Our Lady of Guadalupe’s message remains alive across five centuries

BY DENNIS SADOWSKI

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Nearly 500 years after Mexican peasant Juan Diego was greeted by Mary and urged to share a message of hope and comfort as promised by God’s compassion, Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to inspire new generations of faithful believers in their daily routines and struggles.

That assurance, rooted in prayer and common experiences, guides daily individual devotion and communal gatherings that build toward grand observances of the apparitions centered annually on the Dec. 12 feast day.

And while Our Lady of Guadalupe is rooted in the Mexican culture, those who have studied the phenomenon and her message as it is lived today are finding that the patroness of the Americas, as she is known, can strengthen bonds of community in a disjointed world.

“In the United States she belongs to everyone. Even American Catholics have embraced her as a symbol of faith and devotion,” said Hesifman Ospino, assistant professor of Hispanic ministry and religious education at Boston College.

Ospino, a native of Colombia, Guadalupe, page 3

The original image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is seen as Pope Francis delivers his blessing Feb. 13 at the conclusion of Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The message of Our Lady of Guadalupe is as relevant today as it was nearly 500 years ago, say scholars.
Pope recognizes martyrdom of Oklahoma priest killed in Guatemala

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has recognized the martyrdom of Father Stanley Rother of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, making him the first martyr born in the United States.

The Vatican made the announcement Dec. 2. The recognition of his martyrdom clears the way for his beatification.

Father Rother, born March 27, 1935, on his family’s farm near Okarche, Okla., was brutally murdered July 28, 1981, in a Guatemalan village where he ministered to the poor.

He went to Santiago Atitlan in 1968 on assignment from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. He helped the people there build a small hospital, school and its first Catholic radio station. He was beloved by the locals, who called him “Padre Francisco.”

Many priests and religious in Guatemala became targets during the country’s 1960-1996 civil war as government forces cracked down on leftist rebels supported by the rural poor.

The bodies of some of Father Rother’s deacons and parishioners were left in front of his church and soon he received numerous death threats over his opposition to the presence of the Guatemalan military in the area.

Though he returned to Oklahoma for a brief period, he went back to the Guatemalan village to remain with the people he had grown to love during the more than dozen years he lived there. He was gunned down at the age 46 in the rectory of his church in Santiago Atitlan.

Government officials there put the blame on the Catholic Church for the unrest in the country that they said led to his death. On the day he died, troops also killed 13 townspeople and wounded 24 others in the same isolated village, 50 miles west of Guatemala City.

Many priests and religious lost their lives and thousands of civilians were kidnapped and killed during the years of state-sponsored oppression in the country.

While his body was returned to Oklahoma, his family gave permission for his heart and some of his blood to be enshrined in the church of the people he loved and served. A memorial plaque marks the place.

Father Rother was considered a martyr by the church in Guatemala, and his name was included on a list of 78 martyrs for the faith killed during Guatemala’s 36-year-long civil war. The list of names to be considered for canonization was submitted by Guatemala’s bishops to St. John Paul II during a pastoral visit to Guatemala in 1996.

Because Father Rother was killed in Guatemala, his cause should have been undertaken there. But the local church lacked the resources for such an effort. The Guatemalan bishops’ conference agreed to a transfer of jurisdiction to the Oklahoma City archdiocese.

News of the recognition was welcomed in Oklahoma.

“This comes as a great joy to all of us here not only in Oklahoma, but I think it’s a great blessing to the church in the United States,” Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City told Catholic News Service Dec. 2.

He also called the recognition of the priest’s martyrdom a gift to the Catholic Church in Guatemala.

Archbishop Coakley recalled how both he and Father Rother are alumni of Mount St. Mary Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md. He remembered a ceremony at the school a few months after the priest’s death, in which a plaque was erected in his honor.

“He’s witness has marked me from my earliest days in priestly formation,” the archbishop said. “It’s a blessing to be the archbishop now who has the opportunity to bring to fruition the work on my predecessor, Archbishop (Eusebius J.) Beltran.”

Now-retired Archbishop Beltran was head of the archdiocese when the sainthood cause for Father Rother was officially opened in 2007.

Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda, author of a 2015 biography of the priest, “The Shepherd Who Didn’t Run: Fr. Stanley Rother, Martyr from Oklahoma,” described Father Rother’s martyrdom as a “reminder that we are all called to holiness in our ordinary lives, and that holy men and women come from ordinary places like Okarcha, Oklahoma.”

Describing the priest as a faithful man, Scaperlanda said he was called to serve in the fields of Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, alongside his Tz’utujil Mayan parishioners.

“This is what his community remembers — that he was one of them,” she wrote. “And when their village suffered oppression and killings from a violent and brutal civil war, he remained one with them. He was truly the shepherd who didn’t run.”
said Catholic Latinos outside of Mexico have come to embrace the Guadalupe story because of their shared faith. That Mary presented herself to the indigenous Mexican, and at a time in history when the situation of Juan Diego and the people was difficult," he said.

Mexico in 1531, the year of the apparitions, was undergoing massive changes after the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs a decade earlier. Catholicism was taking root and indigenous religions were disappearing. Speaking in his indigenous language, Mary asked the future St. Juan Diego, an Aztec and Catholic convert, to convey to church leaders her desire for a church to be built on Tepayac Hill in what today is Mexico City. The Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe near the site, completed in 1976, is the most visited Catholic church in the world outside of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

It took three visits by the saint-to-be to convince the local bishop that he indeed had seen Mary. It was on the third visit that the miracle attributed to Our Lady of Guadalupe occurred, when he unfurled his poncho, or tilma, to present to the bishop the Castilian roses in full bloom that had inexplicably appeared on the hill despite freezing temperatures. More impressively, the tilma bore an image of Mary exactly as Juan Diego had described her: olive skin, pregnant with Jesus, adorned in a turquoise mantle and surrounded by rays of light.

Such an image of Mary adorns the homes of countless Mexican and Mexican-American families and serves as much a cultural symbol and as religious one, said Oblate Father Bob Wright, professor of systematic theology at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio.

"You cannot separate the two of them," he told Catholic News Service.

Such an attachment is readily apparent in the hundreds of celebrations of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which feature the singing of “Las Mananitas” (early morning song) and traditional dances along with a festive Mass, all followed, of course, by hearty food and drink.

Father Wright described the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as “universal to everyone, a mother figure who looks after us, that you can turn to ... just as Jesus himself you can turn to.”

A colleague, Oblate Father Fernando Velazquez, associate professor of missiology at the Oblate school, said devotion to Mary is carried out in daily life by many of Mexican heritage. It is customary, he said, for mothers or grandmothers to send children to school with a brief prayer that Mary and God’s mantle protect them throughout the day.

Perhaps it is no other group than women who have embraced a devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. From family prayer to weekly praying of the rosary among a group of women to sharing a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe in processions from home to home, women have led the practice of prayer before Mary.

"The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is extremely valuable for reading back into the Bible,” said Furst, who grew up in Honduras. She has observed that the images of a black Christ that appear in the border region of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras reflect a fusion of culture and faith in a way that people could better understand. So it is with Our Lady of Guadalupe and other lesser-known apparitions of Mary in the Americas. You might call Our Lady of Guadalupe as the source of this integration,” Furst said. “It is as though God is bubbling from the bottom up as opposed from the top down.”

**Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend**

A number of events are scheduled to take place during the next few days at parishes of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend that have Spanish-speaking populations. Members of the Anglo community are warmly invited to celebrate the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe to St. Juan Diego with Mass, the traditional Mananitas song and more at any of the locations. Most events will take place in Spanish.

**Parish and city**

**Date and activity**

**Our Lady of Guadalupe, Warsaw**

Dec. 11, midnight: Mass and Mananitas Dec. 12, 6 p.m.: Mass

**Our Lady of Hungary, South Bend**

Dec. 4-12, 6 p.m.: Novena Dec. 12, 6 p.m.: Rosary, apparition play, Mass, folkloric dancers and reception

**St. Adalbert, South Bend**

Dec. 3-11, 6 p.m.: Novena (in the chapel) Dec. 11, 11:15 p.m.: Rosary, followed by Mananitas and Mass Dec. 12, 5:30 p.m.: Folkloric dancers, followed by apparition play, Mananitas and Mass at 7 p.m.

