



The

Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960

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*Christ is born for us;
Come let us adore him!*

Monks of Saint Meinrad to elect new archabbot on New Year's Eve

By Sean Gallagher

On Dec. 31, the Benedictine monks of Saint Meinrad Archabbey will elect a new archabbot, only the ninth monk to hold the office in the 150-year history of the monastery.

Benedictine Archabbot Lambert Reilly, elected by the community nearly 10 years ago, announced his resignation on April 30. The resignation took effect on Dec. 15.

Abbots of the Benedictine monasteries in the Swiss-American Congregation, of which Saint Meinrad Archabbey is a member, do not have set terms but may serve in that office until death or they choose to resign.

Pope Pius XII gave the title of archabbey to Saint Meinrad in 1954 to honor its role in the establishment of the Swiss-American Congregation. There are only eight other monasteries in the world with that title.

Only those monks who have professed solemn vows may participate in the election. This group of monks is known as the monastic chapter.

In the months leading up to the Dec. 31 election, the monks participated in a discernment process in which they determined the directions for the community for the future and what qualities and skills in a leader would help them accomplish these goals.

Finally, in the days immediately before the election, the monastic chapter will hold a *scrutinium*, in which it will discuss the qualities that specific monks might bring to the office of archabbot. Any monk whose name is raised in the *scrutinium* is not present when his qualities are discussed. Likewise, a monk may choose to refuse to be considered in the *scrutinium*.

On the day of the election, a votive Mass of the Holy Spirit will be celebrated. Benedictine Abbot Peter Eberle, president of the Swiss-American

Congregation, then presides over the election, which will take place in the monastery's chapter room.

The monastic chapter may cast no more than nine ballots. To be elected on any of the first three ballots, a monk must receive a two-thirds majority. From the fourth ballot on, a monk may be elected with a simple majority.

Once a monk has received enough votes to be elected, the abbot president asks him if he accepts the election. If he does, he is immediately confirmed and installed as archabbot by taking an oath of office and being invested with a pectoral cross, a sign of the office.

He will receive the other signs of his office—a ring, miter and crozier—on the day of his abbatial blessing, currently scheduled for Jan. 21, 2005, the feast of St. Meinrad.

Immediately after the new archabbot is confirmed and installed, the monks process into the Archabbey Church of Our Lady of Einseideln, sing praise to God and individually pledge obedience to their new leader.

Benedictine Father Tobias Colgan, who served as prior under Archabbot Lambert and, following his resignation, has served as prior-administrator of the monastery, explained why he believes the upcoming election is important for the archdiocese.

The archabbot has a direct impact upon the way in which many of the monks serve in the parishes and agencies of the archdiocese and upon the formation of its future priests in Saint Meinrad School of Theology.

Yet Father Tobias also stated that his influence upon the internal life of the monastic community can be important for the archdiocese as well.

"The more authentically we keep the monastic practices," he said, "the more authentically we engage in common and private prayer ... all of that makes us



Saint Meinrad Archabbey's chapter room is the place where the Benedictine monastic community in Southern Indiana will gather on Dec. 31 to elect only its ninth abbot in its 150-year history.

stronger people, which makes Saint Meinrad a stronger place, which makes the works we do stand on a stronger foundation."

In his life of work and prayer, Benedictine Father Simeon Daly has strived to build upon this foundation since his entrance in the monastery's novitiate in 1943. He has participated in the election of four archabbots—half of the abbots in the monastery's history.

Yet even in this year in which Saint Meinrad has celebrated the 150th anniversary of its founding and despite his own longevity, Father Simeon isn't focused on the past as the election approaches.

"For continuity and for the quality of life that we're going to live, the abbot plays a very, very important role," he said. "Certainly, at this point in our life, we look back and are grateful for what we've had, but we can't do anything

about the past anymore.

"It's always important that we have quality leadership so that we can continue to live the life that we feel God has chosen us to live and maintain the good works that we're able to do in the area."

In the days leading up to the election, the monks give thought to the many tangible works that they do in the archdiocese and beyond. However, their preparation to choose a new leader is also marked and led by a prayerful trust in the Holy Spirit.

"I hope people see that our way of cooperating with the Holy Spirit is to be very intentional," Father Tobias said, "in the sense that we're trying to give this election, in human terms, the very best context that we can ... realizing all along that the Holy Spirit is the one who will guide and does guide the process. We want to be good participators with the Holy Spirit." †

Archdiocesan priest named first Catholic president of Church Federation

By Sean Gallagher

Father John Beitans, pastor of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis, will become the first Catholic president of the Church Federation of Greater Indianapolis on Jan. 1.



Fr. John Beitans

In an interview prior to the Dec. 14 announcement, Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith, executive director of the 92-year-old ecumenical organization, praised Father

Beitans' qualifications.

Father Beitans has been active on the Church Federation's board of directors. St. Lawrence Parish is the host of a center for Loaves and Fishes, a Church Federation project aiding families that are at risk of

dropping into poverty. And the parish recently hosted Celebration of Hope, an ecumenical prayer service which aims to further racial reconciliation.

But aside from his active work in the organization, Rev. Dr. Walker-Smith pointed to less tangible qualities when explaining why she believes Father Beitans will serve well the Church Federation's ecumenical ministry.

"He brings just a great deal of joy and enthusiasm to this task," she said. "Some people just kind of do it because they know that they're supposed to do it. But he does it because he loves it.

"He has a passion for this ministry. I think that, above all the other things, is contagious. We think that will go a long way to furthering the work of the federation."

As the first Catholic president of the Church Federation, Father Beitans hopes to be able to encourage other parishes to become members of the organization.

"I feel that my election just makes it easier for Catholic parishes to feel that it's OK to belong to the Church Federation," he said, "not that [some] haven't for many years. I think that it would be good if the Catholic Church would increase its involvement because I think proportionate to other churches, it is small."

Although having a Catholic as its president for the first time is significant for the Church Federation in its local context, Rev. Dr. Walker-Smith placed this event in a national context.

She noted that this local announcement happened in the wake of the November decision of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to join a new national ecumenical forum, Christian Churches Together in the USA. It was the first time that the Catholic Church in the United States has become a member of such an ecumenical organization.

