



The

Criterion

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**Final
celebration**

Pope Francis venerates Apostle's relics, closes the Year of Faith, page 13.

CriterionOnline.com

November 29, 2013

Vol. LIV, No. 9 75¢

'Signed. Sealed. Delivered.'



Photo by Sean Gallagher



SIGNED.SEALED.DELIVERED.
2013 NCYC

Some 23,000 Catholic teenagers pray on Nov. 23 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis at the conclusion of the eucharistic prayer during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) held on Nov. 21-23 at the stadium and the adjacent Indiana Convention Center. Shown on the large screens above a stage on the floor of the stadium are Deacon Timothy Wyciskalla, left, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin and Father Patrick Beidelman. The theme of the conference was "Signed. Sealed. Delivered." For coverage of NCYC, see pages 3-5, 7-13 and 20. All coverage, including galleries of photos, can be found online at www.CriterionOnline.com.

In apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis lays out his vision for Church's mission of evangelization

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—In his first extensive piece of writing as pope, Pope Francis lays out a vision of the Catholic Church dedicated to evangelization in a positive key, with a focus on society's poorest and most vulnerable, including the aged and unborn.

"*Evangelii Gaudium*" ("The Joy of the Gospel"), released by the Vatican on Nov. 26, is an apostolic exhortation, one of the most authoritative categories of papal document. Pope Francis' first encyclical, "*Lumen Fidei*," published in July,



Pope Francis

was mostly the work of his predecessor, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

The pope wrote the new document in response to the October 2012 Synod of Bishops on the new evangelization, but declined to work from a draft provided by synod officials.

Pope Francis' voice is unmistakable in the 50,000-word document's relatively relaxed style—he writes that an "evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral!"—and its emphasis on some of his signature themes, including the dangers of economic globalization and "spiritual worldliness."

The Church's message "has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary," he writes. "In this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God

made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead."

Inspired by Jesus' poverty and concern for the dispossessed during his earthly ministry, Pope Francis calls for a "Church which is poor and for the poor."

The poor "have much to teach us," he writes. "We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voices to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them."

Charity is more than mere handouts, "it means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor," the pope writes. "This means education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free creative, participatory

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DOCUMENT

continued from page 1

and mutually supportive labor that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives.”

Yet he adds that the “worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. ... They need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith.”

Pope Francis reiterates his earlier criticisms of “ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation,” which he blames for the current financial crisis and attributes to an “idolatry of money.”

He emphasizes that the Church’s concern for the vulnerable extends to “unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us,” whose defense is “closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right.

“A human being is always sacred and inviolable, in any situation and at every stage of development,” the pope writes, in his strongest statement to date on the subject of abortion. “Once this conviction disappears, so do solid and lasting foundations for the defense of human rights, which would always be subject to the passing whims of the powers that be.”

The pope writes that evangelization entails peacemaking, among other ways through ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. He “humbly” calls on Muslim majority countries to grant religious freedom to Christians, and enjoins Catholics to “avoid hateful generalizations” based on “disconcerting episodes of violent fundamentalism” since “authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Quran are opposed to every form of violence.”

The pope Francis characteristically directs some of his strongest criticism at his fellow clergy, among other reasons, for what he describes as largely inadequate preaching.

The faithful and “their ordained ministers suffer because of homilies,” he writes, “the

laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them!”

The pope devotes several pages to suggestions for better homilies, based on careful study of the Scriptures and respect for the principle of brevity.

Pope Francis reaffirms Church teaching that only men can be priests, but notes that their “sacramental power” must not be “too closely identified with power in general,” nor “understood as domination”; and he allows for the “possible role of women in decision-making in different areas of the Church’s life.”

As he has done in a number of his homilies and public statements, the pope stresses the importance of mercy, particularly with regard to the Church’s moral teaching. While lamenting “moral relativism” that paints the Church’s teaching on sexuality as unjustly discriminatory, he also warns against overemphasizing certain teachings out of the context of more essential Christian truths.

In words very close to those he used in an oft-quoted interview with a Jesuit journalist in August, Pope Francis writes that “pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insistently imposed,” lest they distract from the Gospel’s primary invitation to “respond to the God of love who saves us.”

Returning to a theme of earlier statements, the pope also warns against “spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, [but] consists in seeking not the Lord’s glory but human glory and personal well-being,” either through embrace of a “purely subjective faith” or a “narcissistic and authoritarian elitism” that overemphasizes certain rules or a “particular Catholic style from the past.”

Despite his censures and warnings, the pope ends on a hopeful note true to his well-attested devotion to Mary, whom he invokes as the mother of evangelization and “wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones.” †



Pope Francis kisses a baby after his weekly audience in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on Nov. 6. In his first extensive piece of writing as pope, Pope Francis lays out a vision of the Catholic Church dedicated to evangelization, with a focus on society’s poorest and most vulnerable, including the aged and unborn.

Synod of Bishops questionnaire on the family and evangelization available for participation

Pope Francis has called for an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in October 2014 on the theme: The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization. Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin is inviting the faithful of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to take part in a consultation to help the bishops prepare for this synod.

The Holy See has issued a preparatory document and a series of questions to help determine the challenges to family and marriage. A questionnaire can be found on the homepage of the archdiocesan website at www.archindy.org or by going to www.archindy.org/synod.

The questionnaire must be returned to the archdiocese by Dec. 13. †

Criterion readers are invited to share their favorite Christmas memories for special December issue

The Criterion invites readers to submit a brief story about a special holiday memory for possible inclusion in our annual Christmas issue, which will be published on Dec. 20.

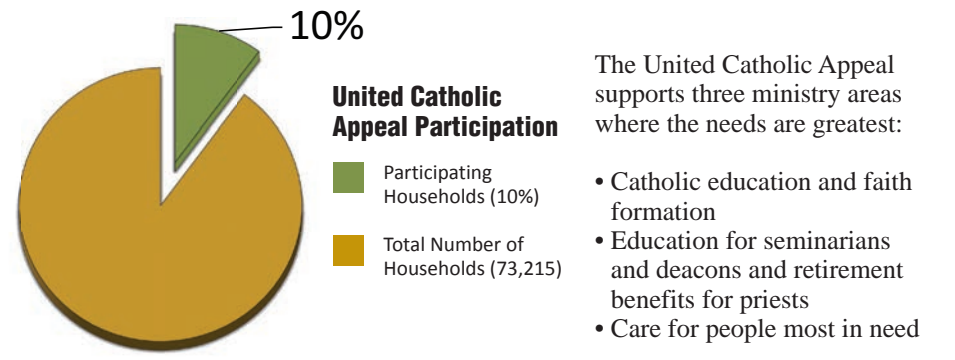
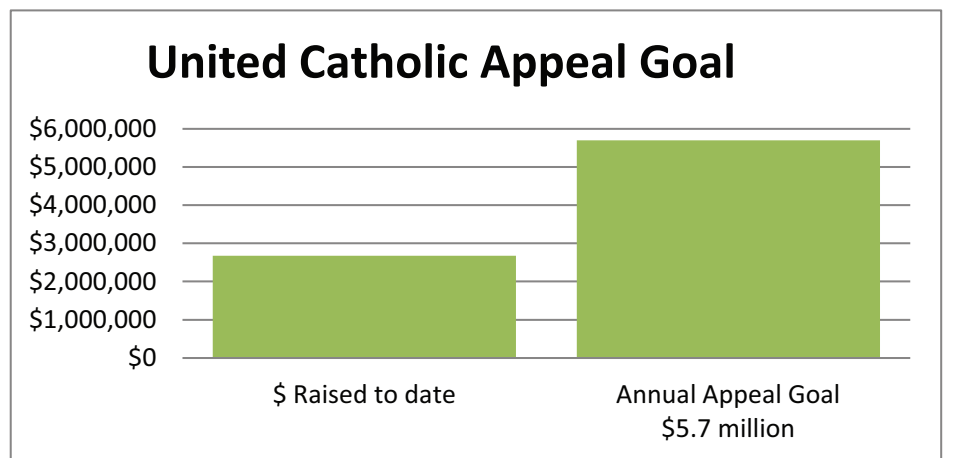
Your favorite Christmas story may be written about a humorous or serious topic related to your faith, family

or friends.

Submissions should include the writer’s name, address, parish and telephone number.

Send your story to The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202 or by e-mail to criterion@archindy.org by Dec. 11 †

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ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

Phone Numbers
 Criterion office: 317-236-1570
 Advertising: 317-236-1454
 Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1570
 Circulation: 317-236-1425
 Toll free: 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1425
 Price: \$22.00 per year, 75 cents per copy
 Postmaster
 Send address changes to The Criterion, 1400 N Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46206
 Web site: www.CriterionOnline.com
 E-mail: criterion@archindy.org
 Published weekly except the last week of December and the first week of January. Mailing address: 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46206. Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN. Copyright © 2013 Criterion Press Inc. ISSN 0574-4350.

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 E-mail us: criterion@archindy.org

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The Criterion (ISSN 0574-4350) is published weekly except the last week of December and the first week of January.
 1400 N. Meridian St.
 Indianapolis, IN 46202-2367
 317-236-1570
 800-382-9836 ext. 1570
criterion@archindy.org
 Periodical postage paid at Indianapolis, IN.
 Copyright © 2013 Criterion Press Inc.
 Postmaster:
 Send address changes to:
 Criterion Press Inc.
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Archbishop Tobin addresses youths as ‘parish of the U.S.’ at closing Mass

By Natalie Hoefler

For three days, the energy level of the 23,000 Catholic teenagers kept soaring.

Now their voices, raised in joyous song, filled Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis as wave after wave of nearly 400 bishops, priests, deacons and seminarians processed into the arena.

Tapping into that energy, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin began Mass with the trademark call and response that was often shared by the teenagers during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on Nov. 21-23. “NC!” he shouted. “YC!” the youths thundered in response. “NC!” the archbishop yelled again, raising a fist in the air. “YC!” the youths roared even louder.

Seconds later, a spirit of reverence and sacredness descended upon the stadium. No ordinary Mass in a common church building, this was the closing bilingual Mass held on the evening of Nov. 23—the climax of the three-day celebration of Catholic youths and the faith they embrace.

After the Gospel reading, silence pervaded the stadium as the archbishop made his way across the large circular stage in the middle of what is normally the playing field for the Indianapolis Colts.

In the presence of 12 bishops, 237 priests, 31 deacons and 90 seminarians—as well as the 23,000 teenagers—Archbishop Tobin offered his homily. “I believe it’s safe to say that tonight we formed the national parish of the United States of America,” he began, after opening with comments in Spanish. “Can you recall another occasion when there are people from all 50 states gathered around the Lord’s table in word and his sacrament? I can’t.”

Archbishop Tobin commented on two other events that marked the day—the ending of the Year of Faith, and the feast of Christ the King.

“Whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, we join our brothers and sisters across time and across space,” he said. “Tonight, in a particular way, we are part of a world parish, a parish that stretches across the globe as 1.2 billion Catholics bring to conclusion a year that was dedicated particularly to our faith.

“[Faith is] first and foremost knowing a person, and letting that person know us. That person tonight we call our king, Jesus Christ, the king of the universe, the king of our hearts.

“Calling Jesus our king means we belong to him and he belongs to us, but in a way different from any relationship between an earthly king and his subjects.

“We belong to the Lord. We are signed,

sealed and delivered,” Archbishop Tobin said, calling upon the “Signed. Sealed. Delivered” theme of the conference.

He explained to the 23,000 participants that being signed, sealed and delivered means avoiding the extremes of self-centeredness and detachment.

Regarding the first extreme, he said, “The world does not revolve around us. Life doesn’t revolve around us. We’re not here so others can serve us.”

Referring to detachment, Archbishop Tobin stated that “we are not people without faces. We are not orphans. We belong to the Lord.

“And because we belong to the Lord, the worst thing that could happen to us is not that we die, but that we forget we belong to the Lord.

“That’s why we need each other,” the archbishop continued. “To remind each other of the gift of God’s word, the gift of the sacraments and the gift of our community, and to remind us that whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

“We live as his servants and as his friends, and we show the world the beauty of belonging to Christ because we are signed, sealed and delivered.”

In addition to Archbishop Tobin, four other bishops proclaimed parts of the eucharistic prayer—Bishops Christopher J. Coyne, vicar general; Michael D. Pfeifer of

San Angelo, Texas; J. Terry Steib of Memphis, Tenn.; and retired Bishop Matthew H. Clark of Rochester, N.Y.

As the words of consecration were spoken, a murmur could be heard from the seats surrounding the altar—the voices of 237 priests joining in the centuries-old prayer.

The contrast between the boisterous enthusiasm of the youths during the three days of the conference and their prayerful composure after receiving the Eucharist was dramatic. Neither the knobby, hard plastic tile covering the field nor the solid concrete in the stands prevented the youths from kneeling in reverence.

As she prayed, 16-year-old Jordan Frederick of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis wiped away a tear that traced down her cheek.

One of the animators who helped energize the youths during general sessions, Jordan spoke of her tears as a sign of joy and sadness.

“I had gotten so close to the other animators,” she said. “We each had our own spiritual journeys [during NCYC], both as individuals and as a group.

“I was happy to experience that, but sad that it was my last day with them. But overall, I just felt so blessed to be a part of it.”

The event also left a lasting impact on John Washington of the Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska. Washington is a native Eskimo from a village of 400 people near the Bering Strait.

for healing, we set up four additional locations for young people to receive the sacrament and began recruiting any available priest to assist.

“At one time, we most likely had 75 priests offering the sacrament, and the lines were as long as what you would see at Wal-Mart on Black Friday. It would be impossible to assess the number who went to confession, but God provided the opportunity.”

That humble success set the stage for the closing Mass later that evening—another highlight of the conference for Scoville.

“With our Archbishop [Joseph W.] Tobin as the main celebrant, it was an amazing conclusion not only for the conference, but to close the Year of Faith,” she said. “The reverence, respect and engagement of the young people was evident during the Mass. And once the bishops and priests processed out, and all were dancing, clapping and singing in celebration, I thought, ‘It has all come together.’”

Scoville deflected any credit for the conference’s success. Instead, she praised the archdiocesan staff, the

National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, and the 600 local volunteers for making the conference possible.

“Volunteers included young adults who returned after having experienced an NCYC previously and who wanted to give back, seminarians for the archdiocese, adults who helped in 2011 and were touched by the lives of the young people they served, and even retired adults in scooters and wheelchairs wanting to offer their time, talent and treasure for the young Church.”

The magical feeling of the conference even continued into the day after the event for Scoville.

“As I was packing up on Sunday, in a now empty convention center, one of the security guards came up to me and asked, ‘Is it true that this conference comes back every two years?’ And I answered jokingly, ‘Yes, do you plan to put in for vacation on those days?’ And he responded, ‘No, ma’am, on the contrary, I plan to schedule myself to work it. It was great! The kids were great! It was all great!’

“His reaction was a true testimony of evangelization for our Catholic Church.” †

‘We live as his servants and as his friends, and we show the world the beauty of belonging to Christ because we are signed, sealed and delivered.’

—Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin



With 11 bishops from around the country listening, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin delivers a homily to 23,000 teens at the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 23 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.



Above, young Catholics from the Diocese of Charleston, S.C., hold hands during the Our Father at the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

Right, Jordan Frederick of St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis sheds tears of many emotions after receiving Communion at the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 23 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.



“It was amazing. It was thrilling. I was amazed at how many people were here. I’ve grown stronger in my faith. I can’t wait to share it with the rest of the world and in Alaska.”

After the final strains of the closing hymn sounded, the animators rushed to the stage for a final performance of Stevie Wonder’s 1970 hit—and source of the conference theme—“Signed, Sealed, Delivered, I’m Yours.”

A pandemonium of shouts, laughter, hugs and tears pervaded the stadium as the song continued.

Farewell words and embraces were shared as the participants departed, already anticipating the 2015 NCYC to again be held in Indianapolis.

In the meantime, experiences shared will be applied, said 16-year-old Hannah Svegal of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Minn.

“There were a lot of lessons I learned that opened my eyes to errors in my life that I didn’t even notice I needed to improve in,” said the first-time NCYC participant. “There’s so much higher I could go with my faith that I wasn’t even aware of.

“And seeing all of the different people bonding together, knowing there are so many Catholics my age, it’s really motivating.”

