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“Nativity at Night” by Italian Baroque painter Guido Reni depicts the birth of Christ in a Bethlehem manger. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated Dec. 25.
Joy to the world

IN TRUTH AND CHARITY

BY BISHOP KEVIN C. RHOADES

We are about to celebrate the joyful mystery of the Nativity of the Lord. God comes down among us, and we ascend to God. Christmas is the mystery of this marvelous exchange. In the Liturgy of the Hours, we read:

O marvelous exchange! Man’s Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity. The Church invites us to rejoice on the feast of Our Saviour’s birth. Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, a hallmark of the Christian life. Yet, we know that with life’s problems and challenges, it is not always easy to live in joy. Christmas reminds us of the reason for our joy: the Lord is near; He saves us; He loves us.

The prophet Isaiah wrote long ago: “Rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for He has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of salvation.” That’s really the secret of true joy: it is “in God.” This is why one can have joy even in the midst of suffering. Just think of the Christian martyrs. In so many accounts, we read that, approaching death, they were joyful. That’s hard to grasp. But they had joy even in such horrible circumstances because of their knowledge that God was with them. They felt His love and tenderness. They trusted in their salvation.

Jesus prayed for our joy at the Last Supper. He prayed to the Father that His joy might be in His disciples and that their joy might be complete. We find the source of the joy in Jesus, our Savior, through prayer and charity. Even in the midst of trials and tribulations, we can know joy.

I pray that all may experience the joy of the Lord this Christmas. Pope Francis speaks often about how, as Christians, we are to be messengers of joy to the Gospel. In the world, there is often a lack of joy. Many seek pleasures that do not bring authentic joy. To be messengers of joy, we must first experience the joy of the Gospel in our own hearts. This comes about when we listen with faith and perseverance to the Word of God and when we allow ourselves to experience the love of God and His consolation in our life. Only then can we bring that joy to others.

Pope Francis teaches us about listening to the Lord in prayer and hearing Him say to each of us: “You are important to me; I love you; I am counting on you.” Joy is born from this encounter with Jesus and His love, especially through prayer.

Real joy, even in the midst of hardships, is the gift of knowing that we are loved, that Jesus is with us, not only that He came to save us 2,000 years ago, but that He saves us now. This is the true joy of Christmas. It is a joy that is deep and interior, that one can have even in the midst of life’s challenges: grief at the death of a loved one, a debilitating illness, poverty, homelessness, etc. I think a lot these days about our Christian brothers and sisters in Iraq who have lost their homes and belongings and are living as refugees. They refused to deny their faith in Christ. And even though they seem to have lost everything, they haven’t. They have not lost their greatest possession: Jesus and their faith in Him. And so they are able to smile in their suffering, to experience the joy of Christmas.

The prophet Isaiah wrote: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. In the midst of the horror of imprisonment by the Nazis and being taken to Auschwitz, Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) wrote: “The star of Bethlehem is a star in the darkness of night even today.” The joy of Christmas cannot be dispelled since the light of Christ cannot be extinguished by the darkness of evil and death if we live in His love.

The outdoor Nativity scene from 2012 is from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne. Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades writes in this week’s column, “The joy of Christmas cannot be dispelled since the light of Christ cannot be extinguished by the darkness of evil and death if we live in His love.”

The joy of God who comes as a tiny infant lying in a manger. May you all experience and share with others the true joy of Christmas!
Vatican City (CNS) — A massive, detailed Vatican-ordered investigation of U.S. communities of women religious concluded with a call to the women themselves to continue discerning how best to live the Gospel in fidelity to their orders’ founding ideals while facing steeply declining numbers and a rapidly aging membership.

Although initially seen by many religious and lay Catholics as a punitive measure, the apostolic visitation concluded with the publication Dec. 16 of a 5,000-word final report summarizing the problems and challenges the women themselves see in their communities and thinking them for their service to the Church and to society, especially the poor.

The visitation process, carried out between 2009 and 2012 with detailed questionnaires and on-site visits, mainly by other women religious, “sought to convey the caring support of the Church in respectful, sister-to-sister dialogue,” says the final report by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

The process attempted to help the Vatican “and the sisters themselves to be more cognizant of their current situation and challenges in order to formulate realistic, effective plans for the future,” said the report, signed by Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, prefect of the congregation for institutes.

In summarizing the results, the congregation called for special attention in several areas, including: formation programs for new members; the personal, liturgical and spiritual and pastoral preparation “for us,” the congregation writes, “we use this present opportunity to invite all religious institutes to accept our willingness to engage in responsible and fruitful dialogue with them.”

At a news conference presenting the report, the Vatican spokesman, Religious and Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman.

For religious life of the Church,” the visitation of the LCWR and the chairwoman of the smaller U.S. Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious to address the media. They were joined by Mother Mary Clare Millea, superior general of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the apostolic visitor appointed by the Vatican.

The congregation’s final report says that while apostolic visitations are “normal instrument of governance” designed to “assist the group in question to improve the way in which it carries out its mission in the life of the Church,” the visitation of U.S. women religious “was unprecedented” in many ways.

“It involved 341 religious institutes of both diocesan and pontifical right, to which approximately 50,000 women religious throughout the United States belong,” the report says. Only communities of choistered nuns were excluded.

While not news, the report presents statistics: “Today, the median age of apostolic women religious in the United States is in the mid- to late-70s. The current number of approximately 50,000 apostolic women religious is a decline of about 125,000 since the mid-1960s, when the numbers of religious in the United States had reached their peak.”

“The congregation’s report does not make specific recommendations other than urging the entire Church “to offer fervent prayer for religious vocations” and to ask religious communities to ensure they provide “a solid, theological, human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation” for religious life.

