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Using faith in addictions counseling,
recovery groups help in healing
'from the inside out,' page 3.

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Charlestown youths learn about joy volunteering at SPREAD Advent retreat

By Natalie Hoefer

As Jessica Sarver drove from Charlestown to Indianapolis on Dec. 2, she was excited to see friends she made during a two-day retreat this summer.

And she was excited for six girls of the youth group she leads at St. Michael Parish in Charlestown to meet them.

"I can tell they're enjoying themselves already," Sarver said of the youths shortly after the gathering began.

The friends Sarver referred to were participants she met while volunteering at a Special Religious Education and Discipleship (SPREAD) summer retreat south of Indianapolis in July.

On Dec. 2, many of the same participants were gathered again for an afternoon SPREAD Advent retreat at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis on Dec. 2 following the Special Religious Education and Discipleship Advent retreat. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)

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Above, participants and volunteers wave at the camera during the Special Religious Education and Discipleship Advent retreat at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis on Dec. 2. Right, Joseph Lorenz, center, and Jessica Sarver, right, pray after receiving Communion during a Mass at St. Mark the Evangelist Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 2 following the Special Religious Education and Discipleship Advent retreat. (Photos by Natalie Hoefer)

Priest says change in Church from synod rooted in 'transformative friendship'

By Sean Gallagher

Reflecting on the first assembly of the meeting of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, Dominican Father Timothy Radcliffe pondered whether or not it will bring about change in the Church.



Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P.

"Some people came with the hope that it would bring dramatic change to the life of the Church," said Father Timothy during a Dec. 6 presentation at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. "Other people hoped it would exactly change nothing."

Father Timothy, an English priest appointed by Pope Francis as spiritual adviser of the synod, which met at the Vatican from Oct. 4-29, was in Indianapolis while touring various cities in the U.S. to speak about the meeting.

"According to the media, the press, ... no big decisions were taken. It was dismissed as a failure, a flop," he said to an audience of about 100. "But Pope Francis always insisted that it's the Holy Spirit that is the protagonist of change. That's quite a different understanding of change."

From this perspective, Father Timothy asserted, the synod will change the Church "through transformative friendship" that "will leave people completely changed."

"Any change in the structures of the Church for which we hope, for which we long," he said, "any of these will derive because we've become different sorts of people, a different sort of community, a community of the friends of God."

'Transformative friendship'

Such "transformative friendship" at the synod is ultimately rooted, Father

See SYNOD, page 10

Holy Family Shelter helps a father find the perfect Christmas gift for his two children

By John Shaughnessy

Like most parents of young children, Darren Highbaugh wants to get the perfect Christmas gift for them.

And considering all the struggles and heartbreaks that Highbaugh and his 9-year-old daughter and his 6-year-old son have faced in recent years, his desire to give them that special gift is even more intense.

Highbaugh will soon share what that Christmas gift is, but right

See SHELTER, page 2

Darren Highbaugh basks in the love of his children, 9-year-old Daranasia and 6-year-old Darren Jr. at Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis.

(Photo by John Shaughnessy)



SHELTER

continued from page 1

now he is explaining why it's so important to him, beginning with the downward spiral in his family's life that began a few years ago.

"My wife had a substance abuse problem that skipped out of control. I was the only provider at the time. Then I got injured at work, and I couldn't work. The pain was so horrific," says Highbaugh, who is wheelchair-bound because of the nerve injury to his back when he was a machine operator.

"Then she decided to walk out on us. I'm left with two children. I had to find some type of way to pull us back together. I went through our complete savings, through the kids crying and being upset, and then we moved into the van."

After living in a van for a couple of days, the family of three bounced from one homeless shelter to another in Indianapolis, eventually moving during February of this year into Holy Family Shelter, a shelter operated by the archdiocese's Catholic Charities Indianapolis. It's there where Highbaugh learned the news this fall that his wife had been murdered.

"That's been devastating for me and the children," he says. "My daughter wrote me a note today saying how much she missed her mommy and how much she loved her mommy. Some days are really good, and some days are bad. I'm just trying to hold us together."

'If that happens, it will be a terrific Christmas present'

As he explains his family's struggles and heartbreaks, Highbaugh is just several minutes removed from smiling and greeting his children as they got off the school bus just outside Holy Family Shelter on an early December afternoon.

Inside the shelter, he says Holy Family

has been a godsend, a refuge in the storm, for him, his daughter Daranasia and his son Darren Jr.

The shelter has also been extremely focused in helping Highbaugh move toward the one Christmas gift he desperately wants to give his children—a home of their own again.

"It's been really great here," Highbaugh says. "The staff has been tremendous in helping us and being very supportive to our needs. They've helped me out with the children a lot, with school



Rachelle Frink


clothes, counseling help, support. They have helped them mentally, physically. They give them three square meals a day. They have plenty of activities—holidays and birthdays.

"It means a lot because we had some issues before we got here. They've been pretty awesome."

Maybe, most of all, they've given the family hope again. "We're hoping to move forward," he says. "We're looking for a safe and stable place to move in. If that happens, it will be a terrific Christmas present. There's nothing like having your own place for your children, so they can get a sense of comfort and love. Being here at Holy Family has been great, terrific, but I think we need to move on, to try to get our life back."

That gift could come soon. After Highbaugh was approved for his Social Security disability benefits in October, staff members at Holy Family Shelter helped connect him with the Homeless Initiative program of the City of Indianapolis.

"They have a program now where the city has released a certain number of Section 8 housing choice vouchers," says Rachelle Frink, the assistant director of



Public Schedule of Archbishop Charles C. Thompson

December 19–24, 2023

<p>December 19 – 1 p.m. Mass and visitation at Indiana Women's Prison, Indianapolis</p>	<p>December 21 – 6 p.m. Serra Club dinner at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center</p>
<p>December 20 – 10 a.m. Department heads meeting at Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis</p>	<p>December 24 – 10 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Indianapolis</p>

Holy Family Shelter. "He's been awarded one. That will give him a tremendous amount of flexibility as far as housing is concerned. He would only be required to pay 30% of the rent amount."

While also serving as the shelter's case manager for Highbaugh and his children, Frink knows how rare their situation is.

"It's unusual being a male-headed household of his age," says Frink, a member of Holy Angels Parish in Indianapolis. "Mr. Highbaugh is a little bit older than the typical age of most of the families we serve—56, 57. Also, we don't typically have single dads with such young children. His physical disability also makes their situation unique. He's wheelchair-bound and unable to work. So that's what stands out to me."

So does his attitude and his approach to his children.

'He's nice, and he loves Jesus'

"As a dad, he loves his children to pieces," Frink says. "He's very attentive. He always just wants the best for them. But sometimes he gets a little bit nervous as it relates to his daughter—the things that go on in a girl her age. Sometimes that can be a little intimidating for a dad. He's always seeking advice for those kinds of things."

His children glow when they talk about their dad.

"He's a good man, and he's a very good father," Daranasia says.

"He's nice, and he loves Jesus," Darren Jr. says. "And he reads the Bible every day."

"I rely on the Most High," their father says. "I've tried to put everything into God's hands. Ask God for his help, his mercy and his grace. Every single day, day in and day out. I believe there's no power that is stronger than God's. So, I'm sure God's got me."

He smiles as he adds, "Even though there are some days when it seems that he don't got me." He pauses before continuing, "But I know he's got me. It's tough. But I have to say he wouldn't put me in this position if he knew I couldn't handle it. I've kept my faith that he will restore us."

At the same time, he strives to be the best father he can be for his children.

"They went through some traumatic times," Highbaugh says. "Ever since we lost our place, everything kept rolling downhill. But I kept embracing them,

giving them love, showing them love. Really trying to enforce the Scripture reading. Standing in faith in God that he will bring us through this.

"I tell the kids their mother is in a better place. And that our Father just wanted her to come home, that it was time for her to go rest. I tell them she's looking down on them, she's in great hands, and we'll meet her and see her later on."

He takes a long breath before touching upon other parts of his approach as a father.

'I give them big hugs and kisses'

"We try to read Scriptures together a lot," he says. "Extended hugs. And be understanding sometimes when they're acting out, because it's hard for them to have only one parent. It's a different type of living, especially for a little girl that's growing up. She should have a mother to really talk to about girl things. I'm working on that. I always let them know I love them. I give them big hugs and kisses."

As the time nears for giving his children the Christmas present that he desperately wants for them, Highbaugh also has a warm place in his heart this Christmas for the place that has been his family's home for the past 10 months.

He especially cites the help and influence of Frink and Brenda Ray, the shelter's manager of residential services.

"Rachelle is a great help. And Miss Brenda is just terrific with them. Miss Brenda has been my backup. She's always been there for my daughter. She takes them on the field trips. She's been a great help."

"If I could recommend anyone to this center, I would. It's a great group of people. They genuinely care, and they're very attentive to your needs and wants. The staff is just outstanding here. We couldn't ask for a better place to be."

(Holy Family Shelter always welcomes volunteers, monetary donations and donated items to help people making the transition from a shelter to a new life. Secure online donations can be made by going to archindy.org/cc/holyfamily and clicking on the "Give Now" link, or checks can be made payable to Holy Family Shelter and mailed directly to the shelter at 907 N. Holmes Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46222-3714. The shelter can also be contacted by phone at 317-635-7830.) †

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral and Saint Meinrad Archabbey announce Christmas liturgies

The Christmas liturgical schedules for SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis, and the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einsiedeln of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, 101 Hill Drive, in St. Meinrad, are as follows:

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Both liturgies will be livestreamed at: www.sppc.org/streaming.

Dec. 24—10 p.m. Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson as the principal celebrant. Parking will be available from 9 p.m.-midnight behind the cathedral and at the Archbishop Edward T. O'Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., across from the cathedral. Fox 59 will broadcast this Mass beginning at midnight.

Dec. 25—10 a.m. Mass.

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Church

Seating in the Archabbey Church is limited; however, the Christmas services will be livestreamed at www.saintmeinrad.org/live.

Dec. 24—Vespers (Liturgy of the Hours) 5 p.m. CT, Mass 10 p.m. CT

Dec. 25—Mass 10:30 a.m. CT, Vespers 5 p.m. CT

For the Christmas liturgical schedules of other religious communities or parishes in the archdiocese, contact their offices. †



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Using faith in addictions counseling, recovery groups help heal ‘from the inside out’

(Editor’s note: This is the fourth in an occasional series of articles addressing mental health, including the role of faith in seeking wholeness. The final topic will address the role of spiritual direction and other Catholic resources in seeking mental wholeness.)

By Natalie Hoefer

For years, Sophie’s life followed the same frustrating pattern. “Every morning, I would walk the dog and ask God to help me manage my eating,” she says. “And every evening, I would be asking for forgiveness because I had blown it.”

For Sophie, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis using an alias for privacy, the inability to control her eating affected her everyday life and

quality of living—one of the signs of the mental illness known as addiction.

Addiction is a “chronic brain disorder,” according to the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM). It typically takes one of two forms—substance use disorder such as drugs and alcohol, or behavioral addiction such as overeating, gambling, viewing pornography and more.

The organization notes that addiction “doesn’t happen from having a lack of willpower or as a result of making bad decisions.” But it can have devastating effects on a person’s physical and mental

health, relationships and career.

In this article, two Catholic counselors—Jonathan Chamblee of Novella Counseling, LLC, and Amanda Beikes of Central Psychological Services, LLC, both in Indianapolis—discuss the causes of addiction, ways it can be managed, and the role faith can play in healing.

The ‘feel-good, reward chemical’

Search for “addiction” in Google, and the screen fills with links to sites and articles on drugs and alcohol.

But ASAM states that behavioral addictions “can occur with any activity that’s capable of stimulating your brain’s reward system.” It lists activities like gambling, eating, shopping, viewing pornography, video gaming and using the internet.

So, a person enjoys good craft beer or engages in a hobby frequently. Does that mean they’re addicted? It depends.

Signs of true addiction generally



In this photo from 2015, counselor Andy Martin leads an afternoon group session at GraceWay home in Albany, Ga., a home for women working to overcome addiction. (CNS photo/Michael Alexander, Georgia Bulletin)

include “an inability to stop [the activity or substance], increased tolerance, intense focus on the substance or activity, lack of control, personal problems, health issues and withdrawal,” according to information on Cleveland Clinic’s website (bit.ly/48caX85).

What makes addiction particularly difficult to address is that it changes the brain’s chemistry.

“Over time, the substances or activities change your brain chemistry, and you become desensitized to their effects,” the site notes. “You then need more to produce the same effect.”

The chemical causing this effect is dopamine. Chamblee, a licensed clinical social worker, calls it the “feel-good, reward chemical.”

See MENTAL HEALTH, page 9

Who or what helped you navigate the first years of married life?

The first years of marriage bear unique challenges for newlyweds as they adjust to each other and to their new state in life.

“The first years of married life need to be ‘accompanied,’ and newlyweds should not be left in solitude.” So says paragraph #74 of “Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life,” a 2020 document of the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life. It also states that, “From the very beginning of married life, the couple needs to receive concrete assistance to live their interpersonal relationship in all sincerity” (#78).

For *The Criterion*’s upcoming Spring Marriage Supplement in February, we would like to hear from

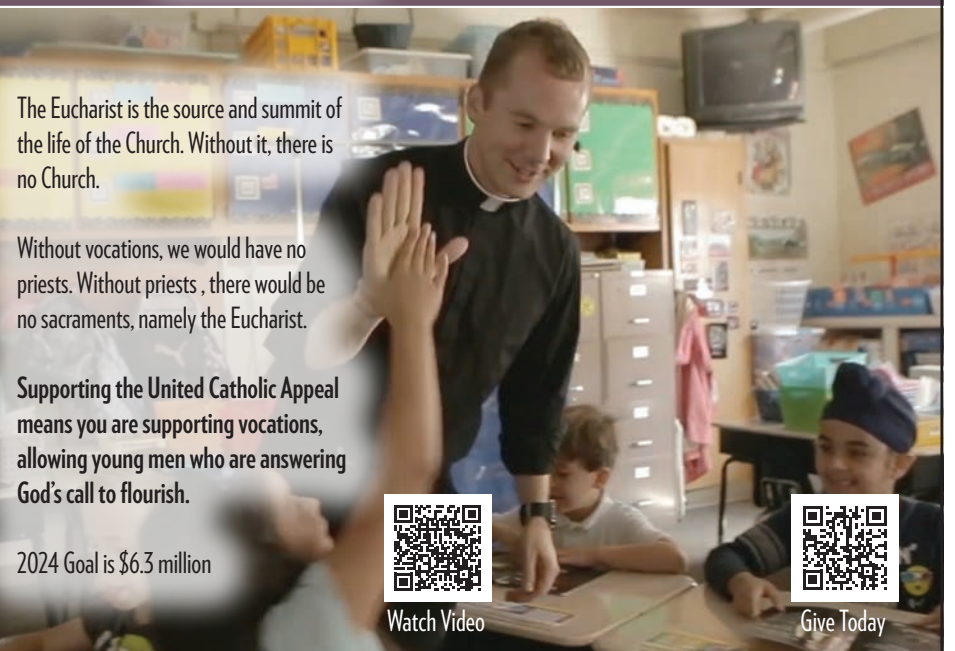
“experienced” couples as a way to help Catholic newlyweds.

What helped you overcome challenges in the early years of marriage? Was there anyone who accompanied you in your first years of married life? If so, how did they help you grow as a couple as you adjusted to marriage? If you were to accompany a newlywed Catholic couple, what would you do to help them in those first few years?

Please send your responses to Natalie Hoefer by e-mail at nhoefer@archindy.org or by mail in care of *The Criterion*, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202. Please include your parish and a daytime phone number where you can be reached. †

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Editorial



Palestinian Manan Abu Abuayash holds her baby Maram, 6 months, while lighting candles on Dec. 20, 2015, in the Church of the Nativity where tradition believes Christ was born in Bethlehem, West Bank. Advent is a time of anticipation and deep consolation. (OSV News/Debbie Hill, CNS)

Longing for the Prince of Peace

During Advent, we give expression to some of our deepest desires as individuals and as the people of God.

For example, we admit that the God who we believe is “with us” often seems to be absent, far away from us.

