Today’s Catholic wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and blessed New Year

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This mural, located within the apse of the recently blessed Chapel of Saint Joseph at the new Saint Joseph High School in South Bend, is the central piece of art — a reredos with an oil painting of the Nativity, executed and donated by Ruth Stroik of South Bend. Stroik studied art at Yale and Indiana University, and also taught at the college level for several years.
The birth of the “Prince of Peace”

**IN TRUTH AND CHARITY**

**BY BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES**

To us a Child is born, to us a Son is given... and his name will be called God... Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:6).

The words of Isaiah prophesy the coming of the Savior into the world, a great promise fulfilled when the Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem. Christians celebrate the great mystery of the Incarnation. Like the shepherds and the magi, we kneel in adoration before the Child “wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12).

The promised Messiah is identified as Isaiah as the Prince of Peace. This title has particular meaning for us this year. Our nation has been shaken again by senseless violence with the terrible slaughter of innocent children and adults last week at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut.

Our hearts go out to the parents and families of these innocent victims. Let us remember in our prayers as we celebrate the Birth of Our Savior. May the Lord console them in their deep sorrow and grief!

It is tragic when we consider the scourge of violence in our culture. We see violent behavior in homes, schools, shopping malls, and on our streets. Violence is prevalent in movies, video games, and television. As a society, we must declare this unacceptable. There are followers of Christ, the Prince of Peace, who must never cease to proclaim that violence goes against the truth of our faith and the truth of our humanity.

Violence is fed by anger, intolerance, and hatred. There is a terrible climate created by words and actions (all-too-common today) that attack others and lack even the basic elements of civility and respect. In this Year of Faith in which the Holy Father calls for a revitalization of faith, we also must recognize the need for a moral revolution that recovers elements of civility and respect. In this Year of Faith, the Holy Father calls for a revitalization of faith, we also must recognize the need for a moral revolution that recovers elements of civility and respect.

Our faith calls us to cherish life, from conception to natural death, and to value kindness and compassion over anger and vengeance. Two thousand years ago, the Prince of Peace was born in Bethlehem. His is the power that makes us capable, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, of peace with one another and communion with God Himself. How often Jesus spoke the words Peace be with you after He rose from the dead. These words are often repeated in the Church’s liturgy.

The Church teaches that peace is the work

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**Mass on the Feast of the Holy Innocents**

**Friday, Dec. 28, 2012**

12:05 p.m.

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades will be offering this Mass for the victims of the killings on Dec. 14 at the elementary school in Newtown, Conn., and for their families. All are cordially invited to attend.

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The Christmas Nativity is recreated outside St. Rose of Lima Church in Newtown, Conn., Dec. 15. The planned parish event was carried out as the community and nation sought answers and comfort after a gunman killed 27 people, including 20 children, in a school shooting tragedy the day before.

By Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

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The birth of the “Prince of Peace”

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The Church teaches that peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity. It is a goal of Christian living, as indicated by Jesus who taught in the Sermon on the Mount: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. The promotion of peace is part of our Christian vocation.

On that first Christmas, after the angel of the Lord announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds, a multitude of the heavenly host praised God in these words: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests. This is the peace that the world cannot give. It is the peace of Jesus: salvation. It is reconciliation with God the Father. Jesus is “our peace,” Saint Paul teaches. Jesus Himself said to the disciples in His farewell discourse: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you (John 14:27).

In the Entrance Antiphon of Christmas Midnight Mass, the Church proclaims: Today true peace has come down to us from heaven. It is Jesus who brings true peace to the world. Yet, Christmas reminds us that the birth of Christ shines in the darkness of sin and death. And so we must never lose hope in the message of Christmas, recognizing that peace is the heritage Christ won for us. That peace begins in our own hearts when we renounce hatred and evil and seek to overcome evil with good.

This Christmas, let us raise a great prayer to God for peace in our nation and in our world, for an end to violence, war, and terrorism. Let us pray for a culture of life and civilization of love. Let us pray that the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, may fill us with renewed hope and that His light may spread throughout the world.

I wish to close with these words of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict, spoken at Midnight Mass in 2005:

When we celebrate the Eucharist we find ourselves in Bethlehem, in the ‘house of bread’. Christ gives himself to us and, in doing so, gives us his peace. He gives it to us so that we can carry the light of peace within and give it to others. He gives it to us so that we can become peacemakers and builders of peace in the world. And so we pray: Lord God, fulfill your promise! Where there is conflict, give birth to peace! Where there is hatred, make love spring up! Where darkness prevails, let light shine! Make us heralds of your peace! Amen.

My brothers and sisters, you are remembered in my Masses and prayers during the season of Christmas. A blessed Christmas to all!
‘No words’ can describe shock, sadness after shooting, says priest

NEWTOWN, Conn. (CNS) — Msgr. Robert Weiss, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church in Newtown, was at Sandy Hook Elementary School almost immediately after the horrific shooting Dec. 14.

When the enormity of the tragedy began to unfold, other priests, chaplains and Catholic Charities personnel “were on the ground,” Brian Wallace, diocesan director of communications, told Catholic News Service.

In the days since St. Rose of Lima has taken center stage as people gathered for a prayer vigil the night of the shootings and flocked to Sunday Masses seeking solace. They looked to Msgr. Weiss and his staff and other Catholic leaders for pastoral outreach in the aftermath of the violence, which left 20 children and seven adults dead.

Eighteen children died at the school and two others died after they had been rushed to the hospital. All of the children were first-graders. The adults included the principal and five teachers, as well as the gunman.

Police officials identified the shooter as Adam Lanza, 20, and said he killed himself as first responders arrived on the scene.

“There are no words,” Msgr. Weiss told a TV reporter Dec. 15 in an interview for NBC’s “Today” show after spending hours helping law enforcement officials inform parents that their child had died in the shooting. At least eight of the children belonged to the parish and will be buried from St. Rose.

Msgr. Weiss said many of the family members thanked him for his presence. “There was a lot of hugging, a lot of crying, a lot of praying, a lot just being silent,” he said, adding that at the previous evening’s vigil, community members “came together to care and to support. People really care here and hopefully we can just keep the community together and they can console each other.”

The priest, along with Lutheran, Episcopal, Jewish, Congregationalist, Methodist, Bahá’í and Muslim leaders, participated in an evening interfaith service Dec. 16 at a Newtown auditorium. President Barack Obama addressed the gathering after meeting separately with each family who lost someone in the shooting. He expressed his condolences and the nation’s support as they face their grief and bury their dead.

“I come to offer the love and prayers of a nation. I am very mindful that mere words cannot match the depths of your sorrow, nor can they heal your wounded hearts,” Obama said at the service.

“I can only hope it helps for you to know that you’re not alone in your grief; that our world too has been torn apart; that you are not forsaken in this land of ours, we have wept with you, we’ve pulled our children tight,” he continued.

“And you must know that whatever measure of comfort we can provide, we will provide; whatever portion of our care we can share with you to ease this heavy lead, we will gladly bear it. Newtown — you are not alone.”

Obama ended the evening’s service to “use whatever power” his office holds to “engage my fellow citizens — from law enforcement to mental health professionals to parents and educators — in an effort aimed at preventing more tragedies like this.”

“Because what choice do we have? We can’t accept events like this as routine,” he added.

Before closing his remarks, Obama named each child by name, and added: “God has called them all home. For those of us who remain, let us find the strength to carry on, and make our country worthy of their memory.”

In a Dec. 16 statement, Msgr. Jared A. Doyle, administrator of the Bridgeport diocese, said: “On this Gaudete Sunday we realize how quickly our joy can be turned to sorrow and how our faith can be challenged.

“Be upheld by the clergy, religious and all the faithful of the Diocese of Bridgeport I extend my prayers and condolences to the families of the victims. ... Our concern and support go out to the whole community of Newtown as you try to assist and support one another, especially those who were directly impacted.”

Msgr. Doyle pledged whatever diocesan resources are needed “to assist those affected by this tragedy, especially those who were directly impacted.”