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Visit the Cathedral during this Season of Grace
Count down to Christmas by counting your blessings, pope says

BY CINDY WOODEN

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — No saint was ever known for having a “funeral face,” Pope Francis said; the joy of knowing one is loved by God and saved by Christ must be seen at least in a sense of peace, if not a smile.

Celebrating the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, Dec. 14, Pope Francis paid an evening visit to Rome’s St. Joseph Parish, meeting with the sick, with a group of Gypsies, with a first Communion class and with dozens of couples whose newborn babies were baptized in the past year.

“Be joyful as you prepare for Christmas,” he told them at Mass, urging as a first step that people thank God each day for the blessings they have been given.

A Christian’s Christmas joy has nothing to do with “the consumer-ism that leads to everyone being anxious Dec. 24 because, ‘Oh, I don’t have this, I need that’ — no, that is not God’s joy.”

With Christmas “less than 15 days away, no 13 days, let us pray. Don’t forget, we pray for Christmas joy. We give thanks to God for the many things He has given us and for faith, first of all.”

Earlier in the day, reciting the Angelus with visitors in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis blessed the statues of the Baby Jesus that will take center place in Nativity scenes in Rome schools, churches and homes. Addressing the children who brought their figurines to the square, the pope said, “When you pray in front of your creche at home, remember to pray for me, like I will remember you.”

At the end of the Angelus, volunteers distributed a little booklet, marked “gift of Pope Francis,” containing the texts of the Our Father and Hail Mary and other “traditional prayers,” as well as prayers drawn from the Psalms and the “five-finger prayers,” as well as prayers drawn from the Psalms and the “five-finger prayers.” Using the fingers on one hand, the prayer guides people in praying for those closest to them, for those who teach, for those who govern, for those who are weak and — on the pinkie or smallest finger — for one’s own humility.

“The human heart desires joy,” the pope said in his Angelus address. “We all want joy; every family, all peoples aspire to joy. But what kind of joy are Christians called to witness? It is that joy that comes from closeness to God and from His presence in our lives.”

“A Christian is one who has a heart full of peace because he or she knows how to find joy in the Lord even when going through difficult moments in life,” he said. “Having faith does not mean not having difficulties, but having the strength to face them knowing that we are not alone.”

When joy or at least peace shines through a person’s face, he said, others will wonder why, opening the possibility of sharing with them the Gospel.

With Christmas approaching, the pope said, “the Church invites us to give witness that Jesus is not just a historical figure; He is the Word of God who continues to illuminate people’s paths today; His gestures — the sacraments — show the tenderness, consolation of love of the Father for every human being.”

Dressed in rose vestments for the evening Mass at the parish on Rome’s western edge, Pope Francis explained that usually Advent vestments are a dark color, “but today they are rose because the joy of Christmas is blossoming.”

“The joy of Christmas is a special joy, a joy that is not only for Christmas Day, but for the entire life of a Christian,” he said.

Speaking without a prepared text, the pope said someone could say, “Oh, father, we make a big meal (at Christmas) and everyone is happy.’” This is beautiful. A big meal is good, but it is not the Christian joy we’re talking about.”

Christian joy, he said, “comes from prayer and from giving thanks to God.” It grows as one reviews all the blessings God has given.

“But there are people who do not know how to thank God; they always look for things to complain about,” the pope said. Speaking confidentially, he told parishioners that he used to know a nun who worked at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, who brought her figurines to the square.

“Her life was all about complaining,” he said. “Whiner.’ But a Christian can’t live that way, always looking for something to complain about!”

A man holds a figurine of the baby Jesus as Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican Dec. 14. The pope blessed figurines of the baby Jesus held by people in the square.

CNS PHOTO/Paul Haring

“...and many will rejoice at his birth...” Luke 1:14

Wishing you a Blessed Christmas

Mike Richardson

Financial Focus

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Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem supports the life of the Church in Holy Land

BY MATTHEW BUNSON

Catholics are sometimes surprised to see an unusual group of men and women in the processions at major diocesan events. The men wear white cloaks and black berets, and the women are dressed in black mantles and black chapel veils. Adorning the left shoulder of each cloak and mantle is a vivid red cross surrounded by four smaller crosses, the famed Jerusalem Cross. If the vesture looks medieval, there is a very good reason.

The men and women marching in procession are members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. They belong to a Catholic order of chivalry that stretches back more than 1,000 years and that today claims some 30,000 members worldwide in 35 different countries. The order has one chief purpose: To support the life of the Church in the Holy Land, especially the vital labors of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the diocese for Latin Christians that stretches across Israel, Jordan, the West Bank, Gaza and Cyprus. The order, however, is committed not merely to maintaining the Christian presence in the Holy Land but helping it to flourish.

Given the horrific news coming out of the Middle East in recent years, the task is a very urgent one. Where Christians once were the majority, today in the Holy Land they comprise only 2 to 4 percent of the population. Christians are leaving their homeland because of the seemingly endless violence and the lack of economic opportunity.

For the Knights and Ladies of the Equestrian Order, a Holy Land without Christians is unthinkable, but this is a scattering that must be resisted not with military force but with prayer, humble service and generous gifts of time, talent and treasure.

The origins of the order are traced to the First Crusade in 1099, when Christian knights under the respected leader Godfrey de Bouillon captured Jerusalem from the Muslims. Before his untimely death the next year, Godfrey recruited a group of knights noted for their bravery and honor and asked that they and their successors pledge themselves to obedience, poverty and the fearless defense of the Holy Sepulchre and the holy places.

Thanks to the individual chapters that had been formed across Europe, the order survived the fall of Jerusalem to Islamic armies in 1187 and the final death of the Crusader States in the Holy Land in 1291. Its members continued to live the ideals of chivalry, including protection of the weak and, rarely, military service.