"I think that there is a confluence of what is happening nationally as well as locally," Rev. Dr. Walker-Smith said. "I'm really happy about that. To know locally that we are exercising some of that leadership just fits in very nicely with what the bishops have done."

But while Father Beitans also follows ecumenical activities on the national and international level, his current focus is on advancing Christian unity in more intimate contexts in his new role as the president of the Church Federation.

"It's awesome," he said. "It's frightening. But then I hope that the fact that it is something that I take so seriously will help me ... approach things respectfully so that people will perceive that and be themselves serious about it.

"I just love the fruits of ecumenism at the level of friend-to-friend and local Church to local Church. Things are happening that we know have not happened for at least hundreds of years." †



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Former Iraq administrator Paul Bremer said faith replaced courage

By Mary Ann Wyand

A day after receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President George W. Bush on Dec. 14 at the White House, L. Paul Bremer III, former administrator in Iraq, was honored with the Thomas E. Burnett Jr. Heroic Leadership Award by Civitas Dei in Indianapolis for courageous leadership and service to the United States.

The Civitas Dei award is named in honor of Burnett for his heroic actions on Sept. 11, 2001, when he and other passengers fought terrorists on board hijacked United Airlines Flight 93 and forced the plane to crash in rural Pennsylvania instead of into the White House, the terrorists' intended destination.

On Dec. 15, Bremer and his wife, Francie, attended a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein at St. Luke Church and the awards dinner.

The Bremers are members of the Church of the Little Flower in Bethesda, Md., and serve as Communion ministers there. They joined the Church in 1994.

Bremer served as the presidential envoy to Iraq and administrator of the coalition provisional authority there from May 6, 2003, to June 28, 2004.

"I'm really honored and very humbled to receive this award," Bremer told members of Civitas Dei, a Catholic business association, and the Legatus Society of Indiana and other guests.

The plaque features a Scripture passage, Jeremiah 29:11, which reads: "For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! plans to give you a future full of hope."

He said this Bible verse sustained him in Iraq as he worked with soldiers and civilians to begin rebuilding the country in the wake of the 2003 war.

Bremer said he decided to accept the presidential appointment to Iraq because "I was certain that America faces an existential threat from the new terrorists."

Before saying yes to President Bush, Bremer said, "Francie and I prayed about it ... and in the end we believed that God said this was his will. It was our faith that got us through a very difficult fourteen months."

"It was dangerous," he said, "and I was lucky to escape a number of very close assassination attempts. ... I wasn't afraid. I was absolutely sure that God would protect me if that was his will, and I never gave

security a second thought, quite frankly. Faith basically replaced courage—it made courage irrelevant."

Bremer said, as leader of the coalition, he had to inspire hope in the Iraqi people.

"I needed to offer them some hope for their future," he said. "I knew that ... despair would destroy all of our possibilities of creating a new Iraq."

Bremer said his wife's prayer group suggested the verse from Jeremiah.

In August 2003, he began talking about a future of hope in his weekly television addresses to the Iraqi people.

"The present difficulties of the Iraqi people are manifest," he said in an Aug. 15, 2003, address. "The problems are there for all for to see, but things will not remain as they are. There is before all Iraqis a future of hope. You will live in dignity. You will live in peace. You will live in prosperity. You will live in the quiet enjoyment of family, of friends and of a decent income honestly earned. You will live in an Iraq governed by and for the people of Iraq."

In Iraq today, Bremer said, "we are witnessing, I think, a true struggle ... between good and evil. It is part of a much larger struggle between good and evil brought home to most Americans by the attacks on 9-11. It reminds us, if we needed the reminding, that there really are evil men out there who want to kill us, and kill us by the thousands."

Bremer said "it is important, I think, to be very clear about the nature of this threat, the threat for which Tom Burnett gave his life. These are people who hate the West for what we are, and they hate everything about us, not just the superficial aspects of our lives, the films and the books and the magazines, but the very foundations of Western society, the separation of Church and state, universal suffrage, women's education, democratic freedoms, political parties, a free press."

In the war against terrorism, he said, "there are no compromises with these people. There's no deal to be made with them. They simply have to be confronted and defeated" because they represent a significant threat to American security.

"We are going to be called upon to be tough-minded and to defeat these evil men," Bremer said. "This, by the way, is not a new role for the Catholic Church. For centuries, Catholicism, I believe, has played an important role in this titanic struggle for freedom and democracy." †



Above, L. Paul Bremer III, former presidential envoy to Iraq and administrator of the coalition provisional authority there, and his wife, Francie, sing during a Mass for Civitas Dei and Legatus Society members and guests celebrated by Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein on Dec. 15 at St. Luke Church in Indianapolis. They joined the Catholic Church in 1994. Bremer said Pope John Paul II's commitment to Gospel teachings and the Church's tenacity and durability for 2,000 years helped inspire them to become Catholic.

Left, L. Paul Bremer III discusses his faith and reconstruction work in Iraq on Dec. 15 after accepting the 2004 Thomas E. Burnett Jr. Heroic Leadership Award from Civitas Dei members in Indianapolis. Bremer said the world is witnessing "a true struggle between good and evil" caused by terrorists, and Catholicism has played an important role in the struggle for freedom and democracy.



Martha Burnett, the sister of the late Thomas E. Burnett Jr., told Civitas Dei and Legatus Society members and guests on Dec. 15 that her brother had dreamed about the White House and was trying to figure out what the dreams meant in the weeks before he helped overpower terrorists on hijacked United Airlines flight 93. The plane crashed in rural Pennsylvania, but was intended to strike the White House.

The Criterion and Catholic Center are closed from Dec. 23 to Jan. 3

This week's issue of *The Criterion*, which includes the annual Christmas Supplement, is the last issue of 2004.

The Criterion will be published again on Jan. 14 and resume its regular weekly schedule.

The Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center will be closed from Dec. 23 through Jan. 3 in observance of the holidays. †

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House



The Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House Staff and Advisory Board wish you and your family a blessed Christmas season and the happiest of New Years!