**St. Anthony of Padua, Angola**

Dec. 12, 5 a.m.: Mananitas; 8:45 a.m., Mass in English; 4 p.m., procession; 5 p.m., Mass; 6 p.m., reception

**St. Dominic, Bremen**

Dec. 3, 11:15 p.m.: Rosary Dec. 12, 6 p.m.: Mass

**St. Vincent, Elkhart**

Dec. 3, 11:15 p.m.: Rosary novena in homes Dec. 11, 6 p.m.: Procession from St. Thomas to St. Vincent Church, followed by reception Dec. 12, midnight: Mass, followed by Mananitas

**St. Patrick, Fort Wayne**

Dec. 11, 8 p.m.: Apparition play (lyceum) 10 p.m., serenade (church); midnight, Mass

**St. Joseph, Fort Wayne**

Dec. 3-11, Novena; Dec. 3, 8, 10 and 12 at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 4 and 11 at 1 p.m. and Dec. 5, 6 and 9 at 6 p.m.

**St. John Evangelist, Goosen**

Dec. 11, 5:30 p.m., Folkloric dancers, followed by apparition play, Mananitas and Mass at 7 p.m.

**Immaculate Conception, Kendallville**

Dec. 11, midnight; Mass, followed by folkloric dancers, music and reception in the school

**St. Joseph, LaGrange**

Dec. 12, 5 a.m.: Mass; 6:30 p.m., Mass, followed by folkloric dancers and reception

**St. Patrick, Ligonier**

Dec. 11, 10:30 p.m.; Mass; 11 p.m., apparition play; midnight, Mananitas Dec. 12, 5 p.m.: Procession; 6 p.m.

**St. Robert Bellarmine, North Manchester**

Dec. 1-11, 7 p.m.; Rosary in the church Dec. 12, 6 p.m.: Rosary; 7 p.m., Mass followed by mariachi music and reception Dec. 3, 6 p.m.: Procession to the Shrine of OLOG Dec. 3, 11:15 p.m.: Rosary

**St. Michael, Plymouth**

Dec. 12, midnight; Mass; 5 p.m., Knights procession to the church, followed by play; 7 p.m., dancers followed by Mass and reception

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**Public schedule of Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades**

Sunday, December 11: 12 p.m. — Blessing of new Narthe and Guadalupe Shrine, followed by 12:30 p.m. Mass, Saint Joseph Church, LaGrange

Monday, December 12: 8 a.m. — Mass and Pastoral Visit, Saint Adalbert School, South Bend

Wednesday, December 14: 10:30 a.m. — 3 p.m. — Advent Day of Recollection for Priests, Saint Martin de Porres Parish, Syracuses

Wednesday, December 14: 6 p.m. — Mass and Dinner with Legatus Chapters of Fort Wayne and South Bend, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Warsaw

Thursday, December 15: 6:30 p.m. — “An Evening with Bishop Rhoades: A Conversation on the Mystery of Christmas” with young adults, Archbishop Noll Center, Fort Wayne

Friday, December 16: 5:30 p.m. — Mass celebrating 10th anniversary of Redeemer Radio, Saint Mary, Mother of God Church, Fort Wayne
**USCCB leaders seek prayers for migrants, refugees on Guadalupe feast**

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Prayer services and special Masses will be held in many dioceses across the country as the U.S. Catholic Church has asked that the Dec. 12 feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe be a day of prayer with a focus on migrants and refugees. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patroness of the Americas.

“As Christmas approaches and especially on this feast of Our Lady, we are reminded of how our savior Jesus Christ was not born in the comfort of his own home, but rather in an unfamiliar manger,” said a Dec. 1 statement from Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The day of prayer is intended to be a time to place before a merciful God the hopes, fears and needs of all those families who have come to the United States seeking a better life.

“So many families are wondering how changes to immigration policy might impact them,” Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB vice president, said in a Dec. 1 statement. “We want them to know the church is with them, offering prayers on their behalf, and is actively monitoring developments at the diocesan, state, and national levels to be an effective advocate on their behalf.”

The USCCB suggested that Catholics unable to attend such a service or Mass Dec. 12 or who live in an area where one is not being held should “offer prayers wherever they may be.”

The USCCB’s Migration and Refugee Services office has developed a scriptural rosary called “Unity in Diversity” that includes prayers for migrants and refugees. It can be accessed at the Justice for Immigrants website at http://tinyurl.com/hldg3o9.

Another resource suggested by the USCCB is “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope,” the 2003 pastoral letter issued jointly by the bishops of the United States and Mexico. Summary versions of the pastoral are available online in English at http://tinyurl.com/zpd4jex and in Spanish at http://tinyurl.com/hyze9km.

A USCCB announcement on the day of prayer said the bishops’ conference will develop additional pastoral resources.

“To all those families separated and far from home in uncertain times, we join with you in a prayer for comfort and joy this Advent season,” Cardinal DiNardo added.

### What the pro-life community wants from the Trump administration

BY CARDINAL TIMOTHY M. DOLAN

T he last several years have clearly been challenging for the pro-life movement. The abortion industry, exposing its false rhetoric of choice, increasingly seeks to coerce Americans to be complicit in abortion, even insisting that abortion is a social good to be celebrated, subsidized and uncontrolled.

Its core agenda seeks to force taxpayer funding of abortion by repealing the popular, long-standing and bipartisan federal policy known as the Hyde Amendment. It includes a campaign to force health care providers and plans to participate in or pay for abortion.

The abortion industry even succeeded in getting the Supreme Court to invalidate commonsense abortion clinic regulations that protect the health and safety of women seeking abortion.

Sadly, the Obama administration has been an ally to abortion advocates in advancing such oppressive policies. It imposed the so-called HHS mandate forcing even religious organizations to cover contraceptives, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs in their health insurance plans.

It refused to enforce federal conscience protection for abortion and it is currently proposing regulations intended to prohibit states from denying funding to Planned Parenthood through the Title X family planning program.

Given all of this, it is fair to say that the presidential election offers the pro-life movement some cautious optimism. At least at the level of rhetoric, President-elect Donald Trump indicated support for renewed opportunities to protect women and children from abortion and to protect pro-life Americans from forced complicity in it.

The president-elect said he would make it a challenge for the Affordable Care Act to provide much-needed services. President-elect Donald Trump can alleviate the current financial and regulatory burden that weighs heavily on people of faith.

First, the president-elect can and should rescind President Barack Obama’s Executive Order 13672 that would impose oppressive mandatory contraceptive and abortion-inducing drug rules on faith-based organizations and their employees. The president-elect should rescind the HHS mandate.

Second, the president-elect should direct the head of HHS to place an immediate moratorium on the HHS mandate. The next administration should rescind the HHS mandate. Contraceptives are not preventive care. The pro-life movement must continue to work with the government to provide much-needed services.

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York is the chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

### Advancing the freedom to serve

BY ARCHBISHOP WILLIAM E. LORI

R eligious freedom issues have certainly been in the news in the U.S. over the past several years — from the Little Sisters of the Poor to the freedom of organizations to hire people who aim to serve the mission of the organization.

The federal government has played an unfortunate role in attempting to coerce people of faith to violate their consciences. Take the mandate from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, also known as the “HHS mandate,” that forces Catholics like the Little Sisters to facilitate providing devices that can cause an abortion, among other morally objectionable “services.”

If the Little Sisters — who run nursing homes for the elderly poor — do not comply with the HHS mandate, the federal government could impose financial penalties against them in the millions of dollars.

The Little Sisters have admirably served others here in the U.S. since 1868. They should be able to continue their good work as they always have without facing the prospect of draconian fines.

In another example, the federal government seeks to restrict the hiring practices of faith-based organizations that partner with the government to provide needed services, especially to our military service members around the globe.