(For more photos of the event, log on to www.CriterionOnline.com.) †

Unexpected moments show the heart and the success of NCYC, organizer says

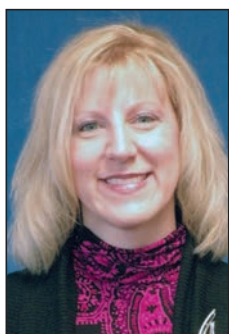
By John Shaughnessy

It was a moment Kay Scoville will never forget, a moment when all her planning for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis seemed to hit a major roadblock in one important area.

Yet all the qualities that Scoville showed in helping plan the event on Nov. 21-23—her attention to detail, her resourcefulness and her faith-filled concern for the 23,000 youths attending the conference—suddenly went into overdrive.

“The highlight of Saturday was discovering that the line for reconciliation was so very long that the set-up was not going to serve all those seeking the sacrament,” recalled Scoville, archdiocesan director of youth ministry.

“So moving into a ‘triage mode’ for all these souls looking



Kay Scoville



Rev. Msgr. Raymond T. Bosler, Founding Editor, 1915 - 1994

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Editorial



Photo by Sean Gallagher

Bishop John B. Brungardt of Dodge City, Kan., talks to a teenager during the sacrament of reconciliation on Nov. 21 during the National Catholic Youth Conference at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. Dozens of priests and bishops heard confessions of youths and chaperones for hours during the conference.

NCYC shows young people are eager to embrace their faith

There were hugs, handshakes and high fives shared throughout the weekend.

Lots of them. When you're among 23,000 of your peers having the time of your life, teenagers do that kind of thing.

And we can't forget the hats. Tons of hats. Upside down ice cream cones. Cowboy hats. Replicas of the Statue of Liberty on young people's heads. To view a photo gallery of them, log on to www.CriterionOnline.com.

But the 2013 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on Nov. 21-23 at the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis was about something bigger.

It was a three-day pilgrimage of faith for the young people, their chaperones, and the speakers, musicians, priests, bishops, deacons, seminarians and religious who participated during this journey where they had their lives of faith "Signed. Sealed. Delivered," the theme of the conference.

As Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin described it at the closing Mass, it was a gathering of "the national parish of the United States of America" that also coincided with the end of the Church's Year of Faith and the feast of Christ the King.

You couldn't help but feel energized—and hopeful—as you watched the teenagers soak in all they saw and heard during the three days, then shared their reflections of how it affected them as young people eager to have their lives of faith nurtured by the Church and its sacraments.

"For me, it was eye-opening," said Renee Gibney, 17, a member of St. Joseph Parish in Elkader, Iowa, in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

"You're at a higher God level," she said. "You really think more."

Matthew Benetiz, 17, a member of St. Celestine Parish in Elmwood Park, Ill., in the Archdiocese of Chicago, was just as energized.

"It's just great to see so many kids together in one spot, doing the same thing, trying to deepen their faith in God," he said, "getting closer to everyone and to God and all the saints."

If you think these young people only talk the talk, think again.

As in 2011—when NCYC was held in Indianapolis, too—teenagers stood

in long lines to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

The prayer chapel consistently had lots of young people visiting to pray or sit quietly in reflection.

And many of them attended not only the closing Mass but the regional liturgies held on Nov. 21 and 22 to receive the greatest gift of our faith, the Eucharist.

With the advances in technology we've had during these young people's lifetime, which translates into a constant news cycle, we are quick as a society to hear of the challenges and heartbreak so many of them face. Faith seems noticeably absent from the conversation.

What NCYC proves to us once again, as Catholics, is that many of our teenagers are hungry to learn more about God, what our Church teaches and why. It also proves why we need to continue to make it a priority to provide them catechetical opportunities that will bear fruit.

NCYC is a prime example of how to do this. Robert McCarty and his staff at the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, and Kay Scoville, director of youth ministry in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and her staff and local steering committee members, are to be commended for letting the Holy Spirit work through them to organize an outstanding faith-filled gathering.

But we also can't forget to thank the hundreds of volunteers who donated their time to help make the weekend memorable for our young Church and so many others.

Wondering what the future of the Church looks like? Katie Koehne, a youth minister at St. Joseph Parish in Elkador, Iowa, has a pretty good idea.

"The kids make NCYC. I look around here, and I'm surrounded by all these terrific youths and I truly see the future of the Church and the future of the world," she said. "It just really gives me a lot more confidence in the future of the world knowing that we have kids like this to carry on what we're doing."

More proof that today's young people love our Church and what it can bring to their lives of faith.

It is a faith they cherish, and want to learn more about to grow closer to God.

May we make the time to continue to nurture each and every one of their souls.

—Mike Krokos

Letters to the Editor

Morning Prayer is a great way to start your day in a centered fashion

Thank you for publishing John Fink's recent Year of Faith column on the Liturgy of the Hours in the Nov. 15 issue of *The Criterion*.

He educates your readers about the nature and value of lay participation in the Liturgy of the Hours, and I wanted to thank him for his advice. I also want to give your readers personal witness to the value and impact of his advocacy.

I first learned about Morning Prayer, a specific component of the Liturgy of the Hours, through an article that Fink wrote in *The Criterion* more than 22 years ago ("The breviary for laypeople? Yes, indeed" in the Aug. 30, 1991, issue).

I then began regular attendance at Morning Prayer every weekday, from 7 to 7:20 a.m., in the presence of the Franciscans at Sacred Heart Church on the near south side of Indianapolis. The timing and location were just right to finish prayer and start my work, then as a scientist at Eli Lilly in downtown Indianapolis.

After I took early retirement from Lilly and no longer had a need to travel

downtown in the morning, we started a Morning Prayer group in the Bosler Chapel at St. Thomas Aquinas Church at 46th and Illinois streets in Indianapolis. It meets every weekday from 7:30 to 7:50 a.m.

This December, it will be 10 years since we started our group. Anyone is welcome to join us at St. Thomas, on a regular or occasional basis, and become familiar with Morning Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours.

If our location and time is not convenient, I am sure the Franciscans would also welcome laypeople to their morning prayer at Sacred Heart. Interested individuals might also contact the Benedictine sisters at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove to see if they could attend their Morning Prayer. This is a great way to start your day in a centered fashion.

Thank you, John, for bringing Morning Prayer into our lives.

**Bill Scott
Indianapolis**

Constitution's Establishment Clause not meant to be controversial, reader says

As the Supreme Court today once again faces arguments regarding the real meaning of the U.S. Constitution's Establishment Clause, I remain astonished that such a simple, clearly stated statement is still so controversial.

The First Amendment reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free practice thereof," reflected an historical perspective of European citizens cruelly ruled by oppressive, church-dominated national governments. As such, this clause should be easily understood without much question.

The key word here is clearly "establishment," which by any sense of the English language implies a national, statutory requirement of allegiance to a specific religious belief with serious economic and personal well-being consequences for non-compliance.

The continuing arguments against school prayer, invocations asking God to guide our legislative deliberations, Christmas displays, asking a higher

power (however defined) for protection, etc. come nowhere close to violating this First Amendment clause because, most fundamentally, there is absolutely no national, legal mandate and no consequences for the non-believer.

It might be noted that more than one of our non-believer founders had no trouble with engraving supplication to God into our Declaration of Independence and other significant federal statements, some of which remain engraved on federal buildings to this day. Our current dilemma clearly derives from ignorance of European and national history.

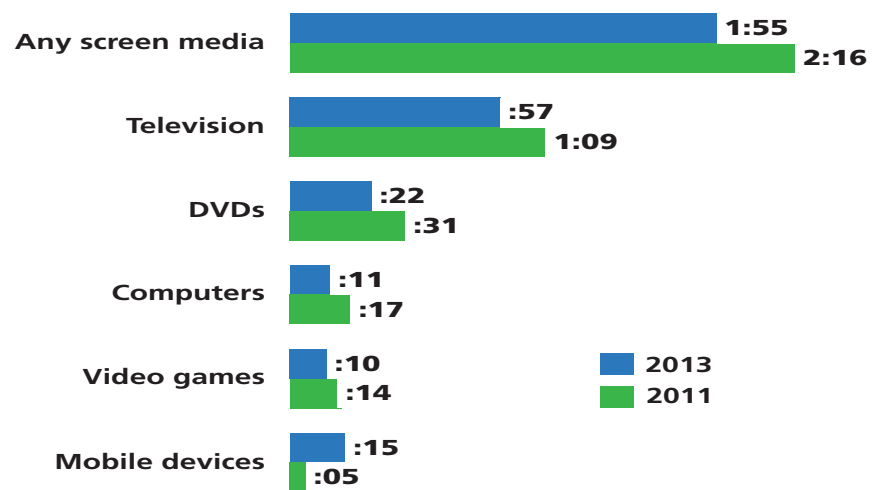
There are understandably atheists, non-Christians, Muslims, believers in celestial gods, tree huggers and others who may be offended by simple prayer to a higher power, but they suffer little consequence other than being offended.

Unfortunately for such, the U.S. Constitution does not guarantee a right not to be offended.

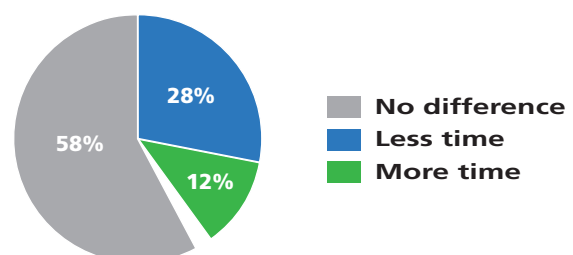
**David A. Nealy
Greenwood**

Media use among children 8 or younger

Average time spent per day using:



Percent of parents who say media cause them to spend more or less time with family members:



Source: Common Sense Media

© 2013 Catholic News Service

Baptism sets up life of 'fulfillment, purpose,' speaker tells youths

By Natalie Hoefler

When Stevie Wonder wrote his hit single "Signed, Sealed, Delivered I'm Yours" in 1970, he likely never imagined the words would form the



theme of a national Catholic gathering for youths.

But the words reinterpreted through the lens of faith formed a clear message to the 23,000 youths gathered for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC):

Signed—by the waters of baptism.
Sealed—by the Holy Spirit.

Delivered—from death into life.

The rain that fell outside Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 21 proved appropriate, with the opening general session focusing on baptism.

Through that rain, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin of Indianapolis processed with the Eucharist from St. John the Evangelist Church across the street to the Indiana Convention Center.

Xander Eisert of the Archdiocese of Louisville, Ky., 15, described the scene.

"We were in the lobby of the convention center. [Priests and seminarians] started walking in, group after group, and they were singing in Latin. Everyone was down on their knees, our hats were off. It was a really cool experience. I didn't expect that on the first day."

Xander was not the only one impacted by the procession.

"It was impressive to see that many priests in one area," said Luke Grant, 17, of the Diocese of Lansing, Mich.

"I hope to spend some time in adoration while I'm here. On the bus ride here, our guide talked about how there is a thin veil between God and man, and how in the Eucharist that veil is literally taken away, and you're in the presence of God. That's pretty cool," said Luke.

From the quiet of the adoration chapel in the convention center, the youths made their way to Lucas Oil Stadium for the music performances before the opening general session.

In the stadium, the teens swayed, clapped and even formed a conga line to inspiring songs by Grammy-award winning musician Israel Houghton, the energetic tunes of Grupo Huellas and the rap sounds of Righteous B.

Overhead, Twitter messages from participants flashed on several Jumbotron screens, statements of joy, excitement and anticipation from youths across the nation

yet all under one roof in Indianapolis.

The opening general session began with Catholic catechist, singer, musician and Two by Two Ministries co-founder Jesse Manibusan taking the stage as emcee for NCYC.

He and his wife, Jodi, led 23,000 youths through songs with hand motions and rounds of call and response that drew an enthusiastic participation:

"Who's the Church?"

"We are!"

"Where's the Church?"

"Right here!"

"What is the Church?"

"Welcoming to all!"

"That's how the world knows that we're ..."

"Signed! Sealed! Delivered!"

Manibusan introduced Catholic singer and songwriter Matt Maher. Thousands of teens rushed the stage as he opened with several of his popular songs.

After leading the crowd in an a cappella rendition of the hymn, "Here I Am, Lord", Maher shared his thoughts on the theme of "Signed. Sealed. Delivered."

On the Jumbotron screens flashed a picture of a young boy.

"That's my 2-year-old son, Conner," Maher said.

"Conner loves playing hide-and-seek. But he hates staying hidden. I'll close my eyes, count to 10 and say, 'Where's Conner?' And he'll say, 'Here I am!'"

"Baptism is about being found—by God," Maher continued. "It sets you up for a life of fulfillment, a life of purpose, a life of meaning."

"The problem is, sometimes we make a mess of it. We're covered in sin."

"Your expectation is that God has condemnation or shame for you. But he doesn't."

"This weekend, God wants to empower you, to help you realize how precious you are in his sight," Maher concluded.

Bishop Christopher J. Coyne, vicar general, offered closing remarks about the sign of a baptized disciple.

"There's going to be troubles in our lives, times when things don't go right," the bishop said.

"But I really think what marks us most as disciples is the joy of knowing that we're signed, sealed and delivered, of knowing from whom we come and to whom we go."

"Why would anyone want to join a sad Church?" Bishop Coyne asked. "Isn't that one of the best ways of being an evangelizer—to live the good life of faith, and to spread the Good News wherever we go that Jesus is Lord?"

Bishop Coyne blessed water that was



At the opening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 21, 23,000 participants sing and move to a song in Lucas Oil Stadium.



Above, Bishop Christopher J. Coyne addresses 23,000 youths during the opening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis in Lucas Oil Stadium on Nov. 21.

Left, singer, songwriter and musician Matt Maher speaks on the theme of 'Signed. Sealed. Delivered' during the opening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis in Lucas Oil Stadium on Nov. 21.

used throughout NCYC, then sent the youths off to "try to get some sleep."

Sleep seemed far from the minds of the energized teens.

For Mason Fisher of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, a first-time NCYC participant, the scene left an indelible mark on his mind.

"It is so powerful seeing all these people come together," he said.

Maya Johnson of St. Mark Parish in Indianapolis, also new to NCYC, agreed.

"I've never seen so many kids in one place," she said. "It's so inspiring and exhilarating. I hope this experience helps me to connect to God and to share my

faith with everyone."

As the thousands of youth made their way out of Lucas Oil Stadium, joyful calls were met with spirited responses:

"Who's the Church?"

"We are!"

"Where's the Church?"

"Right here!"

"What is the Church?"

"Welcoming to all!"

"That's how the world knows that we're ..."

"Signed! Sealed! Delivered!"

(For more photos of the event, log on to www.CriterionOnline.com.) †

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Events Calendar

December 1

St. Paul School, 9788 N. Dearborn Road, New Alsace. **School Commission Christmas breakfast**, Christmas music, 8 a.m.-noon, pictures with Santa, 9:30-11:30 a.m., free-will donation. Information: 812-623-2631 or jstonebraker@stpauledu.com

December 2-5

St. Joseph Church, 312 E. High St., Corydon. **Advent Parish Mission, "Give Me Your Heart and I Will Give You My Heart,"** Family of Jesus Father Philip Scott, confession, 6 p.m., mission, 7-9 p.m., Mass each day at 8:30 a.m. Information: 812-738-2742.

December 3

Marian University, Marian Hall, 1st Floor Conference Room, 3200 Cold Spring Road, Indianapolis. **Adult programs information meeting**, 6-7 p.m. Information: 317-955-6271 or jlee@marian.edu.

December 4

Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Solo Seniors**, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome. 6:30 p.m. Information: 317-370-1189.

December 7

St. Michael Church, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **First Saturday Devotional Prayer Group**, Mass, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, rosary, confession, meditation and petitions, 8 a.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

St. Matthew Church, 4100 E. 56th St., Indianapolis.

Advent organ recital, Travis Person, organist, 3:30-4:15 p.m. Information: 317-257-4297.

December 7-8

St. Lawrence Parish, 4650 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. **64th Anniversary weekend**,

Sat. 5 p.m. Mass; Sun. 8 a.m., 10 a.m., noon English Masses; 6 p.m. Spanish Mass. Information: 317-546-4065.

December 8

Seccina Memorial High School, 5000 Nowland Ave., Indianapolis. **Christmas music concert**, 3 p.m., no charge. Information: 317-356-6377 or daglowinski@seccina.org.

St. Michael Parish, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **"The Signs from God: Miracles and Their Meaning,"** 7-9 p.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

Helpers of God's Precious Infants, Terre Haute. **Mass at Carmelite Monastery**, 59 Allendale, 7:30 a.m., prayer in front of Planned Parenthood, 30 S. 3rd St., 9:30 a.m., prayer at St. Patrick Adoration Chapel, 1807 Poplar St., 10 a.m.