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Editorial



Israeli army Lt. Aviv Feigel talks to papal representatives Cardinal Camillo Ruini, second from left, and Archbishop Pietro Sambi at an Israeli checkpoint leading into Bethlehem on April 23. The church leaders were there to watch a delegation of Italian runners join a group of Palestinians in a marathon for peace. Runners took a torch blessed by Pope John Paul II from Jerusalem into Bethlehem to encourage peace in the region and Catholic pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

The Holy Land today

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.

Unfortunately, as we again celebrate the birth of Jesus in that little town, it has not lain still for years now. What its future will be, and how events of the next few months will affect Christians in the Holy Land, is problematic since the death of Yasser Arafat this past Nov. 11 and with Palestinian elections scheduled for Jan. 9.

Christians in the Holy Land, almost all of them Palestinians, have not fared well during the past few decades. Pope Paul VI tried to do something to keep the Palestinians from emigrating after his visit in 1964, including the founding of Bethlehem University, but those efforts seem to have failed. The Christian population of the Holy Land has declined from about 15 percent a generation ago to less than 2 percent today. Bethlehem, which once was 80 percent Christian, is now less than 10 percent Christian.

Bethlehem University appears to be an exception. It seems to be thriving as never before, with 2,240 Palestinian students. However, its graduates strive to get fellowships outside of Palestine. Instead of keeping Christians in the Holy Land, the university is preparing them for life outside. Besides, since Christians have left the Holy Land in droves, most of the students are Muslims.

Those Christians who remain there fear what might happen next, now that Arafat has died. He was able to keep extremist groups under some control and he was friendly to Christians. His wife had been a Greek Orthodox before she converted to Islam when they were married. They both attended Christmas Mass at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity until he became a virtual prisoner in his compound in Ramallah and she moved to Paris.

Arafat also concluded the "fundamental agreement" between the Palestinian Authority and the Holy See, signed on Feb. 15, 2000. It promised freedom of religion and complete equality for Christians as well as preservation of the rights that the Christian Churches had in respect to the major shrines and churches in the Holy Land.

Now the Christians must hope that the Islamic fundamentalists don't gain

control. Not only among the Palestinians but also in other parts of the Middle East, some Muslims consider Christians as among their enemies who are waging war against the Muslims. In Iraq, for example, bombings of Christian churches have become more and more common—something unheard of prior to the U.S. occupation of that country.

As this is being written, the Palestinians' leaders are Mahmoud Abbas, the new president of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia. They are considered moderates who might be able to negotiate successfully with Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. They have the backing of Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak and other Arab leaders.

They are, though, part of what is considered the old guard of the Palestine Liberation Organization—Abbas is 69 and Qureia is 65. Many Palestinians are looking toward a new generation of leaders and, unfortunately, many of them have lived so long under the oppression conditions created by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that they tend to be more militant. Especially in Gaza, they are allied more with Hamas and Islamic Jihad than with the PLO.

What now should be the role of the United States? For the time being, we should keep our hands off. Because we are seen by the Arabs as partners with Israel, we should not appear to be supporting any faction of Palestinians. Once their election is over and a new government is installed, then we should do all we can to get the so-called "road map" to peace back on track. The United States and Israel refused to meet or negotiate with Arafat but, now that he is gone, there is no longer any excuse to refuse negotiations, and the "road map" remains the best hope for a just peace for both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

It's encouraging that Israel's Sharon appears to be conciliatory and has promised to help facilitate the Palestinians' election. It wouldn't be surprising, though, if some radical Muslim fundamentalists would try to sabotage it.

As we celebrate Christmas, let us pray for real peace in the land where Jesus was born.

— John F. Fink

Letters to the Editor

Let's put Christ back in Christmas

As I drive through town, I see many houses beautifully decorated for Christmas. But there is something that bothers me. I see Santas, snowmen, reindeer, sleighs, candles, decorated trees, artificial trees and lights all over the place. But what bothers me is this: I seldom see any decorations depicting the real meaning of Christmas. Seldom do I see a manger scene with the Holy Family, the shepherds, wise men, etc.

Then I go into a major department store and am greeted with a "Happy Holiday." I am told that these greeters have been told to not say "Merry Christmas" for fear of offending some non-Christian.

About 50 years ago, when I was a member of the Junior Chamber of Commerce, we had a campaign at this time of year called "Let's put Christ back into Christmas." The idea at that time was to stop the growing practice of using "X-mas" as a substitute for "Christmas."

Don't you think its time for all of us to put Christ back into Christmas? What is the reason for the celebration without him?

On June 29, 1788, George Washington said "No country upon earth ever had it more in its power to attain these blessings than United America. Wondrously strange then, and much to be regretted indeed would it be, were we to neglect the means, and to depart from the road which Providence has pointed us."

On July 3, 1776, John Adams said, "And the new government we are assuming, in every part, will require a purification from our vices, and an augmentation of our virtues or there will be no blessings ... But I must submit all my hopes and fears to overruling Providence in which unfashionable as the faith may be, I firmly believe."

In 1799, Jedediah Morse said, "To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom, and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoys. In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation, either through unbelief, or the corruption of its doctrines, or the neglect of its institutions; in the same proportion will the people of that nation recede from the blessings of genuine freedom, and approximate the miseries of complete despotism."

"All efforts to destroy the foundations of our holy religion ultimately tend to the subversion also of our political freedom and happiness."

John Quincy Adams said, "The highest glory of the American Revolution was that it connected an indissoluble bond, the principals of civil government with Christian government."

Doesn't it seem prudent for us to follow the advice of our founding fathers? Let us all put Christ back into our Christmas.

Winferd E. "Bud" Moody, Indianapolis

A Christmas greeting from prison

I wish Jesus Christ a Happy Birthday and wish every reader a Merry Christmas, especially to our priests and prison ministry volunteers who unselfishly give of themselves to benefit our heavenly Father's kingdom. If not for these wonderful people, evil in society and prison would be greater than the level it is now.

I applaud *The Criterion* for publishing the series "The Problem of Evil" by Brandon A. Evans. Mr. Evans' articles reveal Satan working continuous evil in society to prevent humans from

receiving redemption after physical life. The series not only addressed the origin of evil, but also increased awareness of the importance of our holy Catholic Church in her fight against this pestilence in the present. The Church opposes evil in the free world and stands as a beacon of hope for the lost in prison.

