“... I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord.”

Luke 2:10-11 NAB
The face of the God who saves

IN TRUTH AND CHARITY

BISHOP KEVIN C. RHoades

“We let all rejoice in the Lord, for our Savior has been born in the world. Today true peace has come down to us from heaven” (Entrance Antiphon from Christmas Mass during the Night).

The message of the angel to the shepherds on the first Christmas remains ever new: “Today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.” The message of the birth of Jesus our Savior was spoken over 2,000 years ago, but it is a message that the Church still proclaims and will always proclaim, the message of Christmas, the message that “the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger is the Savior, not for people long ago, but our Savior, the Savior of people today.”

Given all the advances in science and technology, especially in recent years, some may feel that we don’t really need a savior. There are those who consider man to be a self-sufficient master of his own destiny. Yet, in the depths of our being, we know otherwise. Despite humanity’s many advances, we still have poverty, injustice, hatred, violence, loneliness, addictions and other ills. In a word, there is still sin and there is death, from which no one can escape. Yes, we do need a Savior. So the message of Christmas has relevance and gives hope: “our Savior has been born in the world.”

The Church’s task, our task, is to receive the Savior into our hearts and lives and to witness to the Savior in our words and deeds. “The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men” (Catechism 780). We are a community saved by Christ. We draw our strength and nourishment from His Word and His Eucharistic Body. And then we bear witness to Christ our Savior in the world. We share in His saving mission to overcome evil with good, to bring light to those in darkness, healing to those who are suffering, in sum, to bear witness to the truth and beauty and joy of the Gospel of our Savior.

Christ does not save us from the world. He came into the world, so that through Him the world might be saved. In order to save us, the Son of God became one of us. He assumed our human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it. He came in the flesh. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). He became truly man while remaining truly God. This is the mystery we celebrate at Christmas, the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. It is the distinctive sign of Christian faith, a mystery unheard of in other religions. The Church confesses that “Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God a who, without ceasing to be God and Lord, became a man and our brother” (CCC 469). Why? Precisely: to save us! As we profess in the Nicene Creed: “For us men and for our salvation, He came down from heaven.”

God revealed to Mary and Joseph that they were to name their child, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, “Jesus” a name which means “God saves.” This is Jesus’ mission. Pope Benedict XVI once said that Jesus is “the face of the God who saves.” He gives life and this life is grace. God sent His Son into the world to fill the world with His grace. When we gaze upon the infant Jesus in the Christmas manger, we see the face of God. We see the immortal Life which became mortal. In the face of the baby Jesus, we see God’s love and humility. In Jesus, we receive the power of God’s saving grace, the grace that sanctifies us.

God shows us His face, full of grace and mercy, in Jesus. When we open ourselves in faith to receive His grace and mercy, we receive a share in His own divine life. This is why God became man: in order to give us a share in His own divinity. At Christmas, we celebrate the amazing grace which the Lord’s mercy bestows on us. This is the message of Christmas: the good news of salvation. And that is why we sing with the angels: “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.” This peace is the fruit of God’s love which is grace, mercy, and truth. And together with this peace, we have hope, the hope which has its foundation in the gift of salvation, of being set free from the darkness of sin and death. Christmas is truly a feast of hope.

The peace, joy and Christmas is for all people. Jesus was born as the Savior of the world. In the Child Jesus in the manger, we behold the Truth that sets us free and the Love that transforms our lives. We adore Him at our Christmas liturgies. Like the shepherds who adored Jesus in the manger, we are also called to spread the good news of the birth of our Savior. The Gospel of Luke tells us that the shepherds “made known the message that had been told them about this child.” We should not be afraid to share the joy of our faith with others. In fact, we have an obligation to do so: to bear witness to Jesus the Savior so that others may encounter His love, grace, and peace. As Saint Paul wrote: “God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). The Church, as the universal sacrament of salvation, has been entrusted with this truth and must go out and bring this truth to the world. Let us not be afraid to share with others the truth of the Gospel and the joy of our encounter with Christ our Savior!

It was through the fruitful virginity of Mary that God bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation. May the Mother of the Savior help us to bear witness in our world to the truth and love of her Son! May God bless you and your loved ones with joy and peace during this Christmas season! Merry Christmas to all!”
Redeemer Radio celebrates 10 years

BY CLAIRE KENNEY

Redeemer Radio has been in operation within the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend for a decade now, touching lives every day. “It is truly amazing how many people’s lives have been changed in the past few months from the wisdom of our guests,” said Kyle Heimann, host of the station’s Kyle Heimann Show. “We are thankful for all the guests who have appeared on our shows, the faith has been taught and, in a sense, has prepared the way for the day’s Gospel reading.”

For 10 years, Redeemer has offered a springboard to people whom we might otherwise never encounter in our ministry. “You reach those who are seeking to learn more about their faith and are encouraged to live the faith the rest of the day,” she said. “Our job is to keep the Faith alive and direct your work! May the Blessed Mother intercede for you and direct your work! May our faith be saved. “Redeemer Radio has a prophetic mission, not unlike the mission of the Old Testament prophets and St. John the Baptist,” Bishop Rhoades said. “For 10 years, Redeemer has broadcast the truth of the Gospel, the truth of the Catholic faith, and, in a sense, has prepared the way for the Lord in the minds and hearts of its listeners.”

Bishop Rhoades and the Redeemer Radio Fort Wayne staff celebrated the station’s 10th anniversary with a Mass and a reception at St. Mary Mother of God Church Dec. 18. In the front row, from left, are Jennifer Zurbich, director of development; Jill O’Sullivan, business manager; Andrea Serrani, producer and programmer; Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades; Cindy Black, executive director; Jennifer Redil, community relations director; and Erin Hecker, marketing manager. In the back row are Kyle Heimann, host of The Kyle Heimann Show; Bob Hartenstein, development; Rick Gonsiorek, 95.7 FM general manager; and Deacon Jim Tighe, senior advisor (retired).

Father Terry Coonan celebrates a Mass for staff members and supporters of Redeemer Radio in South Bend at St. Therese, Little Flower Parish on Friday, Dec. 18. Father Coonan noted that the Mass readings for the day mentioned the word “Redeemer.”

“I like everything about being a priest. My priesthood is a great gift from God!”

