FORT WAYNE — In Mexican culture there is a traditional celebration for a girl’s 15th birthday marking the transition from girlhood to womanhood. “Quinceañero” is an important event in the life of the young lady (la quinceañera), her family and friends. Although it is richly festive and symbolic, with the girl sometimes beginning the party wearing flats and finishing with heels, the occasion has deep religious meaning highlighting God, family and friends. The occasion requires that the young lady has received her first Communion and the sacrament of confirmation.

To honor the feast of Christ the King at St. Patrick Parish in Fort Wayne, 14 young ladies who had already celebrated their Quinceañeros individually with Masses and parties at St. Patrick, reprised their observances in a combined celebratory Mass to honor the feast of Christ the King.

In an all-Spanish Mass celebrated by Divine Word Father Thomas Ascheman, the girls and their escorts recited a “dedication to the king,” offering their youthfulness and stating that because Jesus is king of the universe, he should be king of their lives.

To symbolize this offering, the young couples lined the center aisle of the church and stood in tribute as several parents brought up the gifts in the offertory procession. Adding solemnity was an honor guard of Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus from the Anthony Wayne Assembly.

After Communion, each girl was met by her par-
Responding with our whole humanity is an act of love

BISHOP JOHN M. DARCY

The season of Advent and the Down Jones average

Could the contrast in the Scriptures and the culture be any greater this year as we prepare for Advent? Everywhere we hear questions and concerns like these: “How long will this last?” “The high price of housing?” “The collapse in the markets.” “The up and down prices of gas.” By way of contrast, the Gospel reading for the feast of Christ the King, as we came to the last Sunday of the year, is about the identification of Christ with the one who is homeless, the one in prison, the sick and the dying. The government must address the financial situation for the good of our people, but as the Scripture says, “Where your heart is, there also will your treasure be.” As the Scriptures these Sundays, and especially the past Sunday, reminds us — our treasure is in heaven. I have been reflecting on the second part of Pope Benedict’s encyclical, “Deus Caritas Est,” (“God is Love”). He says when we respond to another who is in difficulty, we should be responding with our whole humanity. It is an act of love. It is given freely, and nothing is asked in return. At the conclusion, he speaks of all the saints, especially Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, who have set such an example in living this way. He refers to St. Martin of Tours, a bishop whose feast we celebrated recently, and the pope tells of this event: Martin once gave half of his cloak to a poor man when they met at the gate of his residence. That night, the Lord appeared to him wearing the cloak, thus showing his identification of Christ with those in need. When some of the followers of John the Baptist came to Christ to ascertain his identity, he told them to go and tell John what they have seen — the deaf hear, the dumb speak, the lame walk and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Why is it that Christ has so identified himself with those that are poor, in need and hungry? These, more than those who claim to be holy, are the special object of his love; and so it must be for us who claim to be his followers. And the question of waiting

Nobody waits today. E-mails must be answered immediately (except by me). To answer every hour on the hour. Answers must come quickly. But Advent is waiting, as the people of the covenant waited for the messiah. So we, in the first weeks of Advent are waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ in our lives. In the later weeks of Advent, the readings focus on waiting for Christmas. Also, in Advent, we wait for the coming of God in our hearts, which only comes when we open to him. It is surely a time to slow down, come with love to our neighbor in need and prove to ourselves the authenticity of our following of Christ.

The teachers’ council

Many years ago, we formed a teachers’ council as a good fit for the relationship of our teachers with their bishop and with the diocese. In the first two years, I attended every meeting, and I promised after that to attend twice a year, and I have kept that promise. I docker our teachers and their struggles. I see their appreciation when we were able to improve salaries and healthcare and working conditions. I see how important to them, is the Catholic identity of their schools. I know that some are single moms, and these meetings help me become more aware of their needs. This week, one of the things we spoke about was the need to discuss our teachers and their handicapped. I also learned how important it is to them when the parish priest has a regular presence in the school.

Finally, Saint Mary’s

A special weekend at South Bend celebrating the Sunday Mass at the basilica in the late morning, and then in the evening my annual visit with the students at Saint Mary’s College. A chance for Mass with them, followed by a discussion and some sharing.

Have a blessed Advent, and I will see you all next week.

BISHOP JOHN M. DARCY

Vatican calls for greater vigilance over financial operations

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Vatican said the current market crisis calls for a new international agreement to effectively monitor global financial transactions and give poorer countries a greater voice in economic policies. In particular, steps are needed to curb the abuses of offshore financial institutions, which many see as one of the causes of the financial meltdown, said a statement drafted by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.

The statement, reported by Vatican Radio, came in preparation for the U.N.-sponsored International Conference on Financing for Development, which was to take place Nov. 29-Dec. 2 in Doha, Qatar. The conference, to be attended by representatives of developed and developing countries, was expected to propose steps to respond to the current crisis.

The Vatican statement said it was important that solutions do not favor a few countries at the continuing expense of poorer countries.

“There is a need to avoid triggering a chain of mutual protection. Instead, cooperation should be strengthened regarding transparency and vigilance over the financial system,” it said.

“It is important that the political examination among the rich nations, although necessary, does not lead to solutions based on exclusive agreements,” it said.

The statement said that under the present economic system, “the poor countries are financing the rich countries” through the movement of private capital and government reserves, which are invested in established markets or offshore institutions.

It said offshore institutions have been able to engage in massive transfers of wealth, some motivated by tax evasion and some recycled from illegal activities.

The document said that in addressing the crisis, experts must not forget the economic rights of the poor and the urgent local needs of the continent. When designing a response, it said, world leaders should follow the principles of solidarity, and it emphasized that key elements of the church’s social teaching.
Poll shows overwhelming support for immigration reform among Catholics

WASHINGTON — A recent Zogby poll of Catholics nationwide showed overwhelming support for reform of our nation’s immigration laws, with Catholics supporting a path to citizenship for the estimated 12 million undocumented persons in the country.

The poll conducted Oct. 17-20, included a sample of 1,000 people who self-identified as Roman Catholics and was commissioned by Migration and Refugee Services of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (MRS/USCCB). It had a margin of error of +/- 3.2 percentage points.

About 69 percent of Catholics polled supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, provided they register with the government; 62 percent supported the concept if they were required to learn English. The U.S. Catholic bishops have long endorsed a path to citizenship for undocumented persons that would include requirements to register with the government and to learn English.

The results show that, like other Americans, Catholics want a solution to the challenge of illegal immigration and support undocumented immigrants becoming full members of our communities and nation,” said Johnny Young, executive director of Migration and Refugee Services of the USCCB. “It is clear that those opposed to a legalization of the undocumented are a minority,” he added.

In other findings, 64 percent of Catholics opposed the construction of a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico, while three out of four Catholics agree that the church has a moral obligation to help nations to “proceed along the way of reconciliation” and continue to address current problems “in mutual respect.”

Todd Scriber, education coordinator for MRS/USCCB, stated that the poll results demonstrated that the efforts of the U.S. bishops to educate Catholics on the realities of immigration are bearing fruit.

“Catholics are generally in agreement with their bishops that there needs to be a comprehensive and humane solution to our immigration problems,” Scriber said. “The strong educational efforts of the bishops, through the Justice for Immigrants Campaign and their own teachings, have helped generate support in the Catholic community for comprehensive reform.”

The U.S. bishops launched an educational initiative in 2005, entitled the Justice for Immigrants Campaign, to educate Catholics on the need for comprehensive immigration reform.

Sister Alodia Carney, OLVM, contributed to this story.

Self-interest can lead the world to ruin, Pope Benedict XVI says

Pope Benedict XVI greeted the crowd gathered in St. Peter’s Square during his weekly Angelus address at the Vatican Nov. 23.

BY JOHN TRAVIS

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Without the practice of Christian charity, the world today risks a disastrous fixation on personal self-interest, Pope Benedict XVI said.

The pope made his remarks at a noon blessing Nov. 23, the feast of Christ the King. Addressing pilgrims from his apartment window above St. Peter’s Square, he said Christ made it clear that his kingdom, while not of this world, works within human history to bring about all that is good.

“If we put into practice love for our neighbor, following the Gospel message, then we make space for the rule of God and his kingdom is realized among us. If instead everyone thinks only of his own interests, the world can only go to ruin,” the pope said.

The pope said Christ used clear language to describe how people will be judged by God, as related in the Gospel of St. Matthew.

“The images are simple and the language is popular, but the message is extremely important: it is the truth about our ultimate destiny and about the criteria by which we will be evaluated: ‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me,’ and so on,” he said.

“Who does not know this passage? It is part of our civilization. It has marked the history of the peoples of Christian culture: the hierarchy of values, the institutions, the various humanitarian and social works,” he said.

The pope said Christians need to remember that the kingdom of God is not a question of honors and appearances, but of justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. God will welcome those who work daily to carry out his teachings, not the hypocrites who talk about Christ but fail to put his commandments into practice, he said.

Pope prays for victims of 1932-33 Ukrainian famine

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI prayed for the victims of the 1932-33 “Great Famine” that left millions dead in Ukraine and other parts of the Soviet Union.

In an apparent reference to the Soviet policies of collectivization and food confiscation that provoked the famine, the pope condemned ideologically based governmental actions that violate basic human rights.

He made the remarks at a noon blessing at the Vatican Nov. 23, at a time when many Ukrainians were commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Holodomor, or “death by hunger,” the name given to the famine that occurred in the Soviet Ukraine.