Chaplains in the military contract with providers of religious goods — such as eucharistic supplies like chalices — in order to allow the men and women to serve our country to continue to practice their faith, including when they are in harm’s way.

President Barack Obama’s Executive Order 13672 would restrict faith-based organizations from being able to hire people who agree with the mission of the organization. It is a contract with the federal government. Faith-based organizations should not be excluded from working with the government to provide much-needed services.

President-elect Donald Trump can alleviate the current financial and regulatory burden that weighs heavily on people of faith.

First, the president-elect can and should rescind this executive order that effectively exclude faith-based organizations from partnering with the federal government, such as Executive Order 13672.

Second, the president-elect should direct the head of HHS to place an immediate moratorium on the HHS mandate. The next administration should rescind the HHS mandate.

As for Congress, it appears that the election left intact a pro-life mandate (at least with regard to abortion) in both the House and Senate (albeit a somewhat slimmer majority).

This is a solid pro-life majority and, as in recent years, should be able to advance pro-life policies. The Senate will consider legislation for advancing pro-life legislation because of its 60-vote threshold for overcoming a filibuster.

Fortunately, one unlikely outcome of the Nov. 8 election was the legalization of doctor-prescribed suicide by the voters of Washington state, making it the fifth state to formally legalize the practice. And just one week after the election, the District of Columbia became the next jurisdiction to embrace assisted suicide.

Proponents have made no secret of their strategy to advance the legal status of suicide in every state to advance their deadly agenda.

The pro-life movement must match or exceed their efforts and put a stop to this encroachment of the culture of death, offering in its place a renewed commitment to real compassion and solidarity through quality end-of-life care.

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York is the chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

### Xavier Wakes

Poems, mostly lyric, which recall the life and reveal the afterlife of Saint Francis Xavier.

by Michael Soper, from amazon.com
Archdiocese, Cardinal Tobin bid farewell

BY SEAN GALLAGHER

On Dec. 3, 2012, then-Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin said that he and the faithful of central and southern Indiana were “under an obligation of love” to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

He said this in a Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis during which he was installed as the sixth archbishop of Indianapolis.

Four years later to the day, looking back on his time of ministry to and with the Catholics of the Church in central and southern Indiana, he said during another liturgy at the cathedral that “we fell in love then, and we remain that way today.”

This Mass was originally planned as a celebration of Archbishop Tobin being inducted into the College of Cardinals on Nov. 19. But when it was announced on Nov. 7 that Pope Francis had appointed Archbishop Tobin to lead the Archdiocese of Newark, N.J., the Dec. 3 liturgy became a bittersweet farewell for him and the 1,000 Catholics from across central and southern Indiana who gathered in the cathedral to worship with him, and offer him their heartfelt prayers as he goes forward to lead the Church in northern New Jersey.

Both Masses four years apart were celebrated on the feast of St. Francis Xavier, the 16th-century Jesuit missionary to Asia who is the principal patron of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

In his closing remarks at the end of the Mass, Cardinal Tobin, his voice filled with emotion, made his own the words of St. Paul in his First Letter to the Thessalonians to describe his love for the Catholics of central and southern Indiana, and the mission he was given in ministering to and with them.

“With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you not only the Gospel of God, but our very selves as well, so beloved have you become to us” (1 Thess 1:5). Cardinal Tobin said.

The love Cardinal Tobin elicited from the faithful who gathered in the cathedral on Dec. 3 was palpable.

“I love this man,” said Benedictine Sister Harriet Woehler, a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove. Cardinal Tobin made an impression on her.

“What he’s done in these four years is unbelievable for me,” Sister Harriet said. “He reminds me of the Holy Father — what he’s done for the world, and what this guy has done for our archdiocese.

For his part, Cardinal Tobin expressed amazement in his homily at seeing all that Catholics across central and southern Indiana have done over the past four years to witness effectively to the Gospel. He said this in a Mass at Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis.

“I have been privileged to see witnesses across the 39 counties of this archdiocese, people who quietly bear witness, give testimony to Jesus Christ in prisons, in hospitals, on college campuses, in [religion] classes, in our Catholic grade and high schools,” he said. “I’ve seen the witnesses of this archdiocese in the food kitchens, in the shelters, the outreach of Catholic Charities and the welcoming of refugees and strangers.

“I’ve seen the witness, and I think that’s no accident — from the Holy Father and the welcoming of refugees and strangers.

During the prayer, he stood in front of the cathedral’s altar with his eyes closed in prayer while a group of people representing the congregation stood around him and placed their hands on him.

One of those people was his mother, 93-year-old Marie Tobin, who was joined at the liturgy by 10 of her 13 children.

“To be with my son when he offers Mass is the epitome of my life, the high point forever,” Tobin said. “But to be surrounded by all this love for four years — I am just so grateful. I would like to be a Hoosier myself.

This article originally appeared in The Criterion, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.
The Syriac Catholic patriarch said he was horrified to see widespread devastation and what he called “ghost towns” during a recent visit to northern Iraq. Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Younan wrote in an email to Catholic News Service that there was little left in some of the communities that he toured Nov. 27-29, and that “the emptiness of the streets except for military people ... the devastation and burned-out houses and churches” was shocking. About 100,000 Christians — among them more than 60,000 Syriac Catholics — were expelled from the Ninevah Plain by the Islamic State group in the summer of 2014 as the militants campaigned to expand their reach into Iraq. Patriarch Younan said for understanding from the incoming administration of President-elect Donald Trump about the plight and ordeal of all minorities, including Christians affinity by violence in the region. The patriarch told CNS about “walking through the Christian towns of Qaraqosh, Bartella and Karamles and witnessing the extent of devastation as if we had entered ghost towns.”

**Some fleeing scene of wildfires describe it as escaping ‘gates of hell’**

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B
oy Scout Gabriel Stein recently achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest accomplishment attainable in the Boy Scouting program of the Boy Scouts of America. He joins a group of just four percent of Boy Scouts nationwide granted this position of honor. The requirements necessary to achieve the rank normally takes five years to fulfill, but Stein did it in about five years.

A member of BSA Troop 349, sponsored by Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Fort Wayne, for the past four years, young Stein is the son of Timothy and Sarah Stein. They attend St. Therese Church.

Requirements for the rank of Eagle Scout include earning at least 21 merit badges. An Eagle Scout must demonstrate "Scout Spirit," an ideal attitude based upon the "Scout Oath and Law," service and leadership. This includes an extensive service project that the Scout plans, organizes, leads and manages.

Stein's Eagle project involved building a 20 x 30-foot road of 2-foot-square rubber mats at Aldersgate Church, on which children could ride tricycles. The project included constructing a storage shed to house the tricycles. Paint for the shed was donated and the church contributed money for building supplies. The matting came from a school that was redoing its playground and throwing old matting away. Stein completed the project last fall in about a week with the help of his family, fellow Scouts and a few adults.

In addition to fulfilling the requirements for the rank of Eagle Scout while at Troop 349, Stein earned the "Ad Altare Dei" ("to the altar of God") emblem as a member for one year of Troop 300, which met at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church. The program was developed by the National Catholic Committee on Scouting for Boy Scouts of the Catholic faith and consists of eight sections paralleling the seven sacraments. Its purpose is to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person by encouraging him to actively live out his Catholic Christian faith.

"There are service projects connected with the award and several learning sessions with adult leaders," said Stein.

Stein joined the Boy Scouts at age 13 at the suggestion of his parents, who thought the BSA training program was good for young men. He agrees with that assessment.

"I plan to continue in scouting as an adult leader now that I'm age 18 and cannot participate as a youngster," he said. "I most enjoyed the life skills training and all that is taught about camping and outdoor survival techniques as well as biking, hiking and rock climbing." Stein is a home-schooled high school senior and is currently taking classes at Indiana Institute of Technology. He hopes to obtain a degree in business management.

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Seminarians plan to dominate third Cupertino Classic

BY BEN LANDRIGAN

The time approaches once again for the highly anticipated basketball game pitting priests against the seminarians of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. This year’s Cupertino Classic will take place in the gymnasium of Bishop Luers High School. The festivities commence at 6:30 p.m. on Dec. 27.