“Redeemer Radio has been an effective means of evangelization and catechesis,” Bishop Rhoades continued. “You reach out to people whom we might never encounter in our ministry: people who are searching for who are confused, people who are hungry for the truth of the Gospel, and people who are hurting. You touch people who are unchurched as well as Catholics who are inactive in the practice of the faith. Like John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit acts in their souls. … Many active Catholics also listen to Redeemer Radio and receive ongoing education in the faith. So many are strengthened in their faith and Christian lives by listening to Redeemer Radio. They are challenged to grow in their faith and are encouraged and assisted to respond to the call to holiness.”

“People throughout the 14 counties of our diocese are fed by the truth of the Gospel through Redeemer Radio,” he concluded. “Like St. John the Baptist, you may be “a burning and shining lamp!” May you continue to prepare the way of the Lord in the minds and hearts of your listeners! May the Holy Spirit guide and direct your work! May our Blessed Mother intercede for you as you continue to serve her Son and His mission of salvation!”

“I don’t think I have ever met more of a kind-hearted person,” she said. “He was a delight to work with. Whenever I thought we needed to change something, I immediately took me to the pastor and discovered a bus trip had been scheduled in two weeks to Wawasee seminary for youngsters interested in learning more about the priesthood.”

Father Sarrazine attended Moreau Catholic Seminary, Norwood, Ohio, and Our Lady of the Lake Seminary, Wawasee and was ordained a priest on Dec. 22, 1962, by Bishop Leo A. Purcell in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne. Why in the month of December? As it turns out, Bishop Purcell thought that he would be in Rome in the spring of 1962 for a session of the Second Vatican Council. He rescheduled that year’s ordinations for December, when he knew he would be in Indiana.

Father Sarrazine’s first assignment in June 1963 was as an assistant at St. Vincent de Paul, Elkhart. Ironically, the pastor at the time was Msgr. Hession. His pastoral assignments included assistant at St. Henry Parish, Fort Wayne (1964), and St. Jude, South Bend (1965), St. John the Baptist, New Haven (1972) and the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Fort Wayne (1975); pastor at St. Martin de Porres, Syracuse, along with St. Francis Xavier, Pierceton (1976); St. Joseph, Mishawaka (1980), St. Henry, Fort Wayne (1991); and St. Joseph, Roanoke and St. Catherine of Alexandria (1999). He was appointed chaplain of Lutheran hospital, Fort Wayne, in 2005. Father Sarrazine also served as an advocate for the tribunal for a time. He retired from the priesthood in 2012 and resided at St. Anne Home and Retirement Community in Fort Wayne.

Kay Schneider, director of religious education for 14 years at St. Joseph, Roanoke, and St. Catherine, was also principal for three years under Father Sarrazine at St. Henry.

“I don’t think I have ever met more of a kind-hearted person,” she said. “He was a delight to work with. Whenever I thought we needed to change something, I immediately took me to the pastor and he supported me. And he was so generous with everyone,” she recalled. A Mass of Christian Burial, officiated by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, will be at 11 a.m., Friday, Dec. 23, at St. Louis Besancon Church, 15535 Lincoln Highway East, New Haven. Visitation will occur an hour and a half prior, as well as from 2 to 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 22, at the church, with a rosary at 6:30 p.m. Father Sarrazine will be laid to rest in Catholic Cemetery in Fort Wayne.

FATHER KENNETH SARRAZINE

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On Thursday evening, Dec. 15, young adults from around the diocese gathered at the Archbishop Noll Center in Fort Wayne for an evening of fellowship, food and an Advent message from Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades.

Jennifer Kopecky, Fort Wayne young adult and campus minister, started the evening by introducing Bishop Rhoades to the group gathered in the Garden Room.

“During this cold evening, I hope your hearts are warmed through the message and fellowship,” Kopecky said. “Bishop Rhoades leads with humility, great passion and intentional relationships. This speaks to his shepherding, starting from where you’re at in your faith journey and building from there. We’re all here to build His kingdom.” Bishop Rhoades began his talk, titled “The Mystery of Christmas” by praying the Angelus with attendees, followed by the theme of the evening’s message. “There’s a certain wonder and awe we should have as we contemplate Christmas,” he said, adding that Christmas in its truest sense is a celebration of the Incarnation, and more than just superficial happiness.

The Incarnation makes Christianity unique. There is no other religion in the world with the belief, the unheard of idea that the Messiah would be God himself. We can’t help but be filled with wonder and awe at the fact that God is actually with us, the bishop said. “All we can do is approach the mystery in adoration.”

He went on to reference St. Thomas Aquinas, who stated that among the works of God, the Incarnation surpasses all. He then encouraged the young adults present to pray the Angelus every day to keep the mystery of the Incarnation prominent in their lives.

Referencing John 1:14, he said: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. … The Incarnation is not an irrelevant event.”

Bishop Rhoades then circled back to Saint Thomas Aquinas and his three points of the purposes of the Incarnation. The first is that God is revealing to us the truth about Himself and man. The second is that He is making all things new through the death and resurrection of Christ. The third is that He is making human beings divine as adopted sons and daughters of God.

The bishop distributed copies of The Nativity, a Byzantine art piece depicting the birth of Christ and mystery of the Incarnation. The artwork illustrates the symbolic darkness of the world contrasting with the light from the sky, the origin of the child.

Within the image, Mary is portrayed at the center, rather than the child. This placement symbolizes the reality of Christ’s birth and the astonishment that the Word of God became man, Bishop Rhoades said.

The presentation concluded with encouragement that those present would live the mystery of the Incarnation — particularly the virtue of humility.

“Besides humility, live poverty, evangelical poverty through the self-giving love of Christ beginning with the Incarnation,” he said. “Be generous, detached from material things.”

The bishop also stated that the spirit of how one gives is important. One of the gifts given this Christmas should be a gift to the poor, he suggested.

“Humility, generosity, and self-giving love — these are what Christmas is all about,” he concluded. The evening ended with discussion, refreshments and fellowship.
WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. House Dec. 13 passed the bipartisan Frank Wolf International Religious Freedom Act and sent it to President Barack Obama’s desk for his signature. The measure gives the Obama administration and the U.S. State Department new tools, resources and training to counter extremism and combat the worldwide escalation of persecution of religious minorities. The bill will improve U.S. religious freedom diplomacy efforts globally, better train and equip diplomats to counter extremism; address anti-Semitism and religious persecution and mitigate sectarian conflict. The bipartisan bill was written by Rep. Chris Smith, R-New Jersey, and co-sponsored by Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-California. Named for former Congressman Frank Wolf, “a tireless champion for the rights of the poor and the persecuted globally,” the bill will expand the International Religious Freedom Act Wolf sponsored in 1998.