The Bridgeport diocese’s website included several other messages of condolence, including one sent on behalf of Pope Benedict XVI by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state.

The cardinal wrote the pope’s “heartfelt grief and the assurance of his closeness in prayer to the victims and their families, and to all affected by the shooting event.”

Pope expresses grief over Newtown shooting, calls for acts of peace

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — After 20 children and six adults were shot dead in Connecticut, Pope Benedict XVI offered his condolences and prayers, urging all to dedicate themselves to acts of peace in the face of such “senseless violence.”

“After reciting the Angelus Dec. 17, the pope, speaking in English, said he was ‘deeply saddened’ by the Dec. 14 shooting at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn. In addition to the students and staff killed, the gunman took his own life.

“I assure the families of the victims, especially those who lost a child, of my closeness in prayer,” he said. “May the God of consolation touch their hearts and ease their pain.”

Just before blessing the Nativity-scene statues of the baby Jesus that children brought to the square, Pope Benedict urged people to use the rest of Advent to dedicate themselves more “to prayer and to acts of peace.”

Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican secretary of state, sent a message Dec. 14 to the Diocese of Bridgeport, which includes Newtown, saying the pope had addressed the cardinal “to convey his heartfelt grief” and his prayers to the victims, their families and “all affected by the shooting event.”

“The aftermath of this senseless tragedy, he asks God our Father to console all those who mourn and to sustain the entire world, hand in hand with the spiritual strength which triumphs over violence by the power of forgiveness, hope and reconciling love,” the cardinal wrote.

Before reciting the Angelus Dec. 17, Gaudete (rejoice) Sunday, Pope Benedict celebrated a morning Mass at the parish of St. Patrick in Colle Prenestino, a suburb on the eastern outskirts of Rome, and met with parents of babies baptized in the past year.

In his homily at the Mass, Pope Benedict said the Prophet Zephaniah’s exhortation of “wrongdoers” to “pray for joy” and “be glad and exult with all your heart” is a proclamation of good news.

“The prophet wants to tell us that there is no reason for mistrust, discouragement, sadness, no matter what situation we face, because we are certain of the presence of the Lord, which alone is enough to cheer us and give joy to our hearts,” the pope said.

“Pray that the day will come to recite the Angelus with visitors in St. Peter’s Square and to bless the baby Jesus statues that will be the center of Nativity scenes in homes, schools and hospitals throughout Rome, Pope Benedict prayed that people would embrace the call to conversion, honesty, respect for others and love for neighbor.

As the pope spoke from his apartment window high over St. Peter’s Square, two small groups of protesters held up signs. The handful of protesters inside St. Peter’s Square had black and white signs in English, Italian and Spanish; one said, “Gay marriag- es do not harm peace.” The other wrote, “We do.”

The group outside the square held up colored hearts with messages in Italian such as “Love your neighbor” and “Marriage for all.”

The groups were protesting a section of Pope Benedict’s World Day of Peace message in which he affirmed Catholic teaching on marriage as the lifelong bond of a man and a woman. The message said attempts to redefine marriage “harm and help to destabilize marriage, obscuring its specific nature and its indispensable role in society.”

• Sunday, Dec. 23, 10:30 a.m. — TV Mass, University of Saint Francis Chapel, Fort Wayne

• Tuesday, Dec. 25, 12 a.m. — Christmas Midnight Mass, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne

• Thursday, Dec. 28, 12:05 p.m. — Mass on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne

Mourners visit a memorial outside St. Rose of Lima Church in Newtown, Conn., Dec. 16. Twelve girls, eight boys and six adult women were killed in a shooting massacre Dec. 14 at Newtown’s Sandy Hook Elementary School. Eight of the children were to be buried from St. Rose of Lima.
NOTRE DAME — “Festschrift,” German for “festival-writing,” is a word academics use to describe a collection of writings celebrating the work of a prominent scholar on some memorable occasion. It is certainly a word well understood by the Bavarian theologian Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, and he seemed pleased to receive a festschrift from the University of Notre Dame, which John Cavadini, director of the Institute for Church Life, presented him Friday, Dec. 7, in Rome.

The festschrift, “Explorations in the Theology of Benedict XVI,” edited by Cavadini and just published by the University of Notre Dame Press, grew from a conference sponsored by ICL in March to mark Pope Benedict’s 85th birthday. The conference brought to Notre Dame an international group of theologians and other scholars to explore and reflect upon some 60 years of Joseph Ratzinger’s theological scholarship and teaching, from his writings as a professor of theology through his papal encyclical letters.

Cavadini, in Rome for the annual meeting of the International Theological Commission, a Vatican advisory group to which Pope Benedict had appointed him three years ago, brought with him a special leather-bound edition of the book that had been signed by all its contributors, including several Notre Dame faculty members and Notre Dame’s president, Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins.

“I would like to emphasize also how pleased I am that we were able to honor Pope Benedict in this way,” Cavadini told Today’s Catholic. “He has taken many courageous and leaderly stands and takes his share of the heat that courageous stands often generate, and I wanted to let him know that there are many of us who appreciate his work and are grateful for it.”

“I’d gone to Rome for the ITC meeting,” Cavadini said, “but I also wanted to find an opportunity to deliver our festschrift to the Holy Father, in the name of all the contributors, of the Notre Dame Press, and of the university. My mission was accomplished more splendidly and amply than I could have imagined, for I had the opportunity personally to be received by Pope Benedict twice! But the Friday audience was arranged specifically for the presentation of the festschrift.”

“He received it warmly and seemed genuinely pleased and even touched when I showed him the leather-bound copy with the signatures of all the contributors and President John Jenkins,” Cavadini said. “I also presented him with a copy of the trade version, with the beautiful icon of Our Lady of Vladimir on the dust jacket, so he could see what it looked like.”

Cavadini was the editor of the collection of essays, intended to introduce people to Pope Benedict’s work as a theologian and to develop his theology along the lines he has laid out in his most recent writings as pope.

The Notre Dame faculty contributors (and signatories) of the book are Cavadini; Lawrence S. Cunningham, emeritus; Father John A. O’Brien, professor of theology; Gary Anderson, Hesburgh Professor of Catholic Theology; Cyril O’Regan, Catherine F. Huisking, professor of theology; Robert M. Gimello, professor of theology and of East Asian languages and cultures; Francesca Aran Murphy, professor of theology; and Daniel Philpott, associate professor of political science and peace studies. Other contributors include Jesuit Father Edward T. O’akes, professor of systematic theology at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake and Mundelein Seminary; Simona Beretta, professor of international economics and policy and political science at Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan; and Peter Casetta, professor of Catholic Studies and director of the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology at DePaul University.

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

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

May the Blessings of the season be yours.
December 23, 2012

‘Nutcracker’ performance is special gift

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — The “Nutcracker” ballet is a timeless holiday tradition cherished by young and old, and this year a local dance group carried on the legacy with panache as they performed for an exceptional audience. Over 60 members of the New American Youth Ballet executed a heartfelt performance for a sold out crowd of over 2,000 children and adults who live with disabilities or in disadvantaged situations on Dec. 16 at the University of Saint Francis Performing Arts Center in downtown Fort Wayne.

Adding to the already spectacular event was a visit from Santa Claus at the close of the ballet performance replete with a gift for every audience member. The gifts were purchased with funds from a generous donation made by Ciocca Cleaning and Restoration and Glenbrook Dodge.

New American Youth Ballet, a nonprofit organization established in 2004 by Beth McLeish, is an academic and ballet dance school in Fort Wayne. As dean of ballet, McLeish shares administration of the extraordinary school with her brother Mark Bly, who is dean of academics. Both are parishioners at St. Vincent de Paul Parish.

While preparing for this year’s annual “Nutcracker” performance the company felt a need to reach out to the community in a special way. McLeish says, “We wanted the students to bring the arts to some who don’t get the chance to experience them … to use their art to give back.”

Twenty-five local social service agencies participated in the special event with clients and family members from Vincent Village, Essel Wilson Community Center, Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Aging and In-home Services, the League of the Blind and many more.