And during Advent, we acknowledge the nearly universal fear that the darkness of sin and evil has overpowered the forces of goodness and light. Finally, at this holy time of year, we give voice to our heartfelt longing for the coming again of the Prince of Peace. He alone can banish hatred and enmity among us, the warring tribes of planet Earth.

And so, we cry: *Maranâ thâ'* (Come, Lord Jesus). We cry to him who is the nearness of God, the light that overcomes all darkness, and the Prince of Peace.

Come, Lord Jesus, and fill our hearts with confidence, hope and the peace that binds us all together as one family of God.

We believe that Christ is with us—in our prayer, in the sacraments (especially the holy Eucharist), and in our efforts to serve one another and build a better world for all. And yet, we are hesitant and afraid. Will he really come again? And if he comes, what real difference will it make?

Advent is a time of waiting, and most of us lack the patience necessary to “wait in joyful hope.” We think of ourselves as “doers,” not waiters. We are restless, irritable and discontented when we are asked simply to pray and wait. Perhaps this is why we rush to begin the Christmas season. Waiting for the blessed hope, Christ, makes us uncomfortable. We would much rather stop waiting and start celebrating.

Unfortunately, our celebrations are empty and superficial if we don't prepare for them properly. That's why the Church asks us to take Advent seriously. We need to acknowledge our deep-seated longing for God, and we must give voice to our anxious fears, before we can truly rejoice in Christ's coming again.

Christian faith is a profound paradox. We truly believe that Christ has come and that he is with us now. But we feel his absence all around us. We sense that he is missing—in our personal relationships, in our communities, and in the public square. The philosopher who declared “God is dead” was not completely wrong.

Paradoxically, our God is both living and dead, present and absent, in our lives and in our world. We Catholics affirm his real presence in the Eucharist, but we also acknowledge that it too often feels like he is somehow missing from our daily lives.

Advent assures us that the light of Christ will once again shine in our world's darkness. During this holy season, we proclaim the nearness of God (Emmanuel) and we sing of the coming again of the Prince of Peace in spite of the grim warfare all around us. Advent is a season of hope. It invites us to cast off the doom and gloom of winter and embrace the warmth and sunshine of our Savior.

The Prince of Peace cannot come too soon. Recent years have witnessed civil unrest, antisemitism, rising poverty and homelessness, ugly words and divisiveness among neighbors and fellow citizens, hostility and the ravages of war among nations and peoples.

We long for the Prince of Peace—especially now—because it seems increasingly evident that without divine assistance, peace is impossible.

God alone is capable of uniting his increasingly divided people, and while it is essential that each of us pray for peace and work for peace—in our hearts, our homes and in our world—we cannot do this by ourselves. We can (and must!) be peacemakers, but we cannot hope to accomplish this most urgent and ambitious goal without God's help.

Maranâ thâ'! We plead for the coming again of the Prince of Peace, and we wait—not always in joyful hope, but with eager expectation that the One we long for will, in fact, come again.

During this time of National Eucharistic Revival, our longing should increase, and deepen, because we are growing in our awareness of and appreciation for the presence of the Prince of Peace in our lives. Each time we receive Christ in the Eucharist, we welcome the nearness of God into our hearts. Each moment we spend adoring the Blessed Sacrament, we acknowledge that his light overcomes all darkness.

Maranâ thâ'! We need you, Prince of Peace, now more than ever!

—Daniel Conway

Be Our Guest/Kenneth Craycraft

Why the Magnificat is the perfect prayer in Advent for us

Anyone who prays Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours regularly recites the *Magnificat* from the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke.



Named for its first word in Latin, this canticle is one of only four places in the Gospels where the Blessed Virgin's words are recorded. And the *Magnificat* contains more words

than the other three passages combined. The rarity and brevity of Mary's words, however, should not diminish their importance.

Indeed, the *Magnificat* is among the most theologically powerful passages in the entirety of the New Testament. Given its place in the narrative of the birth of Our Lord, Advent is the perfect time for meditating on Our Lady's words.

A newly pregnant Mary travels to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John the Baptist. When Mary greets Elizabeth, John leaps in his mother's womb, prompting Elizabeth's own contribution to the Christian liturgical tradition. “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb,” exclaims Mary's cousin (Lk 1:42). “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled” (Lk 1:45). This elicits Mary's response, that begins, “*Magnificat anima mea Dominum:*” “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.”

Echoing the prophet Isaiah

Mary's pregnancy represents our own liturgical experience in the season of Advent. The Lord has arrived in her womb, yet she awaits the fulfillment of his appearance. So, too, we live under the lordship of Christ, while we wait in hopeful expectation of his return.

And John the Baptist, who will become the voice from the desert proclaiming the coming of the Savior, has already made his presence felt to Elizabeth. The incarnational details of the scene draw our minds to the God who became flesh so that we may become like God.

Echoing the hopeful words of the prophet Isaiah, the *Magnificat* could be called a primer on the Church's doctrine of solidarity. Here, at the commencement of the Blessed Virgin's mysterious and wonderful gestation of Our Lord, she proclaims that this birth will upset the order of things.

God calls lowly Mary as the exemplar

of humility and selfless service. And in that humble submission, her soul is exalted. The last has been made first. Considering all these things, the *Magnificat* may be the perfect Advent prayer.

“A voice proclaims: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord!” exclaims the prophet Isaiah. “Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God” (Is 40:3). From the disorder of wilderness will come the order of restoration. “Every valley shall be lifted up,” the prophet continues, “every mountain and hill made low.” The rugged and rough shall be made smooth and plain. And having made all things level, the Lord, like a shepherd, “feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, leading the ewes with care” (Is 40:11).

Isaiah's prophecy of God's mercy echoes through from age to age until it finds its renewed articulation in Mary's canticle, in which the Lord “has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy” (Lk 1:54). God “has ... lifted up the lowly,” Our Lady proclaims (Lk 1:52). “The hungry he has filled with good things” (Lk 1:53). Like Isaiah, Mary's prophetic voice puts the poor and hungry in the center of theological consideration. To those whom mercy has been denied, mercy now has come.

A song for a fallen world

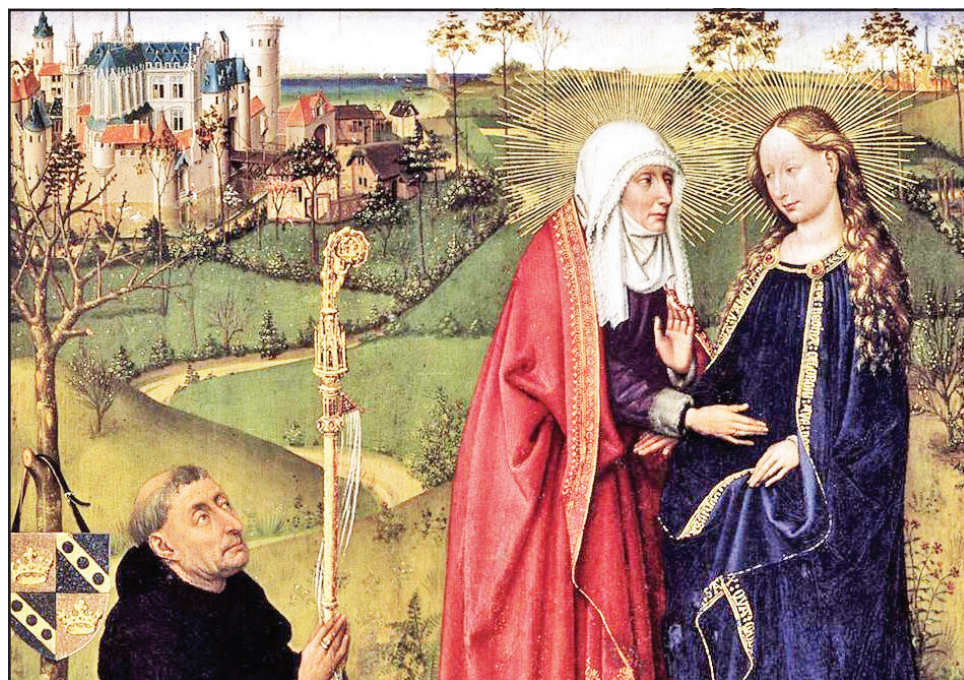
Some commentators have suggested that the *Magnificat* may be a traditional early Christian hymn, put in the mouth of Mary as a kind of early creedal confession. Part of the explanation for this theory is that the hymn makes no direct reference to Mary's pregnancy, or the expectation of the coming of the Savior.

The broader message, these scholars contend, makes it more likely that the hymn came later, and was retroactively put into the mouth of Our Lady.

While the theory has some merit, I believe that it misses the overall messianic tone of the canticle. The song is not simply about Our Lady's pregnancy, but rather about what that pregnancy means to a fallen world.

Just as the birth of Christ is about much more than a baby in a feeding trough, so the *Magnificat* accounts for the expansive—indeed, eternal—message of the Incarnation. A lowly birth to a lowly woman ushers in the magnificent fulfillment of God's offer and promise of salvation. This puts the *Magnificat* squarely in the context of the Incarnation, which has commenced in Mary's womb.

(Kenneth Craycraft is an associate professor of moral theology at Mount St. Mary's Seminary and School of Theology in Cincinnati.) †



“The Visitation,” a panel of the Arras altarpiece, was painted by Jacques Daret between 1434 and 1435. (OSV News photo/Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons)

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO CHARLES C. THOMPSON



Christ the Cornerstone

Christ's coming is near, God is with us, let us share the joy

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit (1 Thes 5:16-24).

The Third Sunday of Advent, which we will celebrate this weekend, is known as *Gaudete* Sunday.

This special day takes its name from the Latin verse "*Gaudete in Domino semper*" ("Rejoice in the Lord always"), and it signifies the growing awareness that the Lord is near. With eager anticipation, the Church invites us all to worship and give thanks to God in joy.

Advent is also a penitential season, a time of prayer and self-denial in anticipation of our Lord's coming again. But this time of waiting should not be dark or gloomy. In fact, we know that Christ has already come, and that he is with us now—even as we look forward to his return. *Gaudete* Sunday occurs midway through a season which is otherwise a time of longing, and it proclaims the joyful news of the nearness of the Lord.

The first reading for the Third Sunday of Advent (Is 61:1-2a, 10-11)

is a heartfelt song of rejoicing. Here the prophet Isaiah acknowledges his role as one "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Is 61:1) who has been called to "bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of vindication by our God" (Is 61:1-2).

Isaiah continues:

I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. As the Earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord God make justice and praise spring up before all the nations. (Is 61:10-11)

Pope Francis would call the one who proclaims these words a "Spirit-filled evangelizer," and he points out that each of us who are baptized Christians have this same vocation. We are called to be joyful evangelists who bring the good news of our salvation in Christ to all.

The responsorial psalm for *Gaudete* Sunday is also a proclamation of joy.

The refrain, "My soul rejoices in my God," is from Isaiah (Is 61:10b) but the verses are from Mary's song, the *Magnificat*, in St. Luke's Gospel (Lk 1:46-56). Here, our Blessed Mother's heart overflows with joy: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Lk 1:46-47).

The second reading (1 Thes 5:16-24) urges us to rejoice as it entreats us to prepare for the Lord's coming with prayers, supplication and thanksgiving. "Rejoice always" (1 Thes 5:16), St. Paul tells us. "Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thes 5:17-18). It is the Holy Spirit who fills our hearts with Gospel joy and compels us to share generously with others as we await the blessed hope who is Christ the Lord.

Finally, the Gospel for *Gaudete* Sunday (Jn 1:6-8, 19-28) presents us with the figure of St. John the Baptist. John embodies the prophecy of Isaiah. He is a powerful example of what we are all called to be as Spirit-filled evangelizers. John proclaims: "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,' as

Isaiah the prophet said" (Jn 1:23). He warns us that the One we are waiting for (the Lamb of God) is actually here among us even though we do not recognize him.

On *Gaudete* Sunday, we especially embrace the paradox that God is with us even as we wait in hope for Christ's coming again. During this time of the National Eucharistic Revival, we are invited to rejoice at the real presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of his body and blood, soul and divinity. We proclaim God's presence in our lives even as we wait in joyful hope for his coming again at Christmas and at the end of time.

Joy and gladness are always the right response to God the Father's generous gift of his beloved Son to us. "Do not quench the Spirit," St. Paul admonishes us (1 Thes 5:19). No matter how bad things may seem, we are called to connect with the joy that always underlies our experience as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

As we complete our Advent preparations and eagerly anticipate our Lord's coming again, let's pray that the Holy Spirit will fill our hearts with joyful expectation. †



Cristo, la piedra angular

La venida de Cristo está cerca, Dios está con nosotros, compartamos la alegría

Hermanos y hermanas: Estén siempre gozosos. Oren sin cesar. Den gracias a Dios en todo, porque ésta es su voluntad para ustedes en Cristo Jesús. No apaguen el Espíritu (1 Tes 5:16-19).

El tercer domingo de Adviento, que celebramos este fin de semana, se conoce como el domingo de *Gaudete*.

Este día especial toma su nombre del verso latino *Gaudete in Domino semper* ("alégrense siempre en el Señor"), que indica la noción cada vez más palpable de que el Señor está cerca. Con gran expectación, la Iglesia nos invita a todos a adorar y dar gracias a Dios con alegría.

El Adviento es también una época de penitencia, un tiempo de oración y abnegación en preparación para la venida de nuestro Señor. Pero este tiempo de espera no debe ser oscuro ni sombrío. De hecho, sabemos que Cristo ya ha venido y que está con nosotros ahora, incluso mientras esperamos su regreso. El Domingo de *Gaudete* sucede a mitad de un tiempo que es de añoranza, y proclama la alegre noticia de la proximidad del Señor.

La primera lectura del tercer domingo de Adviento (Is 61:1-2a, 10-11) es un sentido cántico de júbilo. Aquí el profeta Isaías reconoce su papel al declarar "El espíritu de Dios el Señor

está sobre mí" (Is 61:1) y dice que ha sido llamado "a proclamar buenas noticias a los afligidos, a vendar a los quebrantados de corazón, a anunciar libertad a los cautivos, y liberación a los prisioneros; a proclamar el año de la buena voluntad del Señor, y el día de la venganza de nuestro Dios" (Is 61:1-2).

Isaías continúa:

Yo me regocijaré grandemente en el Señor; mi alma se alegrará en mi Dios. Porque él me revistió de salvación; me rodeó con un manto de justicia; ¡me atavió como a un novio!, ¡me adornó con joyas, como a una novia! Así como la tierra produce sus renuevos, y así como el huerto hace que brote su semilla, así Dios el Señor hará brotar la justicia y la alabanza a los ojos de todas las naciones. (Is 61:10-11)

El Papa Francisco llamaría al que proclama estas palabras un "evangelizador lleno del Espíritu," y señala que cada uno de nosotros, que somos cristianos bautizados, tenemos esta misma vocación. Estamos llamados a ser evangelistas alegres que llevan a todos la buena nueva de nuestra salvación en Cristo.

El salmo responsorial del domingo de *Gaudete* es también una proclamación de alegría. En la respuesta, "Mi alma se alegra en mi

Señor," procede de Isaías (Is 61:10), pero los versos son del canto de María, el *Magnificat*, del Evangelio de san Lucas (Lc 1:46-56). Aquí, el corazón de nuestra Santísima Madre rebosa de alegría: "*Mi alma glorifica al Señor, y mi espíritu se regocija en Dios mi Salvador*" (Lc 1:46-47).

La segunda lectura (1 Tes 5:16-24) nos insta a alegrarnos, al tiempo que nos ruega que preparemos la venida del Señor con oraciones, súplicas y acciones de gracias. "Estén siempre gozosos—nos dice San Pablo" (1 Tes 5:16)—. "Oren sin cesar. Den gracias a Dios en todo, porque ésta es su voluntad para ustedes en Cristo Jesús" (1 Tes 5:16-18). Es el Espíritu Santo quien llena nuestros corazones de alegría evangélica y nos impulsa a compartir generosamente con los demás mientras esperamos la Bendita Esperanza que es Cristo el Señor.