Since its inception two years ago, Cupertino has gained popularity and attention as an annual Christmas time event. In the first game held at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Fort Wayne, the priests dominated an unprepared and seemingly unskilled seminarian team in front of a crowd of an estimated 300 fans. However, last year’s game at Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne, saw a far more even competition — though the priests remained victorious — and an attendance of more than 1,800.

While numbers may not continue to grow at an exponential rate, many look for Bishop Luers High School to be facing a capacity crowd this year. Seminarian co-organizer Mark Hellinger is full of confidence on this point.

“We’re going to max out the gym. I expect at least 1,900 people.”

For a basketball game that is really much more than a sporting event, this news is exciting. Ultimately, the Classic is all about fraternity and community. The vision for the game is of a fun and entertaining gathering designed as a center for Christian fellowship. The whole idea just came out of a group of us getting together for breakfast one day and just talking about how we should get together for a game of basketball, just have some fun, and then it kind of just grew into a bigger idea of inviting more people into that kind of spirit of Christian friendship. So, that’s the first thing, just getting together and enjoying good things in the spirit of the Lord.”

Father Curry also shared another aspect behind the game: “A second level would be, we could in a sense promote vocations to the priesthood. Being a priest doesn’t mean you give up fun and good things, but that you give your life to bring Christ to others. You still have these good, human things as part of your life.”

The Cupertino offers the Catholic faithful in general, and those studying to be priests and those already in the priesthood, an opportunity to see their priests and those studying to be priests in a new environment. A large part of the game’s draw comes from seeing the guys getting competitive and playing basketball, a far different atmosphere from the normal encounters at the parish.

While the Cupertino Classic is designed as a center for Christian community and fraternity, the competitive aspects of a basketball game have certainly not been lost. The priests mercilessly cruised to a 2-0 record, while the seminarians continue striving for their first victory. Father Curry expects this year’s game to be much of the same.

“I think we (the priests) are going to destroy (the seminarians). I’ll be in better shape this year than I’ll have ever been. I’ve already hit the gym early and been playing a lot of sports. I’ve been practicing,” he said. “I know that the Coonans (Father Terrence Coonan, pastor of Little Flower parish, South Bend, and Father Matthew Coonan, vicar of St. Vincent parish, Elkhart) and Runyon (Father Jacob Runyon, pastor of St. Jude parish, Fort Wayne) always come to win, so I’m feeling good. I would expect a very lopsided score.”

Hellinger sees a much different situation developing. Perhaps inspired by the seminarians’ increased level of play last year, he calls this year “the seminarians’ best shot,” and he remains “a firm believer in Team Seminarian.”

The actual outcome will have to be decided on the court. The priests will want to control the pace of play, run an efficient offense and use their combined experience. For the seminarians, a fast pace and limited turnovers will be essential to staying in the game. Come Dec. 27, all eyes will be on the court at Bishop Luers to see who claims the win at the third annual Cupertino Classic.

December 11, 2016
Chapel renovation draws volunteers and adorers

BY DEB WAGNER

In 1939 and 1940, parishioners and volunteers worked together to renovate a chapel built for the Sisters of Providence, who taught at St. John the Baptist School on Fairfield Avenue in Fort Wayne. The teaching sisters lived upstairs from the church. The chapel became known as the Guerin Chapel, named after Sisters of Providence foundress St. Theodore Guerin. But by the 1980s, the sisters’ community had left the area and the convent sat vacant. The eucharistic adoration chapel, which was now allowed to be used by the public, became a haven for adorers. As time passed, however, their numbers dwindled and the upkeep of the chapel diminished.

In 1992 Father William Kummer expressed his desire for it to be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. New stained glass windows were designed and made by parishioner Jim Steinacker. But after a few years, the parish found it difficult to staff the Guerin chapel with at least one adorer every minute of every day. It began to close at 9 p.m. every night. By 2009, Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades and Father Cyril Fernandes deemed it necessary to reduce the chapel’s hours to Mondays and Tuesdays from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. An Adorers Committee was formed to revitalize the chapel, but it never really gained momentum.

In early 2016, a parishioner who had originally installed the building’s carpet wanted to clean it in order to make the chapel look more appealing. A married couple in the parish wanted to paint the walls. In April, Father Andrew Budzinski, pastor of the St. John the Baptist, Fort Wayne, are pews repurposed from pastor Father Andrew Budzinski’s home parish of St. Pius X, Granger. Among the components of the restored Guerin Chapel, St. John the Baptist, Fort Wayne, are pews repurposed from pastor Father Andrew Budzinski’s home parish of St. Pius X, Granger.

BY STEPHANIE A. PATKA

Standing at the registration table of the second annual Rejoice! Women’s Retreat seemed more like a family reunion than women checking in for a religious conference. Women from 31 parishes around the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, totaling 112, arrived at Lindenwood Retreat Center on Dec. 2 for a weekend retreat to grow in their spiritual life, to be strengthened, encouraged, to reconnect with the Lord on a deeper level and to cultivate a greater love for Mary.

“I was really gratified with the way in which the women came to this retreat, they were happy to be here, joyful and so eager. They were here, ready to sit at the feet of Jesus,” said retreat organizer Jan Torma. She reported that at least half of the women attending had come to the first retreat last year with the speaker Sister Ann Shields.

Upon recommendation of Sister Ann, nationally renowned speaker and founder of the Love Revolution, Debbie Herbeck shared her own conversion story from Judaism to Catholicism as a Jewish woman with examples of things that the Church “got from us.” She acknowledged the difficulty that her conversion had on her parents, and said that she sees herself today as a Jewish Catholic and that she, “hasn’t abandoned her faith, but through the sacraments, has enhanced it.”

The Rejoice! Women’s Retreat is a collaborative effort that is supported by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Mary Glowaski, secretary of the Office of Evangelization spoke to the importance of not only the weekend for those in attendance but also the gratitude for those who gave of their time and effort to serve the Church in this way. “What I look forward to is that we continue to encourage women to use all of their gifts of intellect, their wisdom, their voices to serve those in our diocese and in the work of our Church throughout the world.”

“A major theme of the retreat was the recognition of the need of each woman to be a beloved daughter of God. Using humor and the power of story, Herbeck shared her discovery of Catholicism as a Jewish woman with examples of things that the Church “got from us.” She acknowledged the difficulty that her conversion had on her parents, and said that she sees herself today as a Jewish Catholic and that she, “hasn’t abandoned her faith, but through the sacraments, has enhanced it.”

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Salvadoran thrives in U.S. with resettlement, immigration help from Catholic Charities

BY ELIZABETH FLAHERTY

At 18, Alex Coreas came to the United States. It was very difficult to leave his family, but under the circumstances, it was really his only hope.

His native El Salvador was in shambles. The country had been torn apart by civil war for many years. In the aftermath, his homeland descended into anarchy. Violent gangs ruled the cities and towns. They demanded “rent” for protection and terrorized the populace.

“It was getting really bad,” said Coreas. “It was common to see a dead body in the street.”

As he was coming of age in his late teens, the gangs started to recruit Coreas. But he refused nothing to do with them, aspiring instead to raise a family and have a business career. He rebuffed their advances, a response that put him in great danger.

Then came a terrible earthquake that caused widespread damage in El Salvador. The United States came in to provide aid. For some, there was a chance to be granted a special work permit to come to the U.S. Coreas jumped at the possibility.

In financial terms, the Catholic Charities ECHO Program has been a great success. Moms like Ramirez have a more than 90 percent graduation rate, which compares to only 40 percent for teen moms nationally. It is estimated that every mother on assistance costs the government a minimum of $640,000 in services over her lifetime. To date, ECHO has helped more than 800 young mothers avoid poverty.

“There are many like Alex who come to the U.S. legally every year as refugees and asylum seekers,” said Luz Ostrognai, Coreas’ case manager at Catholic Charities. “Because these people are living in the most dire of circumstances, they typically have a great appreciation for being here.”