December 8-11

Most Holy Name of Jesus Church, 89 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. **Advent**

Mission, "God Are You On-Line?", Dominican Friar Father William Garrott, presenter, 6:45-9 p.m. each evening, rosary, mission talk, reconciliation, free-will offering. Information: 317-784-5454.

December 9

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **Advent dinner and concert**, 6-9 p.m., \$40 per person. Information: 317-545-7681 or cmcsweeney@archindy.org.

December 10

St. Paul Hermitage, 501 N. 17th Ave., Beech Grove. **Ave Maria Guild Christmas Party and Pitch-In Luncheon**, noon. Information: 317-888-5098.

December 12

St. Paul Catholic Center, 1413 E. 17th St., Bloomington. **Lessons and Carols**, 7-9 p.m., reception, 6 p.m., free-will offering. Information: 812-339-5561 or music@hoosiercatholic.org.

St. Mark the Evangelist Parish, Media Center, 541 Edgewood Ave., Indianapolis. **Hope and Healing Survivors of Suicide support group**, 7 p.m. Information: 317-851-8344.

December 13-14

St. John the Evangelist Parish, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Christmas City Sidewalks, Christkindl Village**, Fri. 5-9 p.m., Sat. noon-9 p.m. Information: 765-561-2924 or mnfish25@gmail.com.

December 14

St. Roch Parish, Family Life Center, 3603 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Single Seniors meeting**, 1 p.m., age 50 and over. Information: 317-784-4207.

December 15

St. Michael Parish, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. **"The Signs from God-Miracles and Their Meaning,"** 7-9 p.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

Catholic Community of Richmond, 701 N. "A" St., Richmond. **Charismatic prayer group**, 7 p.m. Information: dicksoncorp@parallax.ws.

December 18

Calvary Cemetery, Mausoleum Chapel, 435 W. Troy Ave., Indianapolis. **Christmas Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-784-4439 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

December 19

Our Lady of Peace Cemetery, Mausoleum Chapel, 9001 N. Haverstick Road, Indianapolis. **Christmas Mass**, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-8898 or www.catholiccemeteries.cc.

December 28

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Rosary procession**, following 12:10 p.m. Mass, pray and process through the streets of downtown Indianapolis. Information: faithful.citizens2016@gmail.com.

Retreats and Programs

November 29-December 1

Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. **"O" Antiphons Retreat**, Benedictine Fr. Columba Kelly, presenter. Information: 812-357-6585 or mzoeller@saintmeinrad.edu.

December 2

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Advent Faith Building Institutions (FBI), "Preparing for Christmas in the Footsteps of St. Francis and Pope Francis,"** Fr. Chris Wadelton, presenter, 5:15 p.m., \$30 per person includes dinner. Information: 317-788-7581 or benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

VIPs



Jerry and Margie (Schuster) Cahill, members of Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Beech Grove, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 28. The couple was married on Nov. 28, 1953, at Sacred Heart Church in Indianapolis. They are the parents of eight children, Christie Denzer, Anne Elliott, Cathy Huser, Helen Stephon, Ed, John, Mike and the late Tom Cahill. They also have 31 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren.

Registration is open for young adult pilgrimage to annual March for Life

Registration is now open for those age 18-25 who want to join the archdiocesan Young Adult and College Campus Ministry pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., for the annual March for Life on Jan. 20-23, 2014. The pilgrimage, which costs \$220 per

person, includes transportation to and from Washington, D.C., two nights at a hotel, pro-life material and group gear. The deadline to register is Jan. 7, 2014. Log on to www.indycatholic.org for more details.

Moving sale at The Gift Shop at Providence Center through Dec. 15

The Gift Shop at Providence Center, a ministry of the Sisters of Providence at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, is having a moving sale through Dec. 15. During this time, everything in The Gift Shop will be on sale, with some items reduced as much as 75 percent. A long-awaited children's book about St. Mother Theodore Guérin will also be unveiled and orders taken. The Gift Shop offers Christmas ornaments, Nativity sets and other decorations in time for the holidays. The Gift Shop also offers inspirational music, fair-trade coffee, tea and chocolate, mementos from Saint Mary-of-the-Woods such as mugs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, trivets, sister-made items and much more. Because of the construction of

the permanent shrine of St. Mother Theodore Guérin and the renovation of Providence Center, The Gift Shop will be closed from Dec. 16 through Jan. 5. The Gift Shop will reopen on Jan. 6 in its new temporary location on the first floor of Owens Hall on the Sisters of Providence grounds at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, with similar shopping hours. Signage will lead shoppers to the new locale. During the sale, The Gift Shop will operate under its regular business hours, which are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Monday through Friday, and on the weekend from 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Call 812-535-2947 for more information, or log on to www.SPGiftShop.com, where some—but not all—items will be on sale.

Advent lessons and carols to be presented at Saint Meinrad Archabbey on Dec. 9

Seminarians from Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad will present an Advent lessons and carol service in the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church, St. Meinrad, at 7:45 p.m. CST on Dec. 9. The service, titled "From Eden to Heaven: The Story of Salvation," tells the story of Christ through Scripture

readings and singing hymns and carols. The service is expected to last an hour and 15 minutes and is free and open to the public. Parking is available in the Guest House and student parking lots. For more information, contact Mary Jeanne Schumacher at 812-357-6501.

Join French-speaking Catholics for Advent Day of Recollection on Dec. 7

The French-Speaking Catholics Ministry of the Multicultural Ministry of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis is hosting an Advent day of recollection in French at St. Malachy Church, 9833 E. County Road 750 N. in Brownsburg, from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Dec. 7. The theme is: "Marie apprend-nous à attendre et à recevoir Jésus" which translates, "Mary, teach us to wait and

receive Jesus." The event, led by the group's chaplain, Father Michael Hoyt, will include presentations, eucharistic adoration and Mass. Please bring your Bible. The cost is \$10, which includes breakfast and lunch. To register or for additional information, e-mail Dabrice Bartet and Marie Valèse at ccfindy3@gmail.com. Child care will be provided.



Domino Jesus

Mark Peredo, left, a member of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd County, and Bob Naville, a member of St. Mary Parish in Navilleton, pose on Nov. 23 in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis next to a portrait of Jesus made up of more than 7,150 dominoes in a pattern designed by artist mathematician Robert Bosch. Naville and Peredo directed more than 500 teenage participants in the National Catholic Youth Conference, held in Indianapolis on Nov. 21-23, in creating the portrait, which was unveiled on Nov. 23.

NCYC participants learn what it means to be adopted by God

By Sean Gallagher

“Signed, Sealed, Delivered” was the theme of the 2013 National Catholic Youth Conference held from Nov. 21-23 in the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas



Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

On the morning of Nov. 23, the

23,000 youths from across the country who participated in the conference reflected on and prayed about the “signed” part of that theme and its relationship to baptism during a general session held in Lucas Oil Stadium.

Bob Herron, director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, W. Va., spoke about

how those who are baptized are adopted children of God and that, together, they form God’s family.

Herron spoke about this belief out of his experience as the father of three adopted children.

At one point, he asked those in the audience who



Bob Herron

had been adopted to stand up. Then he explained how everyone who has been baptized has been adopted by God.

“We become adopted by God, who loves us from the first moment of our existence, when we become baptized and part of this Church,” Herron said. “So if you are baptized, you are adopted. So I ask you again, young Church, if you are adopted, please stand up.”

Everyone in the stadium stood up and

thundered their applause.

To help them appreciate their being a part of God’s family and to share that good news with others, Herron had conference participants take out their cell phones, take a picture of the tens of thousands that filled the stadium and then post it to social media.

“We’ve got a big family here,” Herron said. “And everybody knows what to do when you’re with your family. Get out your cell phones and get ready, because we are going to take the biggest family picture ever.”

Later, Herron reflected on how God’s family is enriched by the talents of each of its members.

“Our job, young Church, as a family, is to help one another see what gifts they have and then to help them live those gifts out,” he said. “Part of being a family, an adopted family, and living out our baptism means using those gifts and giving them back to God.”

Herron also challenged the teenagers to reach out in love and support to their adopted brothers and sisters who might be picked on or bullied in their schools or in other settings.

He invited the audience to pause and think of one person in that situation that they know.

“Think of that person,” Herron said. “When we become part of God’s adopted family and become a son and a daughter, we are called to love. I believe this. When Jesus died on that cross, he died for my sins. When he died on that cross, he died for your sins. And guess what, young Church—when he died on that cross, he died for that person that you were just thinking about now.”

“We are called to love and to reach out to those people, and pray for those people and to help them become part of the family



NCYC participants from the Diocese of Dodge City, Kan., take photos on Nov. 22 of the 23,000 youths gathered in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis listening to a presentation by Bob Herron, director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, W. Va.

of God that we are already a part of.”

Finally, Herron shared the story of his father who struggled with Lou Gehrig’s disease for years. Shortly before he died, the father shared an important life lesson with his son.

“He looked at me and said, ‘Bob, if I’ve learned anything through my dying it’s this: You cannot repay love. You only pass it on,’” Herron said. “My challenge to you, young Church, is to share that love with one another here and when you go home.”

“We are called, young Church, to share that love that God freely gives to us. In our baptism, he says, ‘I love you,’ and he pursues you with reckless abandon. He pursues you constantly. He doesn’t ask you, though, to repay that love. He asks

you to pass it on.”

The Nov. 22 morning session in Lucas Oil Stadium ended with a prayer service led by Bishop Mark L. Bartchak of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Pa. It featured bishops attending the conference going throughout the stadium and blessing the conference’s participants with holy water as a reminder of their baptism.

“I love the communion of saints,” Bishop Bartchak said. “Not only the ones that are in heaven. But I’m looking around this place today, seeing that we are filled in this place with living saints.”

“You are part of the communion of saints. And so we pray with and through and for each other. What a wonderful communion to belong to, because we are adopted children of God.” †

Faith forms bedrock of who they are, say youths

By John Shaughnessy

In one moment, the hope for the future of the Catholic Church in the United States could be seen in the eyes and the hands of Sarah Bishop and Carmen Miller.

That moment occurred as 23,000 youths from across the country met in Indianapolis for the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21-23—a three-day event that featured Mass, workshops, musical performances, eucharistic adoration, and a theme park inside the Indiana Convention Center filled with fun activities, service opportunities and a wondrous, widespread wearing of crazy hats by the Catholic teenagers.

As the action in the theme park whirled around them, Sarah and Carmen kept their focus on the face of Christ—the face they had helped shape from their small part of the 2,000 pounds of clay that event organizers had set up for the youths to create images of their faith.

Strangers to each other until just hours before, Sarah and Carmen worked side by side, using sculpting tools to create a crown of thorns for Christ’s head. Then they sculpted his beard, his eyes and his facial features.

As they added the final touches to Christ’s face, they each also shared how God had touched their lives in the past year—a year marked by heartbreak for Sarah.

“My faith means everything to me,”



Sarah Bishop, left, and Carmen Miller of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis work together to sculpt a clay image of Jesus during the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 21.

said Sarah, 17, a member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in New Albany. “I’ve always loved everything in my faith. And I’ve always looked toward it in the tough times of my life. For a while earlier this year, I drew back from my faith when my father died in February. I was mad at God, asking him why he would take my best friend.”

“Then all these other good things happened. I was able to come here. I was accepted into a good college. I’ve learned that God always has my back, even if it’s a different solution from what I wanted.”

Carmen looked at her new friend and nodded sympathetically. Even though she is from the same parish as Sarah, they had never met before they became roommates during the youth conference.

“My faith is what I lean on,” said Carmen, 17. “If I didn’t have my faith, I don’t know what I’d do.”

The embrace of faith echoed loudly during the large, general meetings of the youth conference when the 23,000 participants came together at Lucas Oil Stadium for sessions that mixed music, faith, stories and celebration. Still, the depth and the essence of faith came through louder and more profoundly in the quiet moments when individual youths talked about their faith.

In one moment, Anthony Washington Jr. smiled and laughed with his friends from New All Saints Parish in Baltimore, Md., as he had his picture taken with a life-sized, cardboard image of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. In the next moment, the 17-year-old turned serious as he talked about his faith.

“It’s how I live my life from the smallest choices to the biggest choices,” said Anthony, who wore a T-shirt emblazoned with this verse from Psalms 127:30, “Children are a gift from the Lord. They are a real blessing.”

Anthony looked around the Indiana Convention Center swelling with people his age and noted, “It’s a good feeling to be part of all these people who feel the same way about our faith. I’ve never been to anything like it.”

Alli Kiss had the same feeling as she sat at a craft table, shaping a cross from a small piece of reddish-brown clay.

“It’s eye-opening to see how big the Church is,” said Alli, part of a group from the Diocese of Charleston, S.C. “It’s not just our parish. It’s not just our diocese. People are coming together from all over the country for one sole purpose—to celebrate Jesus Christ and grow deeper in faith.”

She paused before adding, “My faith means everything to me. I would be nowhere without Christ in my life. We should all live our lives serving God on Earth and trying to get to heaven.”

The youths’ display of faith at the conference touched the hearts of the adults who joined in the celebration with them.

“It really gives me a great deal of encouragement as I see the young Church alive and well, dedicated to Christ and in love with one another,” said Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of the New Orleans Archdiocese.

At the area where Sarah and Carmen worked on sculpting the face of Christ, Dave Gehrich watched the efforts of the two teenagers.

An adult volunteer in that area, Gehrich had started the head of Christ before Sarah and Carmen asked to take over. Gehrich looked at the two new friends. He looked around at the youths passing by him, some wearing halos, other wearing hats featuring a cow, an upside-down ice cream cone, a piece of corn on the cob, or even a piece of pumpkin pie topped by a dash of whipped cream.

For Gehrich, it was hard not to notice the way the youths embrace a spirit of fun and joy. It was equally hard to overlook the way they embrace their faith.

“You see them and talk to them and it reminds you of the bigger picture—the continuation of our faith,” said Gehrich, youth minister at St. Maurice Parish in Decatur County and St. John the Evangelist Parish in Enochsburg.

“When you wonder if the Church and the faith is going to continue, this lets you know it will.” †

Youths share the advice that guides their lives

By John Shaughnessy

A message board inside the theme park of the National Catholic Youth Conference offered the 23,000 participants an opportunity to add their thoughts to this theme, “How I Choose to Live Life at Its Best.”

The answers that the young Catholics from across the country wrote on brightly-colored, adhesive notes also offered an opportunity to view their visions and approaches to life.

Here are some of the thoughts that Catholic teenagers shared on the message board inside the Indiana Convention Center during the conference on Nov. 21-23.

- “Be joyful.”
- “Live your life. Never give up.”
- “Love as Jesus has taught us.”
- “Don’t worry. God has your back.”
- “Allow someone to love you.”
- “Forgive the mistakes made in the past.”
- “Always be yourself.”
- “Accept everyone for who they are.”
- “Keep your friends close. They care about you.”
- “Treat your body with respect.”
- “Always laugh.”
- “You are amazing. Don’t let anyone tell you different.”
- “Don’t worry about tomorrow. Do what is meant for today.”
- “Love as God would love you.” †

The spirit of two girls helps the faith of others soar

By John Shaughnessy

He moved to the stage with the strut and the swagger of joyful New Orleans.

As the music soared and brightly-colored umbrellas danced above the heads of a group of teenagers, Ansel Augustine flashed a smile that was almost as bright as the bling on his fingers and the sparkling gold-



white-and-black boots he wore.

On stage, the celebration continued as the

longtime youth minister led the youthful Psalm 119 Step Team from the Archdiocese of New Orleans in a rousing, stomping dance number that brought the 23,000 teenagers inside Lucas Oil Stadium to their feet, cheering.

Yet even with all that strut and swagger, perhaps the most lasting impact that Augustine made on the participants of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) on the early morning of Nov. 23 came through the spirit and the substance of two stories he shared.

Augustine's first story focused on a group of men hustling through an airport after a business trip, trying to make a flight home that was ready to leave.

"They're running through the airport and one of them accidentally knocks over this little girl's fruit stand, fruit going everywhere," began Augustine, director of the Office of Black Catholic Ministries in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

All but one of the men made the flight, Augustine noted.

"He called his wife and said he'd be late. He went back and saw this young girl hopelessly on the floor, groping for fruit, people ignoring her, and no one there to care for her.

"When he walked up to her, he started helping her grab the fruit when he realized something. He realized the young girl was totally blind."

The man spent the next several minutes putting the fruit stand back together

for the girl.