Por último, el Evangelio del Domingo de *Gaudete* (Jn 1:6-8, 19-28) nos presenta la figura de san Juan Bautista, quien encarna la profecía de Isaías. Es un poderoso ejemplo de lo que todos estamos llamados a ser como evangelizadores llenos del Espíritu. Proclama Juan: "Yo soy la voz que clama en el desierto: 'Enderecen el camino del Señor,' como dijo el profeta

Isaías" (Jn 1:23). Nos advierte de que Aquel a quien esperamos (el Cordero de Dios) está realmente aquí entre nosotros aunque no lo reconozcamos.

De manera especial, en el Domingo de *Gaudete* acogemos la paradoja de que Dios está con nosotros incluso mientras esperamos con esperanza la vuelta de Cristo. Durante este tiempo del Renacimiento Eucarístico Nacional, se nos invita a regocijarnos ante la presencia real de nuestro Señor Jesucristo en el santísimo sacramento de su cuerpo y sangre, alma y divinidad. Proclamamos la presencia de Dios en nuestras vidas incluso mientras esperamos con gozosa esperanza su venida de nuevo en Navidad y al final de los tiempos.

La alegría y el gozo son siempre la respuesta adecuada al generoso regalo que Dios Padre nos hace de su amado Hijo. "No apaguen el Espíritu," nos advierte san Pablo (1 Tes 5:19). Por muy mal que parezcan las cosas, estamos llamados a conectar con la alegría que siempre subyace en nuestra experiencia como discípulos misioneros de Jesucristo.

Mientras completamos nuestros preparativos para el Adviento y esperamos con impaciencia la nueva venida de nuestro Señor, recemos para que el Espíritu Santo llene nuestros corazones de alegre expectación. †

Events Calendar

For a list of events for the next four weeks as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/events.

December 15-Jan. 6

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross Parish, 23345 Gavin Lane, Bright. **Bright Lights Drive-thru Christmas Light Display**, 6-10 p.m., free. Information: 812-512-1941, brightlightsdcc@gmail.com.

December 15-22

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Shop INN-Spiced Christmas Sale**, Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Dec. 16 and 23, 9 a.m.-noon; many items 25-75% off. Information: 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

December 20

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

December 21

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

December 28

All Saints Parish, St. Joseph Campus, 7536 Church Ln., West Harrison. **Feast of the Holy Innocents Mass of Healing**, 6:30 p.m., for parents and families who have lost infants or children to miscarriage, stillbirth or other loss, free. To receive ornament with child's name, fill out form by Dec. 20 at tinyurl.com/himass23 or call 859-801-1293.

2024

January 7

Monthly Prayer with Sisters of Providence: "Prayer on Martin Luther King Jr.," for

single Catholic women ages 18-42, via Zoom, 7-7:45 p.m., seventh day of each month. Information, registration: Events.SistersofProvidence.org, 361-500-9505, jluna@spsmw.org.

January 13

Providence Spirituality and Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, St. Mary-of-the-Woods. **Teen Volunteering Opportunity**, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., ages 12-18, assist retired Providence Sisters. Information, registration: TeenVolunteer.SistersofProvidence.org, jluna@spsmw.org or 361-500-9505.

January 18

St. Pius X Church, 7200 Sarto Dr., Indianapolis. **Sensory-friendly Mass**, 7 p.m., for those with sensitivities to light, sound

and smell, picture Mass aids available, all are welcome. Information: 317-446-5507, shannyrae67@gmail.com.

February 7

Monthly Prayer with Sisters of Providence: "Prayer on St. Valentine's Day," for single Catholic women ages 18-42, via Zoom, 7-7:45 p.m., seventh day of each month. Information, registration: Events.SistersofProvidence.org, 361-500-9505, jluna@spsmw.org.

February 17

St. Michael Parish, 11400 Farmers Lane NE, Greenville. **The Eucharist and Your Marriage**, 4-7 p.m., Catholic therapist and author Greg Schutte presenting, second of "Three Great Dates" events sponsored by Catalyst Catholic in New Albany Deanery (May 11, 2024: "Supporting Your Spouse's Dreams" with Steve and Jenni Angrisano),

\$20 per person, includes dinner, childcare available, registration required by Feb. 11. Information, registration: catalystcatholic.org/3dates.

February 21

All Saints Parish, St. Joseph Campus, 7536 Church Lane, West Harrison. **Double Feature with noted Theology of the Body speaker Jason Evert**, 6-9:30 p.m., for adults and youth ages 13-17 accompanied by an adult, "Purified: A Life-changing Event for Families" 6-7 p.m., "Gender and the Theology of Your Body" 7-9 p.m. adoration and confession 9-9:30 a.m., \$25, \$10 discount for registered parishioners of All Saints in Dearborn County, St. Lawrence in Lawrenceburg, St. Mary in Greensburg and St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross in Bright by using code DCC at checkout. Information, registration: kimsprague@dccatholics.com, bit.ly/3PJ7RID.

March 7

Monthly Prayer with Sisters of Providence: "Prayer on Women's History Month," for single Catholic women ages 18-42, via Zoom, 7-7:45 p.m., seventh day of each month. Information, registration: Events.SistersofProvidence.org, 361-500-9505, jluna@spsmw.org.

March 9

The Schrott Center for the Arts, 610 W. 46th St., Indianapolis. **The Passion of Joan of Arc Silent Film with Orchestra**, 7:30 p.m., live performance of Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra and chorus, composition by Richard Einhorn, tickets \$35-\$45, students and children free. Information, tickets: 317-940-9607, info@icomusic.org, tinyurl.com/icojoan24. †

Retreats and Programs

For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to www.archindy.org/retreats.

January 3, February 7, March 6

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Contemplative Prayer**, in person or via Zoom, 2-3 p.m., Franciscan Sister Olga Wittekind presenting, freewill donation. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, center@oldenburgosf.com, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

January 4, 11, 18, 25

Creative Ways to Encounter the Divine (virtual via Zoom): "Hearing God's Voice" offered by Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 7-8:30 p.m. Thursdays, first of four stand-alone sessions (Jan. 11, 18, 25), Jan. 4 focus: poetry, Jan. 11 focus: nature,

Jan. 18 focus: art, Jan. 25 focus: people and events and dreams, Benedictine Sister Antoinette Purcel presenting, \$75 for four sessions or \$25 per session. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

January 9, February 14

Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Personal Day of Retreat**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$40, includes private room for the day and lunch; spiritual direction available for additional \$30, must be scheduled in advance. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

January 12, February 9

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

January 12-14

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. **TOBIT Marriage Preparation Weekend**, 7 p.m. Fri.-11:45 a.m. Sun., \$298 per couple, separate rooms, includes meals and materials. Registration: fm.retreatportal.com/events, 317-545-7681, lcoons@archindy.org.

January 13

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg.

Awakened Grief: Finding the Way Back to Joy, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Life Coach Richard Brendan presenting, \$30, \$45 with CEU. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, center@oldenburgosf.com, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

January 14

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Coffee Talks: Spirituality in the Face of Adversity**, 10:45 a.m.-noon, Oldenburg Franciscan Center spiritual director Mary Waskewich presenting on Holocaust survivor Simon Wiesenthal, free will donation. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, center@oldenburgosf.com, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

January 19-21

Mother of the Redeemer Retreat Center, 8220 W. State Rd. 48, Bloomington. **Our Lady of Loreto and Her Litany**, 5 p.m. Fri.-11 a.m. Sun., Franciscans of the Immaculate Father Elias Mary presenting, \$50.70 commuter, \$241 single room, \$302.90 double, \$369.08 triple, \$433.12 quadruple, cost includes housing, three meals Sat. and one meal Sun. Information: 812-825-4642 ext. 1, MotheroftheRedeemer.com.

January 22-26

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Winter Chant Workshop**, Benedictine Brother John Glasenapp presenting, for

directors of liturgical music and singers in parish liturgies, \$750 single, \$835 double, \$200 commuter. Registration: saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

January 27

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Holocaust Speaker: Son of a Survivor**, 9:30-11:30 a.m., son of Holocaust survivor Steve Coppel presenting, \$30. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, center@oldenburgosf.com, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

February 3

Benedict Inn Retreat & Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Embracing the Lenten Journey: From Ashes to Resurrection Joy**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Benedictine Sister Susan Marie Lindstrom presenting, \$75, includes lunch. Information, registration: benedictinn.org/programs, 317-788-7581, benedictinn@benedictinn.org.

February 27-29

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Women of the World**, Benedictine Brother Zachary Wilberding presenting, bring Bible, \$300 single, \$425 double. Registration: saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

March 6

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Created in the**

Image of God: A Woman's Day of Reflection, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Dr. Kimberly Baker presenting, \$55. Registration: saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **Contemplative Prayer**, in person or via Zoom, 2-3 p.m., Franciscan Sister Olga Wittekind presenting, freewill donation. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, center@oldenburgosf.com, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

March 8

Oldenburg Franciscan Center, 22143 Main St., Oldenburg. **A Day of Quiet Renewal**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$20, \$80 with spiritual direction. Information, registration: 812-933-6437, oldenburgfranciscancenter.org.

March 8-10

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Unpacking the Vocation of Marriage through Scripture and Married Saints**, Angie and Josh Greulich presenting, for married couples, \$425 double. Registration: saintmeinrad.org/retreats.

March 15-17

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guesthouse, 200 Hill Dr., St. Meinrad. **Sleeper Awake!**, Benedictine Father Adrian Burke presenting, \$300 single, \$425 double. Registration: saintmeinrad.org/retreats. †

Discount tickets for two Pacers games will benefit Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry

Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry is offering discount tickets for two Indiana Pacers games at Gainbridge Fieldhouse, 125 S. Pennsylvania St., in Indianapolis as the Pacers host the Sacramento Kings on Feb. 2 and the New York Nets on March 16. For Feb. 2, tipoff is 7:30 p.m., and doors open at 6:30 p.m. March 16 tipoff is 7 p.m., with doors opening at 6 p.m. Discount game ticket prices range from \$30-58 and include a free Pacers branded hat; food voucher for a hot dog, chips and Pepsi product; and a chance to shoot a free throw

on the court after the game. A portion of each ticket purchased will go to Covenant Resources Miscarriage Ministry, founded and operated by Chris and Rebecca Harpring of St. Mary Parish in Greensburg. It offers support, resources and guidance to families who suffer a miscarriage. It is recommended that tickets be purchased a month prior to a game. For more information, contact Covenant Resources at 812-212-3463 or contactus@covenantresources.org. Purchase tickets at tinyurl.com/crmpacers24. †

Oldenburg Sisters of St. Francis will offer Christmas open house on Dec. 27

All are invited to tour the Sisters of St. Francis Motherhouse, 22143 Main St., in Oldenburg, during a community open house from 6-7:30 p.m. on Dec. 27. On display will be their many Christmas trees and decorations representing various cultures and themes.

The Sisters' Chime Choir will perform in the motherhouse chapel, and refreshments will be provided in the dining room. The event is free. For additional information, contact the Sisters at 812-934-2475 or e-mail mirvin@oldenburgosf.com. †

Wedding Anniversaries

RONALD AND MARGOT (GIBSON) CHRISTENSEN, members of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on Nov. 30. The couple was married in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on Nov. 30, 1968. They have one child: Erik Christensen.



Announcements for couples celebrating 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 or more years of marriage are accepted. Go to cutt.ly/anniversaries or call 317-236-1585.



The Face of Mercy

By Daniel Conway



Our humanity is revealed by how we treat women

On Oct. 27, Pope Francis addressed participants in an event sponsored by Italy's National Campaign Against Violence Against Women. The gathering was sponsored by RAI Media—*Radiotelevisione Italiana*—the Italian public broadcasting company.

"I thank the promoters of 'a long wave against male violence against women,'" the Holy Father said, "which enables us to reflect on a very topical theme. Indeed, violence against women is a poisonous weed that plagues our society and must be pulled up from its roots."

According to Pope Francis, the roots of this poisonous weed "are cultural and mental, growing in the soil of prejudice, of possession, of injustice."

Central to this serious cultural problem is the all-too frequent tendency to regard women as second-class citizens.

As Pope Francis said:

In too many places, and in too many situations, women are put in second place, they are considered "inferior," like objects. And if people are reduced to an item, then their dignity can no longer be seen. They are considered merely a possession that can be appropriated for anything, even to the point of elimination.

History records countless examples

of cultural biases against women. As recently as modern times—including in some contemporary cultures—women have been denied the right to vote, to own property and to assume positions of responsibility in business, society and religion. And, as the pope makes clear, when people are denied their fundamental rights and dignity, they are easily abused, exploited and marginalized.

"How many women are overcome by the burden and tragedy of violence!" Pope Francis exclaims. "How many are mistreated, abused, enslaved, victims of the arrogance of those who would make use of their body and their life, forced to surrender to the greed of men."

When women are not seen as equal in dignity to men, all kinds of bad things happen, including diverse forms of mental, emotional and physical cruelty.

Although the event was sponsored by one of the most prominent media organizations in Italy, Pope Francis did not withhold his criticism of the media's role in the abuse of women.

He said:

Unfortunately, the mass media still play an ambiguous role in this. On the one hand, they favor respect and the promotion of women, but on the other, they continually

transmit messages characterized by hedonism and consumerism, in which both male and female models comply with criteria of success, of self-assertion, of competition, of the power to attract others and dominate them.

Because the news and entertainment media cater to popular opinions, the way they portray women (and men) varies according to the circumstances. "Messages characterized by hedonism and consumerism" regularly appear in drama, comedy and even news features offered by the media to the public. As a result, the media help to create and sustain the "poisonous roots" that the pope says need to be pulled up from the soil of modern culture.

Pope Francis strongly objects to the portrayal of men (or women) as figures who exercise a dominant influence over others.

He says:

Where there is domination there is abuse! Love does not demand prisoners. The Lord wants us to be free and in full dignity. Faced with the scourge of the physical and psychological abuse of women, there is an urgent need to rediscover just and balanced forms of relationships, based on mutual respect and recognition. All kinds of conditioning must

be countered with educational action that, starting from the family, places the person, with his or her dignity, at the center.

Relationships based on mutual respect and the recognition of fundamental human dignity are needed to prevent all forms of abuse. The negative cultural influences that promote injustice and inequality must be overcome by an educational system that places positive concepts of human dignity at the center of everything.

Referring to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Father reminds us that "salvation came into the world from the heart and flesh of a woman." Her role was in no way incidental or secondary in the story of our redemption.

In fact, the pope insists that our degree of humanity is revealed by how we treat women.

"It is our duty, the responsibility of each person," Pope Francis says, "to give a voice to our voiceless sisters: the women who are victims of abuse, exploitation, marginalization and undue pressures. Let us not remain indifferent! It is necessary to act immediately, at all levels, with determination, urgency and courage."

(Daniel Conway is a member of The Criterion's editorial committee.) †

"Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God."

—Pope Francis, "*Misericordiae Vultus*" ("The Face of Mercy")

"Jesús de Nazaret con su palabra, con sus gestos y con toda su persona revela la misericordia de Dios."

—Papa Francisco, "*Misericordiae Vultus*" ("El rostro de la misericordia")

El rostro de la misericordia/Daniel Conway

Nuestra humanidad se revela por cómo tratamos a las mujeres

El 27 de octubre, el Papa Francisco se dirigió a los participantes en un encuentro en el marco de la Campaña nacional contra la violencia hacia las mujeres que se llevó a cabo en Italia. El evento fue patrocinado por RAI Media (*Radiotelevisione Italiana*) la compañía italiana de radiodifusión.

"Doy las gracias a los promotores de la iniciativa 'Una ola larga contra la violencia masculina contra las mujeres,' que permite reflexionar sobre un tema de gran actualidad. De hecho, la violencia contra las mujeres es una mala hierba venenosa que aflige nuestra sociedad y que debe ser eliminada desde la raíz."

Según el Papa Francisco, las raíces de esta mala hierba venenosa «son culturales y mentales, crecen en el terreno del perjuicio, de la posesión, de la injusticia».

Un aspecto central de este grave problema cultural es la tendencia demasiado frecuente a considerar a las mujeres como ciudadanas de segunda clase.