“From China and Vietnam to Syria and Nigeria, we are witnessing a tragic, global crisis in religious persecution, violence and terrorism, with dire consequences for religious believers and for U.S. national security,” said Smith, chair of the Global Human Rights Subcommittee.

USCCB forms working group to monitor needs of migrants, refugees

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is establishing a working group charged with developing spiritual, pastoral and policy advocacy support for immigrants and refugees. Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, USCCB president, has named members of the new group, with the mandate of closely following developments related to immigrants and refugees in the United States. The USCCB Public Affairs Office announced the formation of the group Dec. 16.

Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB vice president, will chair the group. Members include the chairmen of USCCB committees and subcommittees involved in immigration concerns: Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Migration; Auxiliary Bishop Nelson J. Perez of Rockville Centre, N.Y., Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs; Bishop Frank J. Dewane of St. Augustine, Fla., chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Domestic Social Development; Bishop Jose H. Torres of Yakima, Wash.; and Bishop Aram Fr. Boutros Behnan Khoury, general secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants; and Bishop Oscar Cantu of Las Cruces, N.M., Committee on International Justice and Peace.

Cardinal Arns laid to rest at the Sao Paulo cathedral

SAO PAULO (CNS) — For two days, a steady flow of worshipers made their way up the steps of the Sao Paulo cathedral to pay their last respects to Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns, Cardinal Arns, 95, who died Dec. 14 of pneumonia, was known for his work with the poor, the children and the political prisoners during Brazil’s military dictatorship. The cathedral, which remained open round-the-clock since the evening of his death, held a Mass every two hours with the cardinal’s casケット present. Among the dignitaries who visited the cathedral were former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Sao Paulo Gov. Geraldo Alckmin. “Brazil lost one of its greatest symbols in the struggle for justice,” Lula said after learning of the cardinal’s death. But the vast majority of people entering the cathedral were those whom Cardinal Arns had dedicated his life to help, the poor.

Martys from Southeast Asian regimes beatified

OXFORD, England (CNS) — Catholic martyrs from various nationalities have been beatified in Laos in the first such gesture toward communist regime victims in Southeast Asia. “The Catholic Church in Laos is very small, humble, almost hidden; its story is not well-known,” Oblate Father Roland Jacques, vice postulator of the martyrs’ cause, said in a commentary for the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, to which six martyrs belonged. “Planted with the sweat and blood of three generations of missionaries, it can rely today only on its own forces, supported by a handful of priests from Vietnam or Thailand. That goes to show how much this event was unique, unheard of for this small country and very young church.” The French priest was describing the Dec. 11 beatification Mass in Vientiane’s Sacred Heart Cathedral, attended on the pope’s behalf by Philippine Cardinal Orlando Quevedo as well as 15 bishops and 150 priests, mostly from neighboring countries, and 6,000 laypeople.

Medics inspect the damage outside a field hospital Sept. 27 after an airstrike in the rebel-held al-Shaar neighborhood of Aleppo, Syria. In mid-December, the Syrian army retook control of almost the entire city of Aleppo, which had been split between government and rebel control since 2012. On Dec. 16, France called an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council to help consider conditions for evacuating the city and allowing humanitarian aid to reach areas most needed, reported the Associated Press.

Call sounded for evacuation of Aleppo

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Bishop Roger F. Morin of Providence, R.I., and named as his successor Msgr. Louis F. Kihneman III, who is vicar general of the Diocese of Corpus Christi, Texas. Bishop Morin, 64, is a Louisiana native who was ordained a priest for Corpus Christi in 1977. He has been the diocese’s vicar general since 2010. The appointment was publicized in Washington Dec. 16 by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States. Bishop-designate Kihneman said in a statement to Biloxi Catholics: “I look forward to getting to know you all and growing with you all in the love of Jesus Christ and together sharing that love with all our brother and sisters.”

Put aside ideology and work to rebuild Aleppo, say Catholic leaders

BEIRUT (CNS) — Mideast Catholic leaders are urging people to put aside ideology and blame and work to rebuild the city of Aleppo, Syria. “The world is divided. Each one is accusing the other,” said Patriarch Gregoire III Laham. “Between the superpowers bickering, a whole country got destroyed. Hospitals, schools, churches, mosques and so many people were killed or were displaced. Accusing each other is not going to help the situation. This is the time to work with each other so we can end the war and rebuild Syria. It’s not the time to accuse each other. It’s the time for worldwide powers to be united and to work together for peace. Now is the time for reconciliation,” he told Catholic News Service Dec. 16, the day after he returned from Damascus, Syria. “We are praying for the victims. We are praying for Aleppo and all of Syria to have peace again,” Patriarch Laham said. “As Christians, we cannot have hatred in our hearts. Even the ones who attacked us, we have to pray for them that they may have a new life and not to continue with war, violence, hatred and terrorism. We must pray for them to go toward the path of peace,” he said.

Stop those profiting from human trafficking, Vatican diplomat says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Eradicating the “heinous crime” of human trafficking requires cracking down on those who profit from it, said a Vatican diplomat. The Vatican urged nations “to recognize trafficking in human beings as one of the most heinous crimes” and to recognize “their moral duty to address it properly and indeed eradicate it,” said Msgr. Janusz Urbanczyk, the Vatican’s permanent representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. He made his comments Dec. 15, during a meeting of OSCE in Vienna. OSCE includes 57 countries in Europe, Central Asia and North America. In his talk, Msgr. Urbanczyk said greater attention should be given to eradicating the trafficking and enslavement of children. Children can be ensnared by traffickers when they are “enslaved and fall prey to exploitation as child laborers or soldiers, fall into the criminal network of drug trafficking or into the mire of pornography,” he said.
Group prayer, reflection prepare parishioners for Christmas

BY CLAIRE KENNEY

It was a Tuesday evening during the second week of Advent, and a small group of parishioners from St. Augustine Parish, South Bend, gathered in their deacon’s living room. Annie Tardy, the wife of Deacon Mel Tardy, scurried about extending hospitality to their guests, who varied in age and time as members of the parish. But they all had one thing in common: a desire to properly prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord at Christmas.

Deacon Tardy and Annie host various Bible study series throughout the year. Each focuses on something different and is designed to accommodate the parishioners’ busy schedules. “I’ve found that our parishioners are hungry for Bible study,” Deacon Tardy said. “We’ve had successful seasonal Bible study discussions during Lent and Easter, and the season of Advent proved successful as well, since we had more time to unpack the richness of the Sunday readings. ‘Hosting it at our home allows folks to be more informal and at ease, plus our Bible study group reflects the diversity of our parish, which is a blessing,’ he went on to say. ‘So we prepared for Advent not just by getting to know the Scriptures better, but by getting to know each other better as a parish community.’