In 1847, Pope Blessed Pius IX, hoping to strengthen the Christian presence in the Holy Land, restored the Latin Patriarchate that had been defunct for centuries. He placed the order under the protection of the Holy See and commanded the Knights and Ladies to help the patriarchate and assist in propagating the faith across the region. Subsequent popes reorganized and modernized the order, including St. John Paul II who declared it a public association of the faithful in 1996. The order, today, is headed by a Cardinal Grand Master, presently an American, Cardinal Edwin O’Brien, former archbishop of Baltimore. He is assisted by a consultative body called the Grand Magisterium, by 52 lieutenants, including 15 in North America and Canada.

Funds raised by the lieutenancies go to building and maintaining schools and the patriarchal seminary, as well as orphanages, clinics, housing and various special projects needed by the Latin Patriarchate and its 68 parishes. Recently, the order provided desperately needed aid to the people in Gaza because of the fighting between Israelis and Palestinians.

Dr. Thomas McGovern, who is a member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, kneels to touch the 14-point star under crypt/cave altar where Christ is believed to have been born at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The 14-points refer to three cycles of 14 generations from Abraham to King David to Babylonian exile and to Christ according to genealogy in Matthew Chapter 1. Members of the order are expected to make a visit to the Holy Land. Dr. McGovern made a pilgrimage earlier this fall.

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Membership is by invitation and is possible only after approval by a candidate’s pastor and bishop and finally the Holy See. Members are frequently reminded that to be a Knight or Lady is not some high honor but a life-long commitment to service undertaken with humility. They are expected to be faithful to the Vicar of Christ and the teachings of the Church; to be witnesses to the authentic Christian life; and to perform genuine acts of charity.

And then there is the close tie that exists between all Knights and Ladies and the very tomb of Christ in Jerusalem. Pope Francis told the members of the Order in 2013, “An ancient bond links you to the Holy Sepulchre, perennial memorial of Christ crucified who was laid there and of the Risen Christ who conquered death.”

Knights and Ladies are thus asked to make at least one pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to visit the key Christian sites—especially the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilee. It is an intense experience. Dr. Tom McGovern, the local section representative, including the 27 members of the order in the diocese, says of his recent journey to the Holy Land: “I understand the Gospels so much better after seeing where Jesus walked.”

Similarly, Deacon Jim Fitzpatrick, a member for 16 years, is grateful for the education regarding the “true situation” of the Christians in the Holy Land. “I think,” he observes, “the average person does not understand much about the Holy Land, other than what they might get from the evening news.”

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre is rooted in tradition and the past, but it strives every day to make a future possible for those living in the very birthplace of the Catholic faith.

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Fontanini Nativities
NOTRE DAME — Sunday, Dec. 14, marked the second annual Christmas concert performed by the Notre Dame Children’s Choir at the Church of Our Lady of Loretto on the campus of Saint Mary’s College in Notre Dame. The choir was formed in the fall of last year.

According to Mark Doerries, the artistic director and conductor of the Chamber Choir, the choir was formed to “engage young singers with the powerful and often forgotten heritage of sacred music of the Christian church.”

The choir is a part of the larger organization of Sacred Music at Notre Dame, with the cooperation of The University of Notre Dame. The goal, said Doerries, is to “specialize in the training of conductors, singers and organists at the graduate level to become future Church music leaders and professional musicians. Between the Notre Dame Children’s Choir and Sacred Music at Notre Dame we educate musicians through the entire age range from 5-35.”

The choir was conceived as a 20-voice ensemble. While Doerries serves as the artistic director, his wife Hillary serves as the accompanist and administrator of the program. During the summer of 2013, the Doerries visited local churches, schools and community centers introducing the choir in order to gain additional support for the program.

“The Catholic parishes and schools of South Bend were particularly generous in lending their support of the program,” Doerries said. “Many graciously established connections with us as an after-school music program.”

The first round of auditions gave the new program 55 singers. As word spread throughout the community about the program, they have continued to grow. This fall the auditions led to an enrollment of 135 singers.

“We have grown from two choirs and four staff members to five choirs and 13 conductors, drivers, vocal coaches, music educators and administrators,” Doerries said. “We also have a host of clergy who regularly lead the choir in prayer. We are blessed and believe that our growth is a reflection of the importance of our work to empower singers through meaningful encounters with sacred music.”

In addition to performing a wide variety of music from Gregorian Chant, to spirituals, the cantratas of J.S. Bach, and the music of Benjamin Britten, Mozart and contemporary rock and folk artists, the choir seeks to educate the whole child through musical, spiritual and social means. The choir seeks to combine sacred music traditions from many Christian faiths. They hold prayer services, vespers, lessons and carols, and evensong services.

“We believe that connecting children to sacred music at an early age creates lifelong engagement with the Church and the art music of our concert halls. Sacred music connects singers to the theological roots of the Church and to western classical music; to lose this music is to forget our spiritual history, culture and ancestors,” noted Doerries.

The Notre Dame Children’s Choir unites singers from across the Michiana community from a wide variety of Catholic and Protestant faiths, rich and financially insecure backgrounds, as well as African American, Hispanic and immigrant backgrounds. It has had a profound effect on the students who are involved in the program.

“There are many things I like about the choir,” said singer Lydia Potter, eighth grader at Mishawaka Catholic. “I have sung many songs in many languages and from different cultures. I have also met some of my best friends since the choir began.”

“Since joining the choir,” she added, “I have seen myself grow as a singer. I have been taught to read more parts of the music, how to project, and to sing a part of a large ensemble. All the directors are so nice and want you to learn and have fun. I’m very glad I joined and I hope we get even more members.”