I know because I have been in prison for 25 years and used to be a "fallen-away" Catholic. But after surviving several violent riots and witnessing evil in many forms behind the walls of the Indiana Reformatory, where I once lived for 23 years, the Church is responsible for my change of heart, and I became a regenerated Catholic and returned to the Lord's house restored. While reading "The Problem of Evil" series, it struck me that Satan works overtime particularly during the Christmas season.

Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ and how he brought salvation to our lost humanity. Christmas should not be about mythological inventions to promote commerce. Satan is clever enough to get people at Christmas time to focus on each other's self-gratification. Many people rush to stores to purchase gifts for friends and relatives while simultaneously hoping these same associates are out buying gifts for them. But what gifts are they buying for Christ? After all, it's Christ's birthday and when someone special has a birthday, gifts are bought for this special person. So what are you getting Christ for his birthday?

Let us remember that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, not Santa Claus. Through Christ, we live and become letters of recommendation to a lost world. Offering ourselves as the very best people we can be to each other is a worthy mission and perfect gift for Christ. This is what our priest and Bible study volunteers do at the Indiana Reformatory and Correctional Industrial Facility and, as a prisoner soon to be released, I am grateful to them.

Someone once said: "When you set out upon the path of self-discovery you will find God along the way." This is true. True Christianity is not about what the self-centered "I" can get.

Catholicism is about what "I" can give. The question that any Christian should ask oneself when dealing with other people is "What can I give this person?" The average person is looking for something, and yet does not really know what, but Jesus knows and so do we. We know that every person needs Christ, and knowing this we can build upon this foundation. Perhaps you too could benefit someone near.

As we celebrate Christ's birthday and prepare for the New Year, take a moment to let a friend or family member know how much you love them. Treat each other like tomorrow will never come. When we have forged the habit of giving the best of ourselves to other people closest to us, the habit will become natural.

Our dignity is never greater than when we can reach into ourselves, despite our own circumstances, and find what it takes to encourage another. This, my friends, is a worthy New Year's resolution.

Doyle O. Wilhelm, Pendleton

Letters Policy

Letters from readers are welcome and should be informed, relevant, well-expressed, concise, temperate in tone, courteous and respectful.

The editors reserve the right to select and edit the letters based on space limitations, pastoral sensitivity and content.

Letters must be signed, but, for serious reasons, names may be withheld.

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Readers with access to e-mail may send letters to critterion@archindy.org.

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO DANIEL M. BUECHLEIN, O.S.B.



SEEKING THE FACE OF THE LORD

BUSCANDO LA CARA DEL SEÑOR

Christmas carols can teach us important lessons about faith

Christmas carols are so welcome! Their wonderful simplicity and warmth make the Christmas mystery, a mystery we need, so accessible. They draw us to worship in all simplicity, and they calm our fears in an otherwise troubling and complicated world.

We all have our favorite popular carols. I want to quote one as a charming background for our Christmas reflection: *"Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay."*

I can think of two quotations that span the spectrum of sentiments in our Christmas carols (and liturgies for that matter). The first reflects the sentiments of the opening stanza above: "No one, whether shepherd or wise man, can approach God here below except by kneeling before the manger at Bethlehem and adoring him hidden in the weakness of a new-born child" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #563). Christmas is a summons to humble faith.

The Christmas carol continues: *"The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes. I love you, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky, and stay by my cradle till morning nigh."*

A second quotation mirrors this sentiment of the carol: "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And the man at the gate of the year replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand in the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way'" (King George VI, Christmas 1941, worldwide radio address to the British people at war).

Humbly we adore the new-born child-Messiah who removes the cause of our fear. Indeed, the prevailing message of the Christmas angels announcing the Messiah is "You have nothing to fear!"

"A sign is given to you," they said. And what is the unlikely sign of the Messiah? A child in a manger, an animal feed box, wrapped in swaddling clothes. The Messiah had no home—there was no room for him at birth. His home is the kingdom of God. Were the circumstances of this homeless child-Messiah a prophecy for all of us? Here we have no lasting city—our final home, also, is the kingdom of God.

There was no hospitality for him and his poor parents, Mary and Joseph. Yet he is hospitality, he redefines hospitality: "God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God"—so testifies St. John the Evangelist.

The child Messiah is born in the town of Bethlehem—the name means "the house of bread." The homeless child-Messiah would give himself to the world as the "Bread of Life." Born in all simplicity, born without a place to rest his head, born with nothing, the child-Messiah would be everything the world could want.

The first evangelizers to announce the Messiah were simple shepherds. Accustomed to a hard life, the shepherds were equal to the challenge of announcing the good news of a child-Messiah in an incredulous and complex world. They announced the simple yet timeless message: Here is the Savior of the world. Even more wondrous: The child-Messiah would become the Good Shepherd and he would give caring shepherds for all ages.

The child-Messiah was born in primitive times and surely is a model of simplicity. The Messiah was one mere child born among countless children during a census of the whole world. Yet, like a mustard seed, his kingdom would spring

forth. The unknown Word of creation, of sun and moon, stars and fire, would become the Light of the World.

The child-Messiah announced by word of mouth, by angels and shepherds, is the Word of God that spans all the ages. It all began with the unfolding of the mystery we know as the Incarnation of the Son of God. The simple unfolding happened simply so that we humans could at least glimpse the wondrous love of God for us.

Our Christmas carol continues: *"Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray."*

Christmas makes our Almighty God someone within our reach. Yet, it requires faith to kneel humbly before a child-Messiah in a proud world. And so we pray fervently for Jesus to stay close to help us be humble—and grateful.

"Bless all the dear children, in your tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with you there."

The earthy paradox of Christmas in Bethlehem reminds us that, really, home is in the kingdom of heaven. †

Archbishop Buechlein's intention for vocations for December

Catholic Grade Schools: that they may teach our children the Catholic faith and assist them in hearing and answering God's call to service in the Church, especially as priests or religious.