Speaking in Ukrainian, the pope recalled that the famine, under the Soviet regime of Josef Stalin caused millions to die of starvation.

“I express the strong hope that no longer will any political order, in the name of an ideology, deny the rights of the human person and his freedom and dignity, and I assure my prayers for all the innocent victims of this tremendous tragedy,” he said.

He prayed that Mary might help nations to “proceed along the way of reconciliation” and confront current problems “in mutual respect and in the sincere search for peace.”

Historians disagree about the exact death toll from the famine, but many estimate that between six million and eight million people died across parts of the Soviet Union, Ukraine, the agricultural heart of the Soviet Union, was the hardest hit.

The government of Ukraine, which became independent in 1991, has condemned the famine as an act of genocide against Ukrainians and wants the United Nations to issue a similar statement. The United States and Canada are among the governments that have also recognized the famine as genocide.

Russian officials recently called the famine a “humanitarian tragedy” but have rejected accusations of genocide. Russia has accused the United States of trying to politicize the catastrophe.
Food pantries facing double whammy of greater need, fewer donors

BY MARY IAPALUCCI

RIVERHEAD, N.Y. (CNS) — While economic indicators continue to tumble, the number of people turning to parish food pantries continues to climb. In many cases, pantries are struggling to meet the increased demand.

“We used to be able to fill up the shelves. Now, as soon as it’s there, it goes out,” said Father Tom Coby, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Riverhead, where the number of people seeking help has nearly doubled in recent months.

According to Mary Rubert, coordinator of social ministry at the parish, they used to serve between 300 and 400 people a month. In August, that number rose to 454. It jumped to 560 in September and more than 600 people in October.

Across the country it’s the same story. At People of Progress, a food bank and emergency assistance charity in Redding, Calif., executive director Melinda Brown said they are seeing “more and more new people, a lot of working people, which is new.”

The working people are getting food from the charity to make their paychecks stretch to the end of the month. “We’re seeing people who have never asked for help before,” she said.

A new report from the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture showed that in 2007 13 million households experienced “food insecurity,” meaning their access to adequate food was limited by a lack of money and other resources. That was 11.1 percent of all U.S. households.

Just about 89 percent of U.S. households were “food secure” in 2007. That means household members had access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.

Food pantries are seeing increased demand.

King said more families are being forced to apply for food stamps and now that food prices have risen, the food budget runs out earlier in the month. This winter, with heating costs, could put more families over the edge, she added.

“There will be an increase in need,” said Christine Koenen, executive director of the interfaith shelter St. Vincent de Paul of Portland, adding that the charity’s central emergency services office is “inundated with big lines.”

Things aren’t any better in America’s heartland. When three other family members moved in with Pam Andrews and her husband last year, she started visiting Catholic Charities’ Branch I food shelf in Minneapolis. Now she needs the help more than ever to stretch the family’s monthly budget, she said.

Andrews, 56, had used the food shelf off and on over the years when she and her husband hit rough times. However, whenever they were doing well, Andrews said she volunteered at the shelf and donated food “to give back.”

Even with the help provided by the food shelf, however, there’s still not enough food, she said. The three adults have skipped breakfast regularly for about four months so the two children — ages 9 and 2 — get their fill.

Andrews is aghast at the price of milk, lunch meat and coffee, items she said she can’t get at the food shelf.

“You can barely touch beef now,” she said. “And fresh produce is completely out of sight.”

At food pantries around the St. Louis metro area, bad economic news is old news. Even so, a dramatic increase has been seen in the requests for free food in recent months.

“The hunger is winning,” said Circle of Concern director Glenn Koenen.

On World Food Day, Oct. 16, he said there were “more hungry people in St. Louis, more hungry people in Missouri and Illinois and more hungry people around the world.”

A record number of people are asking Circle of Concern and other food pantries for help, he noted. Demand is up 20 percent from the last year at his agency.

“At Circle we now feed as many people in a week as we did in a month just a decade ago,” Koenen said. “Without more resources winter will be bleak for many of our neighbors.”

Melaney Swenson, director of Catholic Charities of Idaho’s regional office in Boise, said what’s scaring about the current economic downturn isn’t the number of homeowners coming in looking for mortgage help. It isn’t the increase in the number of people who have lost good-paying jobs and need counseling for the first time. What’s scaring is that the worst is yet to come.

“I’ve never seen anything on this kind of scale before,” she said Nov. 11.

Only the agency response to Hurricane Katrina could begin to compare with the impact of the country’s current economic crisis, she said. The difference between the demand for aid then and now is that people are able to access fund-raising opportunities in numerous communities.

Today, people just don’t have the money to give.

It’s particularly devastating when a landlord loses a home, because people who have bad credit and are caught in a cycle of eviction or who are getting evicted are not able to find housing. Swenson said Interfaith Sanctuary, a family shelter that opened in downtown Boise last year with the help of a rice donation, reported that it is at or near capacity every night.

When people lose their homes, she said, they are done with big lines.”

New York City budget cuts will keep more than 200 parishes in the Queens borough from opening their homeless shelters this winter.

Eva Vitti-Sterling, parish manager at St. Andrew Avellino Parish in Flushing, said the closing of the shelter ends a mutual relationship that has lasted more than a quarter-century.

For 26 years parishioners had provided home-cooked meals for the men, stayed overnight in the shelter, talked with and played games with the men, and made breakfast in the morning, she said.

The men “felt safe here,” and were able to leave their “meager belongings” under the beds during the day, Vitti-Sterling said.

Parishioners had the “joy of sharing,” as is stated in their parish mission statement: “We strive to be a caring, welcoming and inclusive Christian community growing in our faith formation and our commitment to serving others.”

By Mary Iapalucci

Food Security

About 13 million U.S. households did not have enough food at some point in 2007.

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Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Just about 89 percent of U.S. households were “food secure” in 2007. That means household members had access at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.
Catholic survivor of Great Depression has not lost hope in economy

BY ED LANGLOIS

PORTLAND, Ore. (CNS) — Although Mary Barnes did not know much about the 1929 stock market crash that occurred when she was 5, she knew something was awry in the world.

Barnes, born Mary Oster, and her seven siblings, were shielded from the family’s budget woes by their parents.

But on the family farm in South Dakota, dust smothered the crops, and one year when plants actually grew the air was thick with grasshoppers. She also remembers many hungry-looking men and women wandering past the farm looking for work.

Now 85, Barnes lives in decidedly undusty Portland, where she raised four children of her own. When she recommends the need to be thrifty, her brood teases her for having “a Depression mentality.”

“I think we’re more cautious and we’re more frugal,” Barnes said of her generation. “Also, we are more appreciative of the things we have. We used it up, wore it out and made do.”

Her health is excellent; she suffers a few aches and pains and a little blood pressure irregularity. Most days, she walks 18 blocks a little.

“I really don’t know how we managed,” Barnes said. The family had ample food, maybe because they butchered their own meat, raised chickens, baked their own bread and grew vegetables and fruit when the weather allowed. The mother churned butter and sold it to the store for credit.

“Everybody lived pretty simply,” she said, “but everyone was in same boat.”

To get by, people helped one another. Her father hired workers, mostly farm youths from big families. The Osters took them in, fed them and tended to their clothing.

When dust storms appeared on the horizon, her mother would light a candle and huddle with her children to recite the rosary. As fierce as the summer sandstorms were, winter brought deep snowdrifts that did not melt until April.

Barnes recalled listening to radio programs with her family and hearing results from the 1932 presidential election. She was confident that the new president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, would change American lives profoundly, including life around the Oster farm, where planting trees was required to fight the Dust Bowl and where federal road projects put local men to work.

Barnes joined the Coast Guard during World War II when she was in her early 20s. She came to Portland in 1952, invited by a priest who asked her to do clerical work at a magazine published by the Jesuits. She later worked in banks’ loan departments.

She draws a pension from the Southern Pacific Railroad, where her husband, who died 11 years ago, worked for more than 40 years.

To deal with today’s economic problems, Barnes prescribes cooperation she remembers from her days on the farm. For example, she admires the idea of community gardens.

Perhaps because of her days of wind, dust and poverty, Barnes is still resourceful and generous. She supports her parish, the Archdiocese of Portland and other charitable groups with significant donations.

She also gives in smaller ways. She often bakes sweet rolls for the parish Bible study and is also sure to make extra rolls for any unexpected guests.

Editor’s Note: Share your stories with Today’s Catholic about growing up during the Depression. What can families learn about that time in American history that can help us with today’s economic downturn? How did the church, faith interact with the tough economic times? How did you deal with the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays during the Depression?

Send your comments before Dec. 5 to editor@todayscatholic.org or mail to Today’s Catholic, Att’n: Tim Johnson, P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN 46856.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend hosted the Cultural Orientation Resource workshop in the Archbishop Noll Catholic Center on Nov. 18-19. Shown here is a workshop participant with workshop presenters.

CULTURE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

(Burma and Vietnam), Latin America (Cuba), and the Near East and South Asia (Bhutan, Iran, Iraq). In all, refugee numbers totaled more than 60,000 nationally in 2008.

Bebic pointed out that cultural orientation is required by law to help these new residents adjust to life in the local community and elsewhere. That orientation is broad-based and includes assistance with housing, employment, transportation, education, health issues, money management and cultural adjustment. In addition, refugees need help in understanding their rights and responsibilities and tapping into community services.