As the prospect of returning home diminished because of continued unrest in El Salvador, Coreas made the decision to stay in the United States and apply for his green card. Catholic Charities helped him navigate the labyrinth of red tape. With a steady work history and proficiency in English, he was granted permanent residence status.

Day by day Coreas’ appreciation for his new country grew. The freedoms and opportunities he experienced here were in such sharp contrast to the oppressive environment in his native El Salvador.

“Compared to my country, there is no hardship here,” he said. “If you work hard and play by the rules, you can get ahead.”

Ever thankful for his new lease on life, he wanted to show his appreciation for his new country by serving in the military. Once he received his green card, he became a member of the Army National Guard.

“My respect for my new country is big. It’s been 16 years, but every day I still feel a great sense of gratitude for being here.”

Coreas has served in the Guard for the last four years as a firefighter and medical first responder. Once a month, he spends a three-day weekend at Camp Atterbury in southern Indiana.

Eventually, with help of Catholic Charities, he became a U.S. citizen. Again, the staff helped him with all the paperwork.

“We see people like Alex all the time,” said Ostrognai. “They work very hard and make great contributions to our community. They are such an inspiration.”

Coreas is married and is the father of two children. He is also a homeowner, living on the south side of Fort Wayne. One of his ambitions is to build his own house, so several years ago he and his wife acquired a piece of property. He and some friends recently poured the foundation and will soon begin building the new home.

With all the opportunity Alex has realized here in the United States, his gratitude for this country and for Catholic Charities is always close at hand.

“They are extremely good people,” he said of Ostrognai and the Catholics Helping Our Youngsters (CHOY) volunteers who have helped him get my new life and be successful in what I do.”

ECHO helps single mothers continue their education and realize their potential

BY CLAIRE COLEMAN

While still in high school, 18-year-old Reyna Ramirez found herself pregnant, frightened and overwhelmed. She was living two hours away from home, with friends. Then things began to deteriorate.

“I was scared because I didn’t know what to expect,” said Ramirez. “I had no support, and I didn’t know how to be a mom.”

She decided to return to South Bend to live with her mother. It was then that she went to the Women’s Care Center for assistance. After she decided to parent her baby, the staff referred her to the Catholic Charities ECHO Program.

ECHO, which stands for Education Creates Hope and Opportunity, is designed to help pregnant teens stay in high school and complete their diploma, all while still raising their children. ECHO also helps young mothers continue their education beyond high school up to age 24.

Like many other teen moms, Ramirez faced the possibility of having to drop out. But without a high-school diploma, she would have very poor job prospects. With the right support, however, young mothers can get the education they need to land better-paying jobs and keep their families out of poverty.

In financial terms, the Catholic Charities ECHO Program has been a great success. Moms like Ramirez have a more than 90 percent graduation rate, which compares to only 40 percent for teen moms nationally.

It is estimated that every mother on assistance costs the government a minimum of $640,000 in services over her lifetime. To date, ECHO has helped more than 800 young mothers avoid poverty.

“But the program is about more than avoiding poverty,” said Ramirez. “ECHO is about helping moms achieve their potential and creating a culture of human flourishing in our diocese.”

Ramirez was fearful at first about ECHO. She thought the people at Catholic Charities would look down on her for being pregnant at such a young age. What she found, instead, was a warm welcome, much-needed assistance and a very pro-life response among the staff.

Bautista first helped Ramirez with a schedule that would allow her to stay in school and still look after her son. More importantly, Bautista helped her set priorities and get organized, and helped her through the many personal difficulties she faced.

“She has kept me focused and is always there for me.”

Over the years, Catholic Charities has established strong working relationships with high schools in Fort Wayne, South Bend and elsewhere in the diocese. Those professional relationships are vital to the success of the program because they help ECHO case managers achieve a consensus on the plan for the student among faculty, staff and parents, and carry out the plan.

Thanks to ECHO Ramirez graduated on time, but she had no plans for continuing her education beyond high school.

Bautista once again stepped in and helped her investigate career possibilities. Ramirez decided she wanted to do something in the medical field, so Bautista helped coordinate her search for possible programs. She also helped Ramirez with the scholarships and financial aid necessary to pursue her goal. Eventually Ramirez decided on Ivy Tech Community College, where she enrolled in September.

Ramirez credits Bautista with helping her organize and prioritize her life so she can continue her studies and raise her son. More importantly, she feels that advancing her education will help her stay out of poverty and provide the life she wants for her family.

“I’m able to have my son in my arms and provide him with a stable family — that was life changing,” said Ramirez.

Consider supporting the ECHO program by sponsoring a teen mother and her child as she completes her education. For information, call 260-422-5625.
For more than 10 years, the Catholic Charities RSVP office in Auburn has offered free winter garments to those in need. Each year the organization passes out nearly 2,000 coats, hats, scarves, gloves and mittens to area residents.

“There is no income test to qualify for a coat,” said Site Director Patti Sheppard. “We only ask that the person fill out a form for our records.”

Sheppard noted that requests come from many types of people, including those who have been recently released from jail and those who are living at the local homeless shelter and are in need of a decent coat to wear to a job interview. There is also the occasional pregnant woman who has outgrown her coat. Whatever the circumstances, the office is generally deluged with requests about the time of the first significant snowfall.

Each year the drive begins with barrels located in front of Kroger stores in Auburn and Kendallville. The Downtown Auburn Business Association also collects warm outer garments through drop-off points at PNC Bank, Peekers and the Atrium Market Place. McKinney Harrison Elementary School did a coat drive this year, as did the local Knights of Columbus from Immaculate Conception parish.

The drive is publicized by word of mouth and through United Way offices in DeKalb, Noble, Steuben and LaGrange counties.

“We even have school-crossing guards who get involved,” said Sheppard. “They notice which children are walking to school without proper clothing and then pass out items to them when they see them next.”

This year the DeKalb County Community Foundation supported the drive through its Voice Grants. Thanks to these grants, high school kids from DeKalb County receive money and decide on how to spend it on winter garments and other items for the agency’s food pantry.

Clothing donations are accepted year-round. Donated items may be dropped off at the Catholic Charities RSVP office in Auburn, located at 107 W. Fifth St. For those in need, items may be picked up on Monday afternoons from 4:30-6:30 p.m., on Tuesday mornings from 9:30-11:30 a.m. and Wednesday afternoons from 1:30-3:30 p.m. Winter jackets and accessories will be given out through the end of January. Most all sizes are available, and items are distributed on a first-come-first-served basis.

Anyone with questions is invited to call the RSVP office at 260-925-0917. Volunteers from Catholic Charities are available to deliver items if transportation is unavailable to the recipient.

Save on your energy bills now and let your windows pay for themselves later.

With the high cost of today’s cooling and heating bills, our high efficiency vinyl windows pay for themselves in practically no time at all! And right now we’re offering Zero Percent Down and 0% Interest For One Full Year.

So you save on your energy bills now, and let your windows pay for themselves later. What a concept!

Call today for a free estimate or call store for details. Bushey’s will donate $50.00 to Catholic Charities for an order of five or more windows.
Mom’s guide to an old-fashioned, blessed, wonderful Christmas

I have been yearning for simplicity lately. Have you? During this Advent season, I suggest we turn inward and even backward a bit, to create for our families an old-fashioned, blessed, wonderful Christmas. Here’s how.

Put Christ at the center

To have a wonderful, blessed, old-fashioned Christmas we must, of course, keep Christ where He belongs — in front. Stores and advertisements on television, the Internet and radio feed modern materialism, and we ourselves sometimes inadvertently do things that take away from the true meaning of Christmas too. Even though we may be well meaning, if we prioritize the purchases, plans and meal details before considering spiritual aspects and how to guide our families toward gratitude and a deeper relationship with Christ, we will find ourselves frustrated and missing out on the best part of the season, Christ himself.

There is nothing wrong with decorating; enjoying some of the secular trappings of the holiday is fun, of course. But, if anything takes away from our ability to hone in on prayer time, preparing our hearts and leading our families in that direction, we need to ditch it.