Fred Tone, retired principal of Bishop Dwenger High School, and Steve Doepker, academic consultant and retired administrator, were instrumental in planning the event, coordinating the agencies and sponsors, and procuring the USF Performing Arts Center for the performance. McLeish says that the NAYB has performed on that stage for eight years, while it was known as the Scottish Rite Auditorium.

“When University of Saint Francis bought the building last year, it was a natural transition to go to USF to sponsor the project,” she says. “This active St. Vincent de Paul Parish parishioner felt the Christmas outreach was a perfect way for her to serve her community. She says, “I love seeing them (the children) smile when we come out in our costumes. ‘Tis cool to share with them what we love to do.”

In addition to this special outreach performance the New American Youth Ballet student dancers held a performance on Dec. 15 that was open to the public and another the evening of Dec. 16 at a discounted rate for area Fire and Police Department families as well as military families and veterans.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades celebrated a special dedication Mass with students, staff, faculty, benefactors and friends of the University of Saint Francis’ new Performing Arts Center in downtown Fort Wayne on Dec. 11. The building, formerly the Scottish Rite, was purchased last year by USF to establish a downtown campus. In his homily Bishop Rhoades said, “At this first Mass in this Performing Arts Center we are reminded of the Catholic mission of the University of Saint Francis, a mission that will not only be lived at the main campus but here in this place.” He invoked the Lord’s blessing saying, “May the Lord bless all who study, work, and perform here, that they use their God-given gifts and talents for the glory of the Lord.” Following the Mass the bishop blessed the building with a prayer of dedication. Pictured is Bishop Rhoades blessing the lobby of the Performing Arts Center with holy water.

From left, USF President Sister Kriss, Nancy Money, director of facilities and events, and Brian MacMichael, director of the diocesan Office of Worship look on.

Olivia Kruse, a 16-year-old student at the ballet school was excited to be cast as the sugar plum fairy and participated in the sneak previews. She says, “This is the first year our school is doing the ‘Nutcracker’ on stage in public. So we’re very excited and happy that we get to do it.

“Professional Insurance Services”

“Nutcracker” performance is special gift

BY KAY COZAD

FORT WAYNE — The “Nutcracker” ballet is a timeless holiday tradition cherished by young and old, and this year a local dance group carried on the legacy with panache as they performed for an exceptional audience. Over 60 members of the New American Youth Ballet executed a heartfelt performance for a sold out crowd of over 2,000 children and adults who live with disabilities or in dis-
Pope launches Twitter account, tweets to more than 1 million followers

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI launched his very own Twitter account, sending a short inaugural message to his more than 1 million followers. "Dear friends, I am pleased to greet you through this social network," it said. The pope's initial tweet — 119 characters long — went viral as the number of followers of @Pontifex and its seven other extensions grew by more than 5,000 new people per hour, a Vatican official said. Tens of thousands of followers retweeted the messages in the short minutes after they were posted. After the pope gave his catechism and blessing to those gathered for the general audience in the Vatican's Paul VI hall, an announcement came over the public address system saying the pope was about to make his first tweet. Officials placed a small wooden desk in front of the pope, and staff from thePontifical Council for Social Communications placed a small tablet computer on top. The pope put on his glasses as Thaddeus Jones, an American working at the council, showed him the screen that already had the message prepared and loaded. The pope, with a tap, sent the greeting, which in English was just one character shy of the site's 140-character limit. Archbishop Claudio Celli, the council president, then showed the pope his @Pontifex accounts, which had amassed 1 million followers in the 10 days before the first tweet. The pope had difficulty in navigating the 14-day pressuring of a screen button with a determined push, which the archbishop then remedied with a more practiced tap. About 45 minutes later, after the pope left the audience hall, the first pair of tweets in a Q&A format was sent by Vatican officials. While the pope seems to approve each tweet, all tweets after his inaugural message are sent by Vatican staff.

Christmas trees remind believers of light of Christ, pope says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The light of Christ has not dimmed over the past 2,000 years, but Christians today have an obligation to resist attempts to extinguish it, knowing that whenever societies have tried to pretend God did not exist, tragedy followed, Pope Benedict XVI said. Pope Benedict made his remarks Dec. 14 during a morning audience with civic leaders and pilgrims from the town of Pescopennataro and the province of Isernia, which donated the 78-foot silver fir tree that became the Christmas tree in St. Peter’s Square. Apparently informed that Pescopennataro has a population of about 350 people, the pope seemed a bit surprised at the crowd of 450 people who came to pay their respects and receive his thanks for the gift of the Christmas tree. “The whole town must be here,” he told them. In fact, the mayor did manage to get everyone on buses and to the Vatican. Along with regional government officials, they met with the pope just a few hours before Bishop Giuseppa Sciacca, secretary-general of the office governing Vatican City, presided over the official tree-lighting ceremony. At the ceremony, the Pope Pioquinto poet, Angelomaria Di Tullio, read in the local dialect a poem he wrote about the tree, growing for decades near his hometown, so that one day it proudly would represent the Pescolani people at the Vatican. At the audience earlier, Pope Benedict said the gift of the tree was a sign of the faith and religiosity of the southern Italian communities that donated the tree for St. Peter’s Square and smaller trees for the Apostolic Palace.

Religious liberty, front and center in 2012, likely to remain big issue

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Defending religious liberty was a top priority this year for the U.S. Catholic bishops, who repeatedly spoke out against threats to its existence. Much as they did the year before, the bishops in 2012 spoke out consistently against the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ mandate requiring most religious employers to provide free coverage of artificial contraception, sterilization and abortion-causing drugs in their insurance plans, even if they are morally opposed to such coverage. The mandate, put in place in August 2011, has a narrow exemption for employers who object to providing these services on religious grounds, namely if they serve or hire people primarily of their own faith. It does not include a conscience clause for employers who object to providing such coverage. The HHS issue took center stage early this year when the Obama administration announced Feb. 10 that it would leave the definition of an exempt religious entity but would shift the costs of contraceptives from the policyholders to the insurers. But the Catholic bishops and other religious leaders rejected the change, saying it failed to ensure that Catholic individuals and institutions would not have to pay for services that they consider immoral, because many dioceses and other Catholic entities are self-insured. At a congressional hearing, now-Archbishop William E. Lori, who heads the Baltimore Archdiocese and is chairman of the bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, said the ongoing debate over the mandate demonstrated a need for enacting conscience protection into federal law. The bishops have repeatedly said the mandate is a restriction on religious liberty because the requirement violates faith-based teachings. They echoed this concern throughout the year and urged Catholics to similarly speak out against infringements to religious freedom. Catholics around the country responded by participating in Masses, devotions, holy hours, educational presentations and rallies during the June 21 to July 4 campaign of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops called a “Fortnight for Freedom.”

Church agencies bring relief during year’s storms, drought, typhoon

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Amid this year’s hotter-than-average temperatures and extreme weather-related events including floods, droughts, storms, wildfires and a recent typhoon, Church agencies in the U.S. and around the world mobilized to provide short and long-term relief. The year ended with a typhoon hitting southern Philippines in December, lashing the island with 120-mph winds and torrential rains killing more than 370 people. The Philippines had already experienced flooding in August when days of torrential rains caused more than a quarter million people to evacuate their homes in the capital of Manila. The previous month, massive flooding in India left 126 people dead, and affected nearly 3 million people. Teams of Catholic Relief Services workers in both areas immediately assessed damages and provided medical aid, food and water, while churches provided temporary shelter. The United States also was particularly hard hit with weather disasters this year prompting aid from Catholic Charities USA, local Catholic Charities agencies and parishes. Hurricane Sandy, which quickly became a super storm, wreaked havoc on the Eastern United States in late October, killing 125 people in the U.S. after causing more than 70 deaths in the Caribbean. According to a report from The Associated Press, the storm caused about $62 billion in damage and other losses in the U.S. — primarily in New York and New Jersey — making it the second-costliest storm in U.S. history after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 which caused $128 billion in damage. The United States also experienced the worst drought in decades in the south-central U.S. this past summer. Drought or near-drought conditions had repercussions for more than just farmers as crop shortages caused food prices to increase. In June, there were severe wildfires in Colorado, prompting evacuations and in March tornadoes ripped through parts of Indiana.