It’s a huge task, but the dedicated professionals gathered for last week’s workshop were eager to share their knowledge and gain further perspective from the day’s presenters. They left with new ideas to apply to the ongoing process of refugee orientation in the Fort Wayne area.

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Same-sex marriage not a matter of human rights, says Maine bishop

PORTLAND, Maine (CNS) — Allowing same-sex couples to marry would strip marriage of its essential component — the creation of new life — and render it meaningless and “open it up to endless permutations,” Bishop Richard J. Malone of Portland said in a letter to Catholics in the state-wide diocese. The bishop defended traditional marriage, writing that he believes opposing its redefinition is a matter of faith and a concern for the good of society. “To claim that marriage is a civil right or to allow all sexual orientations to marry is a misnomer,” he said in the mid-November letter drafted after several Christian ministers at a newswriters conference earlier days called for the state to legalize same-sex marriage. “Marriage is an institution that predates civilization, ordained by God, and exclusive to one man and one woman who are given the responsibility to procreate the human race and to nurture, educate and pass on shared values and mores to their offspring,” Bishop Malone wrote.

‘Don’t water it down,’ says young Catholics

LITHTICUM, Md. (CNS) — Megan Magee didn’t use words she as sat in a circle with young adults from Baltimore and Washington, D.C., surrounded by some of the nation’s leading adolescent catechesis experts during the four-day National Symposium on Adolescent Catechesis. Asked what advice she would give to teens on faith formation, the University of Mary Washington student replied, “Don’t water it down.” Ilibagiza told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview Nov. 20 that she can remember hearing about the apparitions from her father at the dinner table, a place where her close family gathered nightly to pray the rosary. “This was our third house,” she said as she told her story. Ramos herself took in additional income earning houses. “This was our third house,” she told Catholic News Service about the house where she and her husband and three children of four ages lived for three years until it was foreclosed on in November. They bought the house for $580,000 and paid a monthly payment of $3,000. But after a two-year freeze on the interest rate ended, the payment shot up to $4,600. By the time they were forced out of the house, the payment had nearly $5,000, said Ramos, a member of Holy Rosary Parish in Antioch, Calif. The family now rents a house two blocks from the one they lost, home they lost. Asked if she knew who the fire was started by, she said, “I have gone into foreclosure. Ramos replied, “Too many, too many.” Ramos is one of the members of the Oakland, Calif.-based PICO National Network converged on the sidewalk outside the Treasury Building, next to the White House, for a prayer service Nov. 18.

Kenyan cardinal says church will resist moves to legalize abortion

NAIROBI, Kenya (CNS) — The Catholic Church will resist any attempts to legalize abortion in Kenya, said Cardinal John Njue of Nairobi. Cardinal Njue, president of the Kenya Episcopal Conference and 24 other bishops who have come here not to condemn the Reproductive Health and Rights Bill 2008, which would legalize abortion. He said the bill should be opposed at all costs. The cardinal took the stand against the measure, he reminded them they were sent to parliament by voters to make good laws. The cardinal said his diocese at Nairobi’s Holy Family Minor Basilica Nov. 15 after the demonstration described abortion as murder and said it showed disrespect for life and human dignity. “We have come here not to condemn anyone but to make good, not destructive laws such as this attempt to have abortion legalized in the country,” said the cardinal. The chief law officer of the church, who said Cardinal Njue said the forces that have come to make good and, “We have come here not to condemn anyone but to make good, not destructive laws such as this attempt to have abortion legalized in the country,” said the cardinal.

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A woman displaced by war sleeps on her belongings at the Don Bosco center in Goma, eastern Congo, Nov. 20. Fighting in eastern Congo has displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians, and more than 1,500 people have taken shelter at the Salesian-run center. 

voddisplplaced by war sleeps on belongings

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Unlike others who have named his three fire, Los Angeles County, was close to being contained. News reports said that one of the three fires might have been started accidentally by some college students. Twenty people, including firefighters, were injured. One fatality was reported; a 98-year-old man died during the evacuation process near downtown Santa Barbara. The largest concentration of destruction took place north of Los Angeles in Sylmar’s Oak Ridge Mobile Home Park, where 450 homes out of 600 in the park were lost to the fire. Those included 39 homes of parishioners of St. Didacus Church and the home of Barbara Barreda, principal of St. Elizabeth School in Van Nuys. Another parishioner’s home was severely damaged, and many parishioners were evacuated to nearby shelters.

WASHINGTON Archdiocese Donald W. Wuerl praised the appointment during a press conference at the archdiocese’s pastoral center, calling the new bishop “a native son of this archdiocese. He was born, formed in the faith and educated here. He will be an instrument of the church and a sense of continuity with its pastoral life.”

Group prays that U.S. treasury secretary will halt foreclosures

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Berenice Ramos never thought she and her family would have their home lost to foreclosure. Ramos, 39, is a financial planner. “What about that, ‘huh?’” she said as she shook her head. “It has been in the flooring business for 20 years. Ramos herself took in additional income earning houses. “This was our third house,” she told Catholic News Service about the house where she and her husband and three children of four ages lived for three years until it was foreclosed on in November. They bought the house for $580,000 and paid a monthly payment of $3,000. But after a two-year freeze on the interest rate ended, the payment shot up to $4,600. By the time they were forced out of the house, the payment had nearly $5,000, said Ramos, a member of Holy Rosary Parish in Antioch, Calif. The family now rents a house two blocks from the one they lost, home they lost. Asked if she knew who the fire was started by, she said, “I have gone into foreclosure. Ramos replied, “Too many, too many.” Ramos is one of the members of the Oakland, Calif.-based PICO National Network converged on the sidewalk outside the Treasury Building, next to the White House, for a prayer service Nov. 18.

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ST. JOSEPH-HESSEN CASSEL BLESSES BLESSED MOTHER STATUE IN MEMORY OF ROBERT HERBER

Father Thomas Lombardi, pastor of St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel Parish, blesses a statue of the Blessed Mother surrounded by students, staff and parents of St. Joseph School on Nov. 19. The statue is a memorial to Principal Robert Herber who died in June. Herber had a special devotion to the Blessed Mother and the rosary. St. Joseph School Principal Louise Schulteis told Today’s Catholic that students contributed money to wear jeans for a day and were able to raise half of the money to purchase the statue. Father Lombardi offered the additional funds.

**Redeemer Radio releases results of fall sharathon**

FORT WAYNE — Redeemer Radio, Catholic Radio AM 1450, WLYV Fort Wayne, would like to thank the thousands of listeners who made the “Cast Your Vote for Catholic Radio” Fall Sharathon an astonishing success. In the midst of economic worries and political uncertainty, the supporters of Redeemer Radio contributed more than $170,000 during three days of sharathon from Oct. 22-24. The sharathon exceeded the station’s goal of by more than $20,000, with donations being pledged even after sharathon officially ended.

Chris Langford, president of Redeemer Radio, declared, “All of us at Redeemer Radio feel very blessed by the tremendous response of our listeners to our fall sharathon. Even during these challenging times, our generous listeners went above and beyond the total from last fall sharathon, thus enabling Redeemer Radio to continue serving our Catholic community and proclaiming the truth and beauty of our Catholic faith for many months to come. I would also like to thank our staff and the host of volunteers and gift donors who made this successful pledge drive possible.”

The “Cast Your Vote for Catholic Radio” Fall Sharathon was hosted by Jerry Usher at the studios of Redeemer Radio. Usher is the host of Catholic radio’s most popular national program, “Catholic Answers Live,” heard on Redeemer Radio weekdays from 6 to 8, mornings and evenings. Throughout sharathon, Usher was joined by local and national guests who gave of their time and shared their perspectives on the vital importance of Catholic radio to the local community, Other local Catholics and non-Catholics volunteered, answered phones, took pledges and assisted the Redeemer Radio staff.

Especially notable was the participation of priests and parishes from across the diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Twenty-two priests gave of their time in the studio, and 17 parishes were represented. Usher commented, “... Redeemer Radio is blessed with more priests participating than the total from all the other sharathons I have anchored this fall.”

The contributions of local Catholics during the “Cast Your Vote for Catholic Radio” Fall Sharathon will go a long way in permitting Redeemer Radio to carry on its mission to evangelize the Catholic faith through radio and to serve the Catholic community, in harmony with the diocese and Bishop John M. D’Arcy.

Looking ahead to the start of its fourth year of operation, Redeemer Radio is a local independent Catholic radio apostolate that serves the Catholic community of Fort Wayne, northeast Indiana and northwest Ohio by broadcasting the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith. The station is operated by a local nonprofit group of lay Catholics, financially separate from the diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, and dependant on the support of listeners.

**Bishop Dwenger holds Christmas concert**

FORT WAYNE — The Bishop Dwenger High School music department’s Christmas concert, Sounds of the Season, will be held on Sunday, Dec. 14, beginning at 2 p.m. in the main gym. Performing ensembles include the Percussion Ensemble, Concert Band, Orchestra, Jazz Band, Concert Choir and Advanced Choir. Admission is free.

**Matthew Kelly to speak in Huntington**

HUNTINGTON — Matthew Kelly, world renown speaker and author, will present his Christmas message on Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Peter and Paul Church, 860 Cherry St. The presentation is open to the public, with babysitting provided in Gofiner Hall.

Kelly is author of several books including New York best sellers, “Rhythm of Life” and “The Dream Manager” and travels across the country with speaking engagements. Originally from Australia, Kelly currently resides in Cincinnati, Ohio where he conducts retreats as well.