Putting the Nativity set in a conspicuous place of honor and making time for quiet prayer and contemplation daily will do wonders for keeping the focus where it belongs, on Christ. You can find Advent devotions in any Catholic bookstore, online or in real life, but you don’t need them. Put the family Bible next to the Nativity set and spend a few minutes reading the story of Christ’s birth from each of the Gospels each night with your children. Read the little children age-appropriate books while snuggling on the sofa before bed. Pray. Use an Advent calendar and spend an Extra Hour during the week. Take the family to confession. Make a Jesse Tree. Use an Advent calendar. Focus on being kinder and more patient and doing little acts of love for your spouse, children and those around you. It’s catchy, and you’ll find that Christmas cheer spreads rather quickly when you start it yourself.

Give to others

It’s somewhat easy to toss in canned goods or an old coat for a food shelf, but the family Bible next to the Nativity set is much harder to do something for someone in your own little circle of acquaintances; but oh, it is so much more meaningful! Is there a struggling college student or young person you know? Send him a cheery note of encouragement and a $10 gift card inside. Are you at the drive through of your favorite coffee or bread shop? Ask the cashier how much the person behind you owes. If it’s affordable for you to do so, tell the cashier you’d like to pay for the person behind you and to simply tell them “Merry Christmas.” Offer to babysit for a young mother for a couple hours so she can do some Christmas shopping. Bake some homemade cookies to the neighbors. Gather a group of friends or family members and arrange to meet at local nursing home with prior approval of the activities director. Sing traditional carols as residents eat their meals, or go door to door and pass out candy kisses. Stay and talk. Does someone in your family play the piano? Do that for the residents too. Double your dinner recipe one night and drop off some food at the rectory with a card. Call your mother just to say “hi.”

Be creative

Make colorful, construction paper chains with your children. You can make these Christmas countdown chains, and remove a link each day until Dec. 25. Some families cut red and green rectangles that will make up the links and leave them in an easy-to-access spot. Family members write any good deeds they do each time they fold and tape the link to the others. The long chain at the end of the season will brighten the darkness and center our lives on Christ, then with great joy we will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Advent is a time of penance and prayer. This year, let’s use Advent to our advantage. If we are, and if we center our lives on Christ, our love for God and for others will brighten the darkness and terror of our times. It is that simple. Advent is designed to fortify and focus our Christian resolve.

Prayer box taps into spiritual hunger

The box went up on a Monday evening in August: a plain, white box nestled into a little wall under a window and mounted atop a fence and beneath the outermost reach of a maple.

“Prayer requests,” read the side of the tent, in black and all-capital letters.

The box had a slot, like one awaitingValentine’s cards, and the message: “Please write down any prayer requests. We would love to be praying for you!”

Keau Krench didn’t know what to expect when he set up the prayer box, tucking in a pen and a rock to hold down scraps of paper. The college senior, 22, positioned the box at the edge of his childhood home, which is on a busy residential road between a highway and a gas station in South St. Paul, Minn.

But Keau knew he wanted to extend the power of prayer as broadly as he could, with a twist on the Little Free Library concept that began just 20 miles east, in Hudson, Wis., and now exceeds 50,000 locations worldwide, knitting together neighborhoods with a warm and fuzzy literary fiber.

He planned to share the prayer requests, if they came, with his Monday night Bible study, a small group of college-aged students.

The next day Keau peeked inside the box and discovered a handwritten note: “For those who are lonely, God, heal those with addictions, and for the men and women overseas fighting for our freedom...”

It was a heavy start, covering so much in such little space. The prayer box was off and running. Keau and his friends began to pray.

In three months, the box has amassed about 100 prayer requests. Never a week has passed without someone slipping a note inside.

“Please pray for my marriage,” someone wrote.

“Please pray for us that we get a roof over our family’s heads before winter comes,” a note stated in ruffled, fuzzy lettering.

“I am in town with the show Cabaret. I just ran my first half marathon and have lost 270 pounds. Continue to pray for me on my health journey,” a passably wrote last month.

“Pray for me,” someone wrote with a left-handed slope.

“I picked up a bad drug problem and I’ve lost my family and everyone I love and I don’t know what to do... Please pray that God will help me with my troubles.”

Others are shorter. “Aileen’s...”

Make colorful, construction paper chains with your children. You can make these Christmas countdown chains, and remove a link each day until Dec. 25. Some families cut red and green rectangles that will make up the links and leave them in an easy-to-access spot. Family members write any good deeds they do each time they fold and tape the link to the others. The long chain at the end of the season will brighten the darkness and center our lives on Christ, then with great joy we will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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Through Jesus, God has come to heal and save us

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

3rd Sunday of Advent
Matthew 11:2-11

The Book of Isaiah is the source of this weekend’s Gospel reading. Isaiah was between a rock and a hard place, so to speak. He realized that unless alliances, and behavior that for God, put the Hebrews’ kingdom of Judah at great risk. The prophet was convinced that if the nation did not return to God in genuine obedience and piety, then the whirlwind eventually would sweep away life as he and his contemporaries knew it. He met dispute and outrage. It must have been frustrating, but despite the angry reaction to what he said on the part of many of people around him, Isaiah unfailingly called the people to God. When the time came, if God would bring a terrible punishment upon the kingdom. Rather, the people, by their impiety, would create a nightmare for themselves.

The Epistle to James supplies the second reading. This epistle rarely appears in the liturgy and the author of the author is unclear. The New Testament mentions four men with this name. Which, if any, wrote this epistle is open to interpretation and the exact text that James, the foster brother of the Lord, was the author.

(Here is the other question. Did Matthew write the fourth Gospel? Many ancient Christian writers surmised that James in this reference was a son from a previous marriage of Joseph, the eventual spouse of Mary. They reasoned that this must have been the case, as they believed, with the Church today, that Mary had only one child, namely Jesus.) Regardless, this reading solidly establishes the author’s faith that Jesus will be victorious. No power can exceed the power of the Lord. After all, the Lord is the Son of God.

While the final victory undoubtedly will come, it will not necessarily come at a time that humans predict, and certainly it will not come at their bidding. The great day nevertheless will come. God will prevail. The epistle urges strong faith, but also forbearance.

The third reading, from St. Matthew’s Gospel, centers on John the Baptist, whose denunciations of sin in high places led to his arrest. In time, they led to his death.

Despising the Roman occupa-

tion of the land, pious Jews at this time yearned for a Messiah who would rid the Holy Land of the pagan intruders for whom Herod was a stooge.

John gave another description of the Redeemer. He saw the Savior not as a warrior, commanding armies to slaughter the enemies of the One God of Israel, but the compassionate, truly holy, leader of the pious. Jesus met this description, healing the sick, giving hope, and restoring life, lovingly coming to earth as Son of God.

While the last verses, Jesus affirms that John is a prophet. In response, John insists, Jesus is the greatest prophet.

Reflection

Advent is approaching its close. Since Christmas is near, the Church looks ahead to the wonder of the Lord’s birth. This is Gaudete Sunday, using a title that predicts the first word of the Introit in Latin, “gaudete,” or “Rejoice.”

Priests may wear rose vestments this weekend, using them instead of violet, as if the rays of dawn already are brightening Advent’s somberness.

The readings make several points. Isaiah warned us, as he warned his contemporaries, that by sin we bring heartache upon ourselves. By sinning, we weave the cloth of our own misery. God never brings death. He brings life, just as Jesus brought life. Advent penance and prayer hopefully lead us to imitate Christ. The liturgy presumes that we are using Advent to our advantage. If we are, and if we center our lives on Christ, then our love for God and for others will brighten the darkness and terror of our times. It is that simple. Advent is designed to fortify and focus our Christian resolve.