POPE SENDS FIRST TWITTER MESSAGE FROM VATICAN

In St. Peter's Square, the pope seemed a bit surprised at a population of about 350 people, a Vatican official said. Tens of thousands of followers retweeted the messages in the short minutes after they were posted. After the pope gave his catechism and blessing to those gathered for the general audience in the Vatican’s Paul VI hall, an announcement came over the public address system saying the pope was about to make his first tweet. Officials placed a small wooden desk in front of the pope, and staff from thePontifical Council for Social Communications placed a small tablet computer on top. The pope put on his glasses as Thaddeus Jones, an American working at the council, showed him the screen that already had the message prepared and loaded. The pope, with a tap, sent the greeting, which in English was just one character shy of the site’s 140-character limit. Archbishop Claudio Celli, the council president, then showed the pope his @Pontifex accounts, which had amassed 1 million followers in the 10 days before the first tweet. The pope had difficulty in navigating the 14-day pressuring of a screen button with a determined push, which the archbishop then remedied with a more practiced tap. About 45 minutes later, after the pope left the audience hall, the first pair of tweets in a Q&A format was sent by Vatican officials. While the pope seems to approve each tweet, all tweets after his inaugural message are sent by Vatican staff.

Vatican newspaper: World will end, but not because of Mayan calendar

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A papal astronomer gave his reassurances that the world will not end Dec. 21, 2012. While the universe eventually will come to an end, he said, humanity will have “very precise data on the evolution of the cosmos, particularly the evolution of the sun, which was published the priest-astronomer’s piece written by Piero Benvenuti, an Italian astronomer and the founder of the Astronomical Observatory of the Vatican.”

POPE SENDS FIRST TWITTER MESSAGE FROM VATICAN
FORT WAYNE — Queen of Angels School was selected as a grant recipient for a new technology upgrade and was awarded a $10,000 grant through the Microsoft Student Innovation Program. The announcement was made on December 6, 2012, at a special assembly at St. Monica Parish, where Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, the Diocese of Fort Wayne-Bloomington's Bishop, celebrated Mass with retired priests, including Father Laurence Tippmann, Father Robert Traub, Saint Anne of Assisi Parish, and Father Kenneth Sarrazine, St. Dominic Parish in Bremen.

Leah Lehman, who was the grant applicant, said, "A huge thanks to Skype, Santa, Kaplow Public Relations and Microsoft for making our Christmas a little more merry." Reported Terry Kaplow, public relations manager for Queen of Angels School, "Students will have access to technology more readily." The applications were judged on originality of the entry, uniqueness of need and the potential to benefit the school and the community.

In the grant application, Lehman wrote, "We are in desperate need of newer computers and software to help our students, especially in math and language arts. This prize would help us start to build more reliable workstations for use in all of our classes. Our current desktops and other hardware items were used when we got them for our one and only lab and we have had them for about eight years.

Lehman added in the application, "We have several IEP students who use the Internet to help them with their remediation needs, but our systems are so slow, they aren’t always able to accomplish everything they need. Plus I have one girl who is legally blind and we could use new items to help her out so she can actually participate and keep up with the whole class, as she has a hard time seeing the screen and the keyboard."

Queen of Angels School serves 240 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 8.

Correction

Taya Ashley and Brendan Price submitted the story about Bishop Rhoades’ visit to Ball State University. The attribution incorrectly listed their names.

**BISHOP RHOADES CELEBRATES MASS WITH RETIRED PRIESTS**

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades celebrated Mass Dec. 10 at Saint Anne Home and Retirement Community in Fort Wayne with retired priests who live in the Fort Wayne area and residents. In the homily, Bishop Rhoades said, “My brothers and sisters, the season of Advent encourages all of us in joyous hope that God has come to bring us salvation. In Advent, we prepare anew for the coming of the Lord. We still need a Savior. The world needs a Savior. Those who are spiritually blind or deaf or mute or lame need the saving power of God.” In the photo are, seated from left, Father Paul Miller and Father Lawrence Kramer; and standing, from left: Father Kenneth Sarrazine, Father Adam Schmitt, Bishop Rhoades, Father Laurence Tippmann, Father Robert Traub, Saint Anne Chaplain Father Jack Overmyer and Father Paul Bueter.

**MARIAN HIGH SCHOOL HOSTS WORKSHOP AT CENTER FOR THE HOMELESS**

The Marian High School Art Club sponsored the school’s 15th annual Santa’s Workshop at the Center for the Homeless in South Bend on Dec. 6 with about 75 students from Marian High School and several faculty and staff members. Guests were able to make Christmas gifts for their loved ones at various craft tables. Three Marian students Bridget VerVaet, Maggie Feighery and Adriana Bermudez staffed a gift-wrapping station at the event.
Annette Roman’s second-grade class from St. Adalbert School rehearses the retelling of the Nativity story for the upcoming Christmas School Mass on Dec. 20.

The importance of the Las Posadas celebration, "Las Posadas strengthens the St. Adalbert community because it is a project of the parents in connection with the school and it is intended to benefit the students, who are primarily (98 percent) Latino, and pass on the time honored tradition of Las Posadas here in the United States," he explains.

Carrier adds, "The integration of ethnic cultural tradition with Catholic religious tradition is a true strength of the universal Church and is a priority at St. Adalbert Catholic School.

### ECHO program being ‘heard’ in diocese

**BY VINCÉ LABARRERA**

"Being a teen in today’s world isn’t easy. Neither is being a parent. When you put the two together, it usually means a lot less time with friends and a harder time keeping up with school requirements and a lot more responsibility," states a brochure from Catholic Charities, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. "Most pregnant and parenting teenagers need extra support," reads a subhead in the brochure.

That "support" is being provided through a Catholic Charities program called ECHO (Education Creates Hope and Opportunity). This school- and home-based program provides guidance and resources to pregnant and parenting teens, enabling them to complete their high-school education and successfully parent their children. Catholic Charities serves a total of 14 Indiana counties; however, the ECHO program currently is only available in Allen and St. Joseph counties.

"The program has been in existence in the Fort Wayne area since May 1998," said Tosha Gearhart, family services supervisor for Catholic Charities. Along with Natalie Corazzi, ECHO program case manager, the two young ladies are prepared to administer the program in about a dozen schools in Allen County. In addition, ECHO has expanded, offering support for 18- to 24-year-old parents attending college at IPFW (Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne) or who are enrolled in any Allen County continuing education or job-training program.

"This school year we’ve served 67 clients in four schools in Allen County," said Gearhart. "All eight students eligible to graduate from high school did graduate," she emphasized.

Since July 2011, Kwajalein Reed, ECHO program case manager, South Bend, provides services to the South Bend School Corporation, which includes approximately 25 elementary, middle and secondary schools. She also reaches out to IUSB (Indiana University South Bend), ITC and other area colleges and continuing education programs, estimating at one time last year she was serving about 30 clients.

Reed said she has had 12 referrals since last July, including three students at IUSB, one from Ivy Tech and one from a vocational program. "Our focus is on schooling, earning that high-school diploma," she said. "We also provide information about adoption, which works out well since Tosha works with adoptions. Sometimes we also accompany a client on their prenatal and well-baby visits," said Corazzi, who often spends several hours in a doctor’s office with a student.

The program is free; strictly voluntary and parental consent is required for students under 18 years of age. This year, in fact, ECHO services were provided to two 13-year-olds in Fort Wayne.

Originally from Huntington, Gearhart is observing one year with Catholic Charities this December. She earned a bachelor’s degree in social work from the University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne, and received her master’s degree in social work from IUPUI (Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis).

Corazzi is a native of Fort Wayne and also has worked at Catholic Charities for a year after completing a one-year internship. She received a bachelor’s degree in human services from IPFW.