**STUDENTS REMEMBER THE DECEASED**

St. Joseph Catholic School students processed to St. Rose Cemetery, Monroeville, to pray the rosary and visit the gravesites of families and friends. They do this annually to commemorate the month of November dedicated to the Poor Souls.
LAFAYETTE — After conversations at school events, two friends felt a need to give busy Catholic moms a chance to get together and explore their faith. “We want to be as formed in our faith as our kids are,” said Noreen Beardsmore, a parishioner of St. Boniface Church.

“Last November, Lara (Behr, a parishioner of the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception) and I called about 20 moms and invited them to talk with us about what they would want out of such a group,” she told The Catholic Mo/2 newspaper for the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana. “They fired out a lot of stuff and basically said that if they were going to leave their chaotic houses, meetings would have to be substantive.”

Thus, the “What Would Mary Do?” (WWMD) group was formed.

The group began meeting monthly in December 2007. Most meetings include speakers, with time allotted for socialization. All mothers are welcome to attend.

“The initial meeting was small but it had all the answers, but it is to remind us that we are not alone,” Beardsmore said. “We’re not talking about being ‘uber-moms’ — we are all in this together. We always want to have time to socialize so moms have the opportunity to hear another strong Catholic mother’s ideas.

“Moms today are busy,” Beardsmore said. “We are pulled in 10 different directions. With our busy lives, friendships suffer and this is a great chance to forge new friendships and spend time with old friends.”

About 35 women attended a recent WWMD meeting with the theme “Our Kids are Catholic (But Can You Tell?) — Building the Christian Virtue in Our Children,” at the cathedral. Speakers for the evening were Grant Freeman, campus minister at Central Catholic Junior-Senior High School, Lafayette; and Lisa Cooley, school counselor at St. Mary and St. Lawrence schools here.

Cooley spoke about how to develop character and moral values in children, and how to combat the problem of bullying. “There are examples from the book ‘Building Moral Intelligence’ by Michelle Borba. ‘Moral intelligence is the capacity to understand right from wrong,’ Cooley said. ‘It means to have strong ethical convictions and to act on them so that one behaves in the right and honorable way.’

She identified several virtues — empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and fairness — which “if they were combined into one, could eliminate bullying itself. That’s our goal, but it’s not a perfect world.”

Jennifer Page, a cathedral parishioner, said she found herself agreeing with many points the speakers made. “The talks were a good reminder of a lot of things we should be doing,”

Cari Gothard, also from the cathedral, said members of the meetings “because it brings together all moms. Preschool, grade school, high school, even college moms — we’re all moms. No matter what age our kids are, moms have the same problems, just at different levels. That’s what I like. How can I connect with this mom who has a senior in high school or one who is a kindergartner? We have the same problems, but she’s more experienced. We get great support. The meetings are good and they give great speakers every time.”

“In my opinion, you just can’t have a group of moms trying to do this,” said Monica Walker, parishioner of St. Thomas Aquinas, West Lafayette. “I love these programs. The talks were all really good and they give great speakers every time.”

Back in August of this year, Williams met with her committee to discuss the auction solicitations to the community were started. Underwriting for the benefit, which is a significant portion of how we received for the event, was led by Mary Liddell.

“We have about 30 underwriters who have given at least $100 donations each, but together they covered about $10,000 in funds for our mission. It is one third of the goal we set to make by the end of the year,” Uhran remarks.

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“It is a team rather than just one woman who do what needs to be done, so we can see a need to fill, no matter what kind of job it is, someone steps up. And usually it is a team rather than just one person.”

On the afternoon before the event volunteers gathered for the extensive set up of the luncheon, Holiday benefit cochairmen Jennifer Incropera suggested the autumn theme for the occasion. “I was adamant about not doing a Christmas theme before Thanksgiving.” The outcome includes table decorations of autumn flowers tied together with fall ribbons, a basket of homemade chocolate glass with a chocolate colored candle inside.

Making of the decorations began in August, according to decorations chairwoman Ann Riley. The process of putting together 48 centerpieces was at times slow.

There were 485 ribbons and 488 pieces of wire flowers. To cut. Riley recalls one funny story from a decorations volunteer: “When she went to get a manicure she was asked — ‘what happened to your hands?’ Cutting those wire flowers took its toll.”

Kay Houser, chairwoman of the silent auction sends kudos to those who asked for auction items. “I think solicitations take a very special kind of person. I asked two people and my heart was pounding out of my chest,” Houser recalls. Approximately 200 articles were donated to the silent auction and included items that ranged in value from a framed oil painting at $1,000 to a $10 dinner gift certificate at a local restaurant. Raffle Basket volunteer Anne Em and Roberta Heeter were excited about the enthusiasm and sales of the four raffle baskets.

“A Night on the Town, Basket of Holiday Cheer, Pamper Me Package and A Dash to the Finish (a homemade quilt). Each basket had a value of at least $250 and all items were donated by local businesses and Christ Child members.”

Proceeds from the entire event which included underwriting, silent auction and raffle basket sales, and miscellaneous contributions came to over $30,000.

One of the highlights of the event was the testimonial of two Christ Child clients, Graciela Calaballo Rhodes and Kathe McMullen. Both expressed gratitude to Christ Child’s contributions of new clothing and shoes. “The staff is wonderful, never judging and always supporting. On several occasions they just listen to me,” McMullen remarks.

And Rhodes adds, “At Christ Child I find coats to stop wind and shoes to keep away the wet, every year, without fail. A mother can never be happier when her children are safe and warm.”

A.M. Best IMSA Standard & Poor’s A++ Certification AAA 1 of only 5 companies to have these impressive ratings, out of over 1,900 companies!
In a Christmas refrain, St. John of the Cross wrote:

The Virgin weighed
With the Word of God
Comes down the road
If only you’ll shelter her.

In an arresting manner, he points out that if our hearts allow her space and love — if we “shelter” her as it were — she will truly lead us to Christ. We learn to absorb her redemptive attitudes. And during Advent — a season in which we are called to prepare to give birth to Christ in our hearts and in our world — we will, I believe, profit immeasurably by journeying with Mary.

One of the foundations of Mary’s spirituality was and is joy — a virtue so needed in our church and our world. Some sociologists characterized the past century (20th) as a “sad century.” And so many observers of our contemporary scene conclude that the situation does not seem to have improved. In our quest for success, our spiritual instincts seem to have been sterilized.

We must never forget that joy is a constant in our spiritual tradition. Thomas Merton, in “Seeds of Contemplation,” states simply and succinctly: “Do not look for rest in any pleasure, because you were not created for pleasures ... you were created for spiritual joy.”

Moreover, Christ himself, in His Last Will and Testament commanded us to be depositories of joy; “I have told you this that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete” (Jn 15:11). Sometimes word-pictures can be helpful in elaborating a truth. In the case of joy, we might turn to John of the Cross’ image: “The Virgin weighed with the Word of God.” He leaves no doubt that the Word attached himself to Mary. And redemptive reality remains constant. Our God is Emmanuel — God with us. In baptism, he has given each of us his irrevocable promise that he will walk with us throughout our earthly pilgrimage.

On the Lord’s part, this attachment is a reminder of how much he loves each one of us. We are in his heart. And joy — humanly and spiritually — springs from the heart that loves. Through our dialogue of love with the Lord we slowly become transformed and even externally we begin to radiate joy.

The fact that Jesus is our invisible companion on our earthly pilgrimage has so many ramifications. It means I can speak to him and in times of difficulty, I can rely upon his strength and support. Mary’s prayer, the Magnificat, is also a prayer of memory. She not only notes the “great things” God has done for her on a personal level but also his faithfulness to his people Israel. In our own life, we should also be trying to cultivate a type of prayer of memory — learning to decode times of God’s faithfulness to ourselves, especially in helping us to get through difficult moments. This has always been a staple in the spirituality of God’s people. Thus the psalmist could cry: “When my soul is downcast, I remember ...”

One of the handmaids of joy is the virtue of contentment — a virtue which seems to have slipped through the cracks in our anxious age. The present Holy Father wrote: “Each one of us Is a result of a thought of God. Each one of us is willed. Each one of us is loved. Each one of us is necessary.”

In the pontiff’s mind, each one of us is called upon to contribute to the building up of the kingdom of God in our world (a kingdom of justice, love and peace) and in our own hearts. Such, of course, is a lifelong process. In decoding the direction God wishes us to take in our lives, we should go to Mary and “Seat of Wisdom” and ask her to aid and assist us in our search.

Finally, before we leave this reflection, we return to the image of Mary as the Woman of the Word. She not only heard God’s word but nourished it within. As we begin Advent, we should pray for the grace to realize that we are called to the same vocation. We must take time (that most overlooked of God’s blessings) to nourish the Word within ourselves. Like Mary, we must reflect upon God’s words (both in Scripture and through life’s events) in our hearts.

Msgr. Thomas McDonnell is a retired priest from the Archdiocese of Boston. He has dedicated his life to the urban poor and disabled. A cancer survivor, he is the author of “Walking in the Dark Valley: When Cancer is a Constant Companion.” This is the first of a series that will be offered by Today’s Catholic through Advent.
A simple but powerful truth

BY SISTER MARGIE LAVONIS, CSC

I have to admit that it is rare for me to remember a homily the next day, let alone several years later. But I do remember one such homily that a Holy Cross priest gave one Christmas at our mother-house. He said that while he was praying about what he was going to say in his homily God told him, “Just tell them that I love them.” It was a simple but powerful truth.