READINGS

Sunday: Is 35:1-6a, 10 Ps 146:6-10 Jas 5:7-10 MT 11:2-11

Monday: Zec 2:14-17 Ps Hbr 13:8bcs, 19 Lk 12-28c

Tuesday: Zep 3:1-2, 9-13 Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19, 23 Mt 21:28-32

Wednesday: Is 46:5b-8, 18, 21b-25 Ps 85:9-14 Lk 7:18b-23

Thursday: Ps 146:1-10 Ps 32, 4b, 11-13 Lk 22:46-3

Friday: Is 56:1-3a 6b Ps 67:2, 4, 5, 7, 8 Jn 33:36-37

Saturday: Gn 49:2, 8 Ps 72:3-4, 7-8, 17 Mt 1:1-17

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TWENTY SOMETHING

TERESA A. THOMAS

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COMMENTARY

Christina Capecci
Personal prayer, public prayer and the presence of Christ

There is no such thing as “private” prayer. There is — and certainly should be — deeply personal prayer, but really no such thing as “private” prayer. All Christian prayer, if it is true to its name, is initiated by the compelling of the Holy Spirit received in baptism, who prays in and through the hearts of the baptized — who together are constituted as the body of Christ, the Church.

Two things are worth noting here: First, all prayer begins with God in its inception. It is in the tradition, the Holy Spirit is often referred to as “uncreated Grace” — and second, the Church is constantly, daily and body of Christ, the Church, as the Spirit draws us in to an ever-deeper communion with the Father.

Public, liturgical prayer should shape, inform and nurture our personal prayer. That is, rather than accommodates, the experience of liturgical prayer to our experience of personal prayer — and thus asking, for example, whether the liturgy of the Church “meets my needs” or “connects me personally,” we should allow the public prayer of the Church continually to affect our experience of personal prayer, by putting us out of ourselves and uniting us more deeply to the self-offering of Christ to the Father. Our needs, like our tastes, should be shaped, informed and nurtured by what the Church does for us personally; we should allow the Church to shape, inform and nurture our prayer, so that it is in turn effective in our lives.

The prayer of the Church is the prayer of the Church — the Eucharist, the Sacraments, the liturgy, the Divine Office, the Lectio Divina, novenas and litanies, and a host of other ways of praying that adorn the Church. This whole panoply of styles and approaches must all be as somehow participating in the one prayer of the Church and as always taking their orientation from and ultimately being directed to, the celebration of the Eucharist. Even when, alone, one is never praying alone. There are times when a priest can celebrate Mass without a congregation, but even in such cases, we believe that the entire Church, including the angels and saints, are somehow present in that celebration.

Liturgy is an act of charity and social justice, as much as it is an act of theology — from the Breviary, which is the official times called the Divine Office or the Liturgy of the Hours, some 700 years called the Divine Office, alone in church one morning, is praying with the Church Universal, and all these individuals are not merely individuals with other people praying together, but they are “part of Christ’s Body,” in communion with the whole Church on earth.

For those interested in deepening their life of prayer in and with and through the Church, I suggest two very fine books: Thomas D.陌生的“Prayer Primer: Igniting a Fire Within” and Jean Corbin’s “Wellspring of Worship,” both published by Ignatius Press and available online or in stores.

Bake from scratch

Pull out those dusty, handwritten recipes that came from your grandmother and make treasured treats for your family. Don’t have any? Call your mom or mother-in-law and ask for some old family standbys. What’s even better, if you have young children or grandchildren, invite them to help you bake. Freeze the goodies for Christmas Eve. There is something incredibly special about making recipes that are family heirlooms that you have been handing down from generation to generation. You may want to tell stories while you bake, memories of your grandmother or your own childhood Christmas.

Finally, his mom called a young minister at her parents’ Methodist church to field Keanu’s questions. They met at a coffee shop and struck up a friendship over hot chocolate. Soon Keanu was attending Sunday night worship services. Something changed in his heart. For the first time in a long time, he felt hope.

As Keanu completes his bachelor’s degree in pastoral ministry, he’s writing his faith guide for the next chapter. The goal, he says, plain and simple: to love God and love others. And as long as people keep submitting prayer requests, he’ll keep praying for them.

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn., and editor of SisterStory.org.}

Lower Expectations

The Advent and Christmas seasons can be a time of stress and high expectations. Be realistic in what you expect, whether it relates to how much you think you must accomplish or what to expect of a relative’s words or behavior. Remember in your mind as much as is necessary, “Christmas is for Jesus’ birth. What else is, is.”

Lastly, simplify, simplify, simplify! You know your own limits. If buying gift cards instead of actual presents for some people on your list means you can spend more time preparing your heart well for our Lord, and with your family in meaningful interaction, don’t hesitate to do so. Choose those traditions that have meaning and value to you and yours, remembering the true meaning of Christmas, Jesus’ birth. Prioritize, then let go. No one will know if you find a Cookie Exchange party instead of a cookie exchange party. Focus on what counts most.

If you do these things, then, when you're wrapping the paper little by little on Christmas morning, when dinner has been eaten and relatives have gone home, you can KCMA Primary school. Which lessons mean and value to you and yours? Can you do it differently? Have a more merry, blessed, wonderful, old-fashioned Christmas!

Theresa Thomas is the wife of David and mother of nine children.
MARIAN, LUERS FACE OFF ON THE COURT At home on Dec. 3, the Marian High School Lady Knights varsity basketball team improved to 7-3 on the season with a 57-55 overtime win versus nonconference foe Fort Wayne Luers. Meghan Urbanski led the Marian Knights with 21 points and Libby Priller chipped in 11. Other scorers were Kiya Roby, 7 points; Anija Payne, 7; Christina Himelick, 5; and Makayla Weaver, 6.

December is here, and that means “basketball” in CYO sports circles. The breakdown of leagues this year, as last year, falls into three leagues for both girls’ and boys’ basketball. Schools are placed according to enrollment.

The Gold League is for larger schools. Based on student-athlete enrollment, schools are placed according to both girls’ and boys’ basketball. The White League is reserved for seventh-grade-only teams, or just seventh-grade girls from schools. The Black League is for smaller schools, and likewise may include combined seventh- and eighth-grade teams, or just eighth-grade. Last year’s girls’ Blue League winner was St. Joseph-Hessen Cassel. The boys’ Blue League tournament champ was Most Precious Blood.

The White League is reserved for seventh-grade-only teams, regardless of school size. The seventh-grade girls from St. Charles Borromeo walked off with the girls’ top honors last year, while the boys’ seventh-grade top White League team was St. Vincent.

Blue League coach Justin Allen, of the championship boys’ team from Most Precious Blood, is excited about the upcoming season. "We recently found out that we’re being bumped up to the Gold League due to realignment," Allen said. "This is Sordulet’s 20th season with the St. Charles Cardinals; last year, his team captured top boys’ Gold League honors.

Coach Mark Scudder and the St. Vincent Panthers have eight eighth-grade girls this year. Last year, in the White League, his seventh-grade team won end-of-season tournament honors. This year he’s following the kids up to eighth grade and will continue with the squad. "If they are out for another successful season," Scudder said, "quite a few talented CYO student athletes returned this year with this group of girls."

Coach Fisher’s assistants will include husband Jason and daughter Victoria, a Bishop Dwenger junior and St. Charles basketball alumnus. Many of the CYO teams were involved in the Thanksgiving weekend Queen of Angels Invitational. This was the 24th year of the tournament. The boys and girls played double-elimination games, with 10 teams in the boys’ brackets. The girls’ competition featured five teams and eight games. The boys’ championship went to the St. Vincent seventh-grade team, an athletic group with good shooting and ball-handling skills. Girl’s tournament winner was the St. Charles eighth-grade team from St. Charles, coached by Brooke Neuhaus.

"We have a very talented group of girls playing for St. Charles," Neuhaus said. "They’ve gotten better over the years of playing together." Plenty of CYO basketball action is scheduled: The weekend of Dec. 3-4 featured some 21 games at various Catholic school gyms around Fort Wayne. All the schools are looking forward to exciting play featuring more than a few talented CYO student athletes.

CYO basketball season tips off in Fort Wayne

BY RON BUSCH

The boys’ Gold League champions were the St. Vincent Panthers. The girls’ Gold League championship went to the St. Charles Borromeo Cardinals.