Reed is from the Chicago area and has been employed at Catholic Charities in South Bend since July 2011. She completed requirements for a bachelor’s degree in general studies at Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, and earned a master’s degree in psychology from Capella University, Minneapolis.

"Our jobs make us feel good and we enjoy the work we do," Gearhart, Corazzi and Reed all emphasized. For next year plans already are underway to add a full-time employee, one part-time worker and an intern to the Fort Wayne ECHO staff. In South Bend, an intern from Saint Mary’s College currently works with Reed in the ECHO program.
Your Faith & Girl Scouts

The new Girl Scouts My Promise, My Faith pin invites girls in grades K-12 to experience a faith journey through exploration of the Girl Scout Law and teachings from their faith. Adult volunteers partner with Catholic girls by guiding them through a personal faith journey and linking the national pin with the Catholic religious recognitions.

For more information, please contact:
Teena Weathersby-Hampton
Director of Mission Delivery
800.283.4812 ext. 132

girl scouts of northern indiana michiana
Catholic Charities Christmas programs support seniors and families in need

BY LISA KOCHANOWSKI

SOUTH BEND — “An 11-year-old girl with a birthday just before Christmas had never celebrated with a party or gifts due to her family’s financial situation. Thanks to a generous sponsor, she was able to celebrate her birthday for the first time with a cake and gifts (a pair of roller skates and a doll). The sponsor also provided Christmas gifts for her,” recalled Claire Coleman, West Region Administrator of Catholic Charities about a memorable moment during the Christmas program.

Each year, Catholic Charities holds a Christmas program where they seek individuals, families, businesses and other organizations to share their good fortune with the less fortunate by serving as family or contributing sponsors.

Family sponsors provide toys and clothing for specific families based upon a list of suggestions provided by Catholic Charities. Contributing sponsors provide gift cards or monetary support, which is then pooled together to supply food and satisfy the other needs of families enrolled in the Christmas Program.

According to Coleman, Catholic Charities has two Christmas projects: one for families with children under age 12 and one for seniors.

“The goal of the Family Christmas Program is to provide holiday comfort and hope to families in need, especially for young children who still believe in Santa Claus,” said Coleman.

The Family Program gives current agency clients of other programs who are especially in need, a chance to be recommended for the Christmas Program by staff or families who are able to add their own names to a waiting list.

Coleman said there are two ways that people in the community can help Catholic Charities with its Christmas Program: 1) families can serve as a contributing sponsor by providing monetary assistance or by donating items, such as new clothing or toys, or 2) donors can elect to serve as a sponsor for a specific family in need. Sponsors purchase items on a list provided and bring the gifts to Catholic Charities.

Some sponsors also choose to provide gift certificates for food or personal care items. Some sponsors also make the kind gesture to include wrapping paper so the parent of the children can feel like they participated in the gift giving by wrapping the gifts even if they could not afford to make the purchases themselves.

“The goal of the senior Christmas Program is to let seniors who may be alone at the holidays and may not celebrate Christmas, know that they are in our thoughts and prayers and not forgotten,” said Coleman.

For the senior Christmas Program, clients of other Catholic Charities programs who are especially in need may be recommended by a staff person or seniors may ask to have their name added to the waiting list.

Coleman said the senior Christmas Program provides a package of food beyond the normal food pantry service and personal care items. They usually try to include special items like coffee as well as one or two small gifts.

Members of the community who would like to help with this program can make monetary donations or donate items to be included in the packages. Some of the items that are appreciated include gloves and hats, stockings, homemade food items, books and slippers.

“A senior who had previously visited the food pantry was recommended for our Christmas Program and when he came to pick up his Christmas package, we learned that although he was living on a very limited income, he had given shelter to his granddaughter and her children,” recalled Coleman. “Fortunately, a contributing sponsor had brought in a few toys the day before providence and we were able to assist the family.”

Monetary donations can be mailed or dropped off at 1817 Miami St., South Bend, IN 46613. Contributing sponsors can drop off material donations in any quantity at the Miami Street location Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. or Friday 8 a.m. until noon. For more information or to sponsor a specific family in need contact Barbara Burlingham at (574) 234-5111.

Inclusion: Lives changed by gifts exchanged

BY DEB WAGNER

FORT WAYNE — The “Community of Christ” at St. Vincent de Paul School has been living the words of St. Francis of Assisi, “For it is in giving that we receive,” all year long for the last four-and-a-half years thanks to student Cash Reuille, who happens to have Down syndrome. Cash, a fifth grader this year, has been in an inclusion program at St. Vincent School since first grade.

Many gifts such as love, patience, forgiveness and acceptance have been exchanged between him and peers of his age.

Missy Reuille, Cash’s mother, conveys, “My heart is filled with such joy that Cash has been given the gift of a Catholic education even though he has different abilities. Who would have thought 11 years ago when he was born, that he would be included in a great school and receive his first Reconciliation and first Holy Communion with his classmates. Cash beams with joy each time after going to Confession and receiving the Body of Christ!”

She says, “Every time a rough patch occurred, God always sent a light to guide our way. I am so thankful for all the supportive parents, teachers, administrators and of course, his peers, his friends.”

It is hard to explain how having a special needs child involved in a Catholic school setting and a member of the parish family can touch so many lives, and tear down walls. Reuille believes, “Disability is a perception and children seem to be so flexible and accepting in general, so they are constantly teaching the adults valuable life changing lessons.”

Fifth-grade friend Catie Hamrick recently said, “When I first saw him in first grade, I wasn’t sure about him. I didn’t understand why he looked different. I was a little afraid. I had never met anyone with Down syndrome before. The teacher read books and we talked about how God makes each of us unique. Then, I guess I thought of him as just another kid in the class. I was really happy when he asked us to go to the Buddy Walk. I didn’t know that there were so many kids with special needs like Cash! I am happy to know Cash and be his friend.”

A good friend, Rachel Strzelecki, says, “Teachers would sit Cash and me next to each other because they knew I enjoyed helping him. Cash has changed my life because I would never know how great it was to help others. I hope we will be in class together next year and that we will continue to be good friends for a long time. When I grow up, I think and it wasn’t until we got older that we did learn how special these kids are! How awesome it is to teach our kids at a young age that kids with special needs are just like you and me. And, how much they teach us about the way simple life is...just love everyone without judging!”

Cash Reuille prepares for first Holy Communion.

Rachel Strzelecki echo the appreciation of many lives, and tear down walls. They see that children and adults at St. Vincent’s are born of many grades, and their families have been very supportive and accepting of Cash. The only disability in life is the bad attitude affects and means everything when it comes to everyday life activities. So, the children and adults at St. Vincent that have opened their hearts and befriended Cash are helping tear down walls. They see that children with different abilities, like Cash, are more alike than different.”

Children with special needs who are included in regular education programs make so many more gains than if they were placed in a self-contained special education class with special needs peers. The gains are reciprocal for their peers without disabilities, the less lessons the peers without disabilities learn are as important as the lessons a child with special needs learns.

Catholic school students are more diverse and more children with mild to moderate special needs. As Mary Lynn Harrick, Catie’s mother says, “More than 90 percent of babies with Down syndrome are aborted. Because of our faith’s pro-life message, many of the babies that survive are born into Catholic families. Children with special needs are gifts from God. These children are a gift to us for a reason and it is dependent upon us to find out what that is. If these children are absent from our schools, our children miss out on the unique opportunity to learn from these special kids about how to be more patient, more tolerant and more appreciative of their own God-given abilities.”

This IS where the giving and receiving begins.
December 23, 2012

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THE APOSTLES’ CREED

FATHER DANIEL SCHEIDT

human intentionality and action are without consequence vis-à-vis God. We can, so to speak, “do whatever the hell we want.” In our practical situation, Satan falsely assured us, we can possess the autonomy of gods in this life and the sentimental delusion that whatever transcendent remainder there may be, for us beyond this life is not our responsibility: “The serpent tricked me!” (cf. Genesis 3). By the end of Sacred Scripture, in the Book of Revelation, the sly Devil says: “I believe in the forgiveness of sins”

God alone is the answer

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MSGR. OWEN F. CAMPION

THE GOSPEL

4th Sunday in Advent
Lk 1:39-45

The Book of Micah is the source of the first reading for this fourth and last Sunday of Advent.