El Papa Francisco señaló que:

En demasiados lugares y demasiadas situaciones las mujeres son puestas en segundo plano, son consideradas "inferiores" como objetos: y si una persona es reducida a una cosa, entonces no se ve más la dignidad, se considera solo una propiedad de la que se puede disponer en todo, hasta incluso suprimirla.

La historia registra innumerables

ejemplos de prejuicios culturales contra las mujeres. Tan recientemente como en los tiempos modernos, incluso en algunas culturas contemporáneas, se ha negado a las mujeres el derecho al voto, a la propiedad y a asumir puestos de responsabilidad en los negocios, la sociedad y la religión. Y, como deja claro el Papa, cuando a las personas se les niegan sus derechos fundamentales y su dignidad, es fácil abusar de ellas, explotarlas y marginarlas.

"¿Cuántas mujeres están oprimidas por el peso y el drama de la violencia!" exclama el Santo Padre—. "Cuántas son maltratadas, abusadas, esclavizadas, víctimas de la prepotencia de quien piensa que puede disponer de su cuerpo y de su vida, obligadas a rendirse a la codicia de los hombres."

Cuando las mujeres no son consideradas iguales en dignidad a los hombres, ocurren todo tipo de cosas malas, incluidas diversas formas de crueldad mental, emocional y física.

Aunque el evento estaba patrocinado por una de las organizaciones de medios de comunicación más destacadas de Italia, el Papa Francisco no ocultó sus críticas al papel de los medios de comunicación en el abuso de las mujeres.

Expresó:

Lamentablemente en esto los medios de comunicación todavía juegan un rol ambiguo. Por un lado favorecen el respeto

y la promoción de las mujeres; pero de la otra transmiten continuamente mensajes impresos en el hedonismo y el consumismo, cuyos modelos, tanto masculinos como femeninos, obedecen los criterios del éxito, la autoafirmación, de la competición, del poder de atraer al otro y dominarlo.

Dado que los medios de noticias y de entretenimiento se adaptan a las opiniones populares, la forma en que retratan a las mujeres (y a los hombres) varía según las circunstancias. En obras de teatro, comedias e incluso noticias aparecen constantemente "mensajes impresos en el hedonismo y el consumismo" que los medios de comunicación ofrecen al público. Como resultado, los medios de comunicación contribuyen a crear y sostener las "raíces de esta mala hierba venenosa" que, según el Papa, hay que arrancar del suelo de la cultura moderna.

El Sumo Pontífice se opone firmemente a que se presente a los hombres (o a las mujeres) como figuras que ejercen una influencia dominante sobre los demás.

Y en este sentido, expresa:

¿Dónde hay dominio hay abuso! No es amor lo que exige prisioneros. ¡El Señor nos quiere libres y en plena dignidad! Ante la plaga de los abusos físicos y psicológicos sobre las mujeres está la urgencia de redescubrir formas de relaciones justas y equilibradas, basadas

en el respeto y en el reconocimiento recíprocos. Los condicionamientos de todo tipo deben contrarrestarse con una acción educativa que, partiendo de la familia, ponga en el centro a la persona y su dignidad.

Las relaciones basadas en el respeto mutuo y el reconocimiento de la dignidad humana fundamental son necesarias para prevenir todas las formas de abuso. Las influencias culturales negativas que promueven la injusticia y la desigualdad deben ser superadas por un sistema educativo que sitúe la noción positiva de la dignidad humana en el centro de todo.

Refiriéndose a la Santísima Virgen María, el Santo Padre nos recuerda que "del corazón y de la carne de una mujer ha venido al mundo la salvación." Su papel no fue en modo alguno incidental o secundario en la historia de nuestra redención.

De hecho, el Papa insiste en que nuestro grado de humanidad se revela por cómo tratamos a las mujeres.

"Es nuestro deber, responsabilidad de cada uno, dar voz a nuestras hermanas sin voz: las mujeres víctimas de abuso, explotación, marginación y presiones indebidas. ¡No nos quedemos indiferentes! Es necesario actuar enseguida, a todos los niveles, con determinación, urgencia y, valentía."

(Daniel Conway es integrante del comité editorial de The Criterion.) †

SPREAD

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Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis.

“Since this isn’t an overnight event, I thought it would be a good opportunity to bring the youths to introduce them to these beautiful people and [to experience] volunteering with those with special needs,” explained Sarver, St. Michael’s pastoral associate.

“I hope [the girls] walk away with a better understanding of the needs of different groups of people, and how they can serve them, and how much joy they can bring to an individual just by showing up and being present with them.”

According to three of the young volunteers, the girls learned not just about what they can give, but about what those with special needs have to offer as well.

‘Openness, love and pure joy’

Both the summer and Advent SPREAD retreats are offered annually by the Disabilities Ministry of the archdiocesan Office of Catechesis.

This year’s Advent retreat focused on the four candles of the Advent wreath symbolizing hope, peace, joy and love. The 18 participants—most from the Indianapolis area and one from the New Albany Deanery—also made Christmas cards for those incarcerated at the Indiana Women’s Prison, prayed the joyful mysteries of the rosary, decorated cookies and worshipped together at Mass.

“I wanted them to walk away with a feeling of hope, peace, joy and love, and really excited about Advent and building that excitement for Christmas,” said archdiocesan Disabilities Ministry coordinator Jennifer Bryans.

She was excited to have the St. Michael youths participate.

“I hope they walk away with the very same things as the participants,” said Bryans. “But also a renewed appreciation of service and helping others, and to witness that openness, love and pure joy that [the

participants] naturally embrace.”

When Sarver saw a flyer about the SPREAD Advent retreat, she reached out to Bryans about the possibility of bringing members of the St. Michael youth group to help.

Through various volunteer opportunities in the New Albany Deanery the group has participated in, “They’ve learned a lot about serving people, and they’ve learned a lot about the needs of other people that they don’t experience in their daily lives,” she said.

“But outside of school, I don’t think working with individuals with disabilities is something that most of them really have an opportunity to do.”

Bryans was thrilled to have the young people volunteer. She traveled to Charlestown to visit with the youth group in advance of the retreat to talk about what would happen and what to expect.

On the day of the retreat, a few girls were assigned to each of the four participant groups.

“That way they could get to know the participants on a more one-on-one basis versus just walking around,” Bryans explained. “The girls were really involved, which was wonderful.”

‘Human just like us’

And they had a great time, too.

“This is so fun! I love being here already,” said a smiling Maelyn Sarver about 30 minutes into the afternoon retreat.

Having a friend with special needs, she said she was “immediately interested when I heard about the idea of coming.”

The seventh-grader especially enjoyed the group of participants she was assigned to.

“They’re just so talkative, and they love learning,” she said. “They like to answer every question, and they get it right almost every time. You can just really tell that they’re paying attention and that they want to be here and they’re excited to be here.”

Lillie Boggess had a similar experience.

“Everyone is just happy to be here,” said the eighth-grader. “It was fun talking with them and hearing them talk at the snack table about sports and stuff they have in common.”

The experience fulfilled a desire of hers in choosing to help at the event two hours from her hometown.

“One reason why I came was to see if I would like” volunteering with the special needs community, Lillie said. Her verdict?



Evan Wilds, a member of St. Roch Parish in Indianapolis, proudly displays the Advent wreath he made during a Special Religious Education and Discipleship Advent retreat at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis on Dec. 2. (Photos by Natalie Hoefler)



Standing at right, Lillie Boggess, a member of St. Michael Parish in Charlestown, listens to instructions before helping participants in the Special Religious Education and Discipleship Advent retreat create an Advent wreath at St. Mark the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis on Dec. 2.

“I would definitely like to do more things like this,” she said enthusiastically.

From the many volunteer opportunities the St. Michael youth group has participated in, seventh-grader Adalynn Latham said “it’s just been nice to get out there and learn about more people and how we can help them.”

Serving at the SPREAD Advent retreat “made me feel really good,” she added. “It taught me to be patient and to really see the people who are here. It’s just amazing to see how they can see the world in different perspectives. Honestly, they’re just joyful.”

To help the six girls process their experience, Sarver plans to have them share with the rest of the youth group about the event and what they learned.

“You always learn and understand and process things better when you then have to teach it or explain it to someone else,” she said.

Sarver hopes to see the rest of the group get involved in future opportunities to serve those with special needs.

“We talk to [the youths] a lot about the dignity of the human person,” she said. Volunteering at events like the SPREAD Advent retreat “really reinforces that message.”

It was a message Lillie embraced.

Those with special needs “can be different, but they are human just like us,” she said. “They still can do amazing things.”

(For more information about the archdiocese’s Disabilities Ministry, contact Jennifer Bryans at jbryans@archindy.org or call her at 317-236-1448.) †

Nebraska priest dies after attack during apparent rectory break-in

(OSV News)—A Nebraska priest has died after being attacked in the rectory of his parish in the early morning before he was to celebrate Mass for the Second Sunday of Advent.

Father Stephen Gutsell was found “suffering from injuries sustained during an assault” on Dec. 10 at the rectory of St. John the Baptist Parish in Fort Calhoun, Neb., where he served as pastoral administrator.

According to a Dec. 10 press release from Washington County Sheriff Mike Robinson, the county’s 911 emergency dispatch received an emergency call on Dec. 10 at approximately 5:05 a.m. reporting an attempted break-in at the rectory. According to the statement, deputies arrived within six minutes and found the suspect—later identified as Kierre Williams—inside the residence with the injured priest.

Father Gutsell was transported to the

University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, Neb., where he succumbed to his injuries.

Williams, a 43-year-old man from Sioux City, Iowa, was taken into custody and booked on charges of homicide and use of a weapon to commit a felony.

The Washington County Sheriff’s Office said the case is in the hands of the county attorney.

In 2007, Father Gutsell pleaded guilty to embezzling at least \$125,000 from St. Patrick Parish in Omaha. He was sentenced to five years’ probation and ordered to pay back the funds. After completing a residential treatment program, the Archdiocese of Omaha then assigned him to assist with Blessed Sacrament Parish, now part of St. Philip Neri Parish, in Omaha, with the pastor of St. Philip Neri placed in charge of parish finances.

In June, Father Gutsell’s brother, Father Michael Gutsell—who served as chancellor of the Archdiocese of Omaha from 1994 to 2003, and as pastor of several parishes thereafter—pleaded guilty to stealing \$155,000 from Father Ted Richling, an elderly priest for whom he

served as power of attorney. He was placed on two years’ probation. Father Michael Gutsell was also charged with stealing more than \$96,000 from St. Joseph Parish in Springfield, Neb., of which he had been pastor. Those charges were dropped in return for repaying the funds.

Robinson told local media that he did not believe Father Stephen Gutsell’s death was related to the priest’s prior offense.

In a statement posted to its website, the Archdiocese of Omaha said it is “praying for Father Stephen Gutsell” and that, with the investigation in progress, “there are no further details at this time.

“Please join Archbishop George Lucas in prayer for the repose of Father Gutsell, for his family and for the St. John the Baptist Parish community in this tragic time.”

Local media reported that tributes poured in at a vigil held on Dec. 10, with parishioners mourning a priest known as a “wonderful person” and “brilliant man” who held Bible studies loved to see the altar decorated with flowers, and was known for devoting himself to the needs of others.

According to the archdiocesan website, Father Gutsell served as both St. John the Baptist’s pastoral administrator and as chaplain of the Madonna Rehabilitation Hospitals in Omaha, Neb., which provide care for brain and spinal cord injuries as well as complex medical conditions.

Father Stephen Gutsell’s final message in the bulletin to his flock concerned the patron saint of their parish, noting the second Sunday of Advent—the Mass he was supposed to celebrate on that day—could be called “St. John the Baptist Sunday” with the theme, “Prepare the way of the Lord.”

“John is ‘the voice of one crying out. . . Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths’ [Mk 1:3]. As the Fathers of the Church described him, he is the voice who announces the coming of the Word, who was God from the beginning and has now become flesh in order to dwell among us,” the priest wrote. “As Christmas draws near, the voice of John the Baptist is meant to remind us of what we all should be preparing to receive in the Advent Season. God bless you and your family in this wonderful season of grace.” †



Father Stephen Gutsell

MENTAL HEALTH

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And with gambling, pornography and internet addiction, he says, “It’s often paired with a fear of missing out, that feeling of, ‘Wouldn’t it be terrible if I won the next game or if it was the next scroll that was going to be mind-blowing?’”

Dopamine plays the chemical role in addiction. But what causes a person to turn to a substance or activity for relief in the first place?

‘It makes it harder to avoid’

There is no simple answer to that question, says Chamblee.

“Addiction can be its own problem, or it can be a symptom of something bigger, or both,” he says.

The root causes are just as complex, but Chamblee and Beikes agree that such causes can be traced as far back as the womb.

“Children of parents with addiction or substance use disorder can be born with a genetic predisposition,” says Beikes, a licensed clinical social worker and licensed clinical addiction counselor.

“Also, when there’s exposure [to addictive behavior] in a household growing up or when there’s less parental supervision of kids dabbling in substance abuse, [addiction] can become a learned behavior.”

Childhood trauma or abuse can also play a factor, says Chamblee.

“There’s a high correspondence between childhood trauma and addiction,” he notes. “Childhood trauma happens when the brain is forming. ... That doesn’t mean you will be addicted, but it makes it harder to avoid.”

He and Beikes both note another common aspect of addiction, a factor exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic: isolation.

“We were made for social interaction,” Beikes says. “When people are isolated, they start feeling more depressed, and addiction plays a part in escape.”

Chamblee agrees.

“When people feel isolated, that addiction is much more likely,” he says. “That’s why it was so prevalent during the pandemic. If people feel connected with good relationships with family and the community, then addiction is easier not to succumb to.”

It’s that sense of community that make 12-step programs so helpful for those with addictions.

‘We are still the image of God’

Twelve-step recovery programs are designed to help individuals attain long-lasting freedom from substance or behavioral addiction.

The 12 steps “outline a path to spiritual progress through a series of actions designed to elicit ... a complete mental, emotional, and spiritual shift in perception,” according to recoverycentersofamerica.com.

One of the benefits of such programs is that they “involve restoration with the community, like making amends to those harmed by addiction, having a sponsor, having a group you can be honest with,” says Chamblee. “Those are incredibly powerful.”

Sophie, a member of Overeaters Anonymous, has found this to be the case.

“Having the support of other people that have the same illness and addiction that I have, I am able to acknowledge my powerlessness over food,” she says.

Combining a recovery program with counseling provides a good “both/and” solution for many people in treating addiction, says Chamblee.

“With counseling, it’s often going back to a trauma, often in childhood, and addressing those wounds,” he says.

He also notes that combining the Catholic faith with counseling “can bring hope and God’s grace into the situation.”

“I just don’t think there’s the same response or equal footing in secular counseling, that no matter how much we’ve fallen or have addiction or other issues, we are still the image of God. ... No matter how much we have messed up, that doesn’t fundamentally define who we are and why we matter.”

Beikes, a Catholic who welcomes involving faith with counseling if a patient wishes, agrees.

“Healing is from the inside out,” she says. “If we can bring God into the healing process, that benefits other areas like personal relationships and job.”

And while 12-step programs “say they’re not based on religion, they definitely have a

spiritual aspect” in their call on help from a “higher power,” Beikes says.

“I do believe people increase in faith as they get sober because they realize there is a greater being playing a part in

their strength, courage and commitment to staying sober.”

Such has been the case for Sophie with her overeating.

‘My faith walk is so much stronger’

It is the 12-step combination of community support and faith that makes Overeaters Anonymous work for her, she says, adding that she knows the “higher power” recovery programs refer to is God.

“I realized that, while I was praying for help in the morning, I was still trying to manage my food all by myself without asking for help from other people,” says Sophie. “And for me, I can’t do my faith by myself. My Christian walk has to be with other people, and finding a solution for overeating had to come from other people.”

While she still begins each morning in prayer, Sophie says that time “includes acknowledging the majesty of our God and asking for the presence of the Holy Spirit to help me not eat the foods that I have discovered make me crazy, and at the same time to stick with the food plan that I’ve created for the day.”

The first three of the 12 steps epitomize for Sophie the faith involved in working the program: admitting powerlessness, believing in the ability of a higher power to restore sanity, and deciding to turn one’s life and will over to that higher power.