“I believe Jesus meant for us to do as he did; to meet at times in large and at times in small gatherings to hear the Word as a means of hope for the world of today,” Annie added.

The structure of each session was fairly straightforward. “For the most part, we read and reflected upon the upcoming readings for the subsequent Sunday Mass,” Deacon Tardy said. “We began with opening prayer, song and the lighting of Advent candles.”

Participants of the Advent Bible Study agreed that the sessions were beneficial. “Advent and Bible study provide a time to reflect, away from the tensions and busyness of the season,” said one. Another said that although she wasn’t a regular reader of the Bible, attending Bible study with a group encouraged her to think about the readings, to examine what she read and to ask questions.

On the second Tuesday of Advent, the group focused on Gaudete Sunday, a time to rejoice in the Lord. The session fittingly started with a very lively song and a favorite of the parish, “Hallelujah Anyhow.”

During the discussion, Deacon Tardy encouraged the group to endeavor in joy. “Spiritual warfare is real. But God is real,” he said.

Hope was a secondary topic that organically stemmed from the subject of joy, and the group shared stories of interactions they had recently experienced with others who seemed to be missing hope in their lives. When discussing the night’s reflection, one participant said, “Tonight I was reminded to live from the inside out instead of the outside in.”

“Listening to people share how these Scriptures relate to their daily lives, I heard how they share the good news at the bank, in the grocery store, and on social media,” said another. “This is evangelization.”

At the end of the study, the group reflected on writings from Evangelii Gaudium, the Book of Isaiah and Pope Francis’ short book, “Mercy from the Manger: Encouragement and Daily Prayers for Advent.” Aligned with the waiting attributed to Advent, the literature centered on slowing down to do God’s true work. This, then, brought full circle the conversation about helping people find hope.

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5:00 PM Children’s Mass
10:30 PM Mass During The Night (Music begins at 10:00 PM)

Christmas Day Masses
8:30 & 11:30 AM

New Year’s Masses
Vigil Mass December 31 - 5:00 PM
January 1 - 8:30 & 11:30 AM

Epiphany Concert in Chapel
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Wishing you a grace-filled Christmas and a healthy New Year.
Many reasons to celebrate

At the end of Mass, parish youth performed a dance in celebration of the Aztec roots of Juan Diego, to whom Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared. The dance was a re-enactment of the Aztec conversion, 500 years ago, to Christianity.

Bishop Rhoades went to the classrooms of students prior to Mass. Students like these fifth graders and teachers pictured were quizzed by bishop about Advent.

Children gathered in the hallway between classrooms as the bishop sprinkled holy water on them and the newly renovated spaces for faith formation.

Bishop Rhoades and Father J. Steele stand with building contractor Doug Henry, left, and Jesse Perez, construction superintendent.

The Advent wreath sits before the new altar in the renovated sanctuary. The original parish crucifix dates back to 1934 and was a gift from the original eight families that founded the parish in LaGrange County to build a Catholic church, in 1984.

Parishioners gathered in the newly constructed narthex for the blessing of the new space.
LAGRANGE — St. Joseph Parish in LaGrange has many reasons to celebrate during this Advent season. An ambitious construction project of a new sanctuary (interior) in its last stages of completion, and the largely Hispanic church population has built a new shrine on the property dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The parish celebrated both on Sunday, Dec. 18, when Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades blessed the new construction, presided over a Spanish Mass and led a special procession of worshippers to the shrine.

Father J. Steele, CSC, who is in his fourth year as pastor of the faith community, described his parish as “growing and thriving.” In fact, two years ago a pressing need for additional space for the burgeoning congregation led to ambitious expansion plans. Those plans have come to fruition in a five-part construction project undertaken with the auspices of general contractor D. M. Henry. No fundraising effort was required for the sanctuary, since the parish had money on hand for the work.

“There were a lot of moving parts to this project,” said the pastor. First, in order to accommodate St. Joseph’s 230 religious education students, as well as other church groups, four temporary classrooms in the church building were converted to permanent spaces. Then additional classrooms were created from the pastor’s rectory apartment, which had been located in the building.

The conversion of the pastor’s living quarters meant that a new rectory was needed; that residence was constructed on church grounds as well.

A larger altar and sanctuary were also built and now grace the main body of the church, and a new gathering area expands the entrance. The newly constructed shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe stands directly behind the church, located on the opposite side of the wall of the tabernacle.

Father Steele is especially pleased with the new, high altar, with its reredos, or decorative wall, behind the altar; and its 9-foot Corinthian columns and Roman arch of faux-painted gray and cream marble with gold detailing. It was built by area craftsmen Barry Campbell, owner of Te Deum Construction in LaOtto.

The new gathering area is a welcome change from a narrow entrance hall. The enlarged area is quite spacious, he said, and enables parishioners to linger and socialize after Mass while enjoying coffee and donuts. In the spring, a “porte cochere” or covered entry, will be added to provide shelter for those entering the church, which will especially benefit the elderly and handicapped.

The new rectory is a 1,500-square-foot modular home, with a south-facing view, an open concept floor plan, an attached breezeway and garage and a large porch.

The shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe was constructed behind the sanctuary wall of the church so that “Jesus and His Mother are back to back,” Father Steele noted. The $50,000 construction cost was covered by St. Joseph’s Hispanic parishioners, who raised the money through taco sales and personal contributions over a two-year period.

“A small army of dedicated volunteers headed up by long-time parishioner Salvador Nieves installed drywall, did general carpentry, painted, put down carpet and laid tile. Volunteers were present on a rotating basis, six days a week, and did a lot of work, said Nieves. Father Steele estimated that the volunteers contributed at least $150,000 worth of labor to the $500,000 project. “It’s been tremendous … a real community effort,” he said.

The project culminated on the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Bishop Rhoades’ visit. He blessed the classrooms, gathering space, baptismal font, altar and shrine, then presided over a Spanish Mass with Father Steele.

During his homily the bishop spoke about the courage of faith and the obedience of Mary and Joseph, calling attention to the fact that their example invites us to accept, with an open spirit, Jesus—who is Emmanuel, which means, “God-with-us.”

The Gospel lesson for the day told of the angel’s appearance to Joseph, in a dream. Mary and Joseph received the same surprising announcement of Incarnation of God, Bishop Rhoades said, and both responded with faith and obedience to His Word. Both said yes to God and to His plan for our salvation.