"At the end of doing all this, he gave her \$40, took all the damaged fruit away, and said, 'I hope I didn't spoil your day too badly.' As he looked at her, he saw tears streaming down her face."

By this time, he had to leave to book another flight.

"As he walked away, the girl said, 'Mister!' He stopped, turned around and looked into her eyes. And the girl asked this question, 'Are you Jesus?'"

"He didn't answer. He didn't know how. But that question was burning in his heart all the way home."

As the once rocking stadium turned silent, Augustine paused before asking the Catholic youths a question.

"NCYC, young Church of today, are you Jesus? Can people mistake your life so much so as that of one of Christ? The way you treat one another, how you act, can people say, 'That's a follower of Christ'? Or do you just go with the flow? Are you scared to step up and speak out in the name of Jesus?"

"If we were to pull up your Facebook page, your Instagram page, your Twitter, would you be proud of what you are representing? Young people, our Church needs you. My challenge to you is to check yourself. As you do, find those areas of your life where Christ may be vacant. Bring him in, and let us know who you are and whose you are."

Augustine's second story focused on a father and a daughter.

One of their common bonds was fishing together, and they were just heading home from a day when they had caught a bounty of fish. As they headed back to the pier in a row boat, the daughter told her dad, "I bet I can beat you to the pier if I swim." The dad let her.

"She jumped in the water and started swimming as hard as she could," Augustine told the teenagers. "Trying to make his daughter feel good, the father started rowing real, real slow. As the daughter started swimming harder, he started



Holding a large crucifix, Ansel Augustine, left, talks with National Catholic Youth Conference emcee Jesse Manibusan during his presentation at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on the morning of Nov. 23 in Lucas Oil Stadium.

noticing ripples in the water behind her. He started rowing a little faster. All of a sudden, an alligator's head popped out of the water.

"The father starts screaming and shouting, rowing as fast as he could, but the daughter couldn't hear him because she's swimming so hard. The alligator is getting closer to her."

In the frantic seconds that followed, the father made it to the pier while his daughter was just feet away from reaching it. The dad told the daughter to jump to him.

"She jumped into her father's loving arms. Unfortunately, the alligator jumped, too, and he clamped onto the girl's legs. Immediately, a tug of war happened. The father tried to pull the daughter out, and the alligator tried to pull the girl in."

At the same time, a farmer was driving by, saw the struggle, grabbed his shotgun and fired at the alligator, killing it.

Augustine continued the story by focusing on a moment a few years later when a reporter came to visit the girl in the hospital—as part of a "where are they now" story. By then, the girl had reached the point where she was walking again.

"At the end of the interview, the reporter

turned off the tape recorder and asked if she could see the girl's scars. The little girl hopped on her hospital bed and pulled up her gown. Her legs were twisted and mangled from the alligator's teeth, the years of surgery and the years of rehab."

The reporter was embarrassed that she had asked, but the girl said, "Don't worry about it. Do you want to see my cool scars?"

The reporter was confused. She said, "Cool scars? Well sure."

"The little girl jumped up on the hospital bed, rolled up her sleeves, and there were all kinds of scars up and down her arms. The little girl said, 'These are my cool scars because this is where my father refused to let me go.'"

Augustine let the emotion of those words sink in for the teenagers.

"For many of us here, we walk around with scars. We have our own issues, our own trials, our own tribulations, our own problems. But I came here to remind you that Jesus refuses to let us go. He is there with us."

Augustine paused again.

"Never forget who you are. Never forget whose you are." †

Best Catholic pick-up lines and stories of love, help speaker connect with thousands of youths

By John Shaughnessy

The laughter of 23,000 teenagers roared through Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

Jackie Francois had just shared the two favorite pick-up lines that she heard a guy use on a girl at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC).

The first pick-up line she shared with the crowd was, "Girl, if I had a rosary bead for every time I thought of you, I'd have a glorious mystery."

As the laughter eventually died down, Francois said, "My other favorite is this one: 'Girl, I would say God bless you, but clearly he already has.'"

Even Francois laughed again at that line during her keynote presentation on the evening of Nov. 22.

"But seriously, we were made for love," said Francois, a full-time speaker, singer/songwriter and worship leader from Orange County, Calif. "That's why



Speaker Jackie Francois talks about love during her presentation on Nov. 23 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

we do these silly things. That's why we're so attracted. We were made for a love that is free, total, faithful and fruitful."

And the source of that desire to give love and experience love is God, Francois told the teenagers.

"It makes even more sense that we were made in the image and likeness of God as male and female. Why? Because love is never just one. Love is never just in solitude. Love always has the lover, the beloved, and the love between them.

"Now here's the truth. God wants us to share in his love so he gives us the Holy Spirit who is love. God gives us the Holy Spirit so we might truly be free."

She then shared two stories of how the Holy Spirit's influence shaped lives, starting with the story of an 11-year-old girl whose actions led her to sainthood—St. Maria Goretti.

"She was 11 when a man attempted to rape her. As he was attempting, she yelled out, 'Please don't do this. You will have mortal sin on your soul, and you will go to hell.' The man took out a knife and stabbed her 14 times, and she died.

"The man was sent to prison. And in his prison cell, St. Maria Goretti appeared to him and said, 'I forgive you.' And by the power of the Holy Spirit, that man had a huge conversion, and his life was changed."

The man even attended St. Maria Goretti's canonization with her mother, Francois told the teenagers.

"Can you imagine that? Her mother said, 'If Maria forgives you, so do I.' It's only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can do these kinds of things, that we can forgive someone who hurts us."

She then shared the story of a young man who had to forgive himself.

"There was a young man, raised

Catholic, who when he was in college was very involved in campus ministry," she began. "He had thought, 'I'm going to wait until marriage to have sex.' This young man started dating this girl, and she wasn't very much into her faith. One thing got pushed further and further. And sure enough, he lost his virginity.

"He started rejecting the Holy Spirit and started to be a slave to his sin. For two years, he was in this relationship that was crippling him. At some point, a friend said to him, 'Are you even happy?' He said, 'No, I don't like myself. I don't like who I am.' The Holy Spirit listened to his heart, and this guy decided to break off the relationship."

The young man also decided to enter a seminary, to consider a vocation he had thought about earlier in his life.

"In seminary, the healing started to begin," Francois told the crowd.

"He grew into the man of God he was supposed to become. Ironically, when he was in seminary after three years, he realized he was called to marriage. And three months ago, I married that man."

As the crowd cheered, Francois smiled.

"I am so glad that he told the Holy Spirit, 'I don't want to be a slave to sin no more.' Because the man I married is an amazing man of God, a man who walks with the Holy Spirit, a man who I go to Mass with, adoration with, and pray the rosary with. A man who is truly a new creation."

That's the hope and the challenge that Francois shared with the teenagers.

"God is asking you today, 'Are you going to say yes?'"

"If we truly say yes to the Holy Spirit, his gifts will allow us to set the world on fire with God's love." †

Souvenir shirt slogans fit the Catholic faith to a 'T'

By John Shaughnessy

Teenagers often express themselves through the messages on the T-shirts they wear.

So it was fitting that T-shirts that captured thoughts about the Catholic faith were once again among the most popular souvenirs for the 23,000 teenagers who attended the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 21-23.

Here are six of the Catholic "messages" that were displayed on T-shirts at the conference:

"Keep Calm and Offer It Up."

"Lifeguard. Mine Walks on Water."

"Got Mystery? Joyful. Luminous. Sorrowful. Glorious."

"Thou shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Wi-fi."

"Who's your hero?" (T-shirt showed a lone image of Christ on the cross.)

"Can't Beat The Real Thing—The Catholic Church." †



T-shirts display inspiring faith messages at Inspiration Junction during the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 23.

Teens explore priestly, religious vocations during NCYC

By Sean Gallagher

Tens of thousands of teenagers from across the country weren't the only people who made their way to Indianapolis for the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC), which took place on Nov. 21-23 in the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium.



Some 216 representatives of 62 religious communities in the United States also participated in the biennial Catholic youth event.

They interacted with teens in a variety of settings in two large exhibit halls in the Indiana Convention Center that had been turned into a thematic park called "Inspiration Junction." It was a place where Catholic teens could create arts and crafts projects, put together meals for those in need, listen to Catholic musicians sing or pray in a variety of settings.

Representatives of different religious communities worked together in groups as they helped the teens in the thematic park.

Sacred Heart Brother Ronald Hingle of Baton Rouge, La., chairman of the board of the National Religious Vocations Council, stood in the midst of Inspiration Junction on Nov. 21 and liked what he saw.

"We want to promote all of religious life in the Church," Brother Ronald said. "That's why we need to work together. We truly are collaborating, and we're presenting the broad spectrum of religious life in the United States."

Two years earlier at NCYC, religious orders had booths in one part of the connected exhibit halls. Brother Ronald thinks the changed approach this year reflects the place of religious life among the faithful.

"Religious are, by our lifestyle, to be leaven in the Church," he said. "We're to be part of the Church and not separated from it. So we're trying to be all throughout the entire thematic park and the entire conference, as opposed to being separated and segregated."

Katie Allie, 16, of Cornelius, Ore., first attended NCYC two years ago. She saw the change in how religious were a part of the event this year.

"A lot of the kids get to interact with them rather than just hearing information from them [at booths]," she said. "They're also getting to do arts and crafts with them, and experience a little bit of what they have to offer. It gives them more of an impression."

That impression was able to be shaped in a special way in the thematic park at "Vocations Got Talent." Throughout the three-day conference, seminarians, deacons, priests and religious showed off their talents and shared their vocation stories in an area organized by the vocations office of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and religious orders in central and southern Indiana.

Archdiocesan vocations director Father Eric Augenstein said "Vocations Got Talent" showed the teens at the conference that people who discern a priestly or religious vocation have multifaceted lives beyond the ministries that they might see them involved in.

"They're able to continue to do the things that they love,



Above, Transitional Deacon Daniel Bedel, a member of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Enochsburg, left, plays the violin on Nov. 22 for Guillermo Caballero, second from left, a seminarian of the Diocese of Little Rock, and teenage participants at the National Catholic Youth Conference held at the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

Right, Bishop Paul D. Etienne of Cheyenne, Wyo., left, discusses on Nov. 23 his vocation and the phone call he received where he learned he was named a bishop with Father R. Tony Ricard, a priest of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, at the Archdiocese of Indianapolis' "Vocations Got Talent" venue.



like skiing, playing the violin, beekeeping or walking on stilts," Father Augenstein said. "We have a nun who walks on stilts. We have a brother who does juggling."

Frances Seaton was attending the conference from Owensboro, Ky. After listening to transitional Deacon Daniel Bedel of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis play the violin, she talked about how she has an aunt who is an Ursuline sister and a cousin who is a priest. She is considering religious life herself.

"I know that they're just regular people. They're awesome, too," Frances said. "It's great to see them not just at the altar because I think a lot of people think that priests and seminarians just do [ministry]. But they're really awesome people, and have awesome talents to share with us."

Teens at NCYC who wanted to have conversations with the religious at the conference could go from the often raucous thematic park to a quiet corner of the Vocations Nook, furnished with couches and easy chairs.

Alexandra Desrosiers, 16, of Belleville, Ill., chatted with Brother Ronald in the Vocations Nook. She

appreciated how the religious at the conference were available to the teens and that a lot of teens were talking with them about vocations to consecrated life.

"I think it's really cool because, personally, you think of Church figures as people you really can't talk to," said Alexandra. "Seeing them here interacting with all of us and explaining to us about what they do is really nice."

"I think that it's nice that a lot of people are open to the fact that they might be called to something in the Church. It's really cool."

Alexandra was joined in her appreciation by Providence Sister Theresa Clare Carr who stood in the middle of the thematic park taking in the thousands of teens who made their way through the exhibit halls, often taking time to chat with her and other religious.

"It's been very heartwarming to see so many kids," Sister Theresa Clare said. "When we approach them, they're all smiles. They're happy to be here. We've met so many, from Connecticut and Baltimore to New Mexico and California."

"If we can plant a seed now, that's what counts." †

Young people from coast to coast experience forgiveness during NCYC

By Sean Gallagher

The happiness of Rachel Moos shone out clearly through the smile on her face as she left a conference room where dozens of priests and bishops were hearing confessions during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) held on Nov. 21-23 at the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

"We were going to go to another [session], and it was full," said Rachel, 16, of South Vienna, Ohio. "So I decided that I wanted to go to confession. Here was God giving me the chance. And it was a relief because I hadn't gone since my first Communion."

"I had wanted to for quite a while. I needed to get this



Father Rick Ginther, pastor of St. Patrick and St. Margaret Mary parishes, both in Terre Haute, hears the confession of a National Catholic Youth Conference participant on Nov. 22 in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.

stuff off of my chest."

She paused and added, "I feel really happy right now."

The joy that was the fruit of the sacrament of reconciliation at NCYC wasn't experienced by the teenagers alone.

Father Clement Davis, pastor of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, drove an hour to Indianapolis to hear confessions on Nov. 22.

"It's great to see people in this number, and having a really close encounter with Christ," he said. "They really are coming to grow closer in their relationship with Christ. And the sacrament helps them with that. It's inspiring. I get goose bumps when I think about it because I'm there. I'm part of that process."

Bishop John B. Brungardt of the Diocese of Dodge City, Kan., signed up for six hours of confession during the conference.

"It's great," Bishop Brungardt said. "Mercy and forgiveness is a beautiful gift for the young people. It gives them great hope. All are welcome."

Luke Hassler, a seminarian for the Evansville Diocese and a junior at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis, assisted conference participants in making their way to priests and bishops in the confession room. The regular flow of teens preparing to confess their sins encouraged him in his vocational discernment.

"It reflects how our young Church responds to God's mercy," said Hassler. "It's amazing seeing everybody come together and seeing what the young Church is like."

The numbers of teens availing themselves to the sacrament of reconciliation during the conference was a help to Luke Santiago of Kualapuu, Hawaii.

"I felt intimidated at first," said Luke about the idea of going to confession. "But then it made me feel more comfortable because there were kids my age [going to confession]."

It's [also] really encouraging to see all of those priests giving time to help students like myself to confess to them."

The hushed conversations in the confession room stood in contrast to the singing, laughter and cheers that filled other conference rooms during NCYC. A similar quiet atmosphere pervaded a nearby chapel where a holy hour of eucharistic adoration took place on Nov. 22.

Many teens who received sacramental absolution in confession made their way to the chapel, a converted conference room, where they prayed and did their penance.

Devin Gutierrez of Dallas appreciated the quiet of the chapel.

"You're praying to Jesus," she said. "You're kneeling before him and giving your thanks to him, giving him all that you are. It's quiet. You can think. You can pray without all the noise, the laughter, the screaming."

Wearing an "I'm forgiven" sticker, Rachel Moos reflected on how the outwardly intense general sessions in Lucas Oil Stadium flowed to the inwardly profound experience in confession.

"You're coming down from this crazy high," she said, "and you're getting back down to the part where [you say to yourself], 'This is what I have done. I need somebody to listen and forgive me and help me get back to where I was.'"

Having experienced the power of confession after being away from it for a number of years, Rachel said there was more to the numbers of teens at NCYC going to confession than just a form of positive peer pressure.

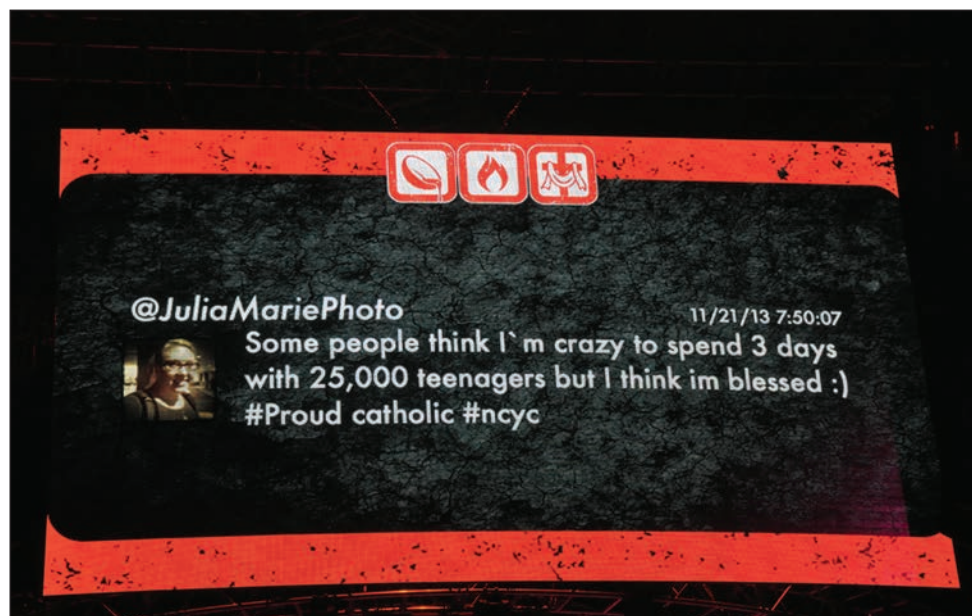
"We're all similar. We're all in this Catholic faith. It's so empowering," she said. "We all have sins. And we all want to feel that we can be forgiven. Sometimes it's hard to feel that way. And to be forgiven and know you are being forgiven is really great." †



Haley Beierwaltes, left, Eva Hagman, Amanda Durava, Catherine Mazur and Shawn Durava, all of Niles, Ill., in the Chicago Archdiocese, sing and clap hands at the start of the Nov. 23 closing Mass.