This book’s author was a contemporary of Isaiah. Little is known about him. It is known that he came from a small community about 25 miles southwest of Jerusalem.

As in the cases of the other prophets, Micah felt the obligation to denounce the disobedience to God that he saw all around him. Also in the cases of the other prophets, he devoutly believed that he spoke not just on his own authority, but also more importantly as the spokesman for God.

In this weekend’s reading, Micah predicts that the savior of Israel will come from Bethlehem. David, the great king of Israel who established a personal covenant with God and whose kingship had as its chief purpose the guidance of the people in the ways of God, was from Bethlehem.

This new savior will “shepherd” his people, a term reminiscent of David himself, a shepherd. This savior’s majesty will shine to the ends of the earth. He will be the savior of all humankind.

For the second reading this Advent weekend, the Church presents the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Hebrews is distinctive in part because of its strong reliance upon ancient Hebrew symbols. This reading certainly is in keeping with this characteristic. Highlighted is the ritual sacrifice, the heart of the ancient Jewish religion.

The other central characteristic of this writing is its developed and eloquent Christology. Its message about the Lord, the Lamb of God, the Redeemer, is profound. This characteristic also is abundantly clear in this weekend’s reading. St. Luke’s Gospel supplies the Gospel reading. It is the account of the familiar story of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth. As the story makes clear, Mary already is expecting the birth of Jesus. He has already conceived.

This reading identifies Christ. Elizabeth and Zachary were very special people. They were becoming parents because of God’s direct intervention in their lives. They were holy people. Their unborn child would be the great forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist.

That these holy people recognized Mary as the mother of the unborn Redeemer and testified that Mary’s child was the savior long promised.

The reading also reveals the great longing for God, coming to humanity in the person of Jesus. Ages had come and gone. Nothing else had satisfied this longing. God alone would satisfy the longing by sending Jesus.

Reflection

Elizabeth and Zachary, mentioned in this weekend’s Gospel reading, were persons of deep faith. They were supernaturally privileged. They had pondered life. They understood the greatness, and certainly the reality, of God. Yet, as in the lives of all human beings, a vacuum was present. In their wisdom, a wisdom derived from holiness, they realized that only a knowledge of, and union with, God could fill this vacuum.

So, Elizabeth rejoiced when she saw Mary. She rejoiced because she knew Mary was bearing the unborn Redeemer, the Lord who would bring God’s presence and peace to the world. Hebrews proclaims the majesty of this Lord. Micah predicted not only the Lord’s eventual coming, but Micah identified the need for God, a need sensed by Elizabeth.

In only a few days the Church will celebrate the birth of Jesus. His birth occurred at a given time in a given place. Advent points us toward the celebration of this birth. It also reminds us that we await not an annunciation, but hopefully more importantly a renewal of God’s presence with us, through Jesus. In Advent, have we recognized the vacuum of living without God? In Advent, have we sought to fill the vacuum, knowing that God alone is the answer?

Jesus the Lord, the son of Mary, is the Son of God.

The dating of Christmas

As we approach the Solemnity of the Nativity of our Lord, periodicals both secular and religious attempt the task of explaining how it became that Christmas landed on the 25th of December. It is a story that intertwines many historical events, which have been sufficiently debunked, to continue to persist in popular myth. Such is the case with the dating of Christmas. This popular myth is that the date was a Christian response to a pagan Roman festival honoring Mithras, the “unconquered sun god.”

In his book “The Spirit of the Liturgy,” Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger argues against this myth and instead demonstrates that the date is determined by events in the life of Christ. The new savior comes from the Risen Christ, who through the death and resurrection comes to humanity in the person of Christmas.

The universe itself bears witness to the truth of our words. Up to this day (Dec. 25, the approximate date of the winter solstice) the dark days increase, but from this day the darkness decreases. . . . The light advances, while the night retreats.

St. Jerome also came out in support of these ideas: “Even create reveals the plan of our preaching.”

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St. Thomas Aquinas, quoting a contemporary of Isaiah, states that a prophecy is fulfilled on Dec. 25, but rather with March 25. The African ecclesiastical author Tertullian (c. 150-207) discussed a well-known tradition that Christ suffered death on March 25, a day that was also associated with the creation of the world. March 25 was taken as the spring equinox (which we now know to be off by a few days), and hence the date after which light definitively conquers darkness. For the same reason, March 25 was also taken as the day of the New Creation (the Incarnation or Annunciation) as well as Christ’s Passion. In each of these events, there is an element of light overcoming darkness.

Therefore, the key date is March 25. It is from this historical development, and that of the Mithras myth, that Christ’s birth is dated Dec. 25. The dating of the Annunciation comes first. Christmas is subsequently placed nine months after March 25.

St. Thomas Aquinas, quoting a fifth century source, reiterates the dates of both March 25 and Dec. 25, as well as their cosmic significance. Aquinas points to Scripture’s placing of the Annunciation in the sixth month of John the Baptist’s conception. He understands the “sixth month” to be March, with the day being the 25th. Like Tertullian, he then places Christmas as the 25th of December, a week later, on the 25th of December.

The former occurs on the vernal equinox, the latter on the winter solstice. On the vernal equinox, the light overtakes the darkness, a cosmic event that reflects the Incarnation. On the winter solstice, we encounter the height of darkness and the moment when light turns from a period of decrease to a period of increase. This too is fully appropriate for the birth of the savior, who lightens the world and all of humanity.

Sainthood of the Week

Lazarus

first century

December 17, July 29

The Gospels describe Lazarus of Bethany, and his sisters Mary and Martha, as friends and disciples of Jesus. Lazarus was raised from the dead by Jesus, and he was at a banquet for Jesus just days before the Crucifixion. But Lazarus also figured in one of many popular pre-

GUEST COMMENTARY

JAKE TAWNEY

is a husband and father of the out. He and his famil- er round insights in his magnificent work: “The Spirit of the Liturgy.” Certainly the text would provide a valuable Christmas reflection.

Jake Tawney is a husband and father of two. He and his family are members of St. Mary in Delaware, Ohio. In his spare time, he writes for the website Roma Locuta Est.
Taboos and tattoos

On TV these days, we’re seeing more and more programs about “body art” and tattoo design. Despite the apparent widespread acceptance of the practice, there are several problems with tattooing that go beyond the sanitary issues, disease transmission and unclean inking needles that can be found in second-rate tattoo parlors.

Tattoos, as some who have gotten them have recognized, have negative associations. An article in the *Dallas Morning News* a few years ago chronicled the story of a young man named Jesus Mendoza, who was “going to great lengths to remove the six tattoos that hint at his erstwhile gang involvement... He feels branded. ‘It’s the stereotyping,’” he said. “The question is: What do you think when you see a young Hispanic male with tattoos? You’re going to think gangs. And I think that, too, now...”

Similar branding concerns were raised in a recent column by David Whitley about San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick, whose arms and back are full of tattoos. “NFL quarterback is the ultimate position of influence and responsibility,” he wrote. “He is the CEO of a high-profile organization, and you don’t want your CEO to look like he just got paroled.”

That branding communicates a message that can make life more difficult for those who have tattoos. It should come as no surprise that employers often associate tattooed workers with “reduced productivity” and may show a preference for un tattooed employees in hiring or promotions.

Even for the vast majority of tattoo recipients who have no connection with gangs or an indolent lifestyle, a psychological issue is raised by the way they seem to serve as marks of vanity. Placing tattoos in positions where they can hardly be missed — on the neck, the forearm or even the face — can play into a disordered desire to be flamboyant, disruptive and self-seeking with their bodily image. One young woman, tattooed with the image of a fairy having “stylized butterfly wings, in a spray of pussy willow” expressed her sentiments this way: “I am a shameless exhibitionist and truly love having unique marks on my body.”