Los villancicos navideños nos enseñan importantes lecciones de fe

Los villancicos navideños son muy bien recibidos! Su maravillosa simpleza y su calor hacen que el misterio de la Navidad, un misterio que necesitamos, esté mucho más a nuestro alcance. Nos conducen a la adoración bajo la mayor simplicidad y calman nuestros miedos en un mundo generalmente lleno de tribulaciones y complicaciones.

Todos tenemos nuestros villancicos populares preferidos. Quisiera citar aquí uno que constituye un marco encantador para nuestra reflexión de Navidad:

"Apartado en un pesebre, sin cuna por cama, el pequeño Señor Jesús reposaba su dulce cabeza. Las estrellas desde el cielo brillante miraron donde yacía, el pequeño Señor Jesús, dormido en el heno."

Recuerdo otras dos citas que abarcan el espectro de sentimientos contenidos en nuestros villancicos Navideños (al igual que en las liturgias). La primera refleja los sentimientos de la estrofa de apertura anterior: "Pastor o mago, nadie puede alcanzar a Dios aquí abajo sino arrodillándose ante el pesebre de Belén y adorando a Dios escondido en la debilidad de un niño." (*Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica*, #563). La Navidad es un llamado a la fe humilde.

El villancico continúa: *"El ganado muge, el bebé se despierta, pero el pequeño Señor Jesús no llora. Te amo, Señor Jesús, mírame desde el cielo y quédate en mi cuna hasta que llegue la mañana."*

Una segunda cita refleja este sentimiento del villancico: "Le dije al hombre que estaba a las puertas del año, 'dame una luz para que pueda caminar con seguridad hacia lo desconocido.' Y el hombre a las puertas del año me respondió: 'Dirígete hacia la oscuridad y ponte en las manos de Dios. Eso deberá ser para ti mejor que una luz y más seguro que un sendero conocido.'" (Discurso de Navidad radiado para todo el mundo, del rey Jorge VI al pueblo británico en guerra, 1941).

Humildemente adoramos al niño Mesías recién nacido quien elimina la causa de nuestros temores. De hecho, el mensaje principal de los ángeles de la Navidad anunciando al Mesías es: "¡No tienes nada que temer!" "Se te ha dado una señal", dijeron. ¿Y cuál sería la señal menos esperada de un Mesías? Un niño en un pesebre, un cajón para alimentar a los animales, envuelto en pañales. El Mesías no tenía hogar; no hubo una habitación para él a la hora de su nacimiento. Su hogar es el Reino de Dios. ¿Acaso fueron las circunstancias de este niño Mesías sin hogar una profecía para todos nosotros? No tenemos una ciudad para siempre: nuestro hogar final, también, es el Reino de Dios.

Ni él ni sus humildes padres, María y José, recibieron hospitalidad alguna. Y aun así, él es hospitalidad, él redefine la hospitalidad: "Dios es amor y todo aquel que habite en el amor, habita en Dios", así lo testifica San Juan Evangelista.

El niño Mesías nació en el pueblo de

Belén, cuyo nombre significa "la casa del pan". El niño Mesías sin hogar se entregaría al mundo como "el pan de la vida". Nacido en la mayor sencillez, sin un lugar donde descansar su cabeza, nacido sin nada, el niño Mesías sería todo aquello que el mundo podría desear.

Los primeros evangelizadores en anunciar al Mesías fueron simples pastores. Acostumbrados a una vida difícil, los pastores se pusieron a la altura del reto de anunciar las buenas nuevas del niño Mesías a un mundo incrédulo y complejo. Anunciaron un mensaje simple, y sin embargo, eterno: he aquí el Salvador del mundo. Y lo que es aun más asombroso: el niño Mesías se convertiría en el Buen Pastor y nos entregaría pastores compasivos por todos los tiempos.

El niño Mesías nació en una época primitiva y sin duda es un modelo de sencillez. El Mesías fue un simple niño, nacido entre un número incontable de niños, durante un censo de todo el mundo. Y sin embargo, como una semilla de mostaza, su reino se propagó. La palabra desconocida de la creación, el sol y la luna, las estrellas y el fuego se convertirían en la Luz del Mundo.

El niño Mesías, anunciado de boca en

boca por ángeles y pastores, es la Palabra de Dios que abarca todas las eras. Todo comenzó con la revelación del misterio que conocemos como la Encarnación del Hijo de Dios. Esta revelación sencilla sucedió únicamente para que nosotros como humanos, pudiéramos si quiera atisbar el maravilloso amor de Dios por nosotros.

Nuestro villancico navideño continúa: *"Quédate cerca de mí, Señor Jesús, te pido que estés cerca de mí para siempre y me ames, te ruego."* La Navidad hace de nuestro Dios Todopoderoso alguien a nuestro alcance. Sin embargo, se requiere de fe para arrodillarse humildemente delante de un niño Mesías en un mundo tan arrogante. Así que rezamos fervientemente para que Jesús se quede cerca y nos ayude a ser humildes, y agradecidos.

"Bendice a todos los niños de bien que se encuentran bajo tu cuidado y prepáranos para el cielo, para vivir contigo allí." La paradoja mundana de la Navidad en Belén nos recuerda que, en realidad, nuestro hogar se encuentra en el Reino de los Cielos. †

Traducido por: Language Training Center, Indianapolis

La intención del Arzobispo Buechlein para vocaciones en diciembre

Escuelas primarias católicas: que ellos puedan enseñar la fe católica a nuestros niños y puedan ayudarles a oír y contestar la llamada de Dios para ser vir en la Iglesia, sobre todo como sacerdotes o religiosos.

Check It Out . . .

An **open house** will be held for Missionary of Charity Sister Mary Christa Knarr to celebrate her silver jubilee from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Jan. 1 at Holy Cross Central School, 125 N. Oriental St., in Indianapolis. Former Holy Cross parishioner Tanya Knarr of Indianapolis joined the Missionaries of Charity in January 1977 and professed her first vows in 1979. For more information, call the parish at 317-637-2620.

The People of Peace Secular Franciscan Order Fraternity is hosting an **Epiphany Party and Baby Shower** from noon to 2 p.m. on Jan. 2 at the Ruth Lilly Student Center at Marian College, 3200 Cold Spring Road, in Indianapolis. The event benefits Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis, and those who attend are asked to bring a generous gift of diapers, size 4 or 5, or other baby items. All are welcome. For more information, call 317-955-6775.