Teenagers from the Diocese of Nashville, Tenn., sport cowboy hats during the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 21 in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.



One of the many Tweets sent before the opening general session at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis is displayed on a Jumbotron screen on Nov. 21.



National Catholic Youth Conference emcee Jesse Manibusan leads 23,000 youths in a song of praise during the opening general session of NCYC at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 21.



Mason Tope, 17, of the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, prays after receiving Communion on Nov. 23 during the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.



'Signed. Sealed. Delivered.'

Youths embrace their faith at National Catholic Youth Conference



Above, animators lead the crowd in song during the Nov. 21 opening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. The conference, which drew 23,000 youths from across the country, took place on Nov. 21-23 in the stadium and the adjacent Indiana Convention Center.

Right, members of the youth group from the Diocese of Honolulu in Hawaii pose on Nov. 23 for a photo before they took the stage at Lucas Oil Stadium for a performance.

Below, Bishop Donald F. Hanchon, an auxiliary bishop of the Detroit Archdiocese, assists teenagers with a service project in Inspiration Junction on Nov. 23 in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.



Brendan Nussear of Orlando, Fla., spins a prize wheel on Nov. 21 as Felician Sister Marie Eliana Remiszewski of Chicago looks on during the National Catholic Youth Conference at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.



Joella Bitter of San Antonio, Texas, receives Communion from Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin during the Nov. 23 closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference.



Bishop Christopher J. Coyne, vicar general, shares high fives on Nov. 23 with participants in the National Catholic Youth Conference at the end of the conference's closing Mass.



Father Kenneth Taylor, center, pastor of Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis, processes into Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis with the 237 priests who concelebrated at the closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 23.



Above, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin receives a t-shirt signed by members of JUMMP Youth Ministry in Terre Haute. Marcia Lane-McGee, left, coordinator of JUMMP, and Karen Ridgway, also of Terre Haute, pose with the archbishop and his shirt.



Left, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin carries a monstrance during a eucharistic procession from St. John the Evangelist Church to the Indiana Convention Center on Nov. 21 in Indianapolis. The procession was part of the biennial National Catholic Youth Conference, a three-day experience of prayer, community and empowerment for Catholic teenagers and their adult chaperones.

'Courage capes' reveal the hearts of heroes and volunteers

By John Shaughnessy

The idea tugged at the heart of 17-year-old Abby Tuttle as soon as she learned about the "courage capes."

Abby immediately joined the long line of Catholic teenagers who were waiting their turn to make one of the capes for a child who is a patient at Peyton Manning Children's Hospital in Indianapolis.

"I think it's great that the kids get these capes to show them that they're superheroes," said Abby, who traveled from the Archdiocese of Kansas City to attend the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 21-23.

As she ironed a large star onto a multi-colored, striped cape, Abby noted, "It's important for kids to have the strength to face diseases. It's important that they know that other people care about them, and that other people are helping them overcome their struggles."

For three days, that combination of service and compassion resonated throughout the conference's theme park inside the Indiana Convention Center.

Each area of the theme park seemed to offer an opportunity for the conference's 23,000 participants to make a difference, from donating "Jeans for Jesus" to cutting off 10 inches of hair for the "Locks of Love" program—a program that provides wigs for financially disadvantaged children who have lost their hair because of

a medical condition.

Paige Hicks was one of the 40 youths who signed up to have her hair cut during the conference.

"My hair hasn't been this short in four years," said Paige, as she proudly showed the 10 inches of her hair that had been cut. "It was the longest it's ever been in my life."

Paige said she made the decision to cut her hair after talking about it with her mother.

"My mom said I should do it. At first, I thought it was too much," said Paige, a member of the Diocese of Owensboro, Ky. "But then I thought, 'Me having long hair is less important than a child being happy.'"

Living out the halos they wore, 16-year-olds Christian Urmanski and Jennie Britton were part of a large contingent from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles who swooped into action to help fill, seal and pack bags of rice.

Their efforts were part of a Catholic Relief Services and Helping Hands organization project determined to stop hunger in Burkina Faso, an African country hit hard by drought in recent years.

"An important part of being Catholic is helping others," Christian said as he waited for another bag of rice to seal. "There are a lot of people around the world who need food."

Christian and Jennie both learned that each bag of rice would create six meals for someone in need. They later learned that they were among the 1,000 volunteers during the conference who assembled more than 101,000 meals to help people in the African country.



Paige Hicks, left, of the Diocese of Owensboro, Ky., is pictured with stylist Alice Hannon getting a haircut on Nov. 21. Paige was one of 40 youths at the National Catholic Youth Conference who signed up to have 10 inches of her hair cut off for "Locks of Love," a program that provides wigs for financially disadvantaged children who have lost their hair because of a medical condition.

For Jennie, being involved in the "Stop Hunger Now" program is an extension of the service work that has marked her life as a young Catholic—part of a generation that has embraced the concept of serving others.

"I love helping out in the community and for the Church in any way I can," Jennie said. "This is a great way to help. I see it as an important part of my faith." †

Faith of adult volunteers grows from helping young people

By John Shaughnessy

Marcella Rumpel's smile revealed one of the great truths often experienced by adult volunteers who work with children and youths trying to learn and live their faith:

The more an adult is around those children and youths, the more their own faith seems to grow.

Rumpel had that experience again as she volunteered at a booth inside the theme park at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 21-23.

As a member of the Catholic community of Jeffersonville, Rumpel was part of a group offering conference participants the opportunity to make backpacks

for children at a parish in Haiti.

"I've been on the Haiti committee for a number of years, and I've been to Haiti twice," said Rumpel, a member of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Jeffersonville. "You can't understand the poverty until you see it. The people love God. This is a project for the Haiti kids. I'll do anything for them. I love them."

She had a similar feeling for the Catholic teenagers who kept coming to the booth to make backpacks for the children in Haiti.

"We've got a bunch of young people here who are faith-filled," Rumpel said. "It's just good to see God working in all of them."

Kathy Laudick couldn't stop smiling either as she talked about the youths who lined up to make

"courage capes" for children who will become patients at Peyton Manning Children's Hospital in Indianapolis.

"When we tell them that every cape goes to a child, they think that's great," said Laudick, a part of the group from St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis that organized the "courage cape" effort at the conference.

It didn't take long for the youths at the conference to reach the goal of creating 250 capes. Besides the capes, many of the youths who created them attached notes of encouragement for the children in the hospital.

One read, "Keep your head up! You're very strong and inspiring." Another noted, "I hope this cape gives you courage. Stay strong!"

Many of the youths also picked

up bracelets that had the names of hospitalized children on them—a reminder to keep the children in their prayers.

"I have a child who had an appendix out at St. Vincent five years ago," Laudick said. "I know how important something like this is."

She also knows how special the youths who helped create the "courage capes" are.

"It's so neat to see the kids come in and do this." †

Kathy Laudick of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis shows one of the "courage capes" that youths at the National Catholic Youth Conference made for children who are hospitalized at Peyton Manning Children's Hospital in Indianapolis.



Catholic comedian connects faith, life and humor during NCYC performance

By Natalie Hoefler

A peek into the exhibit halls of the Indiana Convention Center during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis on Nov. 21-23 would show different aspects of the faith.

A bishop talked about turning off electronic devices to find time for God.

A priest discussed how to



After performing a comedy routine on stage on Nov. 23 in an exhibit hall, comedian Judy McDonald pays some attention to her service dog, Daisy, at her booth at the National Catholic Youth Conference at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis.

combine fitness and prayer time.

And on a stage in a large exhibit hall, comedian Judy McDonald commented on the questions she is asked because of her service dog, Daisy.

"They'll ask if I'm blind—while I'm texting," she jokes.

McDonald and Daisy were part of the Saturday afternoon recreation portion of NCYC in an hour-and-a-half session called the Comedy Club.

The pair was joined by seven other comedy acts to lighten the mood after two-and-a-half days of praise, worship and faith-growing sessions.

"Comedy is in our life every day, like depression and dinner and pancakes and snot," said McDonald, a lifetime Catholic and former youth and campus minister.

"Life is life. I think we tend to compartmentalize God into a separate area, and he doesn't want that. He wants all of it."

"So I think, why not put Catholicism in comedy and comedy in Catholicism? It's part of our life."

McDonald, who lives in San Diego, sees comedy as a form of the new evangelization.

"I integrate a funny talk with sharing my faith. I did that even in secular clubs. I was part of the new evangelization, and I didn't

even know it."

McDonald has been performing as a comedian for 20 years. She started doing comedy on the side while a freshman at the University of San Diego.

After graduating, McDonald served as campus minister for her alma mater.

Later, while working as youth minister for a junior high school, she felt a push toward full-time comedy—out of necessity.

"The priest at the time said, 'You know how you want to be a comedian? Well, this is God's way of shoving you into that because we don't have enough money to pay you anymore.' I was like, 'Thank you?' But now I praise God for it."

She switched to full-time comedy in 2003, speaking at faith-based conferences, Life Teen events and parishes.

Soon she was invited to go overseas to perform at garrisons and army bases. That led to speaking at parishes in Ireland and other countries, and eventually large venues like NCYC.

But all was not comedy and laughter in McDonald's life.

"My childhood was not particularly good, and no one knew about it until I was about 30," she said.

As a result of the incidents of her past, McDonald has suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for the last three years.

"My doctor said getting a service dog would be good for me, but that it was \$10,000. I didn't exactly have that in the cookie jar," she said.

McDonald prayed about what to do. She decided to send a letter to all those for whom she'd worked in the past, as well as adding the plea to her Facebook fan page.

"I really felt the Holy Spirit nudging me to trust that if these people cared for me then they would help me."

Within two weeks, McDonald had the \$10,000.

"I really feel like God gave me [my service dog] Daisy," she said. "She came from the aptly named 'Little Angels Service Dogs' in San Diego. She alerts me when I'm going to have a panic attack or flashback or nightmares," McDonald explained.

"She's not the end all be all, but God has certainly put her in my pathway as a gift, and I respect her as such. She really is my little angel."

The dog has proven to be a blessing in her comedic ministry as well.

"She's great after shows when

kids want to come up and talk to me," said McDonald. "She's that extra push that comforts kids if they want to share something with me. I'm someone from out of town, and they may not be comfortable telling their youth minister, but they'll talk to me."

"Of course, I then tell them to share it with their youth minister or priest or mom," she said.

McDonald is a fan of NCYC, and not just for the economic opportunity it provides.

"I love this venue. It's so great for the kids to see before they go off to college that it's OK to be Catholic."

"If I'd known what these kids are learning here, I would have stayed Catholic out of love instead of fear," she admitted.

"It's so great to see them having fun and doing it because they want to do it. Now their kids are going to learn, and it's just going to build."

"These kids aren't the Church of the future, they're the Church right now," said McDonald. "Anybody could come here and have hope. If anyone is disillusioned about the Church, they need to come here and see this."

"[NCYC] gives me hope throughout the year. I can look back at this and say, 'The Church is OK.'" †

Pope venerates Apostle's relics, urges people to focus on Christ

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis closed the Year of Faith by calling on people to keep Christ at the center of their lives, especially in times of trouble.



“When Jesus is at the center, light shines even on the darkest moments of our lives; he gives us hope,” he said in his homily on Nov. 24, the feast of Christ the King.

The closing Mass in St. Peter's Square also saw, for the first time, the exposition for public veneration of bones believed to be those of St. Peter. The Apostle is believed to have been martyred on a hill overlooking St. Peter's Square, and buried in a tomb now located two levels below the main altar of St. Peter's Basilica.

Eight bone fragments, each two to three centimeters long, were nestled in an open bronze reliquary displayed to the side of the altar.

During the ceremony, the pope—the 265th successor of Peter—held the closed reliquary for several minutes in silent prayer while choirs sang the Nicene Creed in Latin.

The bones, which were discovered during excavations of the necropolis under St. Peter's Basilica in the 1940s, are kept in the pope's private chapel but had never been displayed in public.

While no pope has ever declared the bones to be authentic, Pope Paul VI said in 1968 that the “relics” of St. Peter had been “identified in a way which we can hold to be convincing.”

Pope Francis began his homily by thanking retired Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI for establishing the Year of Faith, calling it a “providential initiative” that gave Christians “the opportunity to rediscover the beauty of the journey of faith begun on the day of our baptism.”

The pope then greeted patriarchs

and archbishops of the Eastern Catholic Churches, who were in Rome for a meeting, and extended those greetings to all Christians living in the Holy Land, Syria and the East, wishing “them the gift of peace and harmony.”

He expressed his appreciation for their fidelity to Christ, which comes “often at a high price.”

In his homily, the pope focused on “the centrality of Christ” and how the faithful are expected to recognize and accept “the centrality of Jesus Christ in our thoughts, words and works.

“When this center is lost, because it is replaced with something else, only harm can result for everything around us and for ourselves,” he said.

Reflecting on the day's Gospel reading of the good thief, who was crucified alongside Jesus, repents and asks Jesus to remember him in paradise, the pope said Jesus responds to the man with forgiveness, “not condemnation.

“Whenever anyone finds the courage to ask for this forgiveness, the Lord does not let such a petition go unheard.”

The pope said everyone should ask the Lord to remember them because “each one of us has a history,” has made mistakes and sinned as well as experienced happy times and sad.

People need to say, “‘Jesus, remember me because I want to be good, I have the desire to become good, but I don't have the strength. I can't, I'm a sinner,’” the pope said. In response, “the Lord always grants more than what he has been asked.”

With an estimated 60,000 people gathered in the square for the Mass, a special collection was taken up for victims of Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

In a Nov. 25 meeting with people who volunteered their time and efforts to organize and promote Year of Faith activities, Pope Francis said, “the faith is



Pope Francis venerates the relics of St. Peter the Apostle during a Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Nov. 24. The bone fragments, which were discovered during excavations of the necropolis under St. Peter's Basilica in the 1940s, are kept in the pope's private chapel but had never been displayed in public.

the cornerstone of the Christian experience because it drives the choices and actions of our daily life.

“Faith in Christ is able to warm hearts, truly becoming the driving force of the new evangelization,” he said.

A faith “lived deeply and with conviction” spreads the proclamation of the Gospel far and wide, but “apostolic courage” also is needed to reach people where they are, especially in very difficult places.

Before closing the Year of Faith, Pope Francis presided on Nov. 23 over the Rite of Acceptance, marking the moment when some 500 men and women, from 47 countries, inquiring about the Catholic faith, formally became catechumens

preparing for baptism at Easter.

During a Liturgy of the Word in St. Peter's Basilica, the pope told the adult catechumens that it is always God who initiates relationships with people and that he patiently and perseveringly waits for a response. “He never draws away from us, but has the patience to wait for the favorable moment to meet each of us.”

Believing “is walking with Jesus. It's a journey that lasts a lifetime,” Pope Francis told the catechumens. “Obviously, in this journey there will be moments when we feel tired and confused. However, faith gives us the certainty of the constant presence of Jesus in every situation, including the most painful and difficult to understand.” †



Like thousands of senior religious, Sister of Divine Providence John Margaret Walsh, 76, has spent her life serving others. Today, she and some 34,000 elder Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious. Your gift provides funding for prescription medications, nursing care, and more.

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Vatican, Google team up to bring Christian catacombs to light

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Early Christian burial sites are now easier to see, both in person and via the Internet, thanks to 21st-century technology and collaboration between Google and the Vatican.

“This is perhaps the sign of the joining of two extremes, remote antiquity and modernity,” said Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi on Nov. 19 at a news conference at the Catacombs of Priscilla in northeast Rome.