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German Christmas concert

FORT WAYNE — St. Peter Church, 518 E Dewald St., will host a Christmas concert Sunday, Dec. 18, at 4 p.m. The Fort Wayne Männerchor/Damenchor will offer traditional German Christmas music in the beautiful sanctuary. No admission charge. Visit www.fortwaynemangerchor.org for information.

Christmas concert planned

FORT WAYNE — Most Precious Blood Church, 1515 Barthold St., will have a Christmas concert Thursday, Dec. 29, at 7 p.m. in the church. Admission is free.

Visit with St. Nicholas

SOUTH BEND — Breakfast with St. Nicholas will be served Sunday, Dec. 11, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the St. Patrick’s Parish Center Kelly Room. Special treats, crafts and games with new breakfast plate options. Tickets are $5 for adults, $3 for children, pancake stack $2 and family ticket $15.

Knaves host Sunday breakfast at Most Precious Blood

FORT WAYNE — The St. Gaspar del Bufalo Knights will be serving a breakfast Sunday, Dec. 11, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the gymnasium at Most Precious Blood Church, 1515 Barthold Street. Tickets are $8 for adults, $4 for children 6-12 and $20 per family. Carryout will be available. All proceeds will benefit the schools of Most Precious Blood and Queen of Angels.

Pancake breakfast planned

FORT WAYNE — St. Charles Athletic Association, corner of Reed and Trier roads, will be serving pancakes and sausage on Sunday, Dec. 11, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the school cafeteria. (Door #9). All the pancakes you can eat and a chance to sit on Santa’s lap. Tickets are $5 for adults; $3 for children ages 12 and under, or $20 for the entire family. All proceeds benefit the St. Charles Athletic Association.

Bishop Luers to offer Christmas prayer in music

FORT WAYNE — Bishop Luers High School will offer Christmas Prayer in Music Sunday, Dec. 18, at 4 p.m. in the new Chapel of Saint Francis of Assisi at the school. The Bishop Luers choir and musicians will offer a reading and Christmas prayers in the form of music. The service is expected to last one hour. The annual Christmas Concert will be Thursday, Dec. 15, at 6:30 p.m., where the bands and choirs will perform music of the season.

XLT Night at St. Jude

FORT WAYNE — St. Jude, St. Charles, and St. Louis youth ministries will have an XLT event on Sunday, Dec. 11. XLT is short for “exalt” and it consists of adoration, praise and worship, confession and reflection. Music and adoration starts at 7 p.m. in St. Jude Church. After adoration, a social time for high school students only will be offered until 9 p.m. Anyone may attend adoration and benediction from 7-8 p.m. Contact Vickie Lortie @ 484-6609 ext. 1012 for information.

Celebrate Advent

NEW HAVEN — Spark Your Faith of St. Louis Besancon Parish presents a “Celebration of Advent” on Dec. 11 from 6-7 p.m. in the church. Celebrate Advent with a choir concert, readings and reflections.

Young adult retreat planned

SOUTH BEND — “Set the World Ablaze” will be Saturday, Jan. 14, from 9 a.m. through Sunday, Jan. 15, 1 p.m. at the Sacred Heart Parish Center. Enjoy relevant talks, music, Mass, adoration, confession and social time. Includes overnight lodging, lunch and dinner on Saturday, and breakfast and lunch on Sunday. For more information or to register visit www.diocesefwsb.org/yam-retratets.

Live drive-through Nativity

ANGOLA — St. Anthony of Padua will have a live drive-through Nativity on Sunday, Dec. 11, from 5-8 p.m. on the parish grounds, 700 W. Maumee St. Travel in the comfort of your car along a road lined with over 500 luminaries, past the Bethlehem Inn, through the fields where the angel appeared to the shepherds, past the three wise men following the star and ending at the manger. Each scene comes alive with animals including a camel. There is no charge.

Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry at St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Angola

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Angola seeks a full time Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. The Youth Minister collaborates with the pastoral team to oversee a comprehensive faith formation program for older children and young adults, especially the following five areas:

• Confirmation preparation (grade 8)
• High School youth ministry
• Scouting
• Campus ministry for students of Trine University
• Young adult ministry, with focus on ages 18-29

This is a full time, salaried position. The applicant is expected to be an active Catholic who can become a parishioner at St. Anthony’s and has a good mastery of the teachings of the Catholic Church. We prefer an applicant who has at least a bachelor’s degree in pedagogy (certified teacher), religious education or theology. Other applicants will be seriously considered.

For a more complete job description, please write to Fr. Bob Showers OFM Conv. at frbob@stanthonyangola.com or write to St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church 700 W. Maumee St., Angola IN 46703.

What’s happening?

What’s happening? carries announcements about upcoming events in the diocese. Send your announcement at least two weeks prior to the event. View more Catholic events and submit yours at www.diocesefwsb.org/bulletin. 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 260-399-1449 to purchase space.
As Dec. 25 edges closer and closer, there is an almost palpable sensation of excitement and happiness in the air. This excitement, for many, is caused by the thought of finally getting to see and gather with friends and family. For others, it is the hope of tasting Mom's chocolate chip cookies or Grandma's cheesecake that brings about smiles and grumbling bellies. And then there are those who are glad about contemplating the opening of those gifts glistening under the Christmas tree.

But although the 25th of December brings about these awe-some and great reasons to be happy, for the Church community there is a deeper, underlying sentiment of joy as Christmas approaches.

I decided to interview some of my family members, as part of the domestic Church, to get their perspective on the meaning of joy during Advent. I asked each of them, “What is the true meaning of joy during Advent to you?”

I first asked the question of my 11-year-old sister, Aurora Nunez. “Joy is preparing for Jesus to be born,” she explained. I asked her why it was joyful for her. “Because babies are cute,” she responded, with giggles and a fit of laughter.

After she finally got ahold of herself, she told me a bit more seriously, but with a smile still tugging at her lips, “Jesus Christ comes and saves us from our sins, and that makes me very happy.”

Aurora definitely struck a chord of truth, not just about babies being cute but also with the fact that Jesus Christ coming and rescuing us from slavery to sin should make us euphoric and jubilant indeed.

My 15-year-old sister, Carmen Stephanie Nunez, also had much to share. Pondering the meaning of joy during Advent she said, “I think of family being united, preparing for Jesus’ coming. You just get really excited because Jesus’ coming is closer. I’m excited for beautiful Masses and events, but most of all for being gathered together with my family and community.”

Stephanie is right. A big part of the joy everyone experiences during Advent is getting to spend that time of anticipation for Jesus’ coming together with one’s family and community.

My mom, Alma Medina, when asked the same question, responded: “For me, the joy is about the happiness that comes along with the coming of Jesus, our Lord — even though he won’t come physically, but will instead be born in our hearts. We have to let Jesus be born in our hearts, and grow in our hearts,” she added with a little emphasis. “Our hearts need to be open for Him to grow.”

According to my dad, Oscar Nunez, “Joy during Advent is waiting for the consummation of God’s love for us. This is love at its maximum expression. It is the incarnation of God out of love for us, for our salvation.”

Overall I think that my family members had great insights on the meaning of joy during the Advent season. They established that this joy is about being together in community to experience Jesus’ coming into our lives and hearts for our salvation.

I got the opportunity to converse with Father Elmer Rodriguez, a pastor from Guatemala visiting his family during the holiday celebrations, and to talk more about this joy.

“The joy of Advent is substantially different to, for example, joy during Easter. Even the pink color of the vestment used by the priest on the third Sunday of Advent expresses this joy. This joy is about the coming of the Lord. But what is the novelty in that? It is the mercy that God has for us,” he said. “The joy is that the all-powerful God makes Himself present and makes Himself incarnate in the world. So the joy that He brings is caused by His closeness, the closeness of God. It is like the waiting of the groom as it gets closer and closer for him to be with his bride; in the same way, in this third week of Advent, it gets closer for us to meet with Jesus. It is a waiting with longing, excitement and lots of hope. That is the joy during Advent, the joy that brings hope.”

Alma Nunez is a Saint Joseph High School Junior.