“And it applies to other things in my life I’m powerless over,” she notes. “If I invite God into that situation, then I can trust he’s got this.”

The results have been profound for Sophie. Yes, she lost the weight she desired, she has kept it off for several years, and she physically feels better.

But more importantly, she says, “My faith walk is so much stronger, since I’ve been able to give my addiction over to God.”

“By practicing every day handing my food over to God, it just has allowed me to trust him with everything in my life, at a much deeper level than I had before.” †



‘There’s a high correspondence between childhood trauma and addiction. Childhood trauma happens when the brain is forming. ... That doesn’t mean you will be addicted, but it makes it harder to avoid.’

—Counselor Jonathan Chamblee



Amanda Beikes

Resources exist in central and southern Indiana to help manage addiction

Compiled by Natalie Hoefler

Addiction is a “chronic brain disorder,” according to the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM). It typically takes one of two forms—substance use disorder such as drugs and alcohol, or behavioral addiction such as overeating, gambling, pornography and more.

The organization notes that addiction “doesn’t happen from having a lack of willpower or as a result of making bad decisions.” But it can have devastating effects on a person’s physical and mental health, relationships and career.

Counseling and recovery groups exist in central and southern Indiana—as well as online—to help manage addictions. Below is a non-comprehensive list.

12-step recovery programs

—Alcohol: Alcoholics Anonymous. For information, go to aa.org. For a list of cities and towns offering in-person meetings in central and southern Indiana, go to alcoholicsanonymous.com/aa-meetings/Indiana. For a list of online

meetings, go to aaintergroup.org/meetings.

—Drug and substance use: Narcotics Anonymous. For information and to find in-person or online meetings, go to www.na.org.

—Gambling: Gamblers Anonymous. For information and to find in-person or online meetings, go to gamblersanonymous.org.

—Internet: Internet and Technology Addicts Anonymous. For more information and to find in-person and online meetings, go to internetaddictsanonymous.org.

—Nicotine: Nicotine Anonymous. For more information and to find in-person and online meetings, go to www.nicotine-anonymous.org.

—Overeating and food disorders: Overeaters Anonymous. For information and to find in-person or online meetings, go to oa.org. Also applicable to those who obsessively diet or have bulimia or anorexia.

—Overspending, shopping: Spenders Anonymous. For more information and to

find in-person or online meetings, go to spenders.org.

—Pornography viewing addiction: For information, go to www.pornaddictsanonymous.org.

—Video gaming: Gaming Addicts Anonymous. For more information and to find in-person or online meetings, go to www.gamingaddictsanonymous.org.

Additionally, Catholic in Recovery incorporates a Catholic perspective to 12-step recovery of any form of addiction, although some online meetings focus on a specific addiction. Two in-person groups are available in the archdiocese:

—Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Lumen Christi Catholic School building, 580 Stevens St., Indianapolis. Tuesdays at 7 p.m. Information: Jerry, 317-757-1439, cir.church.holyrosary@gmail.com.

—St. Simon the Apostle Parish, 8155 Oaklandon Road, Indianapolis. Mondays at 7 p.m. Information: Mark, 513-227-6325, rubicma@hotmail.com.

For more information or for a list of

online meetings, go to catholicinrecovery.com.

Counseling

—A list of Catholic therapists and counselors located in central and southern Indiana, vetted by the archdiocese, can be found at lnkiy.in/MentalHealthMinistry and lnkiy.in/CounselorList.

—Catholic Charities Bloomington offers individual, couples, family and child counseling. Most health insurances are accepted, with a sliding fee scale available. For accessibility to all in need, this counseling is not faith-based. Call 812-332-1262 or go to ccb.in.org for more information.

—Catholic Charities Indianapolis (CCI) offers individual, couple and family counseling on a sliding fee scale based on income. CCI also accepts a variety of private insurances as well as Medicaid. For accessibility to all in need, this counseling is not faith-based. Call 317-236-1500 and select option 2. Go to lnkiy.in/CCICounseling to complete an intake form and for a list of therapists. †

Lenten 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. 15, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Mary of the Immaculate

Conception, Aurora

Dec. 15, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at St. Joseph, Shelbyville

Dec. 19, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Michael, Brookville

Dec. 20, 6-8 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Osgood

Additionally, recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Batesville Deanery are as follows:

Weekends of Dec. 16-17 and 23-24 before and after

weekend Masses at St. Maurice, Napoleon

Indianapolis North Deanery

Dec. 17, 2 p.m. at St. Thomas Aquinas

Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Matthew the Apostle

Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Lawrence

Indianapolis South Deanery

Dec. 16, 8:30-10 a.m. at SS. Francis and Clare of

Assisi, Greenwood

New Albany Deanery

Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville

Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County

Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Starlight

Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Michael, Charlestown (English and Spanish)

Dec. 21, 6:30 p.m. at St. Francis Xavier, Henryville

Seymour Deanery

Dec. 20, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Ambrose, Seymour

Terre Haute Deanery

Recurring opportunities for reconciliation in the Terre Haute Deanery are as follows:

Thursdays 6:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturdays 3:30-5 p.m. at St. Joseph University. †

SYNOD

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Timothy said, “in the divine friendship, which is the very life of God: Father, Son and Spirit.”

“Pope Benedict often said our religion, Christianity, is not a religion of the book,” he said. “It is a religion of encounter, transformative encounter.”

To further such encounters, Father Timothy said, the synod meeting did not meet like past synods, in an auditorium centered around the pope, cardinals and bishops.

Rather, the participants—ordained, religious and lay Catholics—sat at round tables where they listened to and looked at each other.

“You could see faces being changed, people learning to smile at each other,” Father Timothy said. “Christianity is a religion of the face. A lot of what was happening at the synod, at this first stage, was learning to see each other’s faces, learning to befriend them.”

In reflecting on the work of the Holy Spirit in the synod meeting, Father Timothy recalled how, when he ministered in Rome as the general of the Order of Preachers, he watched a nest of hawks outside his office where the mother and father hawks urged their nestlings to fly out of the nest.

“Fly or die,” Father Timothy said. “That’s what the Holy Spirit does.

It propels us out of where we are comfortable. A similar thing happened at the synod, and its consequences are potentially enormous.”

‘Citizens of the kingdom of God’

Part of going beyond “comfort zones” in the synod, Father Timothy said, was its participants seeing value in the priorities and experiences of fellow participants from different countries and cultures.

This, he said, is especially important in contemporary society marked by a growing “militant nationalism all breathing to war” that “often goes with fundamentalist forms of religion.”

“But in the synod, we began to glimpse how we are called to be more than citizens of our country,” Father Timothy said. “We are baptized to be citizens of the kingdom of God. Vastly more significant than any identity we may have as citizens of any country is that we are citizens of the kingdom [in] which, as St. Paul said, there is neither slave nor free, Greek nor Jew, male, nor female.”

While the Holy Spirit takes believers beyond the comfort zones of their countries and cultures, Father Timothy said that it also binds people of great diversity into the truth.

“The Spirit leads us into all truth,” he said. “On the night before he died, Jesus promised the Spirit, the Spirit of truth. Human beings live by the truth. We need it to thrive. Birds need air. Fish need water. Human beings need truth. Without it, we perish. And we live in a society in which ... the instinct for the truth is being undermined.

“Detachment for the truth is subversive

of the human community, as we can see all over the world. It leads to polarization, violent language and conflict, here in the United States, at home in Britain and everywhere in the world. This detachment from reality is fundamentally dangerous.”

‘The hardest lesson of all’

Looking forward to the concluding meeting of the Synod of Bishops on synodality in October 2024, Father Timothy said that it needs to go beyond the “conversations in the Spirit” that marked the first meeting.

“To go further, we need theologians to help our dialogue with each other, our dialogue with the Gospel, our dialogue with the [Church’s] tradition,” he noted.

In particular, Father Timothy said, the synod needs the kind of theology that he said Pope Francis promoted in a *motu proprio* he issued on Nov. 1, “*Ad theologiam promovendam*.”

“We must move toward a theology of dialogue, a theology of conversation, a theology in which we engage with others with different views with whom we disagree,” he said. “That’s what we need in the synod. That’s what we need in the Church. And that’s what we need for every one of you.

“We need to dialogue with people who are different, to release us from our little bubbles so that we may journey toward the truth together. We must be unafraid of argument. I think we only took the initial steps towards that in this first session of the synod.”

A challenge in moving the synod and Church as a whole toward this kind of dialogue and change, Father Timothy said, is “to bring on board the priests.”

“If we do not do so, the synodal path will get us nowhere,” he said. “It was remarked that the priests around the world—I don’t think in this archdiocese—but around the world the priests have been those most resistant to the synodal path.

“I think that if we are to move forward, we have to find ways of cherishing the priesthood, of accepting it and seeing its beauty in a good way, of seeing how people are ordained to be ordered to the people of God.”

Looking more broadly, Father Timothy also saw a challenge in the way that competition marks so much of contemporary culture.

“How do we become a non-rivalrous people,” he wondered. “It’s the hardest lesson of all.”

This aspect of society has an effect on the Church, Father Timothy said.

“I think for us the great art is how we learn to live without competition with each other,” he said. “Because essentially, more authority, more voice for the laity does not mean less authority for the priests. More authority for priests does not mean less authority for bishops.

“If we learn to live together well in the Holy Spirit, poured upon us by the Father, then we will become less and less competitive and mutually empowering.”

Accepting the ‘ministry of unity’

During a question-and-answer session after his presentation, Father Timothy



Karla Hudacek, pastoral associate and director of religious education at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis, speaks on Dec. 6 with Dominican Father Timothy Radcliffe in SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis after the priest gave a presentation on the recent meeting of the Synod of Bishops on synodality. (Photo by Sean Gallagher)

was asked whether the way issues in the Church were being discussed at the synod might lead to a devaluing of obedience and a corresponding growth in the influence of relativism in the life of the Church.

Noting that this was “a concern that was widely shared” at the synod, Father Timothy noted that it can be overcome by fostering unity in the Church.

“We have to be held in the unity of the Church as we seek,” he said. “And the bishop, according to the teaching of the Church, is the minister of unity, holding us together. So, one way in which we respect and honor the bishop—at the local level, our priest, at the level of the whole Church, the pope—is by accepting that ministry of unity.”

Father Timothy emphasized that the dialogue about the Church at the synod “can’t drift into relativism.”

“There is one truth,” he said. “But it’s beyond the grasp of all of us. You see, the temptation of some people is to say, ‘There’s one truth and I’ve got it.’ The opposite temptation is to say, ‘I’ve got my truth, and you’ve got your truth.’ Those, I think, both lead us astray.

“The middle way, which I think is the healthy way, is that of course of St. Thomas Aquinas, who taught us that there are truths that we know, such as God is good and God is true, the truths of the teaching of the Church. But what they mean—we’re always on the way of understanding.”

‘Deeply eucharistic all the way through’

Another questioner asked Father Timothy about the synod meeting on synodality happening at the same time that the Church in the U.S. is taking part in a three-year National Eucharistic Revival, for which the archdiocese is preparing to host the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis in July 2024.

Father Timothy noted how the October synod meeting “was profoundly prayerful.”

“It was filled with silence,” he said.

“After every four or five interventions, we’d have four minutes of silence, four minutes of prayer. And so, you could say—and the pope said this many times—the whole event was eucharistic.”

Father Timothy recalled a trip he made to Rwanda in 1993 when tribal violence began taking its toll on the eastern African country that would soon descend into genocide.

After visiting a hospital filled with children who were victims of this violence, Father Timothy said he “couldn’t think of anything to say.”

While he was “robbed of all words” by the violence swirling around him in Rwanda, Father Timothy knew he could do something, “do this in memory of me.”

“Then I think I understood, in a way, the Eucharist a little bit better than I’d ever done before,” he recalled. “Do this in memory of me.

“It took us back to that last crisis [for Jesus and his disciples], the last night, when there was no future, apparently. All that lay ahead was betrayal, torture, failure, and death. And at that moment, he performed ... an act of radical hope. This is my body, and I give it to you. This is me. I give myself to you.

“Ever since then, every Eucharist for me is an expression of radical, immeasurable hope. When there seems to be no future, when things seem to be going nowhere, at that moment we celebrate the Eucharist, and that gift of the future we cannot imagine.”

Although the participants in the synod came to the meeting with vastly differing hopes and expectations, Father Timothy said, they were united in the Eucharist.

“Which is always beyond what all of us can imagine,” he said. “It’s beyond all that we could dream. So, for me, that’s why every synod is profoundly and deeply eucharistic all the way through.”

(To watch a video of Dominican Father Timothy Radcliffe’s presentation on the meeting of the Synod of Bishops on synodality, visit bit.ly/radcliffe2023.) †

Pope asks Mary to watch over Ukrainians, Palestinians, Israelis

ROME (CNS)—Mary’s conception, free from original sin, shows that the destiny of humanity lies in life, brotherhood, harmony and peace rather than death, hate, conflict and war, Pope Francis said on the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

“Your person, the fact that you exist, reminds us that evil does not have the first nor the last word,” the pope said to Mary during a prayer ceremony on Dec. 8 while seated in front of a Marian statue in central Rome.

After a canceled trip to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and having an aide read his speeches for the past weeks due to a bronchial infection, Pope Francis went into the center of Rome to continue the tradition of praying before the elevated statue of Mary next to the Spanish Steps.

That morning, Rome firefighters climbed nearly 90 feet using a truck and ladder to place a ring of white flowers on Mary’s outstretched arm, continuing a Roman tradition that began in 1949.

Reciting his prayer while seated, the pope asked Mary

to “turn your merciful eyes on all people oppressed by injustice and poverty, tried by war.

“Look at the martyred Ukrainian people, at the Palestinian people, at the Israeli people, plunged back into the spiral of violence,” he said.

The pope entrusted to Mary’s care the “many mothers who, as happened to you, are grieving. Mothers who mourn their children killed by war and terrorism.”

During his prayer on last year’s feast day, Pope Francis began weeping when he mentioned the suffering of the Ukrainian people during his prayer.

At noon on the feast day, the pope prayed the *Angelus* with some 10,000 visitors while standing in the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter’s Square. On the two previous Sundays, Pope Francis had led the prayer from his residence in the Vatican due to his infection.

Wearing a white coat at the window and seeming to speak without difficulty, the pope recalled how Mary was “amazed” when an angel told her she would become pregnant with Jesus and how she always remained faithful

to God in simple ways—attitudes that demonstrate her sinless heart.

Mary, the pope said, “is presented as a simple girl” in the Bible, but one who “precisely because of her simplicity, kept pure that immaculate heart with which, by God’s grace, she had been conceived.”

In the afternoon, Pope Francis went to the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome where he prayed before the Marian icon “*Salus Populi Romani*” (“health of the Roman people”) before going to the Spanish Steps. He left a silver vase with three gold roses in front of the icon.

Praying at the Spanish Steps, the pope asked Mary to care for the mothers who see their children “leave on journeys of desperate hope,” and mothers who try to free their children “from the bonds of addiction.”

“Today, Mary, we need you as a woman, to entrust to you all of the women who have suffered violence and who are still victims,” he said. “Dry, we pray, their tears and those of their loved ones.” †

SIMPLY CATHOLIC

Love of Christ's humility spurred St. Francis to create first crèche

By Junno Arocho Esteves

ROME (OSV News)—Every year, the Vatican unveils a Nativity scene from a different diocese, often using materials or artistic styles from the particular region or country where the diocese is located.

Some Nativity scenes have garnered praise for their depictions of Christ's birth, such as the "Sand Nativity" in 2018, a massive 52-foot wide bas-relief sculpture made with more than 700 tons of sand imported from Jesolo, an Italian seaside resort town roughly 40 miles north of Venice.

Others, like the 2020 Nativity scene, which featured not-so-traditional sculptures of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus—as well as a knight that some compared to Darth Vader and what seemed to be an astronaut—drew more divided reactions from the faithful and the world.

As different as they seem, they have a very traditional background—and a famous saint that started them in 1223—St. Francis of Assisi.

The first crèche was created centuries ago in the central Italian village of Greccio. In 2023, the crèche celebrates its 800th birthday.