The cardinal, president of both the Pontifical Council for Culture and the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, lauded recent restoration work by the archaeological commission inside the complex of early Christian tombs.

Using advanced laser techniques, restorers have uncovered vivid late fourth-century frescoes depicting Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead and Sts. Peter and

Paul accompanying Christians into the afterlife. Jesus’ face resembles portraits of the Emperor Constantine, who legalized Christian worship in 313.

Cardinal Ravasi also heralded the Nov. 19 debut of the catacombs on Google’s Street View feature, a project he said had grown out of a conversation he had with the Internet giant’s executive chairman, Eric Schmidt.

Users of Google Maps can now click the “see-inside” option for the catacombs, which allows them to move virtually through the narrow corridors tunneled out of soft tufa stone, and to see high-resolution images of the interiors from practically every angle. The brilliantly lit views are in startling contrast to the shadowy reality of an in-person visit.

Google’s Giorgia Abeltino told reporters that almost the entire

eight-mile complex of catacombs is now accessible online. However, there is no underground map to let users know exactly what they are seeing.

Also on Nov. 19, Google launched a Street View of the catacombs of the Ipogeo di via Dino Compagni, located in southeast Rome. The catacombs are privately owned and not open to the public, so the virtual mode is the only way to visit them.

The news conference at the Catacombs of Priscilla was held above ground in the reconstructed fourth-century Basilica of St. Sylvester, where a new museum displays hundreds of fragments of ancient marble sarcophagi, also recently restored. A glass floor offers illuminated views of the sites of ancient tombs below.

Msgr. Giovanni Carru, secretary of the Vatican’s archaeological commission,



A fragment from an ancient marble sarcophagus is pictured in a new museum in the reconstructed 4th-century Basilica of St. Sylvester above the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome on Nov. 20. Users of Google Maps now can see virtually through the underground corridors of the Catacombs of Priscilla.

said the restorations had made the Catacombs of Priscilla a “privileged course” for pilgrims to Rome, helping them to

appreciate these “dark places that were lit up by the emblematic and paradigmatic stories of salvation” painted on their walls. †

Pittsburgh, Erie dioceses win temporary injunction against HHS mandate

PITTSBURGH (CNS)—A federal judge on Nov. 21 granted the Pittsburgh and Erie dioceses a preliminary injunction against the federal health care law’s contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization mandate, saying religious employers’ right to adhere to their moral objections to it outweighs a government decision to widen access to contraceptives.

Pittsburgh Bishop David A. Zubik said that “all who recognize the importance of religious liberty should be very pleased” with the ruling by Judge Arthur J. Schwab of the U.S. District Court for Western Pennsylvania.

“Acknowledging that our beliefs are sincerely held, Judge Schwab found that the good works that the Church provides in society are both essential and integral to who we are as believers,” the bishop said in a statement released

the day of the ruling. “Judge Schwab refused to accept that religious freedom is solely the freedom to worship behind closed doors.”

In a statement issued in Washington, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said he was “strongly encouraged by the court’s rejection of the government’s attempt to reduce freedom of religion to freedom of worship, as well as the court’s recognition that service to those in need is at the heart of our faith.”

“The court’s decision vindicates that approach, and we fully expect more decisions like this to follow,” said Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky.

In his 65-page opinion, Schwab said the issue he was asked to decide was whether “the government will be permitted to sever the Catholic Church into two parts

[i.e., worship and faith, and ‘good works’]—in other words, whether the government will be successful in restricting the right to the free exercise of religion as set forth in the First Amendment to a right to worship only.”

He wrote that he could not understand why religious employers, such as Catholic Charities of Pittsburgh, also a plaintiff in the case—“born from the same religious faith, and premised upon the same religious tenets and principles, and operate as extensions and embodiments of the Church, but are not subsidiaries of a parent corporation—would not be treated the same as the Church itself with respect to the free exercise of that religion.”

Without the preliminary injunction, the government would have begun levying fines on Jan. 1 on the dioceses and related entities for noncompliance with the mandate. †

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December Program Offerings

We hope that you will join us as we celebrate Advent and Christmas!
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| | |
|---|---|
| <p>December 6-8, 2013 ‘Grief- From Darkness to Light’ \$159 per person \$286 per married couple Fr. Jim Farrell, Mary Weber, Marilyn Hess & Sr. Connie Kramer, SP</p> | <p>December 10, 2013 Day of Reflection- Fr. Jeff Godecker ‘The Spirituality of Aging’ 9 am – 2:30 pm \$39</p> |
|---|---|

December 31, 2013—January 1, 2014
 New Year’s Eve Retreat
 “As Time Goes By: The Mystery of the Sacred in Beauty and Happiness”
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Northwestern Mutual Recognizes McGinley with Forum Membership
Financial Security Company Recognizes Financial Professionals at Annual Conference

Northwestern Mutual is honoring Indianapolis financial advisor Mike McGinley with membership in its 2013 Forum group, which recognizes individuals for an outstanding year of helping clients achieve financial security. McGinley is affiliated with Northwestern Mutual Indiana based in Indianapolis. This is the third time that McGinley received the Forum honor.

“Our 2013 Planning & Progress study shows that half (51%) of Americans feel less financially secure than they thought they’d be at this point in their lives,” says Northwestern Mutual Executive Vice President Todd M. Schoon, CLU®, ChFC®, J.D. “In an uncertain economy, consumers are seeking guidance and are turning to experienced financial professionals like Mike to plan for their future financial security.”

The honorees were recognized at a conference held on November 3 to 6, 2013, in Scottsdale, AZ. At the conference, honorees learned new insights from prominent speakers, gained access to advanced training and leadership development, and shared knowledge with fellow colleagues. The Forum conference is an extremely exclusive achievement, with approximately five percent of Northwestern Mutual’s more than 6,500 financial representatives invited to attend.

About Northwestern Mutual

Northwestern Mutual is the marketing name for The Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, Milwaukee, WI, and its subsidiaries. Northwestern Mutual is among the “World’s Most Admired” life insurance companies in 2013 according to FORTUNE® magazine and has helped clients achieve financial security for more than 156 years. As a mutual company with \$1.4 trillion of life insurance protection in force, Northwestern Mutual has no shareholders. The company focuses solely and directly on its clients and seeks to deliver consistent and dependable value to them over time. Northwestern Mutual and its subsidiaries offer a holistic approach to financial security solutions including: life insurance, long-term care insurance, disability income insurance, annuities, investment products, and advisory products and services. Subsidiaries include Northwestern Mutual Investment Services, LLC, broker-dealer, registered investment adviser, member FINRA and SIPC; the Northwestern Mutual Wealth Management Company, limited purpose federal savings bank; Northwestern Long Term Care Insurance Company; and Russell Investments. Further information can be found at <http://www.northwesternmutual.com>.

About the Northwestern Mutual Planning & Progress Research

This study was conducted by independent research firm Harris Interactive, and included 1,546 Americans aged 25 or older who participated in an online survey between January 9, 2013 and January 23, 2013. Results were weighted as needed for age by gender, education, race/ethnicity, region and household income. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated; a full methodology is available.

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Wait in hope during Advent for Christ's glorious coming

By Marcellino D'Ambrosio

The word Advent literally means "coming." If we are looking for blessings from God to come, that means that they are not here yet. And so Advent inevitably means not just coming, but waiting.

Throughout the Bible, we read about people with a wish list. Abraham longed for a son, his enslaved descendants yearned for freedom. Soon after, it was their own land they wanted. Then they wanted a king to save them from the Philistines. In exile, they longed to return home. In the days of the Caesars, they wanted an anointed one or a messiah, who would once again sit upon David's throne and, like David, smash their foes.

There are two things that they, and we, have in common. One is that it turns out that God wants to give us much more than we asked for. The second is that we have to wait a long time to get it.

Moses' mission had taken him quite a distance, from the splendor of Pharaoh's palace, to a stroll through the Red Sea, to wrestling with Israel's stubbornness for 40 years in the desert. How sad that he never made it across the Jordan. But God gave him a moment of consolation. He brought him up to the top of Mount Nebo and showed him the Promised Land.

John the Baptist had a similar mission. He proclaimed the imminent coming of the kingdom and labored tirelessly to prepare the way. Yet, next thing we know, we find him locked in a dismal dungeon, awaiting execution. He sends a message to his cousin Jesus, looking for some shred of hope. "Are you the one who is to come?" (Mt 11:3).

The message sent back to him no doubt made excitement surge throughout his weary bones. The prophecy of Isaiah had been fulfilled—the blind see, crippled people walk, lepers become clean, the dead are raised, the poor hear good news. This can mean only one thing: The anointed one, the Messiah, has come.

Though John had seen the anointed one and heard of his wonderful works, he, like Moses, did not enter into the kingdom of God during his lifetime. John only caught a glimpse of the first light before sunrise. For the dawn from on high would not break upon the world until Easter morning. The birth of Jesus, his teachings and even his miracles were but a preparation for the kingdom of God, for the righteousness, peace, love and joy that could only have been made possible by the Messiah's death, resurrection and sending of the Holy Spirit.

Who is greater than John? The little baby who is incapable of doing very much at all, but who, through the saving waters of baptism, is born into the kingdom of God. This baby is born not of woman, like John, but of water and the Holy Spirit. The greatness of this baby is a pure gift of God's grace, the gift of being an adopted child of God and temple of the Holy Spirit. All this is so much more than what John and the people of Israel ever dreamed they'd receive.

It is good to pause a moment and think about the difference made by Christ's first coming, of the old covenant versus the new, of works versus grace, of written



Joe Brooks lights the first candle of the Advent wreath at St. Joseph's Church in Alexandria, Va. The season of Advent features the theological virtue of hope as the faithful are called to confidently await Christ's glorious second coming.

'You can endure hardships cheerfully only when the anticipated reward makes it all worthwhile.'

law versus the law of the Spirit, of liberation from Pharaoh versus liberation from Satan.

It is also good to pause a moment to remember the difference between Christ's first coming and his second, of mortality versus immortality, of the darkness of faith versus the beatific vision, of the valley of tears versus unending joy. And this brings us to ponder on the Advent of his birth versus the advent of his ultimate coming.

While Christ's first coming transformed the meaning of suffering, it did not banish it. His second coming, however, will. At the sight of him riding upon the clouds, "sorrow and mourning will flee" (Is 35:10).

Yes, we who live between the two comings of Christ have been saved, but we have not yet fully taken possession of our salvation. We have tasted the first fruits, we have received the down payment, but the rest is held for us in trust.

The confident anticipation of this inheritance is known

as hope. This unsung hero among the theological virtues is terribly important because it makes patience possible. You can endure hardships cheerfully only when the anticipated reward makes it all worthwhile.

Hope also is important because it holds the key to joy. And that's why the third Sunday of Advent is known as "Gaudete" or "Rejoice" Sunday. The vestments change from penitential purple to rose because the suffering of this present age is as nothing compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Moses rejoiced on Nebo. John rejoiced even in chains. In the season of Advent, in the midst of this valley of tears, let us rejoice in hope.

(Marcellino D'Ambrosio writes from Texas and guides pilgrimages to Rome and the Holy Land. He is co-founder of Crossroads Productions, an apostolate of Catholic renewal and evangelization.) †

Advent can teach us to wait patiently for the light in many areas of life

By Rhina Guidos

There's little, if anything at all, to be found in the Bible pertaining to Advent.

Though it's hard to peg down, some believe the Catholic Church began observing this period leading up to Christmas in the fourth century. Since then, Advent



Nuns and Palestinians pray during Mass in St. Catherine's Church at the Church of Nativity in the West Bank town of Bethlehem on Nov. 29, 2009, the first Sunday of Advent.

has become increasingly popular as some faithful observe with Advent wreaths or calendars, counting down to the moment of joy, of the birth, the new life, not just of our Savior but essentially, of our faith.

What's most important about observing Advent is that for those who really take the time, it can teach us to slow down, to reflect during what is, for many, the busiest and most stressful time of the year. It can help us get ready for our lifelong advent, that waiting period until we are with God, our light.

I can't help but think of lyrics from George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord," when the former Beatle sings "I really want to see you, really want to be with you, really want to see you, Lord, but it takes so long, my Lord."

I remember having that feeling when I was a child, when we stopped by the empty bed of straw in the Nativity scene of our parish church. I had no way of measuring or counting the days until the beautiful statue of the baby Jesus reappeared in his straw bed. But each time we passed it and he wasn't there, I remember that "I really want to see you" feeling.

Psalms 27:14 tell us to "Wait for the Lord, take courage; be stouthearted, wait for the Lord."

When we're children, it seems as if that waiting period

will take forever. When you're older, and depending on your Christmas customs and practices, that wait seems endless if you're anticipating gifts. It can seem endless, too, to a mother or a father waiting for a child who lives far away, and who visits only during Christmas.

But there's something really beautiful about the wait, about the anticipation, and we shouldn't let it go to waste. Perhaps we're waiting, neither for presents, nor for the "magic" some of us find in the Christmas season, but for a moment of darkness or loneliness to pass, one that only the Lord can lift us out of.

Maybe we're waiting for the advent of the day when we're able to defeat an addiction, with help from God, or when we're able to get a better job, holding on solely to God during our moments of tribulation. We know the day will come when the pain will be over, if we wait with the Lord for the storm to pass.

"They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on eagles' wings; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint," says Isaiah 40:31.

Advent can teach us to wait for the light, in whatever form it comes.

(Rhina Guidos is an editor at Catholic News Service.) †

From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink

The Infancy Narratives: Reflections for Advent

(First of four columns)

With the end of the “Year of Faith” last Sunday, we arrive at Advent this Sunday. It seems appropriate, therefore, to devote four columns to preparation for Christmas. What could be more appropriate during Advent than reflections on the Infancy Narratives? They are the first two chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. I hope you’ll read them sometime during Advent.

Both of these Gospels link Christ’s birth with passages from the Old Testament to show how it fulfills prophecies about the Messiah. They tell stories rooted in history: Here is what actually happened. Nevertheless, they tell different stories.

Matthew’s account is told from Joseph’s viewpoint while Luke’s is more about Mary. They also had different sources, so Matthew didn’t know that Mary and Joseph had traveled to Jerusalem from Nazareth. He has them moving to Nazareth after their



John F. Fink

Living Well/Maureen Pratt

‘Tis the season to calm down and let go of life’s stresses

Peace on earth. Good will toward all. Comfort and joy. Light and love. Prosperity. Purpose.

Did last year’s wishes as expressed in songs and greetings come to pass in 2013? Or as we approach another holiday season, with another round of carols and cards, are you feeling tired? Hollow? Discouraged? Unfulfilled?

Are you wondering, “What’s the point to these weeks of celebration, gift-giving, sleep-deprivation-causing holiday responsibilities and reunions with people I don’t have much contact with the other 10 or 11 months of the year, let alone really like?”

Are you already looking past December and into a new year when it might seem that troubles will only continue?

Is it difficult to take off stress and put on cheer at any time of year, let alone during the jam-packed holiday season? Many people I have spoken with, myself included, have had extremely difficult lives



Maureen Pratt

Emmaus Walk/Debra Tomaselli

A gift from our God who knows every child’s need

Shivering, I glanced outside. Grey skies added a chill to the December air that we, living in Florida, weren’t used to. This week in particular, as my neighbors and I discussed Christmas festivities, we found ourselves grumbling about the freezing weather.

I went home, keenly aware that we had nothing to complain about. We could heat our plush homes, don sweaters and coats ... or even purchase new ones.

Rather, I found myself thinking about the people at the local homeless shelter where my Bible study group served meals. Glancing at the clock, I knew they’d soon be gathering for lunch.

Suddenly, I searched my closets, grabbing sweaters, coats and a little pink jacket my daughter had outgrown. Then I phoned neighbors and asked if they would do the same, promising to deliver their donations immediately. Soon, I was on my way to the shelter, arriving with an armload of clothing.

“Anybody want a coat or a sweater?” I announced, unloading them onto a table.



Debra Tomaselli

return from Egypt.

For his part, Luke apparently didn’t know about the flight into Egypt. He has the Holy Family returning to Nazareth right after Jesus’ presentation in the Temple.

Matthew and Luke agree, though, on the essentials: Jesus was born to the virgin Mary, the wife of Joseph, in Bethlehem, the city where King David had been born.

Matthew’s Gospel begins with “the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Mt 1:1), but Luke puts his genealogy in Chapter 3. They differ somewhat, but the main difference is that Matthew begins with Abraham and goes forward to Joseph while Luke begins with Joseph and proceeds back all the way to Adam and then to God.