Parents are just as impressed. “Lydia has been part of the choir since the beginning,” said Amy Potter. “I love the fact that this group of talented children can come together from all walks of life and create such beautiful music. Lydia has been challenged vocally and has been given many wonderful opportunities to share her talent with others in addition to her learning from others with more experience that share her love of singing. That being said, the community that has grown out of this shared musical endeavor is a very special one indeed.”

Rita Lyden, who has two singers — Seamus and Lilia — in the choir, also spoke highly of the program.

“Lilia joined first and just loved it so much, she inspired her brother to join,” she said. “They both have so much fun. They have both been practicing together for the Christmas concert, but I tried to keep some of the songs secret from us so we would be surprised.”

“It’s a commitment with two practices a week,” Lyden noted, “but the directors go out of their way to make it special for the kids and they get social time as well as learning time.”

The program is not only a benefit to the local community. The Notre Dame Children’s Choir places Notre Dame graduate students in conducting, voice and organ programs into the classrooms as choir directors. Through courses in children’s choral methods at Notre Dame and the experience of teaching the choir singers in the classroom, the graduate students are being trained to enter their parish and regional communities upon graduation, and to establish sacred music children’s choirs with similar missions to the Notre Dame Children’s Choir.

In the past year, the Notre Dame Children’s Choir has established an annual performance at an outdoor concert at the South Bend Farmer’s Market in early October, an annual community wide children’s choir festival in May, and their annual Christmas concert on the campus of Saint Mary’s College.

Composer Ruth Boshkoff enhanced this year’s Christmas concert by a song written especially for the middle school Chamber Choir. A nationally recognized composer and music educator, Boshkoff was on hand to hear the children sing the song she composed for them.

“The song took me most of the summer to write,” said Boshkoff smiling. “I wanted it to be different. I kept thinking about the whole Christmas story, the journey, the Wise Men and the three Kings. The children sang it beautifully. One mother came up to me and told me that her son sings this song all the time, all around the house practicing. That’s the thing I most like to hear, when the children love to sing what they have written.”

The Christmas concert this year drew over 400 family members, friends, students from Saint Mary’s College and Notre Dame, the sisters from the college, as well as members of the Michiana community.

For more information about the Notre Dame Children’s Choir, visit their website at www.ndc-choir.org or email at ndcchoir@nd.edu.
SAINT MARY’S COLLEGE

ATHLETICS PAIRS WITH TEAM IMPACT

NOTRE DAME — The Saint Mary’s College Department of Athletics has joined Team IMPACT and has been partnered with a 10-year-old girl from New Carlisle in a unique program which spans the country.

According to its website, Team IMPACT is an organization which improves the quality of life for children facing life-threatening and chronic illnesses by matching these courageous kids with local college athletic teams. Nearly 300 schools have been matched with 560 children in 37 states.

Through the organization, Saint Mary’s College has been paired up with 10-year-old Bryanna Sikora. Sikora was born drug exposed due to her birth mother’s substance abuse during pregnancy. As a result, she suffered from anatomic band syndrome, which occurs when anatomic bands wrap around the fetus resulting in development problems. Additionally, Sikora has been diagnosed with hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy and arthrogryposis. She has needed a trach, has a feeding tube and communicates through sign language and a communication device.

Sikora officially joined the Saint Mary’s basketball team on Wednesday, Dec. 3. Sikora received a reversible jersey as well as other team apparel and was announced as the newest member of the team in a recognition ceremony.

CENTRAL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF ‘64 AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS

FORT WAYNE — The Central Catholic High School Class of 1964 held its 50th class reunion on Oct. 4.

With the invitation for the reunion, organizers requested donations for struggling classmates and to assist with costs of the reunion. Classmates donated from $15 to $600, which not only provided the basic costs for the reunion but assisted those in need to attend the reunion. During the post-reunion meeting it was decided to use the remaining donation funds to honor the parents who sacrificed so that their children could receive a Catholic education.

The Central Catholic High School Class of 1964 presented a scholarship in the amount of $500 to both Bishop Luers and Bishop Dwenger high schools to help a descendant of a Central Catholic High School graduate pay down his or her high school debt and enable him or her to go on to higher education.

“I challenge those of you planning a reunion this year or in the future to carry on this legacy,” says Cindy Loraine DuBois, chairman of the Central Catholic High School Class of ’64 Reunion Committee.

The Bishop Luers recipient of the scholarship is junior Zachary Hensler. He is the grandson of a 1964 Central Catholic graduate.

The Bishop Dwenger recipient is junior Zachary Hendler. He is the grandson of 1964 Central Catholic graduates.

THREE VINCENTS RECEIVE TOP HAT AWARD

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WOMEN’S MORNING OF REFLECTION

Twenty-seven ladies representing St. Catherine-Nix Settlement, St. Joseph, Roanoke, St. Paul of the Cross, Columbia City, and Sts. Peter and Paul, Huntington, met Nov. 8 for the Women’s Morning of Reflection. Mass was celebrated by Father Dale Bauman, followed by breakfast and then a talk on several women from the Old Testament. The morning concluded with readings from the writings of Pope Francis and a general discussion of how the faithful can implement the ideas expressed in his papers.
Faithful celebrate, honor Our Lady of Guadalupe

BY CHRIS LUSHIS

WARSAW — Hundreds of Catholic faithful were in attendance for a late Vigil Mass at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and Diocesan Shrine on the night of Dec. 11. Those at the parish in Warsaw rejoiced at hearing the words of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades. “¡Viva la Virgen de Guadalupe! ¡Viva Cristo Rey!” (Long live the Virgin! Long live Christ the King!), to which they responded joyously, “¡Viva!”