A special program for men and women in the "mourning state of divorce" will take place from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

on eight Thursdays from Jan. 6 through Feb. 24 at the Terre Haute Deanery Pastoral Center, 2931 Ohio Blvd., in Terre Haute. The cost is \$20 per person and includes a book. Pre-registration by Jan. 4 is requested. For more information or to register, call 812-232-8400 or e-mail sue@thdeanery.org.

"**From Dream to Action,**" a Martin Luther King Jr. birthday celebration, will take place at 4 p.m. on Jan. 16 at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis. The prayer service will feature the liturgical dancers of St. Rita Parish, the archdiocesan Gospel choir and personal testimonies about how the principles of Martin Luther King impacted their life. The event is sponsored by the archdiocesan Multicultural Commission. For more information, call the Cathedral parish at 317-634-4519.

St. Rita Parish, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., in Indianapolis, is hosting several **Kwanzaa** events. A Jazz Fest will be featured after the 10 a.m. Mass on Dec. 26. The

cost is \$10. Programs will take place at 7 p.m. on Dec. 27-30. A night watch service will be held from 10 p.m. to midnight on Dec. 31, with breakfast served afterward. A Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. on Jan. 1. For more information, call the parish at 317-632-9349.

St. Matthew Parish, 4100 E. 56th St., in Indianapolis, will conduct a series called "**Catholics Returning Home**" at 7 p.m. on six consecutive Tuesdays beginning on Jan. 11. The sessions are for non-practicing Catholics who are seeking answers to questions about returning to the Church. For more information, call Melinda Fihe at 317-257-7435.

A **Mass of Thanksgiving** for the past year and prayers for the coming year, sponsored by the Catholic renewal groups of central Indiana, will be celebrated at 11:30 p.m. on New Year's Eve at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis. Songs of worship will begin at 11 p.m. on Dec. 31. Father Rick Ginther, pastor of Cathedral Parish, will celebrate the Mass. Fellowship and refreshments will be available after Mass. For more information, call 317-797-2460.

The Couple to Couple League will host a **Wine and Cheese Social** for those interested in Natural Family Planning (NFP) from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Jan. 14 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, 10655 Haverstick Road, in Carmel, Ind., in the Diocese of Lafayette. Topics that will be discussed are Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body* and the health advantages of NFP. The cost of the event is a suggested donation of \$10 per couple. An R.S.V.P. is required by Jan. 8. For more information or to R.S.V.P., call Joe and Diane Conover at 317-848-4486 or diane.conover@sbcglobal.net. †

VIPs . . .



Tom and Catherine (Foradori) Steppe, members of St. Leonard of Port Maurice Parish in West Terre Haute, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on Nov. 23 with a Mass and open house. The couple was married on that date in 1944 at St. Leonard of Port Maurice Church. They have seven children: Margaret Price, Alice, Helene, Mary

Elizabeth, James, Michael and Thomas Steppe. They have 16 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. †

Archdiocesan man ordained for Legion of Christ



Jason A. Clark, a son of St. Nicholas Parish in Ripley County, was ordained to the priesthood for the Legionaries of Christ on Nov. 25 at the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica in Rome by Archbishop Franc Rodé, prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

Father Jason has completed 10 years of formation with the Legion, and is in his third year

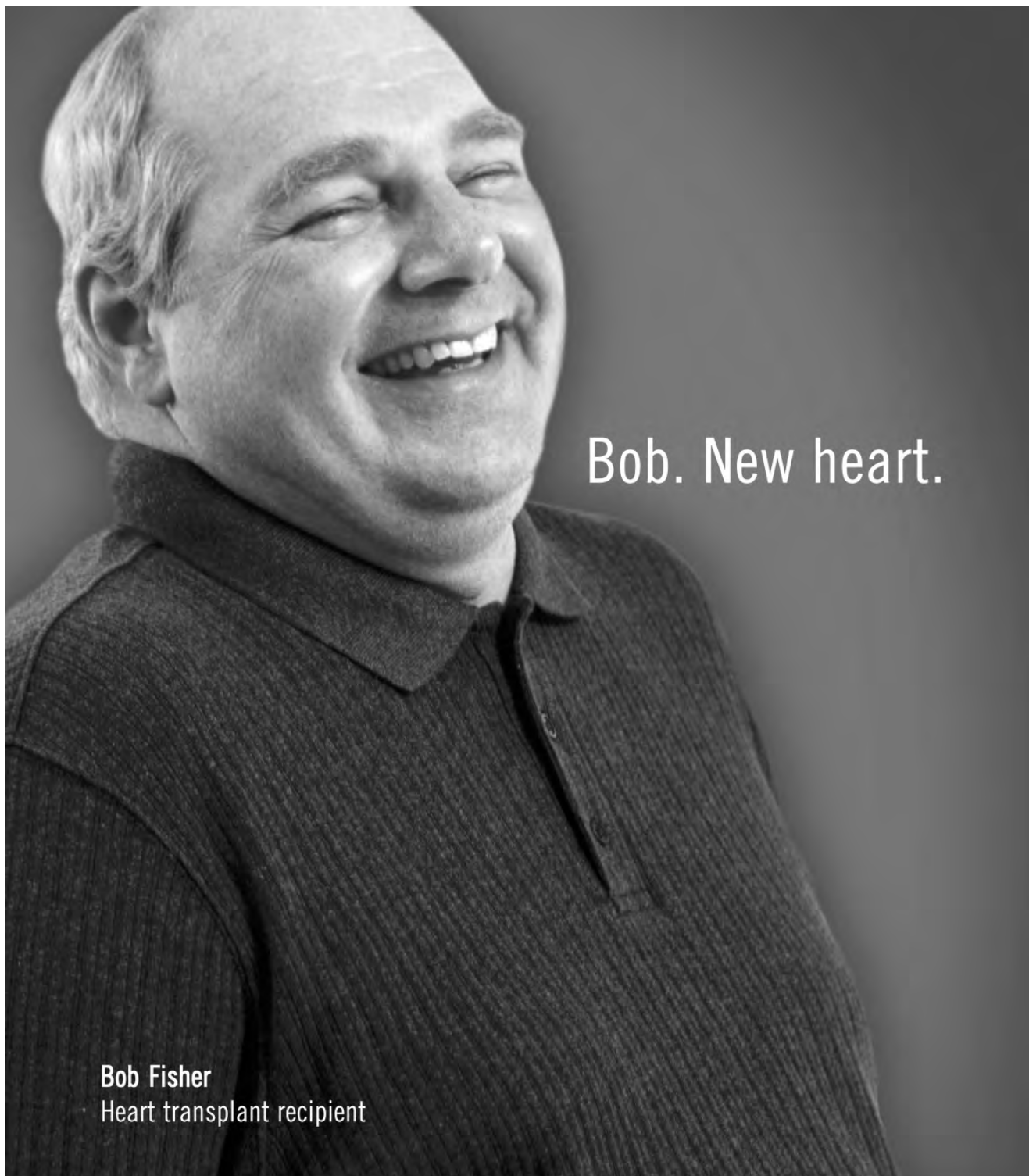
of theological studies. In June, he will receive his first priestly assignment.