Thus, Matthew emphasizes Jesus’ bonds with the people of Israel while Luke stresses Jesus’ universalism.

Matthew’s genealogy includes four women. Luke’s are all men. All four women bore children in unusual or scandalous ways. Matthew wasn’t afraid to point out that Jesus’ family, like those of most of us, was sometimes dysfunctional. Furthermore, none of the women were Jewish. Gentiles were part of

this year, peppered with loss, financial worry and health concerns.

It might even seem appealing to hibernate through the next several weeks, only emerging when the new year is underway. But if we step back a bit from the adult-ness of how we feel, the bone-weary, emotionally drained individual buffeted by external pressures and internal angst, we might begin to feel differently.

This time of year, unlike other weeks and months, is not for the world-worn cynic, but for the child.

We can choose to focus on the child born in Bethlehem. This period is about the birth of Jesus Christ, in a manger, far from glitz and glamour. He is the point of this season, and no special interest group or hectic schedule can tear us from this wondrous, peace-giving gift from God, his only Son, come down to Earth. This season is for renewal of appreciation of our faith.

This season is for the children among us who have no inhibitions about expressing delight in laughter, unconditional love and even too-cute insistence in “how many more days until ...”

It is to these children that history, traditions and—most important—faith

The women swarmed over, helping each other choose the right style and size. Amazingly, each took only what they needed, nothing more. Finally, the only remaining items were one frayed sweater and the little pink jacket.

The women thanked me and directed me toward other residents. As I entered the courtyard, I saw a frail woman with straggly hair.

“Would you like a sweater?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said, pointing to her cotton shirt. “This is all I have for the cold.”

Smiling, she donned the sweater.

The last item was the little pink jacket. I entered the residential building and found an overweight woman sitting on a folding chair, talking into a pay phone. I waved the pink jacket at her.

“Do you know anybody who needs this?”

The woman motioned toward a child in the hallway.

“Maybe her,” she said.

A beautiful girl with braided pigtails approached. She had big, brown eyes that sparkled at the sight of the jacket.

“Would you like this?” I asked.

She nodded enthusiastically.

“It’s yours!” I said. It fit perfectly!

Turning to leave, I added, “Merry

Jesus’ genealogy.

Most important, though, is that Matthew’s genealogy ends with a woman—Mary. Throughout the genealogy, we heard that so-and-so was the father of so-and-so. But at the end, we hear, “Jacob [was] the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Messiah” (Mt 1:16).

Then we learn that Joseph was not the father of Jesus. The angel told Joseph, “It is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her” (Mt 1:20). Joseph was prepared to divorce Mary because he assumed, quite naturally, that she had committed adultery. He knew darned well that the baby wasn’t his.

This happened after Joseph and Mary were married but before they lived together. A Jewish wedding at that time consisted of two parts: the actual marriage and then, later, when the husband came to take his wife into his home. Thus, the angel told Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary into his home. He obeyed.

Although Joseph wasn’t Jesus’ actual father, he was his legal father, which meant that Jesus belonged to the house of David. †

practices are passed. There is no time like the holidays to reinforce the values and faith that form the backbone for the oft-sung “people of good will.”

The next few weeks is for the child in all of us. Medical studies show the importance of laughter and play, the human need to take time for rest and relaxation.

The days of Thanksgiving and Christmas are crucial for us who desire to be better, do better and reflect all the good that God has given us. We are celebrating a marvelous gift, one given freely, with complete love. Simply put, if we take the holidays too seriously, we will seriously miss the point.

Even if this year has been up and down, or more down than up, the point of the holiday season is not to erode well-being and heap stress upon stress.

Let’s take the opportunity to breathe deeply, enjoy the world with childlike eyes and renew our faith, energy and focus so that no matter what the next year brings, we will meet it with courage and strength.

(Maureen Pratt writes for Catholic News Service.) †

Christmas!”

The woman at the pay phone paused. “Not only that,” she said, “but it’s her birthday.”

I bent down next to the girl.

“Happy birthday,” I said. “How old are you today?”

“Six,” she said. She pulled a necklace out from her collar, and proudly showed me her silver crucifix.

“I love Jesus, too!” I exclaimed.

Beaming, she hugged me.

“Happy birthday,” I said, returning the embrace. “Merry Christmas.”

As I left, I overheard the woman on the phone offering an explanation. “I don’t know,” she said, “Some lady just came here and gave her a jacket ...”

But the gift really wasn’t from some lady. The gift was from a God who loved that child and knew her every need. It’s the same God who loves you and knows your every need. It’s the same God who sent his Son to be born in a manger so we could be together in eternity.

“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift” (2 Cor 9:15).

(Debra Tomaselli writes from Altamonte Springs, Florida. She can be reached at dtomaselli@cfl.rr.com.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

A faith-filled Advent can broaden our hopes for Christmas

I’ve found that the older my five sons get, the more specific their Christmas wish lists become.



It used to be when Michael, 11, and Raphael, 8, were younger, they were happy with just about anything that they received.

I can even remember Raphael being excited by

getting clothes for Christmas one year—quite a contrast from my reaction when I received a similar Christmas gift when I was his age.

Now it’s a little different. Michael definitely has certain Lego sets in mind that he’d like to see under the tree on Christmas morning. And I’ve found that he’s meeting with Raphael to help him figure out what specific Lego set he should ask for.

I have to pause and smile before I try to temper their hopes and broaden their horizons a little. I took pretty much the same approach to my Christmas wish list when I was their age.

Nonetheless, I feel it my duty as their father to help them consider alternatives—like the kind of Legos I played with as a child, which are basically still available today.

They were colorful building blocks with which you could build just about anything, not just a specific *Star Wars* spaceship or *Lord of the Rings* movie scene.

No matter how persuasive I think my advice might be, however, I foresee my sons pretty much standing firm in their hopes in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Maybe that’s one of their ways to observe Advent, which has been described as a season of hope.

Thankfully, it’s not the only way that Advent is a part of our family life in December.

When we sit down for a family supper during Advent, we’ll start it with the usual meal blessing prayer. At the end of that prayer, however, we’ll pray together, “Come Lord Jesus.”

Then we’ll bring out our Advent wreath, place it in the center of our table, light the requisite number of candles on it and turn off the dining room lights. We then sing a verse from “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.”

Finally, we have one of our boys open up a door on a homemade Advent calendar. Behind each door is either a drawing of a saint whose feast is that day, an Advent or Christmas symbol or the various “O Antiphons” that are prayed in Evening Prayer from Dec. 17-23—and which serve as the basis for the verses of “O Come, O Come Emmanuel.”

We also wait to decorate our house for Christmas until *Gaudete* Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, which features the joy that is part of our waiting for the coming of Jesus. That’s a good bit after we see Christmas decorations going up on other houses, let alone retail stores.

The Christmas decorations that start filling our house that day are meant to be an expression of that joy.

Hopefully, over time, this faith-filled approach to the weeks leading up to Christmas will help broaden the hopes of our sons for the upcoming celebration of Christ’s birth.

Given the growing secularized and commercialized approach to Christmas, it’s never too early to lay the foundation for this countercultural perspective on this holy day. It’s one which I am convinced will lead to a celebration of Christmas filled with a far deeper and long-lasting happiness than a Lego set could ever provide. †

First Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 1, 2013

- *Isaiah 2:1-5*
- *Romans 13:11-14*
- *Matthew 24:37-44*

With this weekend, the Church begins its new liturgical year. In so doing, it also begins to use the A Cycle of readings at Sunday Masses.



This weekend's first reading is from the first section of the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah is one of the most important prophecy books in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is inevitably eloquent and profound. It also is one

of the longest books in the Old Testament, although it is actually a collection of three distinct works.

As often is the case with other prophets, Isaiah at times warned the people that if they did not return to heartfelt religious fidelity their doom was on the way. This is certainly a theme of this first section of Isaiah.

No prophet, however, including Isaiah, spoke warnings without expressing a most hopeful and faith-filled thought that God, the Almighty and merciful, would protect the people in the end.

After all, such was the promise of the Covenant. God had pledged to safeguard and secure the people, despite the stubbornness of the people and their fascination with sin, in spite of the catastrophe they brought upon themselves by sinning.

This weekend reading, the first Scriptural proclamation for Advent 2013, is a testament of this confidence and faith. God will judge the good and the bad. Such is the divine right. It is logical. Human behavior must be balanced against the justice and love that perfectly are in God.

It is not a tale of gloom. Sin is to be feared. Human faithfulness to God brings peace and reward.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is the source of the second reading.

Paul always called upon Christians to live as authentic followers of Jesus. While stressing their need to be faithful models of

Christ in human living, the great Apostle urged disciples to set their priorities by making eternal life with the Lord their uncompromised goal.

Paul also bluntly said that earthly life can end at any time for anyone.

The Gospel of St. Matthew provides the last reading this weekend. It predicts the final coming of Jesus. In reading this passage, it is important to remember that the Catholic Church teaches that proper reading of the Gospels requires realizing three perspectives: 1) The Gospel event in the actual time of Jesus; 2) The event as its implications came to be understood in the time when the Gospels were written, likely decades after Jesus; and, 3) The place that the event occupies in the general literary structure of the individual Gospel.

This is important when considering this weekend's passage from Matthew. Likely composed a generation or two after Jesus, Matthew was written for Christians who yearned to be relieved of the burden, and indeed peril, of living amid harshly antagonistic circumstances. They pined for the second triumphant coming of Jesus, recalling the Lord's own words. They earnestly believed that they would be vindicated when Jesus would come again in glory.

Reflection

Advent, begun with the liturgies of this weekend, calls us to prepare for Christmas. Preparation is much, much more than addressing Christmas cards and decorating Christmas trees. It means working studiously to make the coming of Jesus into earthly life, commemorated on Christmas, a personal event because we admit the our Lord into our loving hearts.

So, especially in Advent, the Church calls us to be good Christians and to rid ourselves of anything standing in the way.

It calls us to set priorities. Regardless of Christmas 2013, Jesus will come again to earthly existence in a most glorious, victorious and final way. At that moment, where will each of us be? We must prepare ourselves for our Lord properly, beginning now. We must refine ourselves as honest disciples of the king born in Bethlehem. We must shape our lives accordingly. †

Daily Readings

Monday, December 2

Isaiah 4:2-6
Psalm 122:1-9
Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday, December 3

St. Francis Xavier, priest
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17
Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday, December 4

St. John Damascene, priest and doctor of the Church
Isaiah 25:6-10a
Psalm 23:1-6
Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday, December 5

Isaiah 26:1-6
Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a
Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Friday, December 6

St. Nicholas, bishop
Isaiah 29:17-24
Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14
Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday, December 7

St. Ambrose, bishop and doctor of the Church
Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26
Psalm 147:1-6
Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8

Sunday, December 8

Second Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17
Romans 15:4-9
Matthew 3:1-12

Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

While valuing poverty, bishops choose meeting sites with practicality in mind

QI notice that the Catholic bishops of the United States are holding their annual meeting at the Marriott Hotel at Baltimore's Inner Harbor. This strikes me as an expensive site for those who are constantly asking Catholics for contributions to the poor. Don't they know that most of the faithful could not afford to stay at such a place for several days?



It strikes me that there are many Catholic properties around the country—seminaries, abbeys or convents—which could accommodate them for much less money, and would serve as a better example.

Why don't the bishops take a page from Pope Francis and start acting like the original Apostles whom they claim to represent? (Jamestown, Ky.)

ASince his election in March of 2013, Pope Francis has continually called Christians to examine themselves against Christ's own witness to poverty. On the feast of St. Francis, the pope hosted a lunch for the poor in Assisi. That same day, he addressed townspeople in strong words, saying that "the Church, all of us, should divest ourselves of worldliness. Worldliness is a murderer because it kills souls, kills people, kills the Church."

Such a message rings especially true from a man who has chosen to live in a modest two-room apartment in a Vatican guest house for visitors, and to eat his meals at a common table.

Prompted by your question, I looked into the U.S. bishops' choice of the Baltimore Marriott for their annual meeting. What I found is that they are indeed sensitive to the Gospel's call for simplicity.

In fact, some years ago their annual meeting was moved from Washington, D.C.—where the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is headquartered—to Baltimore precisely because hotel rooms in Baltimore rented for about two-thirds of what they had been paying in D.C.

Another reason for the change was that flights were generally cheaper into Baltimore-Washington International Airport than into Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

Realistically, the options for such a large meeting are limited. It requires a

facility that can host 600 attendees, be easily accessible from all parts of the nation and provide 60,000 square feet of space for meetings, religious services, news conferences, etc.

Sometimes what is ideal needs to be sifted through what is practical and possible. Your question, though, serves as a valuable reminder: Optics are important, and Christians need habitually to view things through the lens of the poor.

QHow should I respond to a young couple, who were raised as Catholics, who do not plan to baptize their infant children? They intend to wait until the children are old enough to decide on a religion for themselves. (Baltimore, Md.)

AI would ask the couple whether they follow the same standard in other areas of child rearing. Since they're not sure whether their son will grow up to like math, do they decline to teach him arithmetic when he is little?

The role of parents is to determine what opportunities they have benefited from, what virtues and values have helped them, what moral framework can offer guidance through life—and then to pass on the best of what they have learned to their children.

What Catholic parents say by having their infants baptized is this: We believe, both from our faith and from our experience, that the sacraments and Catholic teaching offer a clear channel to God, and we want our children to have that blessing.

(Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 40 Hopewell St., Albany, N.Y. 12208.) †

My Journey to God



Longing for Emmanuel

By Sister Susan Marie Lindstrom, O.S.B.

Still my soul, O God of Advent.
Attune my heart's ear
to the ancient songs
of promise,
of possibility
of a world overflowing with plowshares.

With Spirit-breath,
fan the embers of my soul
into a fire that cannot be contained,
a heat that might penetrate even the stone-cold heart,
an energy that sustains the journey.

Kindle within me a light
that will permeate my inner darkness,
igniting anew a passion for Kingdom-living.

Benedictine Sister Susan Marie Lindstrom is a member of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove. She teaches theology at Bishop Chatard High School in Indianapolis. A woman lights a candle in the Church of the Nativity in the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the "My Journey to God" column.

Seasonal reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.

Send material for consideration to "My Journey to God," The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46206 or e-mail to critterion@archindy.org. †

Rest in peace

Please submit in writing to our office by 10 a.m. Thursday before the week of publication; be sure to state date of death. Obituaries of archdiocesan priests serving our archdiocese are listed elsewhere in *The Criterion*. Order priests and religious sisters and brothers are included here, unless they are natives of the archdiocese or have other connections to it; those are separate obituaries on this page.

BENICH, Richard, 71, Holy Family, New Albany, Nov. 9. Husband of Pamela Benich. Father of Pamela Hockenberry, Pauline McCullum, Christine Michals, Richard and Ryan Benich. Brother of Ray Benich. Grandfather of 12.

BOWMAN, Rose A. (Lori), 90, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, Nov. 11. Mother of Nancy Phipps, Chris, David, Jim and John Bowman. Sister

of Freda John, Jesse Skelton and Frank Lori. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of eight.

EDELEN, Charles W., Sr., 75, St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville, Nov. 10. Husband of Mary Helen Edelen. Father of Thomas and William Edelen. Brother of Anna Gish, Eileen Springston and Len Edelen. Grandfather of four. Great-grandfather of three.

FOSTER, Theresa Ellen, 89, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Nov. 11. Mother of Anna, Martina, Mark and Michael Foster. Grandmother of two. Great-grandmother of two.

HARDIN, Patricia A., 70, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Nov. 18. Wife of Robert Hardin. Mother of Terese Walters, Gregory and Michael Hardin. Sister of Karen Hamby, Edmund Jr. and William Henderzahn.

HARRELL, William V., 46, St. Bernadette, Indianapolis, Nov. 6. Husband of Jana (Frye)

Harrell. Father of Billy Harrell. Son of William Harrell. Brother of Crystal Collins.

HUTCHINSON, Mary Ann, 84, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Nov. 9. Wife of Richard Hutchinson. Mother of Teresa, Bernard, Charles, David, Dennis, Michael and Patrick Hutchison. Sister of Charles and John Withem. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of three.

JULIUS, Morgan J., 26, St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, Nov. 9. Son of Dennis Julius and Suzanne Julius. Brother of Kelsey and Kris Julius. Grandson of Bill and Barbara Julius.