The greatest expression of God’s love was the sending of his only Son, Jesus, whose mission was to reveal to the world God’s love for each person. Jesus commissioned his followers to show this same love. Jesus is God’s Christmas gift to us. As the saying goes, Jesus is the world’s greatest gift.

The season of Advent helps us to realize this more deeply this year. The season is a material whirlwind. I want to offer some Advent activities that a Holy Cross priest notes the family trip to the grocery store educates the children on several levels. "They love that they can throw nonsense at a soup kitchen, patching up some of the less fortunate by helping the poor, visiting the lonely, serving the poor, visiting the sick, reconnecting and numbered for each day of the season. Then the family makes a paper chain. The links are connected and numbered for each day of Advent and indicate a special activity for that day. Each day the children take turns pulling links. To prepare for the coming of Christ, our Lord for whom this is it, they alter the colors of the paper. Kate emphasizes that a mix of silly and spiritual activities are required for their children who range in age from 2 to 6, months to 11 years of age. "Some activities are really busy so we do something small. On a weekend day we might do something to involve the whole family. The notion is to get all the kids in the spirit of Advent," says Kate.

Examples of the first activities include cutting out paper snowflakes to hang on the window at home, making cookies for friends, volunteers and strangers, or giving to the poor in the parish or simply listening to music and dancing. "Sometimes on a cold day you just need to get some of that energy out," Kate laughs.

Two outings that the family looks forward to every year is purchasing food at the grocery store for delivery to the Food Bank of Northern Indiana and buying gifts for the Homeless Center. Waylon notes the family trip to the grocery store educates the children on several levels. "They love that they can throw in almost anything they want and it is a great way to teach them math so they stay within a budget and understand the cost of groceries," says Waylon.

The trip to the Homeless Center brings home the concept of giving back to the community. Waylon emphasizes. "One of my favorite traditions is that every year I take the Friday off before Christmas to go shopping with them and buy gifts for each other and gifts for the guests at the Homeless Center with their own money. We will deliver the gifts to the center in person and it reminds us how God has blessed us. I do not take many days off each year unless it is for vacation where we go somewhere so the kids understand that it is a priority for dad and not just mom. I am committed to family and our community," says Waylon.

Spiritual pursuits during Advent include saying the rosary together, and an activity inspired by Mother Teresa. In her biography, Mother Teresa had an empty manger and straw. Each time a sacrifice was made at the convent by one of the nuns, a piece of straw was added to the manger. The sacrifice was not something that a person boast ed about, but rather it was a private encounter between the man and God. In the Peterson household, the manger is put in a room which is not used frequently, to make this experience more personal.

"The idea is to do a nice day hike for baby Jesus by Christmas," Kate notes.

While Adam at 9 months is too young to participate this year, each of the four Peterson girls has her favorite activities during Advent. Rose, 3, enjoys taking the links off the Advent chain and placing it on the mantel and watching it get shorter as Christmas draws near. "I like the pink candle of the advent wreath," she adds.

Caroline, who is the eldest of the Peterson children, enjoys the Mary-Who-People-Pray-to. She announces the coming of a Savior in her Catechism of the Good Shepherd class.

"Last year in catechism we looked up some Old Testament readings, usually the prophets, and we would hear about what each prophet would say about Jesus. An example might be, ‘For a child is born to us, a Son is given; upon the shoulder dominion rests. They shall call his name Wonder-Counselor, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace from Isaiah 9:5.’" explains Caroline.

Both Margaret, 9, and Louisa, 6, the switch beds in the manager grow through their sacrifices. "Sometimes I let one of my sisters take the first chocolate during snack time," says Margaret. Louisa adds, "Once I played with Rose when I didn’t want to.”

Caroline and Margaret both enjoy expressing their own unique talents during Advent. Caroline plays the violin during Mass at St. Pius, while Margaret likes to show her artistic gift through making aluminum foil people or a play mobile out of a cardboard box for other family members.

The four Peterson girls have favorite activities during Advent for the Petersens is the reenactment of the Nativity scene by the entire family. It is with childlike innocence that Louisa describes the characters family members portray. "There usually is a lamb, a sheep, a donkey and an angel. Caroline usually reads the Gospel and daddy is Joseph. And mommy is always Mary because she is always pregnant.

Advent traditions are treasured by the Peterson family.

By Karen Clifford

GRANGER — We live today in a world of instant gratification. We seek the perfect life; lots of nice things and lots of pleasures we think will make us happy. Yet as we seek these objects and obsessions, we often find emptiness and feel isolation. With the coming of the Christmas season there is an opportunity for the Christian community to pause, reflect and prepare together for the coming of God’s Incarnate Word through the birth of Jesus Christ.

The Peterson family of St. Pius X treasures the simplicity and spiritual anticipation of the season through their family Advent traditions. Parents Kate and Waylon take out a calendar prior to Advent each year to look at the family’s work and school schedules and develop an activity for each day of the season. Then the family makes a paper chain. The links are connected and numbered for each day of Advent and indicate a special activity for that day. Each day the children take turns pulling links. To prepare for the coming of Christ, our Lord for whom this is it, they alter the colors of the paper.

Kate emphasizes that a mix of silly and spiritual activities are required for their children who range in age from 2 to 6, months to 11 years of age. "Some activities are really busy so we do something small. On a weekend day we might do something to involve the whole family. The notion is to get all the kids in the spirit of Advent," says Kate.

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EDITORIAL

Unite in prayer for our leaders

A week ago, the bishops of the United States concluded their annual Fall meeting in Baltimore. This year, of course, they held the meeting in historic Fallen Timbers in which Barack Obama was elected the 44th President of the United States.

Speaking for the bishops’ conference, Cardinal Francis George stated, “We have welcomed this moment of historic transition. It is right that we as Catholics acknowledge the historical significance of the election of the first African-American to the presidency. It is a moment of pride especially for the African-American community which, through the decades, has suffered discrimination in our country, a discrimination which has, please God, lessened in our own day. We must pray that the election of an African-American president is a sign of an ending once and for all to racial hatred and discrimination in our country.

Our response also as Catholics should be one of continuing prayer for our new president. This is a duty that we have in the Lord. St. Paul stated in his letter to Timothy: “First of all, then, I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be offered for every one, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” — 1 Tim 2:1-4.

Finally, as Cardinal George pointed out, the church stands ready in her many institutions to continue its cooperation with the government in our work for economic justice and opportunity for all. As the Isaiah prophesied, “Our efforts to reform laws around immigration and the situation of the undocumented; our provision of better education and adequate health care for all, especially for women and children; our desire to safeguard religious freedom and foster peace at home and abroad. The church is intent on doing good and will continue to cooperate gladly with the government and all others working for these goods.” To the extent that we share the desire to build up the dignity of each human person in our country, we as Catholics must be united in mind and sentiment with the president-elect.

At the same time it seems clear that the president-elect fails to acknowledge (and one should greatly fail to acknowledge) the dignity of each human person from the moment of conception until the moment of natural death. His voting record as a senator and his campaign promises to pro-abortion groups show clearly his desire to promote nationwide restriction-free on-demand abortion. Cardinal George addressed this by stating that the aggressive pursuing of pro-abortion policies by the Obama administration would not bring about national unity (which was proclaimed as a campaign promise), but would rather lead to the alienation of tens of millions of Americans, not to mention an escalation in the continual destruction of innocent unborn human lives.

It is no secret that Catholic voters were divided in their support for a presidential candidate. However, now that a president has been elected, we must be more united than ever in praying for and supporting our new president but also in standing firm in word and deed in the defense of life. Our efforts to reform laws around immigration and the situation of the undocumented; our provision of better education and adequate health care for all, especially for women and children; our desire to safeguard religious freedom and foster peace at home and abroad. The church is intent on doing good and will continue to cooperate gladly with the government and all others working for these goods.” To the extent that we share the desire to build up the dignity of each human person in our country, we as Catholics must be united in mind and sentiment with the president-elect.

Advent: Journey to the light of truth

Last year Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that Advent season is a time of watchfulness over and over again. While many of us can easily become captivated in the commercial revery of the season with gift shopping, parties, etc., it is also important that we take time to commit ourselves to quiet times of prayer, reflection and reconciliation. As Catholics, let us remind ourselves who we are, what we are and what is the meaning of the season. We must stand for these truths — truths that are challenged by the secularization of the season.

A parishioner in our Phoenix audience in 2007 just before Christmas, “If the light of God, the light of truth is turned off, life becomes dark and without a compass.”

May we utilize this Advent season to bring our lives closer to the light of God and the light of truth.

COMMENTARY

St. Aloysius worth preserving

By now, many readers of Today’s Catholic have heard of the recent recommendation in the Diocese of Fort Wayne Catholic school to close St. Aloysius school, and the best idea for the students of these schools? As a parishioner, parent and teacher in the diocese, I can attest to the academic excellence of these smaller, rural Catholic schools. They have a rich tradition that has provided priests, valedictorians and salutatorians in the Fort Wayne area schools. They have operated in the black regardless of smaller enrollment because the parishioners stand behind their schools, believing in the future of their children both academically and spiritually. These schools are not a drain on the diocesan finances.

At St. Aloysius, the parishioners are truly committed to their school, realizing its far reaching effects on the future. This is evidenced by the record-breaking 87 percent commitment to support the distant campaign and successful completion in 2001 of a $1.5 million expansion project for the new campus. Five new classrooms, two offices, activity center, library and storage facilities were added. This expansion project was given full approval by Bishop John M. D’Arcy.