Father Jason was born in Kentucky 35 years ago and moved to Indiana when he was 5 years old. He attended St. Nicholas School and graduated from East Central High School in Brookville.

He was among 59 men ordained this year for the Legionaries of Christ. The ordinations coincided with the 60th anniversary of ordination of Father Marcial Maciel, the founder of the order.

Father Jason celebrated his first Mass in the Catacombs of Priscilla in Rome with his family and friends.

Father Jason has two sisters and a brother. He is the son of Catherine Clark, who is a member of St. Nicholas Parish. His father, Charles Clark, passed away in 1986. †



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Honored schools, more seminarians, improving budget in 2004

By Brandon A. Evans

During 2004, the archdiocese nearly doubled its number of seminarians and had six Catholic schools within its boundaries honored nationally for excellence.

Those were only two of the big news stories that happened this past year in the archdiocese. Listed below are 10 of the major stories from 2004.

• Six Catholic schools are named Blue Ribbon Schools.

In October, six Catholic schools within the archdiocese—the most ever for the archdiocese—were honored as No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education.

Annette “Mickey” Lentz, executive director of Catholic education and faith formation, said that the 10 schools that have been honored in the archdiocese in the past two years are more than any other diocese.

• Saint Meinrad Archabbey celebrates its sesquicentennial.

The monks at Saint Meinrad Archabbey have spent the past year celebrating the 150th anniversary of their founding with a variety of events.

The archabbey was founded by monks from the Benedictine Abbey of Einsiedeln, Switzerland, and this year’s events included a re-creation of the first procession of monks to the abbey and the transla-

tion of some of the remains of their first abbot to the cemetery of the monks.

• Men begin their studies to become permanent deacons for the archdiocese.

Twenty-five men, with the support of their wives, began formal studies to become part of the first class of permanent deacons that will be ordained for the archdiocese in 2008.

The men, called “aspirants” in the first stage of their formation, attended a retreat together that launched the formation program and are now attending classes offered through Saint Meinrad School of Theology.

• Archbishop opens new House of Formation for college seminarians.

Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein officially established and blessed the Bishop Bruté House of Formation at Marian College in Indianapolis—a place for young men who are affiliated with the archdiocese to explore the priestly vocation with others in prayer and learning.

The house is named after the first bishop of the Diocese of Vincennes, which became the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. While Saint Meinrad School of Theology will be the primary place of formation for seminarians in graduate studies, Marian College will now be the primary site for the same service for college seminarians.

• Archabbot of Saint Meinrad resigns.

Benedictine Archabbot Lambert Reilly,

only the eighth abbot of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, announced his resignation from the post after nearly 10 years, effective Dec. 15.

On Dec. 31, the monks of the archabbey will elect their new leader.

During his tenure, Archabbot Lambert has overseen the completion of the renovation of the archabbey church, the continued growth and development of programs in the Saint Meinrad School of Theology and the establishment of a new enterprise for the community, Abbey Caskets.

• St. Elizabeth’s survives tornado devastation and expands services.

St. Elizabeth’s Pregnancy and Adoption Services in Indianapolis sustained substantial damage from a tornado over Memorial Day weekend, but has been able to rebuild.

At the same time that center was rebuilding, St. Elizabeth’s acquired Coleman Adoption Services and also received several needed grants. The agency now goes by the name St. Elizabeth’s and Coleman Pregnancy and Adoption Services.

• Number of archdiocesan seminarians nearly doubles.

In the past year, the archdiocese went from having 17 seminarians to 30—a 76 percent growth. The archbishop has said he wants to have 50 seminarians by 2007.

• Announcement made about new, major archdiocesan capital campaign.

Archbishop Buechlein announced at the annual meeting of the Catholic Community

Foundation in November plans to form and implement a new capital campaign titled “Legacy for Our Mission: For Our Children and Our Future.”

The campaign would seek to ensure that the mission of the local Church stays vibrant in the coming years, and is currently being worked out through a feasibility study.

• Archdiocese found to be in compliance with sex abuse charter.

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis was found to be in full compliance with the national 17-article *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* adopted by the U.S. bishops in June 2002.

Suzanne L. Yakimchick, assistance coordinator and chancellor for the archdiocese, said the archdiocese has had policies in place for at least 20 years to protect young people. To be found in compliance with the new charter, she said, the archdiocese revised its policies and procedures to incorporate the new language and requirements.

• Balanced budget for archdiocese projected for first time in seven years.

Jeffrey Stumpf, chief financial officer for the archdiocese, said at the Catholic Community Foundation annual meeting that the archdiocesan operating budget for the 2004-05 fiscal year, which ends on June 30, 2005, is projected to break even for the first time in more than seven years. †

2004: Clergy sex abuse fallout and debate on Catholics in politics

WASHINGTON (CNS)—For the third straight year, fallout from the Catholic clergy sexual abuse of minors was one of the biggest ongoing religious news stories in the United States, followed closely in Catholic circles by a wide debate over the relationship between Church teachings and the political responsibilities of Catholics.