KERR, Shirley Ann, 73, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 4. Wife of Michael Kerr. Mother of Pamela Smith, Deborah and Teresa Weisheit. Sister of Donna Dail, Susie Wassman, Rodney Jordan, Jerry and Larry Austin. Grandmother of four.

KRYNICKI, Thomas J., 83, St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County, Nov. 13. Father of Cynthia Brattain, Delana Brenner, Ronda Hall, Robin Lysiak, Dawn Runnebohm and Thomas Krynicki. Brother of Vicky Bonnett, Jay Fiore, Agnes

Neugenbauer, Irene Shaffer, Leona Spartan, Edward Holipsky, Frank, George and Richard Krynicki. Grandfather of 18. Great-grandfather of 11.

McDANIEL, Dorothy, 95, St. Joseph, Clark County, Nov. 8. Mother of Alice, Benedictine Sister Dorothy Graf, Alvin, Cletus, Larry, Ralph and Robert Graf. Sister of Luella Rauck and Kenneth Kleehammer. Grandmother of 24. Great-grandmother of 32.

McKEE, James M., 58, St. Lawrence, Indianapolis, Oct. 29. Father of Meghan Price and Mason McKee. Brother of Patti Depko, Joy McKee-Brown and Mike McKee. Grandfather of three. (correction)

MISKOWIEC, Dorothy (Nicoloff), 80, Holy Trinity, Indianapolis, Oct. 27. Mother of Edward and James Miskowiec. Sister of George Nicoloff. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of one.

MORGAN, Robert P., 85, St. Mary, New Albany, Nov. 11. Husband of Carolyn Morgan. Father of Beverly

Morgan. Brother of Charles and Thomas Morgan.

SAMUELSON, Cliff, 71, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, Nov. 11. Father of Wendi Samuelson-Dull and Ryan Samuelson. Brother of Arlene White. Grandfather of four.

SCHALL, Richard, 94, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Nov. 5. Father of Theresa Books and Michael Schall. Brother of Eunice Carbrej and Ralph Schall.

SCHRADER, H. Imogene, 85, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Oct. 18. Wife of Leonard Schrader. Mother of Sandra Barnor, Linda Griffis, Anna Snyder, Michael and Paul Schrader. Sister of Sharon Simon, David and William Parker. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of four.

SCOTT, Katherine, 60, St. Matthew the Apostle, Indianapolis, Nov. 14. Wife of Robert Scott. Mother of Kristy Blackman, Brian and Dan Scott. Daughter of Tom Doyle. Sister of Aileen Parsons, Kevin and Thomas Doyle III. Grandmother of eight.

STUTTS, Richard E., 48, St. Simon the Apostle, Indianapolis, Nov. 4. Husband of Wendy (Wagner) Stutts. Father of Kathleen and Megan Stutts. Son of Jane (Morgan) Stutts. Brother of Corrine France, Kathy Schwab, Christine Sommers and James Stutts.

TRAUB, Donald V., 58, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Sept. 20. Father of Emily and Eric Traub. Brother of Martha Nelson, Anne Thompson, Joan Traub-Martin, Jerry, Pat, Paul and Tim Traub.

WARNER, Clara, 75, St. Rita, Indianapolis, Nov. 17. Mother of Dana Alexander, Derrick and Philip Jacks. Sister of Betty Hughes, Lawrence, Marion and Richard Beaven. Grandmother of eight.

WUENSCH, Karl Joseph, 42, St. Agnes, Nashville, Nov. 10. Husband of Cassandra Wuensch. Father of Cole, Dakota and Kelsay Wuensch. Son of Bill Wuensch and Kathleen Adams Butcher. Brother of Michele Dagenais, Melissa Wood and Eric Wuensch. †

Pope's embrace was heavenly, says man with disfiguring disease



CNS photo/Claudio Perin, EPA

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—For someone who has frequently been shunned and humiliated because of a disease that has severely disfigured his entire body, receiving the pope's loving embrace was like being in paradise.

Vinicio Riva, who is afflicted with neurofibromatosis, said his brief encounter with Pope Francis

Pope Francis embraces Vinicio Riva, 53, during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Nov. 6. Riva, who is afflicted with neurofibromatosis, said receiving the pope's embrace was like being in paradise. Riva is from a small village near Vincenza in northern Italy.

on Nov. 6 at a general audience in St. Peter's Square "seemed like forever."

Images of the pope kissing and embracing the Italian man made headlines, but his identity and background weren't known until two Italian news outlets found and interviewed him.

"My heart was bursting," he told the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* on Nov. 18.

When the pope hugged him tight, "I felt like I was in paradise."

Riva, 53, lives in a small village near Vincenza in northern Italy with his younger sister Morena Riva, who has the same genetic disorder, and their aunt, Caterina Lotto, who cares for them. The siblings'

late mother also suffered from the disease, which is typically hereditary.

Riva told the Italian magazine *Panorama* on Nov. 18 that the thing that struck him most was that the pope didn't hesitate at all.

"I'm not contagious, but [the pope] didn't know that. But he did it, period: He caressed my whole face and while he was doing it, I felt only love," he said.

"First, I kissed his hand, while he caressed my head and wounds with his other hand," Riva explained.

"Then he pulled me toward him, hugging me tight and kissing my face. My head was against his chest, and his arms were wrapped

around me. He held me so tightly, cuddling me, and he didn't let go. I tried to speak, to say something, but I wasn't able to: I was too choked up. It lasted just a little more than a minute, but, for me, it seemed like forever," he told *Panorama*.

"The pope's hands are so soft. Soft and beautiful. And his smile [is] bright and wide."

Neurofibromatosis results in numerous, often painful benign tumors. Riva said they constantly itch, and he often wakes in the morning with his shirt soaked with blood from scratching.

"The first signs [of the disease] appeared after I was 15. They said I would be dead by 30. Instead, here I am." †

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Advent penance services are scheduled at archdiocesan parishes

Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Advent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to *The Criterion*.

Batesville Deanery

- Dec. 1, 1:30 p.m. for Immaculate Conception, Millhouse; St. John, Osgood; and St. Maurice, Napoleon, at St. Maurice, Napoleon
- Dec. 2, 6:30 p.m. at St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg
- Dec. 3, 7 p.m. for St. Nicholas, Ripley County; St. Anthony of Padua, Morris; and St. Louis, Batesville, at St. Louis, Batesville
- Dec. 4, 7 p.m. for St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County and St. Joseph, Shelbyville at St. Joseph, Shelbyville
- Dec. 4, 4-5:30 p.m. and 6:30-7 p.m. at St. Peter, Franklin County
- Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg
- Dec. 6, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. at All Saints, Yorkville
- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. for St. Maurice, Decatur County; and St. John the Evangelist, Enochsburg, at St. John the Evangelist, Enochsburg
- Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, Bright

Bloomington Deanery

- Dec. 2, 6 p.m. for St. Charles Borromeo, Bloomington
- Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Agnes, Nashville
- Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m. at St. Jude, Spencer
- Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. John the Apostle, Bloomington

Connersville Deanery

- Dec. 4, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel, Connersville
- Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at St. Bridget, Liberty
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Cambridge City
- Dec. 12, 6:30 p.m. at St. Mary, Rushville
- Dec. 17, 6 p.m., following 5:15 p.m. Mass for Richmond Catholic Community at St. Mary, Richmond
- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. for St. Rose of Lima, Knightstown and St. Anne, New Castle at St. Anne, New Castle

Indianapolis East Deanery

- Dec. 3, 7 p.m. for Holy Cross and St. Philip Neri at St. Philip Neri
- Dec. 4, 7:30 p.m. at Holy Spirit
- Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Greenfield

- Dec. 10, 6 p.m. at St. Rita
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas the Apostle, Fortville
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes, St. Bernadette and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) at St. Bernadette
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Mary SS Peter and Paul Cathedral: Confessions will be heard in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel from 4:30-5 p.m. each Saturday during Advent. On the Sunday mornings of Advent, confessions will be heard from 10-10:30 a.m. Confessions are also heard from noon to 1 p.m. each Friday.

Indianapolis North Deanery

- Dec. 15, 2 p.m. deanery service at St. Lawrence
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. deanery service at St. Lawrence
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. deanery service at St. Lawrence

Indianapolis South Deanery

- Dec. 3, 6:30 p.m. at St. Ann
- Dec. 4, 7 p.m. at St. Roch
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- Dec. 11, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
- Dec. 15, 2 p.m. at Good Shepherd
- Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. at Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Mark the Evangelist
- Dec. 18, 6 p.m. at St. Barnabas
- Dec. 23, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood

Indianapolis West Deanery

- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Michael the Archangel
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Susanna, Plainfield
- Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at St. Malachy, Brownsburg
- Dec. 14, 9-11 a.m. for St. Anthony and Holy Trinity at St. Anthony
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Gabriel the Archangel
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. Monica

New Albany Deanery

- Dec. 3, 7 p.m. for Sacred Heart, Jeffersonville, and St. Augustine, Jeffersonville, at St. Augustine, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 4, 7 p.m. at St. Joseph, Corydon
- Dec. 8, 4 p.m. at St. Mary, New Albany
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville



Father Dennis Noelke hears a confession at Christ the King Church in Irondequoit, N.Y., on March 26.

- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. St. Mary, Navilleton
- Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Bradford
- Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Lanesville
- Dec. 15, 3 p.m. at Holy Family, New Albany
- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany
- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown
- Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. for St. Paul, Sellersburg and St. Joseph, Clark County at St. Paul, Sellersburg
- Dec. 22, 4 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight

Seymour Deanery

- Dec. 5, 7 p.m. for Most Sorrowful Mother of God, Vevay, and Prince of Peace, Madison, at Prince of Peace, Madison
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Providence, Brownstown, and St. Ambrose, Seymour, at St. Ambrose, Seymour
- Dec. 15, 2 p.m. for Holy Trinity, Edinburgh, and St. Rose of Lima, Franklin, at Holy Trinity, Edinburgh
- Dec. 15, 4 p.m. for American Martyrs, Scottsburg and St. Patrick, Salem at St. Patrick, Salem
- Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew, Columbus
- Dec. 23, 7 p.m. for St. Ann, Jennings County; St. Mary, North Vernon; and St. Joseph, Jennings County, at St. Joseph, Jennings County

Terre Haute Deanery

- Dec. 4, 7 p.m., Sacred Heart, Clinton
- Dec. 10, 1:30 p.m. at St. Margaret Mary, Terre Haute
- Dec. 10, 6:30 p.m. at Annunciation, Brazil
- Dec. 10, 7 p.m. at St. Benedict, Terre Haute
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. at St. Paul the Apostle, Greencastle †



Advent resources are available on archdiocesan Web site

During the season of Advent, the Archdiocese of Indianapolis will have a special Web page at www.archindy.org/advent.

The page contains various Advent resources, including links to the daily readings, past reflections from Archbishop Emeritus Daniel M. Buechlein, penance service schedules, images of past *Criterion* Christmas issue covers and links of interest to other Advent websites. †

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Director of Enrollment Management

Seccina Memorial High School, a ministry of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, is seeking a full-time Director of Enrollment Management. The Director leads, directs, and collaboratively develops and facilitates the implementation of a student enrollment plan that results in annually enrolling the optimal number of students as indicated by the school's strategic plan. To accomplish these objectives, the Director works collaboratively with the Director of Communications and others in the promotion and marketing of the school, ensuring cohesive messaging in the recruitment, enrollment, and retention of students.

The Director of Enrollment Management supervises a part-time assistant and serves as a staff liaison to various committees and task forces at the school. The Director reports to the Vice President of Advancement. High School or college recruiting experience is desirable. Applicant should be a professed and practicing Catholic. A college degree is required. See the full position description at www.scecina.org/employment

Application deadline is December 13, 2013. E-mail a cover letter and resumé to:

Bob Golobish
Vice President of Advancement
bgolobish@scecina.org

Describe NCYC in one word: Youths respond



An NCYC participant kneels while praying the rosary in the Indiana Convention Center on Nov. 22.

Photo by Rich Clark



Dear NCYC participants: Thank you for a weekend I will never forget

By Briana Stewart

Two years ago was the first time I had ever heard of the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC). It was being hosted here in Indianapolis, and everywhere



I went I heard clips of conversation about the three-day celebration.

"NCYC is so much fun!"
"I am so excited for NCYC this year!"

"NCYC changes your life."

I didn't understand then how teenagers—normal, social, sometimes irresponsible teenagers—could be so excited about their faith.

I didn't understand the crazy hats and funky costumes that many of the participants wore.

I didn't understand how 23,000 teens would want to come together from all across the nation to celebrate Catholicism.

Now, I understand.

After attending the 2013 National Catholic Youth Conference, I have been enlightened.

I arrived Thursday afternoon at St. John the Evangelist Church for the opening Mass for youths from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. I had been looking forward to this event since I was told that I would be attending NCYC as an intern for *The Criterion*.

The church was gorgeous with high-arched ceilings. Twenty or so priests sat near the front and concelebrated the Mass, all in white. And the large statues placed around the church enthralled me. But there was something even more spectacular that took my breath away.

The reverence and participation demonstrated by the more than 1,000 teenagers and adults in attendance were riveting. I would have expected the subdued silence from an older generation and the enthusiastic singing from children, but the teens succeeded in doing both. I was pleasantly surprised and grateful.

During Mass, I usually refrain from singing because nobody else is singing, but for once I could look around and see everyone joining in song. Our voices filled the church. I loved it.

The Mass captivated me, especially Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin's homily.

I was anxious all during Mass because I was looking forward to the eucharistic procession after it from the church to the Indiana Convention Center. I had only seen photos from the previous procession in 2011, but I already knew it was going to be a magical moment.

Criterion reporter Natalie Hoefler and I shuffled to the back of the church to snap photos of the procession. As we stepped outside into the rain, my level of awe increased tenfold when I saw the thousands of teens waiting to catch a glimpse of the Eucharist.

Then the procession began as I scampered about, holding an umbrella over Natalie as she took shot after shot. The streets fell silent as priests came out in two's and three's, steadily singing *"Ubi Caritas."*

Finally, Archbishop Tobin arrived, holding the monstrance under a red velvet canopy supported by four seminarians. As we entered the Indiana Convention Center, I bid Natalie farewell, feeling much too uncomfortable still standing as the Eucharist continued to come closer.

Once I knelt down by the doors and watched Archbishop Tobin pass, I cried. I'm not sure why, but the sight and the singing were just so beautiful that tears streamed down my face.

After the procession, the mood in the halls lightened, and kids were getting ready for the opening session down at Lucas Oil Stadium. I was also excited as I walked into a sea of flashing lights, squid hats, and chattering teens inside the stadium. The beginning of the session was filled with musical acts and dancing from the teens, and plenty of screaming! I was getting so excited. It was amazing.

Kids were tweeting all kinds of stuff so they could show up on the Jumbotron screens, but their tweets were so refreshing and clean.

Finally, the party really started, and the emcee, Jesse Manibusan, came out to get the 23,000 people in attendance even more hyped up—if that was even possible at this point!

The most memorable part of the opening session was when he asked us three questions and we responded. Loudly.
"Who's the Church?"

"We are!"

"Where's the Church?"

"Right here and everywhere!"

"How will others know this?"

"All are welcome!"

The echo from all of our voices was incredible to hear.

Complete silence came afterward, letting the sound hang in the air and letting me absorb what I had just heard. It was truly awesome to hear the strength in the voices of these teens representing their Church. I now know what wonder sounds like.

I will never forget those echoes for as long as I live.

The rest of my weekend was a blur of seminars and crowds, but I loved it all the same. I felt like I was in a different world. I mean, everywhere I turned, I saw boys talking about the new crucifix they just bought, and all kinds of teens crowding a booth trying to get a "VIRGINITY ROCKS" T-shirt.

It may have been a different world, but a world I would like to visit more often.

The last event I attended was Jason and Crystalina Evert's seminar, "Love or Lust?" on Friday. It was empowering, helpful and humorous.

I was so inspired afterward that I made a promise to myself to stay pure until I'm joined in holy matrimony with my husband. I never felt so confident and excited for the future than when I put that purity ring on my left hand. If I didn't get the chance to attend NCYC, I wouldn't have been strengthened in my decision to do this.

In fact, if I didn't get the chance to be "Signed, Sealed, Delivered" with all these other teens, I would still be under the impression that being proud of my faith is embarrassing and really not very fun.

These teenagers and all the people attending the conference really changed my life and reinforced my belief in Catholicism.

So thank you.

Thank you, all you 23,000 brothers and sisters, for turning a doubter into a believer.

Thank you for giving me two days I will never forget.

(Briana Stewart, an intern for The Criterion, is a senior at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis.) †