St. Aloysius’s ISTEP scores are soaring at 93.8 percent, above the diocese a "C" of 83.7 percent. As a teacher, I have firsthand knowledge of the fact that smaller class sizes are beneficial to academic success.

St. Aloysius School has been a cherished tradition in rural Allen County for the past 132 years, and today they operate a very modern facility, with a quality atmosphere very conducive to learning. St. Aloysius is a legacy worth preserving for the next generations to come.

Pat Wyss
Fort Wayne

Making truthful choices of conscience

O nce recurrent theme in bioethical discussions is the idea that each of us possesses a basic awareness of the moral law. This distinctly human faculty, which Western culture has referred to as conscience, helps us to choose correctly when confronted with basic moral decisions. Everyone has the ability to see what is right and wrong, instinctively seem to recognize a law higher than themselves. Deep within his conscience man discovers that law, which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Cardinal George described conscience as man’s most secret core and his sanctuary. As creatures of conscience, then, we are moved to pursue good and to avoid evil. Yet, in our fallen nature, we are also drawn, mysteriously, toward wrong and harmful choices. The dictates of conscience may become muted or drowned out by other voices around us. As we grow older we may even acquire a certain finesse in justifying personal choices that are not good, choices strongly contrary to the law of our own being.

The inner sanctuary of conscience is delicate and easily transgressed, requiring great attentiveness on our part if we are to remain faithful to it. I recall a powerful story about conscience involving a young couple who cohabitated for many years. Neither of them were thinking much about marriage, and one day the fellow learned that his girlfriend was pregnant. Being Catholic, he approached his priest. All three of them met one afternoon, had rather lengthy discussions, and finally reached a decision together. They decided that abortion was not an option. They talked about the reality of community mar- riage at some time in the near future.

Later the same day, the parents of the woman came by the couple’s house. They had been fairly open and accepting of this “live-in” situation. After dinner it came out that she was pregnant. Things changed as a result of this revelation. After the meal, the mother pulled her daughter aside and said, “Look, you’ve got a life to live. You need to spend the rest of your life with this guy. C’m on, dear, you’ve got to get an abortion.”

The next day, the young man and the young woman ran into the priest again. The young man brought up the discussion with the mother and said they were reconsidering the abortion option. The priest replied, “We reached a decision on that already.” The young man quickly answered, “What do you mean? If I make a decision today, can I change it tomorrow.” The priest responded simply, “For certain kinds of decisions, you can’t change your mind once you’ve made your decision.”

The young woman pulled her daughter aside. “Look, Mommy — a baby!” She left the doctor’s office that afternoon with a new awareness that she couldn’t end the growing life within her.

Through the eyes and heart of a child, we are often reminded of what a pure and upright conscience ought to look like. To form our conscience as adults means to learn virtue, by repetitively and diligently determining what is good, true and moral. Doing so brings us to know who you are anymore...” The young man was shaken by this answer, but when he reflected on it later, he understood that the priest was right. Certain kinds of personal choices touch us at the very core of our being. Accepting or rejecting a temptation to serious wrongdoing like abortion involves our hearts in a far deeper way than many of the lesser decisions we have to make each day. So that in the end, it is our moral choices that define who we are and what we become. By acting against an upright conscience, we violate and disfigure who we are, and become less human. That’s why the priest told the young man that he would not know who he was anymore.

I also recall another true story about the gentle prodgings of conscience that involved a family of three children. When she found out she was pregnant yet again, she became fearful and began telling herself she couldn’t support the burden of another child. She finally told her parents she would be better off having an abortion. She arrived at her decision just before going in for her next checkup. The doctor, unaware of her plans, began a routine ultrasound to find out how far along her pregnancy was progressing. She had brought along her three children, and they were busy playing together on the floor of the examining room. As the doctor ran the scanner over her belly, her little son glanced up from his toy airplanes, pointed to the screen and said, “Look, Mommy — a baby!” She left the doctor’s office that afternoon with a new awareness that she couldn’t end the growing life within her.

For Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D.

Making sense of bioethics

Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did postdoctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as the director of education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org
Exploring Abraham

What was the background of Abraham, the founder of the Jewish nation?

The Book of Genesis says that the father of Abraham, formerly Abram, was Terah who lived in the famous ancient city of Ur in what is now southern Iraq. The time was around 2000-1800 B.C. Terah had two other sons besides Abram, namely Nahor and Haran. Haran became the father of the famous Lot mentioned in Genesis, but Haran died young, before his own father Terah. The two remaining sons of Terah took wives and settled at Haran or Ur. Nahor married Milcah, the daughter of Haran. Ur was the Sumerian city-state. Father John McKenzie says their language was akin to Turkish, Finnish, and Hungarian. The Sumerians organized their city as a temple community. The god was the king of the city. The people were the servants of the temple. The Sumerians furthered writing, art, crafts and commerce. They also made laws, such as the code of Ur-Nammu, about 2000 B.C. They invented the cuneiform script used for records and eventually developed literature, such as the story of the great flood. The Bible calls this city “Ur of the Chaldees.” J. Packer says clay tablets found at Ur explain that it was located in the district of the Kaldu people. The famous Chaldean city of Babylon, on the other hand, were not known until 1,000 years after Abraham.

The Bible says Terah decided to take Abram, Lot and Sarai to the fertile land of Canaan. The reason for this migration may be the disturbances that ended at the end of the third dynasty of Ur suggested by the discovery of mass burials. Also then the Euphrates River probably separated Ur from the plain.

But, on their way, they settle in Haran or Carrhae, formerly in Syria, now in eastern Turkey, 22 miles southeast of Urfa or ancient Edessa. It was at Haran that God called Abram to lead his people to the land of Canaan and become a great nation. So Abram abandons the pagan gods of his past, follows the true God, and becomes the founder of the Hebrew nation. E. Blake mentions that impressions show Haran was in existence around 2000 B.C., the time of Abraham. This city was of great strategic importance because it lay on the road between Nineveh in ancient Assyria or northern Iraq and the fords of the Euphrates River at Carchemish, a town on the west bank of the river at the Syrian border of southern Turkey. Haran was also a religious city, like Ur, worshiping the moon god. Today people in Haran live in the same type of houses that Abraham did, namely mud brick houses shaped like cones or beehives four to five meters high. These high ceilings soften the burning summer sun.

Father Richard Hire, is pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish, Syracuse.

We do not know the future

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

First Sunday of Advent
Mk 13:33-37

This weekend the church begins Advent. It also begins the use of biblical readings from Year B of its three-year cycle.

It also is the start of a new liturgical year, and we now have a new calendar of events through which we move into a closer relationship with God in Christ.

The liturgical readings are chosen to teach us about the Lord, to relay to us the Lord’s message, and to make us better aware of God’s mercy for us as humanity and for us individually.

The first reading is from the third section of Isaiah. When it was composed, the writer was aware of the Jews’ difficult situation. The exiles had been allowed to return to the Holy Land from Babylon, but this return brought the exiles home to no paradise. Life was miserable.

The prophet called for faith in God, not only as almighty, but as true to the covenant, to the belief that God would protect the Chosen People.

The prophet appeals to God, in the name of the people, for relief. However, the prophet does not say that the people are being treated unfairly, at least in terms of God’s care for them. The prophet makes clear that sin has led the people away from God, and this estrangement has produced their woes.

Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians provides the next reading. Counseling the Christian of Corinth was a challenge for Paul. Not only did temptation and vice surround them at every side, but also they argued among themselves. Paul had to call them to faithfulness, and also he had to try to influence them to put their differences with each other aside.

He saw disciples as having enormous religious potential, able themselves to draw more closely to God and also to infuse the goodness of Christianity into the circles in which they moved.

St. Mark’s Gospel is the source of the last reading. It offers us a theme found quite often in the New Testament, namely that Christ will come to earth again, but in this Second Coming the Lord will be the victor.

By the time the Gospels were written, even in the case of the Gospel of Mark, the oldest of the four as they now exist, Christians were numerous enough, and geographically distributed enough, to catch the public eye. Yet they were not numerous enough to be able to stand against their enemies. The culture was an enemy. Soon, the political system would be an enemy.

Problems if not dangers lay ahead. The atmosphere was tense, uncertain, and frightening. Thoughts of the Second Coming naturally were appealing. The reading, quoting the Lord, reminds us that we in fact do not know the future. Life for anyone of us can change dramatically and suddenly.

However, the only permanent reality is God. If we are with God, we need not fear.

Reflection

Advent is much more than a religious gloss over the hurry of the Christmas season merely serves to remind us of the reality of God, and the reality of our need to be one with God in Christ.

Advent is an opportunity to confront ourselves with this reality, an opportunity to achieve this union with God.

The very busy nature of the season merely serves to remind us to sharpen our focus.

If we respond to this opportunity, then Christmas becomes not a national holiday, not even a religious commemoration, but the moment when we truly bring God into our lives, having prepared ourselves for this wondrous encounter.