The Mass, which was celebrated in Spanish, began with a special procession of a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe surrounded by a large wreath made of roses. This memorial was placed under the church’s signature painting of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which Bishop Rhoades venerated and crowned during the celebration. The special feast was also highlighted by traditional Mexican mariachi music and singing offering praise and honor to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In his homily, Bishop Rhoades emphasized the connection of Our Lady of Guadalupe with the woman described in the Book of Revelation, “the woman who appeared in heaven, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of 12 stars on her head.”

Bishop Rhoades said, “The Virgin of Guadalupe appeared clothed with the sun, with a crescent moon under her feet and wearing garments sprinkled with stars.”

He continued, “Just as the woman in Revelation was with child, so is the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is wearing a maternity belt commonly used by pregnant Aztec women.”

“I think we can see in the image of Guadalupe the woman who gave birth to Jesus symbolically giving birth to a new people, to the Church here in America, when she appeared to Juan Diego in Mexico and through the amazing success of the evangelization of America which occurred in the years following Our Lady’s appearance,” Bishop Rhoades said. “We can say that Catholicism in America was born in Mary’s maternal arms.”

Devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe began after her appearance to St. Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill, Mexico, in 1531. During a time when pagan worship and human sacrifices were the ritual practices of the Aztec country, it was here that the Blessed Virgin Mary requested a church be built in her honor, where she promised to show love, compassion and protection to all those who believed in her. The Blessed Virgin instructed Juan Diego to bring roses he found miraculously growing in the middle of winter to the local bishop. When he opened his cloak, the roses spilled out, and a dazzling image of Our Lady remained for all to witness. As a result of the promotion of this apparition, millions of men and women converted to Catholicism and found safety under the mantle of the Blessed Mother.

Bishop Rhoades shared that the face of the Virgin of Guadalupe, which had so inspired the Mexican bishop, particularly moves him as well.

“It is tender and peaceful, sweet and serene,” Bishop Rhoades said. “The mother of the true God appeared with a mestizo face and spoke the language of the people. Her humble and compassionate gaze gave Juan Diego and the recently conquered native peoples true hope and consolation. Her presence and her words dispelled the darkness of superstition and fear. Our Lady of Guadalupe was God’s messenger, a messenger of the Gospel of her Son, who taught the people that the true God is a God of love and mercy. She wants us to spread the Gospel also today when so many have forgotten God or ignore Him and reject His Church.”

Bishop Rhoades also reminded the congregation of the battle described in Revelation between the dragon, Satan and the woman who has crushed his head. “We see this struggle between good and evil throughout the history of the world; it is one that all the disciples of Jesus must face in their lives,” the bishop said. “Pope Francis teaches us that we do not face this struggle alone, that ‘the Mother of Christ and of the Church is always with us. Mary walks with us always, accompanies us, struggles with us and sustains us in their fight against the forces of evil.’ In the end, she wins, not the dragon. Liberation and the hour of glory will come. Pope Benedict reminds us that the woman clothed with the sun is ‘the great sign of the victory of love, of the victory of goodness, of the victory of God.’ We are further encouraged by Pope Francis, who especially recommends praying the rosary to sustain us in this battle.”

Bishop Rhoades also celebrated a bi-lingual Mass at the University of Notre Dame on the evening of Dec. 12 for the feast. Students performed traditional Aztec tribal dances and hymns in honor of the Blessed Virgin. All those in attendance were invited at the end of Mass to process together with the bishop and lay roses at the feet of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart’s statue of the Madonna and Child.

Pope Francis uses incense to venerate an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe during her feast day Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 12. Pope Francis and thousands of Catholics from across the Atlantic celebrated the feast of Our Lady of guadalupe in the Vatican.

Students performed traditional Aztec tribal dances at a Mass celebrated at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart at the University of Notre Dame.

A procession of a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe surrounded by a large wreath made of roses takes place at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and Diocesan Shrine on Dec. 11.
CELEBRATING OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE IN FORT WAYNE

St. Joseph Parish on Brooklyn Avenue in Fort Wayne observed the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with a 5 a.m. Las Mañanitas celebration on Dec. 12. Parishioners are shown gathered in celebration of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. At right, Father Tim Wrozek, pastor, stands prayerfully before the altar as Aztec dancers perform during a special Mass celebrated that evening. The Mass also featured a re-enactment of the Apparition of Our Lady and a children’s choir.

The Our Lady of Guadalupe feast was highlighted by traditional Mexican mariachi music and singing offering praise and honor to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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Blight Christmas

BY MARK WEBER

FORT WAYNE — Amidst the comfort of family, friends, food and cozy Christmas feelings, it is painful to be made aware that less than a day’s drive away, there are families living in coagulated poverty and times so hard that the only abundance they have is hunger, want and more of the same tomorrow.

These are folks, some of whom have no beds, precious little heat and cook on a stove with a single surviving burner.

These are families whose teenage daughters have never seen a prom dress and to get one as a cast off is the fulfillment of a full color Cinderella dream.

These are Kentucky families who are experiencing the charity and kindness of parishioners of St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel and appealed for assistance for his two parishes, Queen of All Saints in Beattyville, Kentucky, and Holy Family Parish in Booneville. Although these parishes are surrounded by the state’s scenic splendor, a sharp focus reveals an imprint of unfortunate consequences of poverty and unemployment hanging around like a cloud of coal dust.

Times were better here when “coal was king” and there were jobs in the mines. But those days are past and employment is limited to jobs with the school district, the city, county or private prisons (an industry unique to this area). This leaves the option of driving 80 miles to Lexington where if a job is found, one must sleep in a car or in a warehouse, returning home for the weekend. Tourism brings some dollars to the area from rock climbers, but not a significant amount.