“We prepare ourselves, then, to celebrate Christmas by contemplating Mary and Joseph, the woman full of grace, who had the courage to rely completely the Word of God, and Joseph, the faithful and just man who preferred to believe the Lord instead of listening to the voices of doubt and human pride. We walk together, with them, toward Bethlehem.”

Bishop Rhoades also noted that the blessing and dedication of the new construction had been postponed one week due to weather. (But) “Thanks be to God, I could be with you today to celebrate the Holy Mass and to bless the new and beautiful church sanctuary and, at the end of the Mass, the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe which sits outside.”

The celebration continued with a procession to the shrine for that blessing, and parishioners joined in with traditional hymns and prayers to the Virgin Mary. The day’s festivities concluded with a parish dinner.
Family experiences the redemptive gift of suffering

BY JEANNIE EWING

FORT WAYNE — For Jim and Cheryl Roy, the past two, almost three years have been an incredible journey of living the cross in such a way that redemption is present in the midst of mystery.

The family’s trying time began in 2014, with several incidents that Cheryl believes prepared her for what was to come. “I visited the St. Jude Adoration Chapel weekly and prayed the Rosary of Seven Sorrows often. But one day, as I was praying the second mystery about suffering, I suddenly realized that I had to answer a very important question: Can I really suffer? It was as if God wanted me to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ It was hard at the time, but I paused and finally responded to Him, ‘Ok.’”

This occurred years before cancer struck both Jim and Cheryl and a mysterious pulmonary disease afflicted their daughter, Michelle. The Roys described the first half of 2014 as challenging, mostly because they were worried about Michelle, whose lungs were only operating at 50 percent capacity. Jim remembered, “I’ve always felt very blessed in my life. We’ve encountered other life-threatening events, but God has always been with us. He’s in total control. I accept whatever He gives us to handle. I saw going through my own cancer treatment as an opportunity to offer up my suffering for Michelle.”

Shortly after Michelle’s illness struck, Jim discovered through a routine colonoscopy that he had Stage 3 colon cancer. He started chemotherapy four weeks later. During that time, Cheryl knew she needed to schedule her annual mammogram, but was tempted to postpone it because of her concern for Michelle and Jim. “I wasn’t planning to go until later, but I felt compelled to call and schedule an appointment. I can’t explain it.” Her mammogram revealed breast cancer.

“Cancer gave me an opportunity to apply the small points of our faith to everyday life. I felt that God wanted me to take one aspect of faith and truly live it. For me, it was gratitude,” she said.

Cheryl recalled another poignant moment, back in 2004, that she believes prepared her for the suffering that would come to their family. “One of my favorite verses is from Philippians 4:6-7. The part about giving thanks made me wonder, could I really give thanks for everything, including the hardships?”

She decided to implement the aspect of gratitude in her daily life. She thanked God for every circumstance, whether a celebration or misfortune. When Michelle became ill, she knew it was time for her faith to really be tested. “This was about what ever God wanted. Even though I asked why it was happening to our daughter, and we didn’t get an immediate answer, still, I knew God wanted me to be faithful.”

“People always ask, ‘Why me?’ when something bad happens to them. I always thought of the question, ‘Why not me?’” Jim added. “It made me realize that I could find the good in our cancer experience. Since Cheryl and I both work in health care, we knew the importance of exercise — so we forced ourselves to get outside and walk. We called these our ‘chemo walks.’

Cheryl agreed. “We know to stop and see the beautiful gifts that God has given us. I started a gratitude list during our cancer treatments: for meals, people who offered prayers or watched our kids, for God’s creation. It has made me pause to value what people have done for us. I see people differently now,” she reflected. “I see their dignity and the value of who they are more deeply than I did before.”

“Our chemo walks really fostered gratitude in me, as well,” Jim said. “Suffering gets your attention. It makes you focus on what’s really important in life. Because of those walks with Cheryl, I appreciate what I didn’t notice before — birds singing, the beautiful sky, every good thing God has given us.”

During her one year of chemo, Cheryl participated in Parkview Hospital’s Healing Arts Program, which allows patients to use different media for art therapy. She chose painting on stones, which she chuckled and said “was never done before.” Each stone she painted represents a specific gift or blessing she, Jim and their daughter have received. She calls them her “stones of gratitude” and plans to make them into a large rosary for display in their home.

Today Jim and Cheryl are cancer free, and Michelle is experiencing improvement in her lung function. The Roys admit that, though they wouldn’t have sought what 2014 brought them, they know their confidence in God’s goodness, their gratitude and surrender to His will brought them to a place of grace.

Suffering often leads to joy, which essentially brings one to a place of appreciation in good times and bad, according to Jim. “People ask, ‘Why suffering?’ But this experience made us understand suffering and study it. I learned that suffering has a purpose and is necessary. Christ learned obedience through suffering.”

“The I want people to know that it’s okay to say ‘yes’ to suffering, because God will be with you on the journey,” Cheryl added.

High school students partner to support disabled

BY MARIAM SCHMITZ

The Bishop Luers High School, Fort Wayne, chapter of the National Honor Society has partnered with Easter Seals Arc of Northeast Indiana in a relationship that is giving both groups opportunities to grow and have fun together.

NHS recognizes outstanding high school students based upon their scholarship, character, service and leadership. According to the National Honor Society’s constitution, any NHS member “who fulfills the purposes of this organization can be eligible for membership.”

NHS recognizes such students for their contributions to society. However, during the 2014-15 school year, the chapter expanded their membership into the local disabled population in a variety of ways. It offers assistance with employment, recreation and education; in addition, there are eight group homes and a respite house for care during the day only. There is also a respite house for care during the night. In total, the agency serves about 630 clients.

Luers NHS members are primarily helping with recreation services. These include bowling, basketball, shuffleboard and ballroom dance. A special upcoming event is the Christmas dance for Easter Seals Arc clients. At the dance, students will help serve food, socialize with clients and give out gifts that were donated by various area organizations.

Becky Allegren, NHS moderator at the high school, said the partnership is helping students step outside of their comfort zone. “I think anyone you can expand horizons, it is beneficial.”

NHS board member and Luers senior Abigail Ulman said they are able to “directly interact with the people they are helping,” and that has led to positive feedback from NHS members. Ulman also said they found something they never thought they would be able to do, but that they are having fun.

Allison Diefenbah, special events and volunteer coordinator for Easter Seals Arc, said that the partnership with Bishop Luers is going well, and that the activities help clients get into the community and meet new people. It also helps them recognize that their disability does not control what they do, which in turn helps them grow.