READINGS


ANSWERS:

1. a. Izmir (Smyrna)  b. Byzantium  c. Nicaea
2. a. cutting a two-frozen turtles at once  b. legalizing Christianity  c. establishing the monastery at Athos in the Crimea
3. a. 11.1:1-10 Ps 72:7-8, 12-13, 17 Lk 10:21-24  b. 11.1:10 Ps 72:7-8, 12-13, 17 Lk 10:21-24  c. no answer
4. a. Izmir (Smyrna)  b. Byzantium  c. Istanbul
5. a. Izmir (Smyrna)  b. Melliktes  c. Yenesis
6. a. Izmir (Smyrna)  b. Byzantium  c. Istanbul
7. a. Izmir (Smyrna)  b. Byzantium  c. Istanbul
8. a. Greek fire, a type of flame thrower  b. They had invented tungsten steel  c. the Scutum or self-directed shield
9. a. Izmir (Smyrna)  b. Byzantium  c. Istanbul
Options are available at wake or vigil services for deceased

When the media makes the news

H
aving been in the sports media for the past 27 years, I’ve seen a fairly dramatic change in the way business is conducted.

We used to report and comment on the news; now we often make the news

Following Notre Dame’s second straight football setback this month — an ugly 17-0 loss to Boston College — a major Midwestern newspaper printed an editorial on the Fighting Irish program under fourth-year head coach Charlie Weis.

Except they left out one small detail: it was an analysis, not a news story, of how Weis’ job was secure, and his performance would be evaluated upon the conclusion of the ’08 season.

There have been countless instances when coaches have received the dreaded “vote of confidence” from their employers, only to be out of a job a few days later. Maybe Weis’ job isn’t in danger, which would explain why ‘08 isn’t the year to go searching for the next coach, of knowing how the story ends, so to speak. That is, 

before we’ve even picked up a copy of the New Testament, we have been instructed by our parents, teachers or catechists in the grand narrative of salvation contained in it — culminating in the saving death and resurrection of Jesus: the paschal mystery.

The full significance of his life and ministry can only be understood in light of this paschal mystery, which shapes not only the collective memory of the disciples, but also the very composition of the Gospels — and our reading of them today must be guided by the same mystery.

A couple Sundays ago, the text of John’s Gospel observed the following, “But he was speaking about the temple of his body. Therefore, when he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they came to believe the Scripture and the word Jesus had spoken.” John 2:21-22, revealing this very aspect of the proclamation of the Gospel and its composition.

The paschal mystery is the “lens” through which all the teaching and miracles of Jesus must be viewed.

For us, this means that the central mystery of the faith, “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again,” must also be the lens through which we read the whole of the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments; that’s why the sacred liturgy is the best and most privileged context in which the Scriptures are encountered.

At Mass, the central event which forms our understanding of the Scriptures is made present sacramentally on the altar, and in fact shapes and transforms us as readers and hearers of the word.

At one point, the disciples misinterpreted Jesus as a ghost walking on the water. What exactly is a ghost? Does the church believe the soul can be trapped in this world? Anonymous

Mark 6:49 says that, seeing the Lord walking upon the waters, the disciples “cried out, thinking it was a ghost.” The Greek word translated as “ghost,” phantasma, might better be translated as “an apparition” or even “a dream” — the English word “ghost” is loaded with connotations that I am not sure the New Testament authors would understand; in short, the disciples are not characterized as thinking about a ghoul or a soul of one who had died; rather, it’s more like they couldn’t believe what they were seeing and weren’t sure what or who was walking on the water.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church 2116-2117 makes it clear that we should not practice “divination” or the conjuring up of spirits, etc., as such actions are an appeal to the omnipotence and providence of God (our attempt to wrest away control of things from him who creates, sustains and orders all things for our good and his glory).

Popular media may offer accounts of how particular places are haunted or about individual ghost-hunters or ghost-whisperers. Catholics should not partake of such practices or put much stock in them. We believe that at death the individual soul faces particular judgment and we should entrust their soul to God’s mercy.

As a norm, before being too credulous about accounts of “ghosts,” we should be advised to seek a rational or scientific explanation for various phenomena that might be uncritically categorized as “ghosts.”

Father Michael Heintz, Ph.D, rector of St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend, answered this week’s questions.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

By Patricia Kasten

Gospel for November 30, 2008

Mark 13:24-37

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

DARKENED

POWERS

CLERICOS

EARTH

GREAT

GENERATION

IN CHARGE

NOT GIVE

THEM WILL SEE

ANGELS

FATHER

PASS AWAY

WATCH

SON OF MAN

F sou

WINDS

SUMMER

NO ONE

ALERT

MIDNIGHT

THEY WILL SEE

O L W K I N CHARGE

O P N N D A R K E N D

P F O O R E M M U S D A

A M O V D F A L G H N

S I N U E FALLING

S D E E R R I E F D E

A N U J V W S H H R H L

W I J O Y I I P C E T S

A G D E L K G N J T R Y

Y H H A A C F T D G A S

A T N A M F O N O S E W

N A N O I T A R E N E G


THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION

FROM THE SIDELINES

by Tim Prister

offensive struggles.

Weis has a rather storied history of rubbing people the wrong way, and he’s hardly carved a path to the distant future, Swarbrick may be thinking midweek again, the speculation and that Haywood would be leaving Notre Dame for the Washington head-coaching job.

Dame? That’s not the point.

There have been countless exclusion of the ’08 season. Would be evaluated upon the conclusion of the year that Haywood had announced that he would continue coaching in the absence of Charlie Weis. Nothing, which adds further suspicion to Weis’ words.

Following Notre Dame’s second straight football setback this month — an ugly 17-0 loss to Boston College — a major Midwestern newspaper printed an editorial on the Fighting Irish program under fourth-year head coach Charlie Weis.

Except they left out one small detail: it was an analysis, not a news story, of how Weis’ job was secure, and his performance would be evaluated upon the conclusion of the ’08 season.

There have been countless instances when coaches have received the dreaded “vote of confidence” from their employers, only to be out of a job a few days later. Maybe Weis’ job isn’t in danger, which would explain why ‘08 isn’t the year to go searching for the next coach.

One week later, after the Irish squeaked by Navy despite dominating most of the game, Weis announced that he would continue calling plays in the absence of offensive coordinator Mike Haywood, who had been excused for “personal reasons.”

Following Notre Dame’s second straight week, Haywood had returned home during Navy week to attend the funeral of a cousin very near and dear to the family.

So when Weis said he would call plays for the Syracuse game and that Haywood wasn’t leaving midway again, the speculation and assumption within the media was that Haywood was unhappy and looking for an escape from Notre Dame.

Is Haywood unhappy at Notre Dame? That’s not the point.

Haywood left midweek to interview for the University of Washington head-coaching job. Weis had permitted Haywood an opportunity to better himself even though Haywood’s absence would be a distraction for Notre Dame’s preparation for the upcoming opponent. Yet the immediate assumption within the media was that Weis had “thrown Haywood under the bus” for Notre Dame’s

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COMMENTS

November 30, 2008

Are there options on what can be done at a wake service for the deceased, i.e., hymns and readings as opposed to the recitation of the rosary, i.e., Fort Wayne.

The Order of Christian Funerals, the collection of rites used by the church in ministering to the family of the deceased, actually proposes a vigil or wake service to be held at the place of visitation (home, funeral home, church) sometime prior to the celebration of the funeral Mass. In fact, there are a number of related rites that are held in conjunction with the wake service and are very helpful to the loved ones who are grieving, for example, when the casket is opened.

The vigil service consists of a brief service of the word, followed by a litany of intercession and the Lord’s Prayer. This is the perfect time for someone from the family to speak in remembrance, offer a eulogy or share a story from the life of the Catholic funeral Mass.

There is, of course, an old and venerable tradition of praying the rosary at the funeral, and this is also a beautiful way of praying together on behalf of one who has died. While not to be discouraged, the rites of the church would seem to prefer the vigil service be celebrated.

There are pastorally sensitive ways of incorporating both the rosary and the vigil service during the times of visitation, at different times during the “calling hours”; some pastors in fact may incorporate a decade of the rosary as an element of the vigil service.

In Luke 14:25-33, Jesus says, “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” This was said prior to his crucifixion. Would anyone understand his meaning? J.J. Wabash.

It’s important for us to remember that — during Jesus’ earthly ministry and prior to his death and resurrection — a great many of the Lord’s teachings and parables were understood only by his disciples. We have the benefit, when hearing or reading the Scriptures, of knowing how the story ends, so to speak. That is,

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Children’s book aims to start movement about baseball, giving

BY CHARLIE HARTLEY

BASKING RIDGE, N.J. (CNS) — Two New Jersey Catholic mothers of Little League baseball players are celebrating what they characterize as a “miracle” — a one-in-a-million and one publication of a hardcover children’s book they wrote together.

Titled “A Glove of Their Own,” the 32-page hardcover volume of rhyming poetic verse is the first published book for Debbie Moldovan and Keri Conkling. The poem is a fictional vignette about a group of about 10 boys and girls in the 8 to 12 age range, who are playing baseball with a scant amount of worn-down baseball equipment. Most don’t have their own mitts and have to borrow and share.

But an older man watching the game brings them a full bag of baseball gear that he had kept from his days as a coach. The gift brings joy to the boys and girls and inspires the narrator, a child, to give back to other people and causes.

The book arose from an event in the Moldovan family three years ago. The 39-year-old mother of two boys and one girl asked her son, Tyler, what he would like to do for his upcoming ninth birthday. He didn’t want presents, he told her, but wanted to come to his house and play baseball in his backyard.

Rob Moldovan and her husband, Rob, held what they called a “grand-slam birthday party” in their Basking Ridge backyard. The 17 boys from Rob’s Little League team came, as did some 808 players from the Wiffle ball. Left empty by extensive local soccer and Little League fields, the kids played on a wooden scoreboard built by Rob Moldovan and brought along their extra baseball equipment for donation to kids who did not have their own.