Dave Kistner and his wife Sue heard Father Koury’s description of the pathetic conditions so close to home and stayed after Mass to ask the pathetic conditions so close to home. Father’s succinct reply was “Come see me.” Dave did that. He and his son Michael visited Beattyville and Booneville and came away determined to organize assistance to the stricken area.

Dave began his mission with a bulletin insert asking fellow parishioners for donations of “anything you use yourself,” and filled a 16-foot box truck with beds, mattresses, stoves, refrigerators, clothing and personal hygiene items.

Now, three years later, Dave has made more than a dozen trips to Kentucky and fills a 26-foot truck. He has fine-tuned his trips to fit the seasons. His spring trip in February will include many gardening and canning supplies because the Beattyville and Booneville residents depend heavily on their gardens and food preservation. This load will also include toys for the kids. Youngsters at St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel are asked to donate “old” toys that have been replaced at Christmas.

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.

Dave Kistner can be reached at d.kistner@comcast.net.

“Lord, when did you see me hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ... And the King will say to them in reply, ’Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for Me.’”

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The Church approaches Christmas with a message of love

FRED AND LISA EVERETT

**Reflection**

In each of these readings, the Church makes a very important point. God reaches out to us. He is not impossible to see or to hear. He is with us. The outreach occurs in the face of our own inadequacy and limitations. Blindness and weakness are not the only problems. We are marred by sin, suffering, and limitations. Blindness is a given to us to draw us to the God who is not impossible to see or to hear. He is in Jesus.

Are wombs transplants immoral?

A recent news report described the unusual story of a baby born from his grandmother’s womb. A 29-year-old woman from Sweden, born without a uterus, received a transplanted uterus from her mother, the same womb that had brought her into the world a generation earlier. The woman then became pregnant through in vitro fertilization (IVF) and delivered a healthy baby boy.

The research had been dogged by controversy and questions: Could this famous opera have the morally good voice to sing a passage from a lengthy opera about the overall act itself becomes immoral only if all three of these factors are morally good. If any one of them is bad, we recognize that the context would render the entire act immoral. The addition of a pregnancy through IVF, this circumstance would render the entire act of the womb transplant morally bad, if it is used, given that IVF is invariably immoral as a means to engender new human life. All reported instances thus far of womb transplants followed by successful pregnancy have arisen because of the use of IVF.

A similar problem with the circumstances of the transplant could arise. If the womb was transplanted by a different uterus that was supposed to be donated for transplantation had been donated by a healthy woman still in her reproductive years who harbored a congenital condition that could not be repaired or treated. She also desired to have more children of her own with her husband. In such a situation, her uterine donation would cause her to become sterile, which would represent a seriously flawed moral circumstance that would like wise render the action of receiving the transplanted uterus immor al. Whether this novel type of transplant would be morally acceptable? If a uterus and recipient, be justifiable? Are the circumstances involved. An act is morally good only if all three of these factors are morally good. If any one of them is bad, we recognize that the context would render the entire act immoral. The addition of a pregnancy through IVF, this circumstance would render the entire act of the womb transplant morally bad, if it is used, given that IVF is invariably immoral as a means to engender new human life. All reported instances thus far of womb transplants followed by successful pregnancy have arisen because of the use of IVF.

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**FAMILY**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

just off I-76 about 45 minutes from downtown Philadelphia. The total cost per night should be about $175 for a three-night stay beginning on Friday, Sept. 25. Married couples and families attending Congress during Phase 1 will have the option of staying at this hotel instead of remaining at the downtown Courtyard. If rooms are not available for those unable to attend the congress, they will be made available to any other individuals in the diocese who would be interested in reserving them.

- Due to the length of time in the fall for all the events and the diversity of groups going — families, married couples, young adults — the diocese will not be renting buses for those from our diocese participating in the 2015 World Meeting of Families. For many families, especially, going by car will be a more economical and convenient method of transportation.

- Finally, thorough information is offered from Our Sunday Visitor, the diocese will be providing full scholarships that will cover the basic packages for both the adult and child tracks for those attending the Theological Congress. The scholarships for adults will be $125 and for children (ages 6-17), $95. Married couples and families who will be staying at the Courtyard will have first priority for these funds. Scholarships per family are not limited. So, for example, a family of two parents and two children would be eligible for $440 in scholarships. Couples or families will only need to produce their congress registration receipt and a form signed by their pastor. Their congress registration receipt will be a more economical and convenient method of transportation.

- For more information about our diocese plaus, please feel free to contact us at frederetter@shekglobal.net.

Catechesis Part 3:

The meaning of human sexuality

Sex is a uniquely powerful factor in human affairs — both for good and for ill. And so sexuality misused or disregarded has always been a major source of confusion and sin. Sexual desire and self-understanding can be complex. Our identity is deeply rooted in Jesus and in God’s plan for our lives, and not in fallen self-assertions.

Marriage exists because procreation and communion, batting God and humanity's nature and super-nature, together undergird what it means to be “human.” Marriage exists because we discover and accept, rather than invent or renegotiate, the vocation to self-giving, which is intrinsic to being created male and female under the covenant. Marriage is God’s creation because we are God’s creatures, and because God created male and female for fellowship with Him in His covenant.

Our origin as two different and complementary sexes, and our call to love, to communion and to life, are one and the same moment. In the words of Pope Francis: “This is the story of love. This is the story of the masterpiece of creation.” This call to love, communion and life involves the entire being of man and woman, body and soul. The human person is simultaneously a physical and spiritual being. The body, in a sense, reveals the person. As a result, human sexuality is built into the very nature that we are.

Sexual difference, visible in the body, contributes directly to the body’s spousal character and the person’s capacity to love. Our call to love is God’s summons to “be fruitful and multiply.” (Gen 1: 28, NRSV). A couple’s spousal union through the body is therefore, by its very nature, also a call to live as father and mother.