Bishop Luers is currently the only Fort Wayne-area high school partnering with Easter Seals Arc. According to Diefenbah, the agency is always looking for extra hands to spend time with clients, and volunteer opportunities can be based upon one’s interests, hobbies and time available. For more information, visit www.easterseals.com/NEIndiana. To volunteer, contact Diefenbach at 260-456-4534, ext. 256 or adiefenbach@esarc.org.

Advent at St. John the Baptist

St. John the Baptist Catholic School, New Haven, formed its kindergarten through eighth-grade students into “faith family” groups this year. In December, the families worked on service projects and attended Mass together. The St. Adelaide family’s project was to make decorations with items for wildlife for a tree outside the rectorcy.
A special family gift

I had a special project I was working on for my family for Christmas this year. I’d been mulling over the idea for a long time and finally the day had arrived to just do it. It’s a time-consuming and personal gift — I can’t give the details, seeing as I’m still hoping it can be a surprise at some point — and I was very excited about putting the whole thing together. I thoroughly researched what I needed to do, gathered what I needed to gather and gave myself plenty of time to complete the task, I thought. Then, in an unexpected way this month, though — nothing tragic or particularly extraordinary, but just enough that I didn’t end up being as efficient and productive as I’d hoped to be in compiling this gift.

You see, eight of my nine children decided to come home for Thanksgiving, which thrilled me. It also entailed a whole bunch of home cooking. (My sneaky plan, since they have some grown adults and three have moved 2,000 plus miles away for work, is to put the effort into completing old-style, home-cooked, memory-inducing meals to reel them back in to this part of the country. So far it hasn’t worked, but I keep trying.)

When the kids come home I usually put together a little itinerary. Sometimes this is a Google document. Other times it’s in email form. I’ll outline proposed activities for the group, which is kind of tricky since the age range is so vast — 11 to 29. What happens is everyone writes back with suggestions for family-building group activities, times for such activities or mentioning something they need to do or someone they need to see. I’ve learned over the years to block out mornings for everyone to sleep, tend to personal goals and provide workout times. Dad usually cooks big breakfasts and people come and go to do their individual things. Planning ahead helps everyone in a big family to have this sense of togetherness, even if it being stilling, which is a real concern because A) There are so many of us, B) Four offspring are adults, who aren’t used to having someone else schedule their time, and C) Kids often perceive their parents in the evening. With this help, those parents are only trying to make things run smoothly. But I digress...

My point is, we had a wonderful Thanksgiving filled with hearty meals, good conversation and lots of bonding activity in the form of college basketball at night, a movie night and old-fashioned euchre games ... but it also naturally took away from any sort of possibility of working on my Christmas project for them.

Then, dear husband informed me he had a work trip to Kentucky planned for the entire next week. I have an amazing and helpful husband, which means when he is gone I am not only not my own: obviously, but I also miss the help he normally provides, including a great deal of driving and picking up kids in the evening. This help is not available, for the last week I have literally spent two hours daily at least, here and there, driving, just dropping off and picking up kids.

My daughters dance each year in their favorite Nutcracker, and rehearsals were heating up. Often, the girls’ rehearsal times did not match, so there were trips to purchase their needs for the show and extra trips back when pointe shoes unexpectedly “died” and black, not pink slippers were needed for the younger one just for one scene. A moment of panic ensued when reminding a shoe quickly proved impossible because of a manufacturer glitch. A revelation occurred that shellac would serve to stiffen the shoes in a pinch, so I squeezed in to the hardware store to get that, then painted the insides of the shoes. Twice.

During that same week, one of my high-school-aged daughters had the nerve to start running a fever, then became hugely sick. The first trip to the doctor indicated a severe sinus infection, but the antibiotic didn’t work, so a trip back was necessary. Poor thing. All I could do is bring her tea and empathize while handing her horse pills. Then came extra helping with...
Christmas martyria: The Octave of the Word Made Flesh

A striking feature of the Western church’s festal calendar is the cycle of memorials and feasts, which “fill out” the Octave of Christmas. Unlike the Easter Octave, which suffers the vagaries one would expect from a movable feast, the days following the Solemnity of Christmas are fixed and foolproof.

Stephen, John the Evangelist, the Holy Innocents and Thomas Becket adorn the days following the Solemnity of the Nativity. Even more interestingly, with the possible exception of John the Evangelist—who is the subject of some dispute within the Tradition—all are martyrs. How can one make fruitful use of this festal and sacramental convergence? The remote origins of Christian calendar is the cycle of feast days that grew out of the liturgical books of Maccabees, where martyrdom becomes sacrificial and the believer herself becomes, as it were, the temple in which she sacrifices the more. More presently, one encounters this phenomenon in the Book of Revelation, where persecution induces the castle-like intransigence in the face of the Imperial Cult forms the immediate context for John’s visions, as where a nascent Christian martyria is perhaps first articulated. On the heels of the Nativity, the Western church commemorates a number of witnesses who offer fitting and elegant testimony to the incarnation, for their very bodies their testimony to the reality of the Word Made Flesh is itself made incarnate.

The Matthean text appointed for the Mass of St. Stephen (10:17-22) is appropriate to the Feast of the Holy Innocents, in the face of opposition and hostility, should fearlessly witness to the faith. Stephen’s resolute conviction juxtaposed to his gentle demeanor toward his persecutors (Acts 7:60) reflects the Gospel’s call to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (Mt 10:16). Further, Stephen’s act of faithful witness to Christ is set within the context of false witness about him (Acts 6:15; 7:58). The Spirit who is promised by Jesus to direct the disciples in their encounter with hostility (Mt 10:20) is present in Stephen’s greatest trial (Acts 7:55; 59). Stephen is often called the “second martyr” in the Tradition as the proto-martyr. Yet for many of the first Christians, it is Christ himself who is the proto-martyr. This clearly is the teaching of the Book of Revelation, where Christ is referred to repeatedly as the “Faithful Witness” (no martyrs in his Pistis, Rev 1:5-7). All subsequent martyrs are conceived of solely in terms of his archetypical martyrdom. In the very early account of their martyrdom, Lyons and Vienne (c. 1778 A.D.), the imprisoned and tortured martyrs-to-be are adumbrated in eschewing the title “martyr.” Christ alone is worthy of that name.