These questions about vanity lead to similar concerns about modesty. Modesty in its essential meaning involves the decision to not draw undue attention to ourselves. Tattoos and body piercings most definitely draw attention, and often may be desired for precisely these immorbid reasons. We ought to dress modestly, in part, to prevent others from being attracted to us out of a mere “focus on body parts.” One aspect of dressing modestly is to make sure everything needing to be covered is, in fact, adequately covered. Placing tattoos in unusual positions on the body may tempt us to dress immodestly so as to assure that the tattoo is visible and exposed for general viewing, in the same way that elective breast augmentation may tempt some women to lower their necklines.

Tattoos, chosen as a permanent change to one’s own body, may also suggest issues with psychological self-acceptance. One young woman wanting to get a tattoo expressed her desire to look “edgier,” after concluding that she was just too “squeaky-clean” looking.

The simple beauty of the human body constitutes a real good and that basic goodness ought to be reasonably safeguarded. Permanent, radical changes to the human body can indeed signal an unwillingness to accept its fundamental goodness, and in certain cases of very radical tattooing and body piercing, one can even discern a subtle form of self-rejection and self-mutilation. There is a virtual dimension involved as well. Russell Griggaitis, who now regrets getting several tattoos in his 20’s, argues in a *National Catholic Register* interview, “I created the body. A tattoo is like putting graffiti on a work of art.” He compares it with trying to improve a painting by Michelangelo.

Some argue that there can be good spiritual reasons for getting tattoos. For example, people have gotten crosses or an image of Jesus tattooed as a sign of permanent commitment to Christ, or a ring or a spouse’s name tattooed as a sign of their marital commitment. Yet isn’t there a personal commitment to Christ or to one’s spouse more effectively manifested through the realities of inner virtue and a life of outward generosity than by a tattoo? It’s unsurprising that many who got tattoos in their younger days have grown to regret it later.

Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D., 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.

CREED

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

serpent has grown into a vicious dragon; the Tempter of Genesis has become the Accuser of the Apocalypse (cf. Revelation 12). The diabolic logic that once tried to persuade us that evil is good and the good is ambiguous now argues that the good is impossible and that we are irreconcilably identified with and reduced to our sins and failures. Moreover, we are forever tormented by the insatiable thirst for vengeance for the evil — real or imagined — that others have done to us. In sum, our exile from perfection and happiness is permanent, and our only remaining horizon is despair.

To believe in the forgiveness of sins is to confess with the sanction of our divine Advocate, the Holy Spirit, that “now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, for the Accuser of our brothers is cast out, who night and day accuses them before our God” (Rev. 12:10).

The gates of hell will never prevail against the Church, because the efficacious prayer of Jesus on the Cross (“Father, forgive them...”) [Lk 23:34] is made present in the sacramental life of the Church until the end of time. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the keys of the Kingdom given to St. Peter are fitted to open the sinner’s locked heart. In the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, the Divine Physician heals sin’s wounds, even to vanishing the medicine of immortality. And in the Sacrifice of the Mass, we behold the medicine of immortality. And in the Sacrifice of the Mass, we behold and receive the Eucharistic “Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world” (cf. Jn 1:36).

Through the Church’s sacramental life, God gives us the virtue of hope as the antidote to both presumption and despair. Thus in hope’s boundless confidence in the power of God’s goodness, we can believe in the infallibility of the love of Christ in the forgiveness of sins.

Father Daniel Scheidt is the pastor of Queen of Peace Parish in Mishawaka.


Sports

St. Vincent CYO boys off to outstanding start

BY MICHELLE CASTLEMAN

FORT WAYNE — The seventh grade boys from St. Vincent are off to an outstanding start this season with a 6-2 record to date. Coach Dale Curry reports that his team is averaging an impressive 45 points per game and 26.7 rebounds.

Their most recent victory came on Saturday, Dec. 15, against Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) conference foe St. Joseph, Decatur. They have also posted wins over Canterbury, Woodside, Antwerp, Queen of Angels, Imagine, St. John the Baptist, Fort Wayne, and Angola.

John Henry Reith leads the scoring for the Panthers averaging just over 9 points a game while Tommy Steele is tops in rebounds.

Looking ahead, Curry details, “It is still early in the season and our team is playing with some inconsistency so we have plenty to work on. We are fortunate to have 12 talented players, and everyone is working hard to improve.”

The eighth-grade boys from Queen of Angels had a tough conference loss to St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel over the weekend, but turned around and had a big 51-29 win in the final game of pool play over Emmanuel St. Michael Lutheran on Sunday at the St. John the Baptist, New Haven, holiday tournament.

Jacob Jacquay had a trey in each quarter of the game for 12 points to lead the scoring for the Royals.

Coaches Chris and Lisa Kinney have been with the group since fifth grade and have a goal for 2012-2013 to post their first winning season. With 11 boys on the roster, the team features two players over six feet and a strong inside game.

USF BASKETBALL TEAMS RISE IN NAIA RANKINGS

The University of Saint Francis men’s and women’s basketball teams continue to climb in the NAIA rankings. The University of Saint Francis women’s basketball team moved up one spot to No. 8 in this week’s NAIA DI Coaches’ Top 25 and is one of three 10-0 teams. This is the highest USF has been ranked since the 2011-12 Preseason Top 25 when the Lady Cougars started at No. 7. The USF men’s team rises six spots to 16th from 22nd after 3-0 week — USF’s highest rank since tied for 13th in 2011-12 Preseason Top 25 poll.

Final weekend of ICCL action does not disappoint

BY MATT SOBIERALSKI

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY — The final weekend of the ICCL regular season is officially in the books for 2012 after this past weekend’s games. It did not disappoint as teams began to separate themselves from the rest. Action was played at Marian High School and Saint Joseph High School.

One of the closer games of the day was played at Marian High School’s gym and it saw the Cougars of Corpus Christi hold on, 40-37, in a grind-it-out game against the Queen of Peace Purma’s. The winners were led by Alex Francouer and Marty Kennedy who each scored 10 points. The Purma’s Michael Denison led all scorers in the contest with 14 points, while Luke Kasnia also chipped in 10 points in the effort. The Cougars improved to 2-2.

Another close game at Marian’s gym saw the St. Thomas Spartans hold off the orange-and-black clad St. Matthew Blazers’ squad, 40-32. Gunnar Sadawey led all scorers in the contest with an outstanding 21-points point effort. St. Thomas improved its record to 2-0, while the Blazers dropped their first game of the season.

The Holy Cross Crusaders improved their record to 2-1 after a victory over the Falcons from Hessen Cassel over the weekend, 51-29 win in the final game of pool play over Emmanuel St. Michael Lutheran on Sunday, St. John the Baptist, New Haven, holiday tournament.

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Coaches Chris and Lisa Kinney have been with the group since fifth grade and have a goal for 2012-2013 to post their first winning season. With 11 boys on the roster, the team features two players over six feet and a strong inside game.
**BUTKUS MAKES BIG HIT AT LUERS**

Rose Bowl champion and Chicago Bears legendary line-backer Dick Butkus brought excitement and a unique recognition for Matt Butkus, the son of Dick Butkus. In the photo, from left, are Dick Butkus, Jayon Smith and Bears fans were among those present for the presentation.

St. Monica Parish

222 West Mishawaka Avenue - Mishawaka

Christmas Mass Schedule

Monday, December 24

4:30 pm and 10:00 pm

(Choir will be casing beginning at 9:30 pm)

Tuesday, December 25

10:00 am

Solemnity of Mary

Monday, December 31 - 4:30 pm

Tuesday, January 1 - 10:00 am

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**ICCL – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13**

St. Jude, 36-22. Elliot Zyniewicz led the Crusaders’ charge with 12-points.

At Saint Joseph High School, close games would stay the theme of the day as the Saints from Mishawaka Catholic would improve to 2-1 after they knocked off the St. Joseph, South Bend, Eagles, 39-35. Alex Horvath led the Saints with 18-points, while the Eagles were led by Andrew Burgess’ 17-points and Sorin Horvath’s 10-points.