For good reason, we hear delight in Adam’s words at his first sight of Eve: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” (Gen 2: 23, NRSV) The Catechesis of the Catholic Church notes that, from the beginning, “man discovers woman as another ‘I’, sharing the same humanity.” Man and woman share an equal dignity that comes from God’s Creator. In God’s plan, both the similarity and otherness of man and woman coincide in their sexual complementarity as masculine and feminine. Created together (Gen 1: 26-27), man and woman are willed for each other. Sexual difference is a primordial reminder that we are made to give ourselves away to others guided by virtue and God’s love.

St. John Paul II often spoke about the “nuptial or spousal meaning of the body.” He echoed the teaching of Vatican II that the “partnership of man and woman constitutes the first form of communion between persons.” But sexual difference marks all our relationships, even for the unmarried, since we each enter life as a son or a daughter. We are called to be a brother or sister not only to those in our families, but also to the needy in our neighborhoods, communities and churches. Our identity as men and women is the basis of our call to fatherhood or motherhood, natural or spiritual. In this way, sexual difference has universal significance.

Because it is a central component of our identity, sexuality cannot be isolated from the meaning of the human person. Sex is never simply a physical or emotional impulse. It always involves more. Sexual desire shows us that we are never self-sufficient. We long for intimacy with another. Sexual intercourse, no matter how “casual,” is never simply a bodily act. In fact, the sexual intimacy is always in some sense conjugal because it creates a human bond, no matter how unintended. A properly ordered conjugal act is never simply an inward-looking, autonomous erotic act. Our sexuality is personal and intimate, but always with a social dimension and consequence. A sacramental marriage is never a private possession, but discovers itself in relation to God’s wider covenant. We have sexual ethics because sex has spiritual significance and meaning.

Two different vocations do justice to the summons of being male and female in God’s plan: marriage and chastity. Both reflect these disciplines converge on the shared premise that sexual intimacy between a man and woman belongs and thrives only in marriage. Celibacy is the way that unmarried people conform the truth and beauty of marriage. Celibacy and marriage both abstain from sexual acts that use others in conditional or temporary ways. Authentic celibate abstinence is certainly possible but rather honors sex by insisting that sexual intimacy serves and is served by the covenant. By living in the light of the covenant, married couples and celibate persons alike offer their sexuality to the community, to the creation of a society, which is not premised on consumption and exploitation. …

Our creation as men and women in the image of God is why we are all called to the virtue of chastity. Chastity is the way, according to whether or not we are married. But for everyone, chastity involves refusing to use our own or other people's bodies as objects for consumption. Chastity is the habit, whether we are married or not, of living our sexuality with dignity and grace in the light of God’s commandments. Lust is the opposite of chastity. Lust involves looking at others in utilitarian ways, as if the other’s body existed merely but rather honors sex by insisting that sexual intimacy serves and is served by the covenant. By living in the light of the covenant, married couples and celibate persons alike offer their sexuality to the community, to the creation of a society, which is not premised on consumption and exploitation. …

Chastity is a great “yes” to the truth of humanity created in the image of God and called to live in the covenant. Understood this way, chastity is not about denying sex, but rather honors sex by insisting on the covenant. Celibacy is the way, according to whether or not we are married. But for everyone, chastity involves refusing to use our own or other people's bodies as objects for consumption. Chastity is the habit, whether we are married or not, of living our sexuality with dignity and grace in the light of God’s commandments. Lust is the opposite of chastity. Lust involves looking at others in utilitarian ways, as if the other’s body existed merely but rather honors sex by insisting that sexual intimacy serves and is served by the covenant. By living in the light of the covenant, married couples and celibate persons alike offer their sexuality to the community, to the creation of a society, which is not premised on consumption and exploitation. …

- Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle B: the Annunciation. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

**SCRIPTURE SEARCH**

Gospel for December 21, 2014

Luke 1:26-38

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle B: the Annunciation. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

**ANGEL VIRGIN PONDERED GREAT KINGDOM POWER OLD AGE GABRIEL JOSEPH GREETING MOST HIGH NO END BORN BARREN GAULLE HOUSE JESUS FOREVER SPIRIT ELIZABETH IMPOSSIBLE**

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**ANNUNCIATION**


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**The Gross Word**

December 21 and 28, 2014

53 Patron saint of dukes
54 Food and drug administration (abbr.)
55 Landing ship, tank
56 Good thief evangelist

down a rabbit hole
2 Darken
2 Land of red, white and blue
3 Scottish “Son of”
4 Elizabeth had been in the news of the day
6 Thief does
7 Saints do
8 Before
9 Jean cloth
10 It is not ___ to give children’s food to dogs
12 Dorm dweller
19 Pretender
21 Belong to (possessive)
22 Teaspoon (abbr.)
23 Not downs
24 WWII Pope Pius ___
25 One’s place
29 Anna’s tribe
31 Messenger archangel
32 Unclean animal (Rible)
33 Annoyed
34 Chinese flax
35 Take to court
36 Jefferson’s single
37 Israel’s model king
38 Redhead
39 Rabbie nozer
40 Apostolic ___
41 Presbyterian
42 Branch of learning
43 Papal finance office
44 Radioactivity unit
45 Internal Revenue Service
46 Sweet stuff
47 Irish cloth
48 Nigerian antelope
49 Covenant vessel
50 Biblical spell

**COMMENTARY**

12

December 21, 2014

Fred and Lisa Everett are co-directors of the Office of Family Life.
ICCL basketball teams square off

BY JOE KOZINSKI

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY — The Inter-City Catholic League basketball teams squared off last Sunday at Saint Joseph and Marian high schools to nudge their way towards the pinnacle of their divisions. The Eagles of St. Joseph remained atop the St. John Bosco Division by extinguishing the Trojans of Holy Family, 49-26, behind the double-digit scoring duo of JP Raster and Chris Smith. West sider Riley Hessey was too much to overcome despite the 14 points of Austin Lee, 44-33.