Italian Franciscan Father Simone Castaldi, secretary of the Franciscan Province of St. Bonaventure in Rome, said the commemoration of the anniversary is "a wonderful opportunity to place the witness of Francis of Assisi back at the center of Christian spirituality."

"Francis is a simple figure with an incredible story of deep and embodied spirituality," Father Simone told OSV News on Nov. 14. "Everyone talks about St. Francis, but few people know the profound experience which moves mainly from his love for the incarnation."

The story of how the first Nativity scene came to be can be found in the biography of Francis written in 1229 by Franciscan Brother Tommaso of Celano, who was commissioned by Pope Gregory IX to write about the saint's life.

For St. Francis, Brother Tommaso recounted, "the humility of the incarnation and the charity of the passion so occupied his memory that he would scarce ponder over anything else."

According to the Franciscan brother's account, St. Francis, before making his way to Greccio to celebrate Christmas, sent word to Giovanni Velita, a friend and mayor of the town, and instructed him to prepare a re-creation of the Nativity.

"Make haste to go before and diligently prepare what I tell thee," St. Francis wrote, according to Brother Tommaso. "For I would make a memorial of that Child who was born in Bethlehem, and in some sort behold with bodily eyes his infant hardships; how he lay in a manger on the hay, with the ox and the ass standing by."

For Polish Franciscan Father Emil Kumka, an expert on early and medieval Church history and Franciscan history and hagiography who serves on the faculty of Rome's Pontifical Theology Faculty of St. Bonaventure (also known as the Seraphicum), the aforementioned passages in Brother Tommaso's account are the key to understanding St. Francis' inspiration for creating the Nativity scene.



In this file photo from 2019, Pope Francis prays during a visit to the Chapel of the Nativity, a grotto in Greccio, Italy. An early account of the life of St. Francis of Assisi says that the saint assembled the first Nativity scene there in 1223. His love of Christ's humility was the motivation behind the act whose 800th anniversary is being celebrated this year. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

"The humility of God, who wanted not only to become man by natural birth, but first and foremost his choice of poverty and lowering to our human level, provoked in St. Francis the desire to relive this moment," Father Emil told OSV News on Nov. 11.

"The conditions in Greccio had to be the same as in Bethlehem, namely extreme poverty, which fully demonstrates the divine 'kenosis,'" he added, referring to St. Paul's words in which he explains that Christ "emptied himself" in taking on human form (Phil 2:7).

Father Simone told OSV News that while St. Francis is "a saint that everyone knows," it often happens that "almost no one really understands him," especially when it comes to understanding his motivations for creating the Nativity scene.

"It is true that on that Christmas night in 1223, Francis depicted a scene of the Nativity for the first time in history," he said. "But we cannot fail to consider that what Francis does is something much more profound than just making the first crèche."

To explain this, Father Simone noted a specific passage from Brother Tommaso's account that described what St. Francis would do when he pronounced the words, "Child of Bethlehem."

In his work on the life of St. Francis, Brother Tommaso said that when naming Christ, the saint

would be "aglow with exceeding love, would call him the 'Child of Bethlehem,' and uttering the word 'Bethlehem,' in the manner of a sheep bleating, he filled his mouth with the sound, but even more his whole self with the sweet affection."

"Moreover," the account continues, "in naming 'the Child of Bethlehem' or 'Jesus,' he would, as it were, lick his lips, relishing with a happy palate, and swallowing the sweetness of that word."

Father Simone said the description was "one of the most beautiful passages from the night of Greccio; one of the most human passages and one that I believe best describes Francis."

St. Francis' devotion to the incarnation and his love for Christ, he explained, was "a passion that became physical and had a bodily sense."

"Everything must be traced back to Francis' desire to see, and thus live, the poverty chosen by Jesus in the incarnation," Father Simone said.

In his account, Brother Tommaso also described the joy felt by St. Francis, as well as by those in the small Italian village that witnessed that Christmas celebration so long ago.

"There simplicity was honored, poverty exalted, humility commended; and of Greccio there was made as it were a new Bethlehem," he wrote. "The night was lit up as the day and was delightful to men and beasts. The people came, and at the new mystery rejoiced with new rejoicings."

Father Emil said that St. Francis' creation of the Nativity scene was "not a spectacle, not religious theater, nor sentimentalism; that is, everything that the Nativity crèche often represents to people today."

Instead, he explained, the Christmas Mass celebrated with a physical representation of the Son of God lying in a humble manger, joined together two important points of devotion in St. Francis' own spiritual life: the Eucharist and the incarnation.

Both, Father Emil told OSV News, "referred back to the same basic choice: that of a God who humbled himself for the salvation of humankind."

"The Eucharist perpetuates Christ's presence in history and demands, at the same time, that—like Christ—we know how to dispossess ourselves of everything," he said. "The Christmas liturgy of Greccio does not remain fixed on what happened in Bethlehem, but follows Jesus all the way to Golgotha and recognizes him as the one who is risen and glorified, and who today again stoops down and gives himself to us in holy Communion."

Father Simone echoed similar sentiments and emphasized that in the simplicity and humility of the manger, St. Francis wanted to "show a way of being in the world: that of the peace that comes from being in the minority, from occupying the last place."

"This is the revolution that he will bring into history by breaking the feudal pyramidal hierarchy and replacing it with the circle of brotherhood, in which everyone is on the same level," Father Castaldi told OSV News.

"In the night of Bethlehem, Francis saw how God made the first move: He chose to occupy the last place."

(Junno Arocho Esteves writes for OSV News from Rome.) †



Pope Francis visits a Nativity scene in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Dec. 31, 2022, after leading a New Year's Eve evening prayer liturgy. All Nativity scenes are rooted in the first one in history, which was assembled by St. Francis of Assisi 800 years ago in 1223 in Greccio, Italy. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Evangelization Outreach/Jenny Bryans

Like a child, begin each day filled with joy and hope

When our daughter was 2, she would wake up early in the morning, before the sunrise and jump out of bed and run into our bedroom and declare in a sweet confident voice, "It's a 'bootiful' day!"



What a wonderful way to wake up!

She remembered other days being beautiful, and she was ready to rejoice in this new day even though the sun hadn't even come up yet and her parents were still in bed. She

not only woke us up, but reminded us of the hope in the gift of a new day!

God calls us to be hopeful for one another: "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom 15:13).

Hope joins our past and our future. Hope springs us forward if we let it, as it did for my daughter each morning."

In Isaiah, we read, "Even to your old age I am he, even when your hair is gray, I will carry you; I have done this, and I will lift you up, I will carry you to safety" (Is 46:4).

It can be difficult to find hope in our present world and even in our own lives at times. Our world can feel "hopeless," especially when we are bombarded with news of sad and desperate events each day.

As disciples of Christ, we have hope—hope of eternal life. God also gives us hope that each day will bring new life and wonderful new possibilities. It is in our memories of our faithful God—and how much he loves us—that remind us that the goodness of God prevails.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines hope beautifully: "Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit" (#1817).

God is our hope in those moments of despair. "Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer" (Rom 12:12). It may be difficult to "rejoice" during difficult moments, but God calls us to go treasure hunting.

Hope is the treasure found in the darkness, in despair, in desperately sad, lonely places. We are called to prayer, and God will help us to find and share that treasure of hope with others.

The prophet Jeremiah tell us, "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—oracle of the Lord—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope. When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer 29:11-13).

Mary is our model for seeking God as our hope. Mary's Magnificat is a prayer of hope. (Lk 1:46-55)

Pope Francis, in 2017, said, "Mother of hope, she teaches us that all the darkness of the world cannot extinguish the light of the candle of hope when it is fueled by faith and trust in God, who never disappoints. We pray, 'Hail Holy Queen, mother of mercy, our hope, our sweetness and our life.'"

God shows us hope in all he has created—the sunrise, the birds singing, a newborn baby, a wedding celebration. God wants us to seek him always, especially in dark times.

Hope is all around. Look for it, feel it, hear it and share it. Our daughter is now 24 and getting married this month. I will always remember that sweet 2-year-old filled with the joy and hope of a new day. Again hope springs us forward as we will celebrate God's goodness and love at their

wedding Mass. It will be another beautiful day!

(Jenny Bryans is the archdiocese's Disabilities Ministries Coordinator. She can be reached at 317-236-1448 or jbryans@archindy.org.) †

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Feeling IV/Effie Caldarola

Let the warmth of Advent pull the bleak midwinter from you

Christina Rosetti's poem, "In the Bleak Midwinter," is a Christmas classic.

"In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone. . ."



As Advent continues and the first wintry weather sets in, those words come to mind. As I write, today is such a day—gusty wind, hard rain, fluid and not yet

frozen like a stone, but cold and bleak nonetheless.

In the darkest nights of our year, and in the dark nights of our world's present turmoil, it seems so wonderful, yet challenging, that hope appears in the guise of a baby born to the poor.

When we saw the news reports of tiny premature babies huddling together in bombed-out hospitals in Gaza, it seemed the baby Jesus lay there among them. And when some "preemies" were evacuated to medical care in Egypt, how can we not remember the little refugee who fled into Egypt with Mary and Joseph?

So much suffering in this world right now, so much sorrow. So many bad, despotic governments, so many refugees, so much climate catastrophe, so much divisiveness, so much terror, so much war.

Rosetti's poem asks us, "What can I give him/poor as I am . . ." and ends by saying, "Give him my heart."

And in the midst of brokenness, we bring a heart made joyful by his presence, despite this weary world. It's up to us to decide how we might give our heart during the days left in Advent.

A small daily journal might help. Keep it short and simple. A prayer offering each morning, a little commitment: I will do this one thing today to simplify my lifestyle to honor our Earth, and one thing today to bring joy to another.

Maybe you put canvas bags in your car and begin the habit of using them instead of those disposable plastic bags. Maybe find the phone number of an old friend or an elderly relative and surprise them with a call.

Share Christmas cookies with a lonely neighbor. Give yourself a bonus point for letting your kids help. Start a bag and place one item cluttering your home into it each day. Bonus points for giving away something someone else can really use.

Write your pastor a note telling him what he's done or said to inspire you this year. Find people to thank.

Sit down for a quick coffee with a friend. Give yourself a bonus point if you're at a coffee shop and you've brought your reusable coffee cup.

Add joy by not snipping at your spouse when you're exasperated. Bonus point for giving him or her a hug instead.

Make the remainder of Advent loving and fun, with your focus on Jesus. Write all those little accomplishments in your journal. Keep it meaningful. We're all really busy right now, right? So go easy on yourself in these hard times. Remember that Christmas is all about joy, gratitude—and Jesus.

Pope Benedict XVI, writing in the first volume of his trilogy, *Jesus of Nazareth*, addressed the great question that the book would ask: "What did Jesus actually bring, if not world peace, universal prosperity and a better world? What has he brought? The answer is very simple: God. He has brought God."

And always remember: God alone is enough.

(Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmother who received her master's degree in pastoral ministry from Seattle University.) †

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginther

Pray for unity across faith traditions throughout the world

Burkina Faso. For many, it is a place unknown, but a place currently of division and strife.

It might seem strange that its Christian people were asked to fashion a prayer service for Christian unity.



But this is what the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches asked for 2024.

Burkina Faso, known as "the land of upright people" or "land of honest men," is a landlocked nation in West Africa. Its neighbors are Mali, Niger, Togo, Benin and

Ghana.

Independent since 1960 from French colonial rule, this small country has been plagued by corruption, famine, instability and drought.

Coups have occurred seven times, with two failed attempts.

Burkina Faso and neighbors Mali and Niger all have large swaths of territory overrun by members of the Islamic State, al-Qaeda and militias. They attack the local populations.

Christian churches are common targets. Many have closed or been destroyed. Public worship has been curtailed. Pastors and other community leaders are harassed, some even killed.

Burkina Faso's population is 26% Christian—20% of them Catholic and 6% Protestant. The rest are Muslim. Sixty ethnicities comprise the population, and 60 languages are spoken. Families are often a mixture of them.

Who better to pray for unity than this small country, which is 105,000 square miles, approximately the size of Kentucky?

There is a degree of solidarity emerging between the Christian, Muslim and traditional religions. Their leaders are working to find lasting solutions for people, social cohesion and reconciliation.

"The Christian-Muslim Dialogue Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Burkina-Niger is making a major effort to support inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation," says a resource book created for the Prayer Service for Christian Unity by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches.

"Following the government's calls for prayers for peace,

social cohesion and reconciliation, individual churches continue to organize daily prayers and fasting," it continues.

Some Catholic and Protestant churches are "working to assist displaced persons, organizing reflection and awareness-raising meetings. These promote understanding and the value of fraternity. They aid in developing strategies for a return to lasting peace," the dicastery writes.

"The invitation to work together on the texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 challenged the different churches in Burkina Faso to walk, pray and work together in mutual love during this difficult period for their country," the document notes.

"The love of Christ that unites all Christians is stronger than their divisions. The Christians of Burkina Faso have committed themselves to walking the path of love of God and love of neighbor."

The *Chemin Neuf* community, the Archdiocese of Ouagadougou, Protestant churches and ecumenical bodies in Burkina Faso sent representatives to fashion the 2024 prayer service.

They chose Luke 10:25-37 as the central text (the parable of the Good Samaritan). Pope Francis chose the same text for his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*.

From Luke's Gospel, they drew their theme: "You shall love the Lord your God . . . and your neighbor as yourself" (Lk 10:27).

Their prayer service calls participants to praise and thanksgiving, prayers of confession, Scripture, preaching, intercessions and a commitment to unity.

This same prayer will be the basis for the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 to take place at 7 p.m. on Jan. 23, 2024, at North United Methodist Church, 3808 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis.

Our world is in the grip of violence, division and polarization. Christianity finds itself a victim of the same circumstances. At times, some Christians are the perpetrators.

It is a good and noble task to pray for the unity of Christians. Our unity can help to bring about some degree of healing and reconciliation to our country and our world.

Come, join the Christian denominational leaders of Indiana on Jan. 23 and many others in such prayer.

(Father Rick Ginther is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs. He is also the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.) †

Third Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 17, 2023

- Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
- John 1:6-8, 19-28

This weekend, the Church celebrates the Third Sunday of Advent, which is also known as *Gaudete* Sunday. This name comes from the opening word of the original Latin text of the entrance antiphon at Mass. In Latin, “*gaudete*” means “to rejoice.” Rejoicing is indicated because Christmas is near at hand.



Another reason for rejoicing is that, hopefully, we all feel closer to God because of observing Advent with prayer, reflection and penance. If we have used Advent as intended by the Church, we are nearer to a fuller communion with the Lord, the light of the world.

Priests may wear rose-colored vestments on this weekend, symbolizing the darkness of Advent already being lightened by the forthcoming light of the celebration of the Lord’s birth at Christmas.

The third part of Isaiah furnishes the first reading. When this passage was written, God’s people were weary and frustrated.

They, or their forebears, had undergone the humiliation, uncertainty and misery of exile in Babylon. When allowed finally to leave Babylon and return to their homeland, they understandably were overjoyed.

They found, however, a sterile and parched land awaiting them. Life was brutally hard. Had God tricked them, providing for their release from Babylon only to subject them to further, worse trials at home? Did God even exist?

This reading glows with optimism, which is typical for Isaiah. Whatever may be the reality of the moment, for those loyal to God, a wondrous future awaits.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians provides the second reading. Belief in the Lord’s second coming, and impatience to see it occur, were widespread in the first generations of Christianity. This reading catches well this mood.

Longing for the second coming among the early Christians is not hard to explain. They had much to endure. Severe

persecution had developed. The culture all around the Christians was hostile. Temptations to renounce the Gospel abounded.

Paul reassured the Christians of Thessalonica, urging them to be true to the Gospel. God and his goodness will one day prevail.

St. John’s Gospel is the source of the last reading. The reading is a story about St. John the Baptist, whose own identity puzzled his contemporaries. Some assumed that John was the Messiah. If not the Messiah, others wondered if he were Elijah or another prophet who had returned to Earth.

Replying to these questions, John was firm. Another would follow him, he insisted. John was to prepare the way for this future representative of God, who would be wonderful for all humanity. John is not worthy even to untie the straps of his sandals.