The traditions regarding the demise of St. John the Evangelist are more muddled. While traditionally the Church has not commemorated him as a martyr—the only apostle so celebrated—some earlier traditions, derived perhaps from the witness of the second-century Bishop Papias of Hierapolis, suggest he, too, was martyred. Regardless, John’s witness to the Word Made Flesh is captured in the Book of Revelation, where he offers faith witness to the Word Made Flesh in the face of persecution. Indeed, the apocalyptic description of John’s witness in Revelation 1:1-18 is the chief scriptural witness (prophesia, v. 2) to the reality of the Word Made Flesh.

For irony appropriate for the author of the Fourth Gospel, the prophet appointed for Mass this day is an account of faith in the presence of the empty tomb (Jn 20:2-8), a faith all too remodeled by an absence of sense-data: the One heard, seen and touched is now more truly present as the object of faith, a faith irreducible to hearing, seeing and touching. As the early second-century martyr Ignatius of Antioch (+ 110 A.D.) wrote to the Roman Christians, Christ is all the more present to us now that he is with the Father.

The Holy Innocents offer yet another kind of witness to the Incarnation. Caught in the wake of Herod’s murderous political machinations, these nameless children fall victim to the profound insecurity that marks all earthly power (Mt 2:13-18). Their witness lies precisely in their seeming insignificance: nameless, faceless and obscure, they become the expendable collateral damage in Herod’s maniacal lust for power. The Office of Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours includes the slaughter of the children under Pharaoh (Exodus 1:18-22): “They are themselves types of a foreboding of the children murdered under Herod, from among whom another Deliverer will escape this time not from Egypt, but to Egypt.”

The second reading in the Office, taken from a catechetical sermon of the fifth-century doctor of the Church, Aurelius Quodvultudes of Carthage (+ 454 A.D.), sees these children as martyrs, witnesses to Christ, eloquent of the mystery of their inability to speak, carrying in their newly-formed and delicate little limbs the palm of victory given to victors. The paradox of the Incarnation is that God reveals and saves not through an exercise of power (and so imitate Pharaoh, Herod and all earthly and diabolical powers), but through humility. Born in the outskirts of an obscure village in a backwater province of the ancient world, the Word Made Flesh has identified himself with those in power, but with the weak; not with the famous, but with the nameless; not with the wealthy, but with the poor; not with the mighty, but few members of ancient society more vulnerable, more lacking in power, prestige and resources than children.

St. Thomas Becket (+ 1170 A.D.) is perhaps best known as the subject of T.S. Eliot’s 1935 play “Murder in the Cathedral,” which dramatized the events of Thomas’ friendship with, estrangement from and short-lived reconciliation with Henry II, king of England. The Gospel pericope appointed for the first day of the Octave (Lk 2:22-35) is in subtle contrast to the previous day’s passage from Matthew. Whereas the fourth day features the young and voiceless, in the Lucan narrative, an aged and articulate Simon of Cyrene offers his own witness to the newborn child’s destiny, one combining both promise and conflict.

Here, another aspect of martyrdom is captured: the opposition those who follow the Word Made Flesh are undoubtedly to encounter and indeed to suffer. Becket’s complexity, captured by Eliot, in his struggle to parse his obligations to his king, his Church and his conscience reveals that martyrdom is not reducible simply to physically violent opposition. The beginnings of martyrdom are found within the disciples, as one strives to remain a faithful witness to the faithful witness. Within early Christianity, Origen (+ 254 A.D.) and his contemporaries were fond of speaking of the Christian life as an agon, literally a struggle and resolve (intellectually and morally) in following Christ. Becket’s witness, his martyrdom, was but the culmination and consummation of this struggle to remain faithful in the face of internal and external pressures.

The Christmas Octave beautifully demonstrates the organic nature of the Christian community, in that the crèche and the cross can only be understood fully in terms of each other: The Word Made Flesh in Bethlehem is the Word Made Weak on Calvary, revealing the height and depth and breadth of the love who has given Himself so generously to us.
Physically challenged athlete clears hurdles on and off the track

BY RON BUSCH

There's a Norwegian saying that is fitting this time of year: "Shared joy is double joy." And as the joy of the Lord's birth is expressed this season, His people are often reminded of their blessings.

Thirteen years ago, Greg and Beth Peters were expecting twins. Due to complications the two babies were born early, on Dec. 23.

Grace Christine and Magnolia Anne Peters entered the world weighing less than two pounds each and were immediately placed in incubation. Grace Christine struggled, then passed away after only a few days, on Christmas morning. Meanwhile Magnolia Anne (Maggie) was given only a 10 percent chance of survival. That's where Maggie's story begins: with only a 1 in 10 chance of living.

Maggie responded to the care provided by her parents, doctors and nurses, as well as to the prayers offered for her and her family. She persisted through seven surgeries, eventually progressing to a normal weight and satisfactory health, and was allowed to come home and begin her young life.

Maggie's vision had been affected, however, by the extended use of oxygen in her recovery. She is legally blind, with no vision at all in one eye and 20/200 vision in the other. This presented a hurdle in her early education, but Maggie persevered. By third grade she had found a reliable way of reading by holding her book just an inch or two from her functioning eye.

Today Maggie is in seventh grade and enjoys reading very much and has even become a multi-sport athlete, participating in CYO track in the spring and, this year, swimming when track season is finished.

Fellow competitors, family and friends marvel at her appreciation for life. She refuses special attention at competitive events and prefers to be treated as just one of the team.

Maggie swims with Three Rivers Aquatics Club, even though she took up swimming just three months ago. Her freestyle relay team recently participated in the Christmas Card Invitational in Muncie, achieving a third place finish from which she proudly displays her first swimming ribbon. The Queen of Angels student is also a school cheerleader.

During track season she participates in sprints, relays and the long jump. One of her events is hurdles, which her mother thinks is an appropriate metaphor for the life of someone who finds a way to get over the many physical challenges that have come her way.

Currently, Maggie struggles with an autoimmune disease called alopecia, which has caused her to lose her hair. Because of her baldness, others often think she is undergoing chemotherapy. But Maggie refuses to wear a wig or get hair replacement treatments because she is satisfied with who she is. She accepts her hair loss as just another difficulty to be endured and conquered.

There are a few sports she's unable to participate in, like basketball or baseball, for the safety of her remaining eyesight. Not one to hold herself back, however, she enjoys drawing, art projects, gymnastics, even paddle boarding, kayaking and even surfing, when given the chance. Her attention to detail in her artwork and drawing is nothing short of amazing, given her limited vision. Another of her hobbies is knitting, and she's earned a family nickname of "Grandma Maggie" because she becomes engrossed in it. Recently she started on a blue and pink blanket.