Some 100 pieces of equipment — gloves, cleats, baseball pants and more — were given to Pitch in for Baseball in Fort Washington, Pa., a charitable organization for improving the lives of children in need through baseball.

After the party that same day, moved by the abundance of generosity and pure baseball bliss which was witnessed, she went to her computer and wrote a poem in two hours. It was, she said, a “story that had to be told.”

“Knowing there were kids in our country and all over the world who wanted to play baseball but had little or no equipment was upsetting to me,” said Moldovan, who has also written about a dozen unpublished poems. “I couldn’t get the thought out of my head that every child should have ‘a glove of their own.’ I saw the joy that baseball brought to my children and wanted all children to have that experience.”

Moldovan let the poem sit quietly on her computer for about two years because “it was a really personal story,” said the mother of Tyler (now 12), Austin, 10, and Cayla, 7.

Enter 37-year-old Conkling, the mother of 7-year-old Holly and 5-year-old Wil, who became “instant friends” with Moldovan in September 2006. One day in September 2007, while Conkling visited her friend’s house, Moldovan shared her baseball poem. Conkling read it and was instantly moved. She also saw how the story could be improved by adding more emotions about the children.

“Keri added such soul to the book,” Moldovan said.

Bob Salomon, a Little League coach and friend of Conkling’s, read the manuscript too, and “my whole arm was full of goose bumps,” he said. “I knew when she read the story I was going to bring it to a national level.”

Despite having no experience in the publishing industry, she started researching children’s book publishers and came across Franklin Mason Press in Trenton, a company with a dual mission: to produce high-quality books and support children’s charities with donations from each book sold.

Lisa Funari-Willever, founder of Franklin Mason Press and the mother of an 8-year-old Little Leaguer, knew right away that “A Glove of Their Own” had potential. She became the third author of the book, providing editorial adjustments. “She made the book sing,” said Moldovan.

The thing about this book is that “everybody’s heart is in the right place,” said Funari-Willever, of Franklin Mason Press and the mother of an 8-year-old Little Leaguer, who was brought in to help with the hardcover project. She became the third author of the book, providing editorial adjustments. “She made the book sing,” said Moldovan.

Franklin Mason Press has chosen three charitable organizations — Good Sports, Pitch in for Baseball and Sports Gift — to be its designated partners for this book. Ten cents from the sale of each book will be donated to each organization. And when each organization sells books through their respective sports fundraising efforts, the publisher will donate $3 per book.

“Our entire story is about divine intervention, the little miracles which happened to us from the very beginning,” said Moldovan. “It’s just a matter of all of us keeping our eyes open and realizing how God brought us together to do something bigger and better than we knew we could.”

Editor’s Note: “A Glove of Their Own” costs $15.95. Copies may be ordered online at: www.agloveoftheirown.com.

This is the cover of “A Glove of Their Own,” a 32-page hardcover book of rhyming poetic verse by Debbie Moldovan, Keri Conkling and Lisa Funari-Willever. It is about a group of about 10 boys and girls who play baseball with worn equipment until a generous older man brings them new equipment. The authors hope the book inspires a movement of improving children’s lives through baseball.
What’s Happening?

WHAT’S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. Send your announcement at least two weeks prior to the event. Mail to: Today’s Catholic, PO. Box 11169, Fort Wayne 46805; or e-mail: fhogan@fdioceseoffwv.org. 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.

Spiri[tual

Advent reflection
Huntington — Victory Noll Center, 1900 W. Park Dr., will offer the program “Soul Mosaics: Preparing for Our Guest” from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 4. The cost is $30 and includes a light supper. All supplies provided.

Create your personal mission statement for 2009
South Bend — Geraldine Bryan, LCSW, staff therapist at Samaritan Counseling Center will offer a free presentation to learn the goals and benefits of creating your personal mission statement for 2009 on Tuesday, Dec. 2, from 12-1 p.m. at Samaritan Counseling Center, 17195 Cleveland Rd. Bring a sack lunch. Reservation to (574) 227-0274.

Taize prayer services to begin
Huntington — Victory Noll Center will present “Christ! Our Light in Darkness,” for the first in a series of Taize prayer services at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 9. Regular services will be held on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month beginning January 13. Services last approximately one hour. There is no cost to attend and no registration is required.

Community sing along
Fort Wayne — The Fort Wayne Bach Collegium is sponsoring a community-wide Messiah sing-along Sunday, Dec. 7, at 2 p.m. at Queen of Angels Church, 1500 W. State Pkwy. Opportunities for soloists are available. Bring your own score, or one will be provided. Admission is $5 and includes holiday cookies and coffee during intermission. Call (260) 482-9411 or visit www.bachcollegium.org for more information.

Day of Reflection
Mishawaka — A day of reflection will be Wednesday, Dec. 17, at Our Lady of Angels Convent, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The theme for the day is “The Fragrance of Christ.” Bring your Bible. The cost of the day is $15 and includes lunch. Register by Friday, Dec. 12, to Sister Barbara Anne Hallman at (574) 259-5247.

Little Flower Holy Hour
Fort Wayne — Father Tom Shoemaker will celebrate the holy hour at MacDougal Chapel Tuesday, Dec. 2, at 7:15 p.m. Father Tom is pastor of St. Jude Parish.

Misc. Happenings
Knights plan fish fry
South Bend — The Knights of Columbus Council 5521, 61533 S. Ironwood Dr., will have a fish fry on Friday, Dec. 5, from 5 to 7 p.m. Adults $7.50, children (5-12) $3. Chicken strips for $7.50 and shrimp for $8.50 will be available.

Fresh cut trees offered by scouts
Fort Wayne — Fresh cut Christmas trees, wreaths and greens are being sold by the St. Vincent Boy Scouts beginning Nov. 28 at the Scout lodge, 8865 Auburn Rd. Hours are Monday-Friday 4-9 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

REST in PEACE

South Bend
Hedwigre Rose Horvath, 86, St. Matthew Cathedral
Joseph F. Dillon, Sr., 87, St. Matthew Cathedral
Joseph J. McCaffery, Jr., 87, Christ the King
Jesus Borrego, 55, Our Lady of Hungary
Domino Jurscak, 81, Holy Family
Yoder
Judith A. Barnabee, 67, St. Aloysius

Jerome Henry, former Catholic Social Services director, dies
FORT WAYNE — Jerome “Jerry” Henry Sr., father of 17 children, including Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry, died Sunday at age 82. Henry spent more than 20 years serving as director of the Catholic Social Services, beginning in 1968. From reports in the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette, Nov. 24, Henry’s service at Catholic Social Services won him the Sagamore of the Wabash award from then Gov. Evan Bayh. A 1944 graduate of Central Catholic High, Henry spent two years serving in the Navy during World War II and held a master’s degree in social work from Indiana University. He was known as a champion for the less fortunate.

He leaves behind his wife of 59 years, Margarene, and 16 of those children. Tim Henry, one of their sons, died in 1977. Henry also had 57 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren.
**New books for Advent reading**

By Kay Cozad

The following are recent releases that have been sent to Today's Catholic. Summaries were taken from press releases and include publisher and ISBN number.

**“Saints at the Dinner Table,”** by Amy Heyd cooks up a delicious menu of meals with each chapter dedicated to a saint who inspired her original recipes. The author combines a brief introduction to each saint, a dinner prayer and question for a meaningful dinner discussion. St. Anthony Messenger Press, ISBN: 978-0-86716-851-8

**“You’re One of Them,”** by Umen Akpan is a collection of five stories, each told from the perspective of a child from a different African country, that portray the horror and beauty found in the life issues facing the children. His narrative prose brings the sights, sounds and feelings of Africa to life. Little, Brown and Company, ISBN: 978-0-316-11378-6

**“God and Country: Reflections for Advent,”** by Father Michael Orlitz is a pocket-size prayer book for Catholic men and women in the U.S. military offering traditional Catholic prayers in addition to reflections that include Scripture, a brief inspirational story and a question to ponder. Ortiz, a military chaplain, ends each meditation with space for personal notes. St. Anthony Messenger Press, ISBN: 978-0-86716-577-7

**“When God is Gone, Everything is Holy,”** by Chet Raymo is forged from both the standards of academy and the reverence for creation born of the Catholic sacramental tradition and is filled with science, philosophy, theology and literature. Raymo uses wit and insight as he offers detailed antedotes and quotes from masters in the field to articulate his perspective as a religious naturalist. Ave Maria Press, Sorin Books, ISBN: 978-1933495132

**“Greater Than You Think: A Theologist Answers the Atheist About God,”** by Thomas D. Williams, LC, Th.D., is a rebuttal response to recent anti-God claims. Williams offers an easy-to-read Q & A-style as he answers questions in five categories, including religion itself; religion and society; religious perspectives as a religious naturalist; and how atheism itself stands up to the same questions asked of religion. Counter questions and Biblical content challenges nonbelievers to further prove their cause. FaithWords, ISBN: 978-0446514934

**“Treasure in Clay,”** by Fulton J. Sheen is the autobiography of this gifted orator completed shortly before his death in 1979. Glimpses of Sheen’s childhood, years in the seminary, academic career, travels and media stardom provide the reader with a timeless message of faith, hope and love. Doubleday, ISBN: 978-0-385-17769-2