The maroon-and-gold clad Panthers of St. Anthony held off a feisty Our Lady of Hungary Bulldogs squad, 43-38. Davante Newhill threw in 15-points for the Bulldogs, while the winners were led by Tyler Bickel’s 16-points.

The St. Pius X Lions roared past the mighty Kings from Christ the King, 58-30. The Kings balanced scoring attack was not enough to knock off the Lions. The Lions were led by Tony Carmona’s 18-points, while Walter Ellis chipped in 11 points.

For more information on holiday tournament brackets and schedules visit www.ICCLsports.org.
WHAT’S HAPPENING?

WHAT’S HAPPENING carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. Send in your announcement at least two weeks prior to the event. Mail to: Today’s Catholic, P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne 46856; or email: f Hogan@diocesefwsb.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.

Trivia night
South Bend — A trivia night will be held Saturday, Jan. 12, at 7 p.m. at St. Therese. Little Flower Parish. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and cost is $80 per team of eight. Prize for best movie theme table. Cash bar will be available. Call Tammy at (269) 684-3334 or ttg2@sbcglobal.net for information or to reserve a table.

Little Flower Holy Hour
Fort Wayne — Father David Voors will celebrate the Little Flower Holy Hour at St. Mother Theodore Guérin Chapel on Tuesday, Jan. 8, at 7 p.m. to pray for priests and vocations.

Knights plan fish fry
Fort Wayne — The Knights of Columbus Council 451, 601 Reed Rd., will have a fish fry on Friday, Jan. 4, from 5-7 p.m. Tickets are $8 for adults and $4 for children 12 and under.

Square Dances
New Haven — St. Louis Besancon, 15535 Lincoln Hwy E., will have square dances Saturday, Jan. 12, Feb. 9 and March 9 in the hall. Doors open at 7:30 p.m., music by Breakaway until 11 p.m. Tickets are $10 per person and include one drink and snacks. Proceeds benefit St. Louis Academy.

Overnight retreat for young adults
South Bend — Young adults in their 20s and 30s, single and married are invited to a retreat Saturday-Sunday, Jan. 12-13, at the Sacred Heart Parish Center. The theme is “You are my Beloved.” Activities include talks given by young adults, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, reconciliation, praise and worship music, coffee house social with live music and Mass on both days. Register online by Jan. 7. Visit www.diocesefwsb.org for information or to register.

Fort Wayne — Donald R. Huth, 72, St. Charles Borromeo Linda Sue Bailey, 62, Most Precious Blood Robert G. Kimes, 88, St. Patrick

South Bend — St. Louis Besancon, 86, St. Vincent de Paul

Monroeville — Harold R. Blauvelt, 88, St. Rose

Notre Dame — Father Matthew M. Miceli, CSC, 89, Basilica of the Sacred Heart

REST IN PEACE

Bristol
Paula S. Seegers, 72, St. Mary of the Annunciation

Decatur
Georgianna C. Converset-Bowers, 95, St. Mary of the Assumption

Elkhart
Chester L. Skwarcan, 86, St. Vincent de Paul

Fort Wayne
Donald R. Huth, 72, St. Charles Borromeo Linda Sue Bailey, 62, Most Precious Blood Robert G. Kimes, 88, St. Patrick

Huntington
Suzanne J. Schenkel, 85, Sts. Peter and Paul

Mishawaka
Helen Esarey, 80, St. Bavo

Harold Lloyd Meeks, 84, Queen of Peace Roman S. Sims, 79, St. Monica Ruth Irene Kopetski, 94, St. Bavo

Monroeville
Harold R. Blauvelt, 88, St. Rose

Notre Dame
Father Matthew M. Miceli, CSC, 89, Basilica of the Sacred Heart

Joe prescriptions
Joseph Leo Harlow, 90, Basilica of the Sacred Heart Roanoke
Veronica Ocken Hoover, 45, St. Joseph South Bend
Bernice M. Edwards, 87, St. Patrick Alma Simonetti Keith, 85, Christ the King Delores R. Neary, 80, Christ the King Beulah L. Patnaude, 87, Holy Family

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*Excludes Fontanini

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You are cordially invited to attend the University of Saint Francis Servus Omnium lecture:

"From Career to Calling: The Vocation of the Christian Business Leader"

Tuesday, February 12, 2013 USF Performing Arts Center 431 W. Berry Street, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Hear Dr. Michael Naughton, director of the John A. Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. discuss the spiritual aspect of Christian business leadership.

SCHEDULE
Blessing and opening prayer, 7 a.m. Mardi Gras breakfast buffet, 7:30 a.m. Speaker, Q&A, 7:45-8:45 a.m.

Tickets $10 in advance at servusomnium.eventbrite.com or $15 at the door. Tables of eight reserved for $80.
Parking across Berry Street.
For information, contact Dr. Lance Richey, lrichey@sf.edu or 260-399-8112.
Two Christmas Stories
112 Years Apart
Dr. Anthony F. Laviano

He rang the doorbell. It sounded his last stop. He arrived. It had been a long, cold, lonely, exhausting trip. When he started out a winter snowstorm was on the horizon and approaching at full force. Not deterred, he was determined to begin his journey. He needed to fulfill Her request.

On Dec. 20, 1896, with luggage in hand at the Superior, Wis., depot he boarded the 11 p.m. train heading Southwest to St. Paul then taking him Eastward across Wisconsin to Milwaukee. The snowstorm was intense. The train slowed to a crawl having to plow its way through snowdrifts. Arriving in Milwaukee he stopped to visit the Capuchin seminary of St. Francis two miles from the depot. The following day he boarded the train to Chicago and upon arrival changed trains to Detroit. Heavy snow slowed the last leg of the train trip to 12 miles an hour. From the Detroit station he took the street car to 1740 Mt. Elliot St., St. Bonaventure Monastery. He arrived well after dusk and rang the door bell. It was now Dec. 24, Christmas Eve. 

With anticipation he waited for the door to open. He knew that when he stepped through the doorway he would have completed Our Lady’s desire. She related it to him on Dec. 8, 1896, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the last day of his novena asking guidance of the Blessed Mother. “Go to Detroit,” She impressed upon him. Bernard Francis Casey had completed his initial step to becoming a Capuchin Friar. The Capuchins at St. Bonaventure were expecting him. He was warmly welcomed by the porter who led him to a chair within the entrance. Unknown to him, such a station in life would be his and such entrances would one day become his office. The porter soon reappeared with Father Casimir, the superior, and Father Gabriel Messmer, his future novice master. They suggested that he have something to eat but his exhaustion satisfied his appetite. He wanted to sleep. They led him up the stairs to his room behind a wood latch door. Soon he was fast asleep on the narrow iron bed. A one-drawer wooden desk with a straight back wooden chair, the only furnishings, kept watch. Light from the Christmas Eve sky coming through the one window blanked the ascetic 9x12 room with restful comfort. He had only been asleep an hour when the traditional procession before Midnight Mass began along the monastery corridors. He was awakened by bells and acapella singing scented with incense. The voices were singing Christmas carols in Latin and German. Listening, he could hear Friars joining the carolers. Approaching his door he joined them. The procession moved into the chapel. His heart was uplifted and “Silent Night” echoed in his ears.

Father Solanus often told the story of his first Capuchin Christmas and how he felt a flood of happiness during the Midnight Mass. The words in the Last Gospel of the Latin Mass that Christmas remained a Christmas crèche etched in the soul of Father Solanus Casey.

“Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht!
Alles schläft; eisam wacht
Nur das traute heilige Paar,
Holder Knab im lockigten Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!”

My Christmas story is a simpler one but heartfelt. It took place 112 years later. It is told in an unnoted footnote in the unpublished portfolio of Solanus miracles.

“A Ferverino for the Beatification of Solanus Casey
Mary, our mother, we ask you to intercede for us before your son, as you did at the wedding at Cana, that the beatification of the Venerable Solanus Casey may be brought about.

We pray that through your intercession the Holy Spirit will bring his beatification about at this time so that we may be strengthened in our faith and filled with gratitude to God.Hail Mary...Glory be...