Maggie has two younger brothers, 11-year-old Mason and 8-year-old Cooper. Beth, an English teacher at Bishop Dwenger High School, keeps the Serenity Prayer on her desk and often prays a Hail Mary as she contemplates the special gift that she and her husband have been given in raising Magnolia Anne.

Beth confesses that sometimes she feels unworthy to have

NAIA FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS — The University of Saint Francis football team returned to Fort Wayne Sunday evening, Dec. 18, and brought with them the 2016 NAIA National Football Championship. Saturday night the USF Cougars defeated Baker University 38-17 in Daytona Beach, Fla., to win their first national title. The win, supported by students, faculty, staff and Cougar fans, capped off a season that also saw Coach Kevin Donley win his 300th game and be named the NAIA Regional Coach of the Year. The university is planning a larger celebration on campus in January.
Winter ICCL keeps faith-based values at its core

BY ANDREW MENTOCK

Winter season for the Inter-City Catholic League is underway. The decades-old winter athletics roster consists of boys’ and girls’ basketball, as well as girls’ volleyball, for South Bend-area Catholic school students who are in fifth through eighth grade.

As the years have gone by, those involved with ICL agree that the level of overall talent in the league has improved. Often, the competitive environment that comes from such a rise in talent will cultivate poor sportsmanship; however, the men and women in leadership positions with the ICL have made sure the league keeps its core, faith-based values.

“My goal is to try to reinforce some of the values that kids get throughout the day in their Catholic schools,” said Ben Wiginton, vice president of the ICL board and president of basketball. “Whether they are interacting with an official or a coach, they should show them the same respect they are expected to show their principal or a teacher at school.”

An important way that these values are strengthened is from the prayer that each student is required to memorize and pray before every game or match.

“This year we’ve also encouraged the coaches not just have the students learn the prayer because it’s important to say the words,” said Wiginton, “but also to understand the message behind the prayer and what it talks about.”

The pregame prayer is important because it starts the players off by acknowledging their potential shortcomings and asking God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Sebastian, the patron saint of athletics, to help them put their best efforts forward and stay safe from harm, and for the strength to treat everyone, including their opponents, with respect.

“Not only does every game start with a prayer, but I hear a lot of prayers said by the teams in the locker rooms,” said Steve Baumgartner, who monitors the decades-old winter athletics program for St. Joseph, Marian high school wrestlers take to the mat

Saint Joseph High School 120-pound sophomore Vincent Frucci, top, is ready to pin 115-pound Marian freshman Nathan Samuels during a matchup of the two schools on Dec. 8 at Marian. Samuels was wrestling up one weight class. Frucci won by pin in 20 seconds, and Saint Joseph won the meet by the score of 60-15.

Mitchell Floran, top, a 158-pound Marian freshman, beat Saint Joseph 145-pound sophomore Alex Lee by a 10-3 decision during a matchup of the two schools on Dec. 8 at Marian. Floran was wrestling up one weight class. Saint Joseph won the meet by the score of 60-15.
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.

Trivia night planned
FORT WAYNE — St. Vincent de Paul Parish will have a trivia night Saturday, Dec. 31, from 9 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. in the Msgr. John Kuzmich Life Center, 1502 E. Wallen Rd. Cost is $10/person at the door. Teams of 10/table or sign up individually and be assigned a table. Groups may choose a theme, dress up and decorate to win a prize for the best table. Bring your own food and drinks. Sign up at www.saintv.org. All proceeds benefit seminarians of the parish.

Christmas concert to be offered
FORT WAYNE — The St. Vincent de Paul Christmas Concert and reception will be Tuesday, Jan. 3, from 7 p.m. in the church, 1502 E Wallen Rd. The concert will feature musicians of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic.

Frasatti young adult game night
FORT WAYNE — Catholic young adults, ages 18-39, the Frassati group is having a game night at Fort Wayne Frassati Young Adults.

Open house and tour planned
KENDALLVILLE — The 150th anniversary of Immaculate Conception Parish will be celebrated in 2017. An open house and tour of the beautiful church on Wednesday, Dec. 28, from 1-3 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. in the church, 301 E. Diamond St.

Day of Reflection
MISHAWAKA — A day of reflection will be held at St. Francis Convent (across from Marian High School) Wednesday, Jan. 4, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The theme for the day is “Peacemaking.” Bring a Bible. The cost of the day is $20 and includes lunch. Register by Dec. 30 to Sister Barbara Anne Hallman at 574-259-5427.

Polish, English Epiphany Mass
FORT WAYNE — A Polish Epiphany Mass will be celebrated Sunday, Jan. 8, at 1:30 p.m. at St. Mary Mother of God church, corner of Lafayette and Jefferson. Father Tim Wrozek will be the celebrant. A Prelude of singing of Polish Christmas carols (Koledy) will begin at 1 p.m. Light refreshments will be served after Mass. For information contact Jean Podzieninski at 260-432-2414.

Diocesan liturgical training scheduled
The Office of Worship has organized diocesan liturgical trainings on upcoming Saturdays in early 2017 for parish lectors and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. There is no charge to attend a training, but advance registration is required by mail or email. Lector trainings will be on Jan. 28 at St. Jude Church in Fort Wayne, and on March 4 at St. Jude Church in South Bend. Extraordinary minister trainings will be on Jan. 21 at St. Charles Church in Fort Wayne, and on Feb. 4 at St. Joseph Church in Mishawaka. The times and durations of the trainings vary. Visit www.diocesefwsb.org/Trainings-And-Retreats for more information.


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The Office of Worship has organized diocesan liturgical trainings on upcoming Saturdays in early 2017 for parish lectors and extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. There is no charge to attend a training, but advance registration is required by mail or email. Lector trainings will be on Jan. 28 at St. Jude Church in Fort Wayne, and on March 4 at St. Jude Church in South Bend. Extraordinary minister trainings will be on Jan. 21 at St. Charles Church in Fort Wayne, and on Feb. 4 at St. Joseph Church in Mishawaka. The times and durations of the trainings vary. Visit www.diocesefwsb.org/Trainings-And-Retreats for more information.
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-drawered 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.

“Et Verbum Caro Factum est, et habitavit in nobis. Deo Gratias!”

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

“A Ferverino for the Beatification of Solanus Casey
Mary, our mother, we ask you to intercede for us before your son, as you did at the wedding at Cana, that the beatification of the Venerable Solanus Casey may be brought about. We pray that through your intercession the Holy Spirit will bring his beatification about at this time so that we may be strengthened in our faith and filled with gratitude to God. Hail Mary...Glory be...”

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

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