The three undefeated teams of St. Martin De Porres Division — St. Pius X, Mishawaka Catholic and St. Thomas — made little work of their prospective opponents by winning by a combined score of 100-32. Jacob Bishop and the Pumas of Queen of Peace gave Coley Quinn and the Blazers of St. Matthew everything they could handle before succumbing, 37-25.

Christ the King and the Panthers of St. Anthony endured a classic confrontation with the Kings and the dozen points of Sammy Clark were too much to overcome despite the 11 thrown in by Kyron King. Action resumes this weekend at the area Catholic high schools. A complete listing of scores and schedules can be found at www.icclsports.org.

CYO basketball action ramps up

BY MICHELLE CASTLEMAN

FORT WAYNE — After suffering a last second loss to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in their CYO opener, St. Vincent overcame early foul trouble to beat a much-improved, younger St. John the Baptist, Fort Wayne, team, 38-28, in a well-played matchup in Week 2.

Ellen O’Brien led all scorers with 23 points in the victory. Coach Dan O’Brien lists 10 on his roster, but has been playing with several missing due to injuries and other commitments. With non-conference games included, the Pioneers post an impressive 5-2 record early on.

“Ours strengths this season include physical play, good transition offense, unselfish team play and speed,” O’Brien explains. Also, 1-1 so far this season in their league is St. Jude 7. The Eagles won their opener against St. John the Baptist, New Haven, but lost to St. Charles 7 by a score of 28-21 in a hard-fought battle.

St. Charles jumped out to an early lead, but St. Jude climbed back to within four points in the third quarter only to have the Cardinals extend their lead to 10 again in the fourth. St. Jude’s final run came up short.

In other girls’ action, St. Charles 8 picked up another win when they downed St. Joseph, Decatur, 35-26. Jayda Smith had 15 points for the Cardinals, while Bridgette Black added 12. Finally, St. Rose/St. Louis improved to 2-0 in conference play

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-PROVERBS 8:34

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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: flogan@dioceseoffw.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.

Bazaar and bake sale planned
South Bend — St. Augustine Parish, 1501 W. Washington St., will have a bazaar and bake sale Saturday, Dec. 20, from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and on Sunday, Dec. 21, after Mass from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Christmas Eve celebrations include a children’s play at 3:30 p.m. followed by children’s Mass and the adult choir singing at 10:30 p.m. before the 11 p.m. Mass.

Christmas concert at St. Pius X
Granger — St. Pius X, under the direction of Jeremy Hoy, Carol Flora and Melissa Butner, will close the Christmas season with a Christmas concert on Sunday, Jan. 11, at 2-3 p.m. in the church, 52553 Fir Rd. Featured choirs include: children’s choir, middle school choir, Sunday morning and evening adult choirs, adult and youth handbell choirs and instrumentalists. The concert is free.

Presentation on annulments planned
Fort Wayne — A presentation on annulments will be given by Father Mark Gurtner, judicial vicar for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Wednesday, Jan. 28, at 7 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 1502 East Wallen Rd. No RSVP required. For more information contact Julia Thill at jthill@saintv.org or 260-489-3537 ext. 208.

Bishop Dwenger High School plans trivia night
Fort Wayne — Bishop Dwenger High School will host a trivia night on Saturday, Jan. 17, at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are $10 per person in advance or $15 per person at the door. A team of 10 or join a team. Carry in food, cash bar available. For information, visit www.bishopdwenger.com or contact 260-496-4775.

Cookie and candy sale
Monroeville — St. Rose Parish will have a cookie and candy sale Saturday, Dec. 20, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the former school basement, 209 Mulberry St. Goodies will be sold by the pound. Call 260-623-3354 for information.

Knights plan spaghetti dinner
South Bend — The Knights of Columbus Council 5521, 51635 S. Ironwood Dr., will have a spaghetti dinner on Friday, Dec. 19, from 5-7 p.m. Adults $48.50, children 5-12 $3.50. Carryout available.

Christmas at St. Monica Church
222 W. Mishawaka Ave., Mishawaka, IN 46544
Experience the beauty of the Liturgy and the music of this Holy Night
December 24 Christmas Eve Mass, 10:00 pm
Music Prelude at 9:30 pm
Vigil (Children’s Mass) 4:30 pm
December 25 Christmas Day Mass 10:00 am

“Do not be afraid, for I bring you good news of great joy...” Luke 2:10
JOIN US! ALL ARE WELCOME!
www.stmonicamish.org

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Visit Rome, Vatican City and be part of a Papal Audience, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, San Giovanni Rotondo, Tomb of Padre Pio, Abbey of Santissima Trinita, Madonna del Rosario, St. Peter’s Basilica, Christian Rome City Tour, St. Paul Outside the Walls, Abbey of Santuario di Pompei, St. Peter’s Basilica, Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Basilica of Our Lady of the Angels, Basilica of St. John Lateran.

December 10-20, 2015
Deadline for registration: January 5, 2015
To Register: Phone 888-882-1391
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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
Ave., 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. These languages would later
confront him in his studies. 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.

“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.

“Anthony F. Laviano was cured of
prostate cancer
during the 2008 Christmas season
through the intercession of
Father Solanus Casey.
Deo Gratias!”

To report favors received through the intercession
of Father Solanus, please direct correspondence to
the official office in Detroit; The Father Solanus Guild.

www.solanuscasey.org