Reflection

In calling us to rejoice on this *Gaudete* weekend, the Church either presumes that we have spent the weeks of Advent pondering within ourselves the meaning of salvation for us personally and individually, or it urges us to use the remaining time in this season to seek God with all our hearts.

Christ was born, in God’s merciful plan, to meet human needs for guidance, hope and life.

As Christmas 2023 draws near, the land blessed by the footsteps of Christ is in anguish. The war between the Palestinian extremists’ Hamas and Israel continues, ending lives, destroying hope and building despair.

Fighting endures in Ukraine. Less bloody, but bitter divisions, separate Americans, filling them with fear and hatred.

How much evidence must humans see to realize the damage that their dismissal of God creates for themselves and others? What proof is needed to convince us that the way of Christ is the only way to peace and goodness?

See Christ’s coming as the answer, determined to bring Jesus into our hearts and lives and thereby to begin, at least in ourselves, the process of living sanely and peacefully. †

Daily Readings

Monday, December 18

Jeremiah 23:5-8
Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19
Matthew 1:18-25

Tuesday, December 19

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a
Psalm 71:3-6, 16-17
Luke 1:5-25

Wednesday, December 20

Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 24:1-6
Luke 1:26-38

Thursday, December 21

St. Peter Canisius, priest and doctor of the Church
Song of Songs 2:8-14
or Zephaniah 3:14-18a
Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21
Luke 1:39-45

Friday, December 22

1 Samuel 1:24-28
(Response) 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-7, 8abcd
Luke 1:46-56

Saturday, December 23

St. John of Kanty, priest
Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
Psalm 25:4bc-5ab, 8-10, 14
Luke 1:57-66

Sunday, December 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent
2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29
Romans 16:25-27
Luke 1:26-38

Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord

Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
Matthew 1:1-25
or Matthew 1:18-25

Question Corner/Jenna Marie Cooper

Two Masses must be attended to fulfill Sunday, Christmas Mass obligations

Q Since Christmas is on Monday this year, can I go to a Christmas Vigil Mass on Sunday and have it fulfill my



Sunday and Christmas obligations? (Massachusetts)

A As you note, in 2023 Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday. And, like all Sundays, Catholics are required to attend Mass in person,

unless there is some legitimate reason (like illness or inclement weather) which makes attending Mass unduly difficult or impossible.

Of course, the following Monday, Dec. 25, is Christmas Day, which is also a holy day of obligation. Because there are two days of obligation—i.e., Sunday and Christmas—this means that there are two distinct obligations to speak of.

Each separate obligation needs to be fulfilled by attending a separate Mass. That is, you cannot “double dip” by attending a Christmas Eve Mass that happens to be on Sunday and have this one Mass fulfill two obligations. In years when Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, Christmas replaces the Sunday liturgically, which means there is only one obligation.

Now for the part that can get confusing. Even though you must attend two Masses to fulfill the two obligations, all this means is that you must go to Mass on that calendar day or attend a Mass for a Sunday or a holy day on the evening before. The readings and prayers do not necessarily need to match the day whose obligation you are fulfilling.

So, you could go to a Christmas Vigil Mass on Sunday, Dec. 24, and have it count as your Sunday obligation this year. But if you intend for this to fulfill your Sunday obligation, then you must also attend another Mass on Christmas Day to fulfill your obligation for the holy day.

Of course, if you were to attend a vigil Mass on Saturday for Sunday, and then the Christmas Mass on Sunday (Christmas Eve) for Christmas day, then you’ve got it all covered.

Q I am a member of our parish’s altar society and was told we are not to use artificial flowers or plants to decorate the altar. Yet, during the Christmas season artificial trees with elaborate

shopping mall decorations are displayed by the altar. Please explain the rationale and guidelines. There seems to be a contradiction. (Hawaii)

A As far as I can find, there is nothing in the Church’s universal law which strictly prohibits using artificial plants or flowers as sanctuary decorations.

The “General Instruction of the Roman Missal” (i.e., which sets forth norms on how Mass should be celebrated) does not discuss silk versus natural flowers, but in paragraph 305 it does specify that: “During Advent, the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year,” and that “During Lent, it is forbidden for the altar to be decorated with flowers. Exceptions, however, are *Laetare* Sunday [Fourth Sunday of Lent], solemnities, and feasts.”

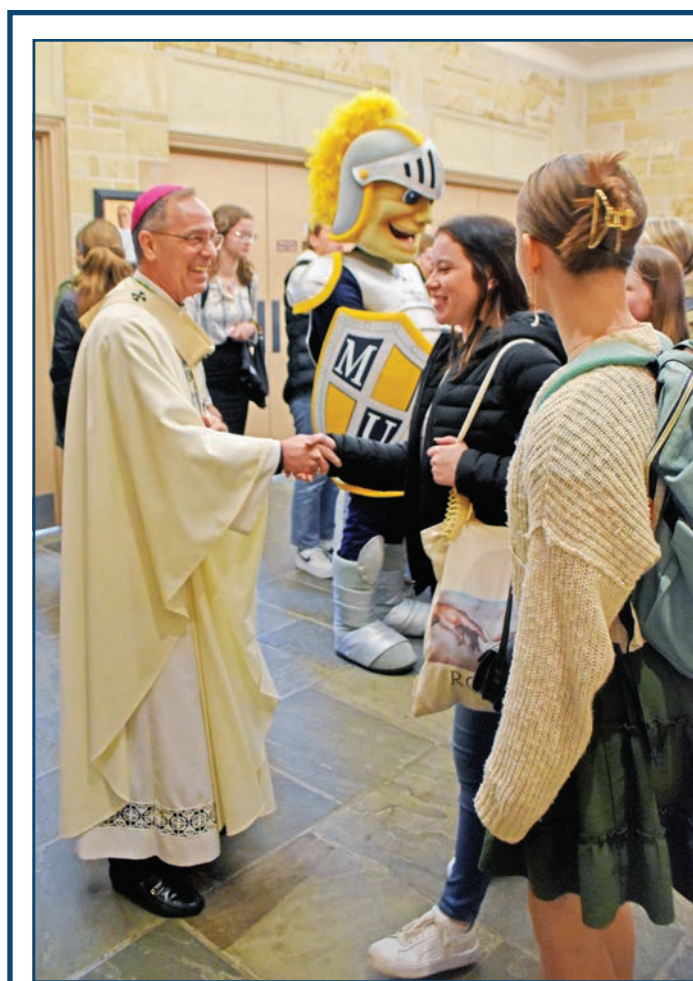
However, in 2000 the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued their own document with guidelines on the proper celebration of the liturgy titled “Built of Living Stones.”

In this document, paragraph 129 states a clear preference for decorating with natural, as opposed to artificial plants, noting: “The use of living flowers and plants, rather than artificial greens, serves as a reminder of the gift of life God has given to the human community. Planning for plants and flowers should include not only the procurement and placement, but also the continuing care needed to sustain living things.”

Granted, this is a stated preference and not an absolute prohibition. But it could be that your specific parish or diocese has a policy of using only natural plants.

But even in places where natural plants are strongly preferred, practically speaking I imagine that Christmas trees, wreaths and other evergreen garlands are one case where it might be reasonable to make an exception and use artificial greenery. As anyone who has ever had a real Christmas tree in their home knows, the regular shedding of dead pine needles can create quite the on-going clean-up project, which might become overly burdensome to an altar society or those charged with care of the sanctuary.

(Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.) †



O Holy Knight

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson greets Marian University students after celebrating Mass in the school’s chapel on Dec. 8. Knightro, the Indianapolis university’s mascot, was on hand to pass out candy canes. (Photo by Natalie Hoefler)

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.

BAUER, Agnes C., 92, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora, Dec. 3. Wife of Leonard Bauer. Mother of Martha Bishop, Michelle Short, Dan, Lenny, Mark and Michael Bauer. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 15.

BISCHOFF, Phyllis A., 92, St. Michael, Brookville, Dec. 1. Mother of Nancy Busse, Sharon Cumberworth, Linda Girty, Cathy Graf, Pam McMillin, Cindy Westerfeld, Lisa Wilson, Ken, Leroy, Paul and Steve Bischoff. Sister of Doris Bischoff, Shirley Lynch and Richard Geiling. Grandmother of 31. Great-grandmother of 72. Great-great-grandmother of six.

BORGMAM, John, 91, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Aurora, Nov. 29. Husband of Marianne Borgman. Father of Chrissy Meek. Grandfather of three.

BOWER, Sarah E., 65, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 15. Wife of Fred Bower. Stepmother of Melissa Anderson. Sister of Patricia Gill, John and Michael Molloy.

CARTER, Marita C., 89, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Oct. 13. Mother of Nancy Ruschhaupt and Dwayne Carter. Sister of James Tunny. Grandmother of one.

CHERRY, Shirley A., 85, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, Aug. 11. Wife of Trivice Cherry. Mother of Brenda McGovern, Daniel, David and Michael Cherry. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of 15.

CORDER, Lucy E., 94, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, Oct. 2. Mother of Ruth Perkins, Therese Pitzer, Mary,

David, Matthew and William Corder. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of five.

DAVIS, Sandra S. (Brown), 80, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Nov. 19. Wife of Richard Davis. Mother of Susan Burgett, Jennifer Dins and Heather Ratcliff. Grandmother of 11. Great-grandmother of nine.

DAVIS, Stephanie D., 56, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood, Nov. 22. Mother of Heather Ford, Allison Frye and Jonathan Richman. Sister of Melissa Whitesel and Doug Richman. Grandmother of eight.

DAWSON, Joseph P., 81, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 4. Husband of Myrna Dawson. Father of Paul Dawson and Dan Tippit. Grandfather of five. Step-great-grandfather of six.

DAWSON, Myrna R., 84, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 8. Mother of Paul Dawson and Dan Tippit. Sister of Meg Freet and Barbara Mottin. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of six.

DEER, Bruce M., 67, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Nov. 29. Husband of Kathy Deer. Father of Natalie Sutton and Wesley Deer. Son of Martha Deer. Brother of Julie Stodghill, Brad, Brian, Danny and Rick Deer. Grandfather of two.

ENGLERT, Helen M., 96, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Albany, Nov. 20. Mother of Pamela Belden. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of five.

FARROW, Rodney E., 75, St. Ambrose, Seymour, Nov. 30. Husband of Charlene Farrow. Father of Jonathan Farrow. Stepbrother of Debra Reinhart.

GEHLBACH, Carolyn, 81, St. Mary, New Albany, Nov. 8. Wife of Larry Gehlbach. Mother of Andrea Mason, Connie Walter, Jonathan and Timothy Gehlbach. Sister of Vernetta Gettelfinger, Joann Pendleton, Alice Volpert and Bruce Andres. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of three.

HILBER, Joan (Wilson), 59, Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, Indianapolis, Nov. 22. Wife of Joseph Hilber. Sister of Susan Cook, Craig and Jeff Wilson.

HOEING, Jerome, 91, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 2. Husband of Kathleen Hoeing. Father of Becky and Joan Metz, Sandy Meyer, Kim Stone, Bob and Matt Hoeing. Brother of Delores Bruns, Marieda Koors and Sheldon Hoeing. Grandfather of 21. Great-grandfather of 36.

KNUEVEN, Joseph C., 98, St. Mary, Greensburg, Nov. 27. Father of Shirley Beetz and Daniel Knueven. Grandfather of five. Great-grandfather of eight.

LEE, Patricia A., 87, St. Ann, Indianapolis, Dec. 5. Mother of Theresa Mattis, Daniel, Leonard, Michael and Timothy Lee. Sister of Geraldine Santo, Marie Sobjack, John and William Johnson. Grandmother and great-grandmother of several.

LIBS, Irvin M., 92, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County, Nov. 25. Husband of Jane Libs. Father of Belinda Dones and Teresa Huber. Brother of Evelyn Baumann. Grandfather of four. Great-grandfather of nine.

MAYS, Gertrude, 93, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 25. Mother of Suanna Ponder, James, Joseph and Stephen Mays. Grandmother of 10. Great-grandmother of 14.

MULLIS, Ruth Marie (Denning), 75, St. Boniface, Fulda, Nov. 2. Mother of Deborah Bays and Thomas Mullis. Sister of Delphina Beier. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of one.

O'BRIEN, James, 84, St. Michael the Archangel, Indianapolis, Nov. 22. Father of Terri Drake, Julie Porter, Dan and Greg O'Brien. Brother of Jack O'Brien. Grandfather of 17. Great-grandfather of 11.

RAY, Bruce B., 75, St. Rita, Indianapolis, Dec. 1. Husband of Elizabeth Ray. Father of Keith and Kenneth Ray. Brother of Dr. Maxine Stovall. Grandfather of six.

RICKARD, Eva M., 97, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Nov. 10. Mother of Theresa Byrd and Mary Ann Gawlick. Grandmother of four. Great-grandmother of four.

RYGELSKI, Donald E., 83, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 29. Husband of Martha Rygelski. Father of Beth Burkhart, Jon and Joseph Rygelski. Brother of Mary Lou Ryan and William Rygelski. Grandfather of five.

STEWART, Jr., Charles A., 85, St. Joseph, Corydon, Nov. 30. Husband of Brenda Stewart. Father of Phyllis Hart, Charles, Jeffrey, Jonathan



The Vatican's Nativity scene and Christmas tree are unveiled and lighted on Dec. 9 in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. Nov. 23 in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. The 90-foot-tall tree from the Maira Valley near Turin, Italy, was lighted on Dec. 9. After Christmas, the wood from the tree will be made into toys and donated to Caritas. The crèche was inspired by the first Nativity scene created by St. Francis of Assisi 800 years ago in Greccio, Italy. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

and Timothy Stewart. Brother of Rosine Belden and Ron Deatrick. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of nine. Great-great-grandfather of two.

SZMANOWSKI, Dr. James E., 76, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Richmond, Nov. 24. Father of Jill Crull, Jason

and Keith Szymanowski. Brother of Deb Southworth. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of one.

WAGNER, Gayle (Ringeisen), 83, Holy Name of Jesus, Beech Grove, Aug. 20. Wife of Gene Wagner. Mother of Chris Mahern, Beth McMinn and

Todd Wagner. Sister of Steven Ringeisen. Grandmother of seven.

WISE, Peggy, 71, St. Mary, New Albany, Nov. 19. Wife of John Wise. Mother of Wendy Knight. Sister of Patricia McAdams and Shirley Patterson. Grandmother of two. †

Franciscan Sister Doris Holohan was a missionary in Papua New Guinea for 44 years

Franciscan Sister Doris Holohan, a member of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg, died on Nov. 30 at Margaret Mary Health Hospital in Batesville. She was 88. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 7 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Doris was born on April 28, 1935, in Streator, Ill. She joined the Sisters of St. Francis on Feb. 2, 1953, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1958. Sister Doris earned a bachelor's degree in education at Marian University in Indianapolis.

During 70 years as a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, Sister Doris

served for 44 years in education and religious formation as a missionary in Papua New Guinea. She also ministered in Catholic schools in Indiana and Ohio.

In the archdiocese, Sister Doris ministered at the former St. Mary School in New Albany from 1954-56, the former St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception School in Aurora from 1956-59 and St. Louis School in Batesville from 1959-60.

She is survived by her sister, Franciscan Sister Kathryn Holohan and her brother, Jerry Holohan.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100. †

Franciscan Sister Rachel West was an educator, peace and justice advocate

Franciscan Sister Rachel West died on Nov. 19 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg. She was 90.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 22 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters' cemetery.

Sister Rachel was born on Jan. 13, 1933, in Waukesha, Wis. She joined the Sisters of St. Francis on Sept. 8, 1954, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1960. Sister Rachel earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University in Indianapolis, and a master's degree and doctorate in history at Indiana University in Bloomington.

During 69 years as a member of the Sisters of St. Francis, Sister Rachel ministered in Catholic schools for 36 years in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. She also spent several years serving in peace and justice advocacy in Washington and Michigan.

In the archdiocese, Sister Rachel ministered in Indianapolis at the former St. Mary Academy from 1956-58, St. Mark the Evangelist School from 1960-61 and Marian University from 1970-83 and 2002-10. She also served in peace and justice advocacy in Indianapolis from 1992-2000.


After retiring to the motherhouse in 2010, Sister Rachel served as the community's archivist until 2017.

She is survived by her brother, Douglas West. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100. †

Online Lay Ministry Formation
The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer not-for-credit online theology classes:

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If you are a victim of sexual misconduct by a person ministering on behalf of the Church, or if you know of anyone who has been a victim of such misconduct, please contact the archdiocesan victim assistance coordinator. There are two ways to make a report:

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www.archdioceseofindianapolis.ethicspoint.com or 888-393-6810

2 Victim Assistance Coordinator, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
P.O. Box 1410, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1410
317-236-1548 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1548
victimassistance@archindy.org

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Pope grants plenary indulgence through Feb. 2 in honor of 800th anniversary of first crèche

Criterion staff report

On the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the “Nativity scene of Greccio,” the Apostolic Penitentiary is granting a plenary indulgence to all the faithful who, through Feb. 2, 2024 (the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord), will visit a Nativity scene in a church entrusted to the Franciscan friars anywhere in the world.

The Franciscan-led parishes in the archdiocese are:

- Clarksville: St. Anthony of Padua
- Indianapolis: St. Patrick and Sacred Heart of Jesus
- New Albany: St. Mary
- Oldenburg: Holy Family
- Terre Haute: St. Benedict and St. Joseph University

Other Franciscan chapels in the archdiocese include:

- The chapel of the Oldenburg Franciscan sisters, Oldenburg
- The chapel of the Conventual Franciscan friars, Mount St. Francis
- The chapel of Our Lady of the Redeemer Retreat Center, Bloomington
- The chapel of Franciscan Health Indianapolis

The faithful may obtain the plenary indulgence under the usual conditions (going to confession, receiving the Eucharist and praying for the intentions of Pope Francis), and in this case also devoutly pausing before the crèche prepared in the church, spending an appropriate span of time in pious meditation, concluding with the Our Father, a profession of faith and invocations to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph as well as St. Francis of Assisi as is found below.

Those who are sick or unable physically to participate can receive the plenary indulgence either by offering up

their sufferings or by carrying out acts of piety.

Invocations to the Holy Family and St. Francis of Assisi:

“Oh Good Jesus, contemplating this Nativity scene, I ask you for the grace of forgiveness of my sins. You are the dawn from on high made flesh to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. You made your home among us and loved us to the point of giving your life for us. You did not come to condemn the world but to save it. Give me the grace of sincere repentance and the humility to recognize my frailty. Give me faith in your mercy and renew in me the joy of your salvation.

“Mary, Mother of Jesus and Mother of the Church, teach us the joy of the humble and of those who believe in the promises of the Lord. Help us to proclaim the greatness of the God who accompanies and saves suffering humanity. You are the dawn of a new creation. You are Virgin made Church, you are Mother of grace and mercy. Listen to our plea with the tenderness of your immaculate heart.

“Saint Joseph, just and faithful servant



A Nativity scene is unveiled on Dec. 9 in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican. The crèche is a reproduction of the scene in Greccio, Italy, where St. Francis of Assisi staged the first Nativity scene 800 years ago in 1223.

(CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

of the Lord, you are a holy and generous custodian. Do not take your care away from us, lost pilgrims in search of the true homeland. Protect the Church from the snares of the evil one and teach us to trust in the One who gave his only Son to rescue us from sin, evil and death.

“Saint Francis of Assisi, you who loved

the poor and humble Christ so much that you wanted to relive in Greccio, with faith and devotion, the night of his birth in Bethlehem, intercede for us so that we can contemplate with a clean heart the beauty of the incarnation of the Son of God and the kindness of his gaze that calls us to a new life. Amen.” †

Employment



**CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**

**Assistant Superintendent,
Secondary Education**

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis Office of Catholic Schools, located in downtown Indianapolis, is seeking a full-time Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education to serve as a resource to clergy, administrators, teachers, staff, students, and families in the areas of curricular support, communications, business management, policy guidance, and data analysis. The duties of this position also include serving as a member of the Archdiocesan Schools Team with the Superintendent and other Assistant Superintendents in a mission-driven, Christ-centered, and student-oriented environment.

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis serves Central and Southern Indiana Catholics in over 120 parishes. There are 53 parish schools, 5 archdiocese schools, 6 private/religious order schools, and 3 consortium schools in the heart of Indianapolis. These 67 schools serve over 22,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 12. With open doors, open arms, and open hearts, the Office of Catholic Schools supports the formation of young people through holistic, engaging, and academically excellent programming that integrates faith, culture, and life as modeled by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The position requires a master's degree in education, business, or a related field and at least five years of educational or business leadership experience, preferably involving school leadership (paid or volunteer) and preferably in Catholic education. Applicants should be professed and practicing Roman Catholics with a deep commitment to Catholic education. Candidates should also have experience in development and/or marketing efforts and be both proponents and role models of lifelong learning.

Applications are due by January 19, 2024. Candidates are expected to be available to assume the responsibilities of the position by July 1, 2024, or sooner.

Please e-mail cover letter, resume, and list of references, in confidence, to Dr. Brian Disney, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, at bdisney@archindy.org.

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Employment

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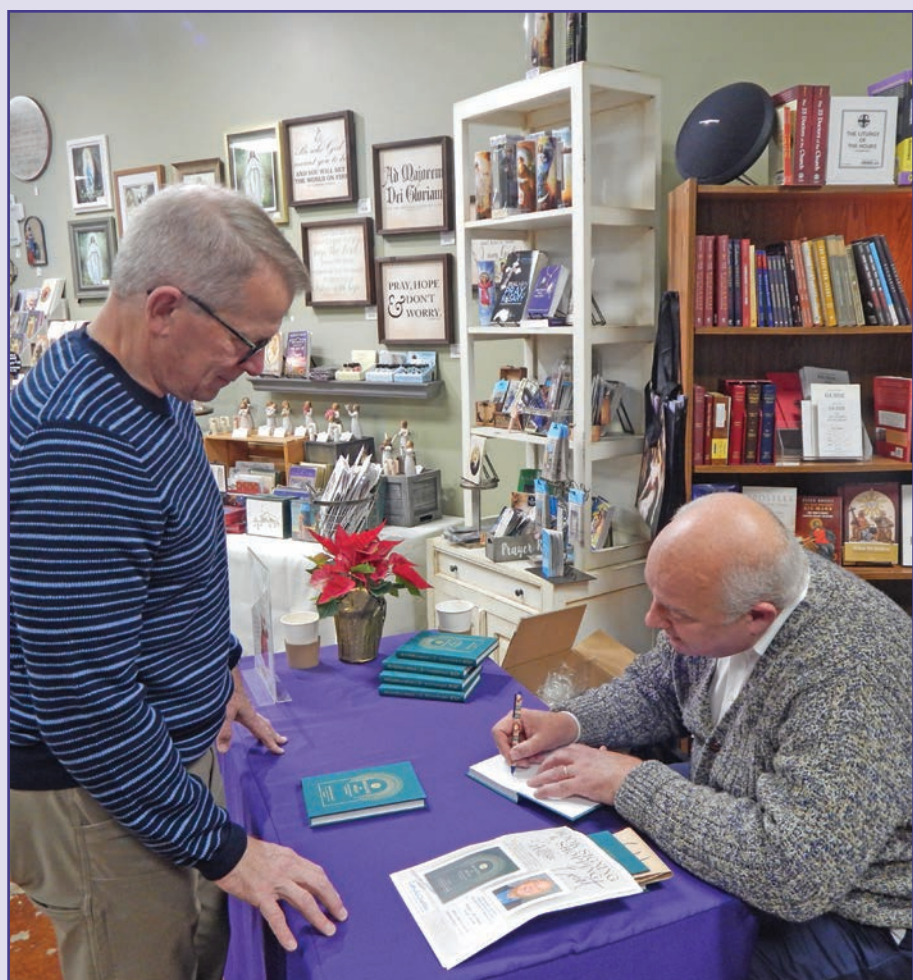
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Book signing



Ken Ogorek, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Evangelizing Catechesis, signs a copy of *Breaking the Bread: A Biblical Devotional for Catholics*, for Paul Brumleve, a member of St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis. The book signing took place on Dec. 1 at The Village Dove in Indianapolis. Ogorek co-authored the book with Scripture scholar Scott Hahn. A Hahn-autographed copy of the book was raffled off and raised \$150 for Catholic Charities' Christmas Store. The new devotional reflects on the lectionary cycle for Year B of the Sunday Masses. Volumes for Year C and Year A are in production. *Breaking the Bread* is available at The Village Dove, online through Emmaus Road Publishing at stpaulcenter.com and anywhere Catholic books are sold. (Photo by Mike Krokos).

Pope appoints Indiana pastor with heart for the poor as bishop of the Diocese of Chilaw, Sri Lanka

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (OSV News)—Father Wimal Jayasuriya came to the United States from Sri Lanka in 2019 partly to further his education; but also, he said, because he had heard “rumors” and “gossip” that Church leaders were considering him as a possible candidate to be appointed a bishop.



Bishop-designate Wimal Jayasuriya

Even after the priest arrived in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in northern Indiana and was appointed pastor of St. Mary Mother of God Parish in Fort Wayne, the apostolic nuncio for Sri Lanka reached out to request a meeting during one of his trips home. Father Jayasuriya declined.

But one can't hide from the pope. On Dec. 6, the Vatican announced that Pope Francis had appointed Father Jayasuriya as bishop of the Diocese of Chilaw, Sri Lanka.

“I was not after this at all, because this is not fun; it's a heavy responsibility. I am responsible for me; I am responsible for the people of God, for the priests; I am responsible for their health; I am responsible for the maintenance of the diocese. What you see in a bishop externally is one who presides over Mass with exuberant clothes and he looks solemn. ... But behind that is a weak human being.” Bishop-designate Jayasuriya told *Today's Catholic*, the newspaper of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

He added that the Diocese of Chilaw has not had its own bishop “for about two years” and there were “a lot of rumors, gossip” as a result.

“I purposely came here to the United States to avoid those things,” he said.

Bishop-designate Jayasuriya said Archbishop Brian Udaigwe, the papal nuncio of Sri Lanka, called him in late November to tell him Pope Francis had appointed him bishop of Chilaw, his home diocese, which is located on the western shore of Sri Lanka, an island nation off the southern tip of India. The priest didn't immediately accept, telling the papal envoy he needed time to pray and discern.

“The call came at night,” Father Jayasuriya said, “and immediately I was on my knees leaning against the bed. There's a picture of Jesus where I pray every day. There were tears in my eyes. I was thinking, ‘Who am I to succeed Apostles?’ As I continued to pray about it, I just felt like Jesus was promising, ‘Do not worry. I'm with you.’”

Along with a doctorate in canon law, Bishop-designate Jayasuriya holds several other degrees. He said he pursued them “not for titles, but for knowledge, so that knowledge could be utilized for the people. So, like a father and a mother, they totally dedicate their life for the family. My duty as a priest is to spend each second of my life for the people.”

In his current position as St. Mary Mother of God's pastor, he has served, in the words of Pope Francis, as a priest “with the smell of the sheep.” As he did in Sri Lanka, at St. Mary Mother of God, a parish known in Fort Wayne for its outreach to the poor, Bishop-designate Jayasuriya has rejected even the most basic conveniences, including that of a car.

When asked how he would apply this lifestyle to his new role as bishop, he said, “I'm a shepherd, and a shepherd has no favorites. Each sheep is important.” †

Six Oldenburg Franciscan sisters celebrate milestone jubilees

Criterion staff report

Six members of the Sisters of St. Francis in Oldenburg celebrated significant anniversaries of their time in religious life in 2023.

The anniversaries are marked by the year in which the sisters entered religious life with the Franciscans. Some who entered in February celebrated their jubilees this year in anticipation of the actual anniversary of their entering religious life.

75-year jubilarians

Sister Jean Michel Suntry is a native of Newton, Iowa. She entered the community on Sept. 5, 1948, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1954. She earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University in Indianapolis.



Sr. Jean Michel Suntry

In the archdiocese, she taught at the former Holy Trinity School in Indianapolis from 1951, at St. Gabriel School in Connersville from 1954-59, at the former Holy Family School in Oldenburg from 1965-73, and at St. Vincent de Paul School in Bedford from 1982-84.

Sister Jean Michel also served as a teacher in Illinois, Missouri, and Ohio, and as a missionary in Papua New Guinea. She is now retired and ministers by prayer and presence at the motherhouse.



Sr. Marie Cecile DiTullio

Sister Marie Cecile DiTullio is a native of Dayton, Ohio. She entered the community

on Sept. 12, 1948, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1954. She earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree at Mount St. Mary Seminary and School of Theology in Cincinnati.

In the archdiocese, Sister Marie Cecile taught in Indianapolis at Our Lady of Lourdes School from 1951-52 and St. Lawrence School from 1954-56, at the former St. Anthony of Padua School in Morris from 1958-59 and at the former Sacred Heart School in Clinton from 1959-60.

Sister Marie Cecile also served in the Diocese of Evansville, Ind., and in Kentucky, Florida, Missouri and Ohio. She now resides in St. Clare Health Facility at the motherhouse and ministers by prayer and presence.

60-year jubilarians

Sister Jan Kroeger is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Sept. 8, 1963, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1966. She earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree at Xavier University in Cincinnati.



Sr. Jan Kroeger

In the archdiocese, Sister Jan taught at St. Andrew School (now Seton Catholic School) in Richmond from 1965-67 and served as guidance counselor at the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception from 1983-91 and 1996-2002.

She has also ministered in the Diocese of Evansville and in Ohio, Kentucky and Missouri.

Sister Jan now resides in Oldenburg and does ministry at the motherhouse.



Sr. Jackie McCracken

Sister Jackie McCracken (formerly Sister Ancilla) is a native of Indianapolis and grew up as a member of the former Holy Trinity Parish.

She joined the community on Sept. 8, 1963, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1971. She earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio.

In the archdiocese, Sister Jan taught at St. Louis School in Batesville from 1968-72 and at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis from 1972-79. She ministered at St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis as youth minister from 1985-87, at Cathedral High School as director of service learning from 2008-10, and at the motherhouse in Oldenburg as communication director for the community from 1979-85. Sister Jackie also taught in schools in the Diocese of Evansville and in Ohio.

For more than 30 years, Sister Jan has worked with non-profits and service organizations in the fields of domestic violence prevention, encouraging youth service/leadership and empowering adults with disabilities. She is now a behavioral consultant for Supportive Behavior Services and resides in Indianapolis.



Sr. Diane Mersch

Sister Diane Mersch (formerly Sister Mercita) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1964, and professed final vows on Aug. 15, 1971. She earned a bachelor's

degree at Marian University and a master's degree at the University of Illinois in Champaign, Ill.

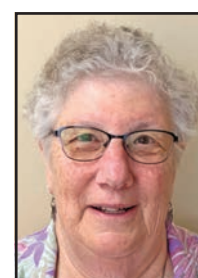
In the archdiocese, Sister Diane taught at St. Lawrence School in Lawrenceburg from 1965-66, at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis from 1968-75 and at the Oldenburg Academy of the Immaculate Conception from 1975-76.

She also taught in schools in Ohio and did social work there.

Sister Diane now is a resident of St. Clare Healthcare Facility at the motherhouse and ministers by prayer and presence.

Sister Elaine Merkel (formerly Sister Jolene) is a native of Cincinnati. She entered the community on Feb. 2, 1964, and professed final vows on Jan. 1, 1972. She earned a bachelor's degree at Marian University and a master's degree at Loyola University Chicago.

In the archdiocese, Sister Elaine taught at Holy Name of Jesus School in Beech Grove from 1967-



Sr. Elaine Merkel

68, at Holy Family School in Richmond (now Seton Catholic School) from 1968-73 and at the former St. Mary School in Aurora from 1973-84.

She also served at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish in Aurora as director of religious education from 1982-88, as pastoral associate and director of religious education at St. John the Baptist Parish in Osgood from 1988-96 and at the former St. John the Baptist Parish in Dover (now a campus of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County) from 1996-2022.

Sister Elaine also served as a teacher in Illinois and served as a chaplain in Ohio. She retired to Oldenburg in 2022, where she does motherhouse ministry. †