Results of the first nationwide diocesan sex abuse and child protection compliance audits were published in January. In February, two major reports on the abuse scandal—one on its nature and scope and the other on its causes and context—made headlines.

In the course of the year, Church settlements with hundreds of abuse victims around the country, many with claims dating back to the 1960s and ‘70s, mounted into tens of millions of dollars.

By year’s end, three Western dioceses had entered bankruptcy protection proceedings, saying they did not have enough assets to cover the damages sought in lawsuits against them.

With Democratic Sen. John F. Kerry of Massachusetts as the first Catholic presidential candidate to appear on a major-party ticket in 44 years, political analysts and media pundits devoted unprecedented energy to analyzing what difference the Catholic vote might make in 2004.

The conflict between Church teachings on abortion and human embryonic stem-cell research and Kerry’s political positions on civil law governing those matters led to a major, sometimes rancorous debate in Catholic circles over the political responsibilities of Catholics. The most divisive discussion centered on whether Catholic public officials who hold political positions in conflict with fundamental Church teachings should be allowed to receive Communion.

On the Republican side, there was controversy over the abrupt departure of a prominent Catholic political strategist from the campaign to re-elect President George W. Bush and over Republican efforts to use parish and congregation membership lists for campaign purposes.

Legalization of same-sex marriage was a major issue in many parts of the country, starting with such marriages becoming legal in Massachusetts in May and culminating in voter decisions in 11 states on Nov. 2 to affirm by state constitutional amendment that only unions between one man and one woman are marriages.

Anti-American insurgents in Iraq used suicide bombings and a wide range of other attacks to drive American forces and other



A U.S. Marine with the 3rd Battalion of the 1st Marine Regiment pays his final respects during a memorial service for Sgt. Byron W. Norwood and Lance Cpl. Abraham Simpson at a base near the war-torn Iraqi city of Fallujah, in this photograph released by the U.S. Marines on Dec. 13.

foreigners out of the country and to undermine the country’s interim government and stymie the U.S.-set goal of democratic national elections in January 2005.

Revelations in late April that some American military guards at the Abu Ghraib prison tortured and degraded some of their Iraqi prisoners dealt a serious blow to U.S. moral standing in the war against terror. Their actions brought sharp condemnations from Pope John Paul II and other religious and world leaders, and added fuel to the very anti-American feelings that terrorist groups have been exploiting to recruit their members.

Pope John Paul II

As he entered the 26th year of his papacy, Pope John Paul II’s health continued to decline and his lack of mobility and growing difficulty in speaking became increasingly evident.

Yet he traveled to Switzerland and France, met with world leaders including Bush, presided over several canonization and beatification ceremonies and met with each contingent of U.S. bishops during the course of the year as the heads of dioceses traveled to Rome in regional groups to make their official five-year reports on their dioceses.

He met with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the chief patriarch of the Orthodox world, and returned relics of two fourth-century Eastern saints to the Greek Orthodox Church. He also returned a

revered 18th-century icon, spirited out of Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution, to the Russian Orthodox Church.

In October, the pope launched a worldwide Year of the Eucharist to promote understanding of and devotion to the Eucharist in preparation for the October 2005 Synod of Bishops on that subject.

World troubles

While most U.S. attention abroad focused on Iraq, it was not the world’s only trouble spot.

Palestinian-Israeli conflict continued to wrack the Holy Land, and Taliban guerrillas continued to fight U.S. and government forces in Afghanistan. Civil strife continued in several nations in sub-Saharan Africa, most notably in Sudan, where government-backed Arab militias terrorized black communities in the Darfur region, causing thousands of deaths and leading more than 1.5 million people to seek safety in refugee camps.

In Africa, the crisis of the HIV/AIDS pandemic continued to take its toll, not only in human lives but in the economies and social structures of entire nations. Pope John Paul praised those who have lowered the price of antiretroviral drugs for people



A 15,000-pound marble statue of the Virgin Mary stands strapped to a flatbed truck ready to be removed from outside the former Boston archbishop’s residence on June 29. The archdiocese sold the residence and surrounding property to Boston College for more than \$99 million to pay for settlements for clergy abuse victims.

in such nations and called on the world’s wealthier nations to increase their aid to countries devastated by the disease.

Catholic Relief Services was part of a consortium of humanitarian groups handling more than \$300 million in U.S. aid to combat AIDS abroad.

Sex abuse crisis

The U.S. clergy sexual abuse crisis erupted in January 2002 with the explosive revelations in Boston of the Church’s light treatment of abuse allegations and mishandling of priests accused of molesting minors. As the Church entered the third year of the scandal in 2004, it was still dealing with the many ramifications of the harm done to children over several decades.

In January, the bishops’ Office of Child and Youth Protection and National Review Board published the results of the first sex abuse and child protection compliance audits in 191 dioceses across the country. The report, given heavy media coverage nationwide, assessed the quality and effectiveness of every diocese’s policies and programs, and listed more than 50 specific recommendations on ways all dioceses could improve their child protection and sexual abuse responses in the future.

In February, within hours after Bishop Thomas L. Dupre of Springfield, Mass., announced his early retirement for health reasons, *The Republican*, the local daily newspaper, reported on its investigation into allegations that as a priest in the 1970s he had molested two teenage boys.

A grand jury subsequently handed down child rape indictments against Bishop Dupre, making him the first U.S. bishop in history to be criminally indicted for sexual abuse of a minor, but the district attorney declined to prosecute the case, citing the statute of limitations.

At the end of February, two major independent studies, commissioned by the bishops to help them and others understand the abuse crisis, were released simultaneously at a crowded press conference in Washington.

“A Report on the Crisis in the Catholic Church in the United States” was prepared by the all-lay National Review Board that the bishops formed in 2002 to help them address the abuse crisis. The report was highly critical of a clerical culture that did not recognize the seriousness of child abuse, and of the way many bishops in the past handled abuse allegations and the

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continued from page 7

accused priests. The board's study and report were only a first step that set the groundwork for a more comprehensive academic study on the issue, which is still to be conducted.

The second released study, "The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950-2002," was prepared by New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice, using data provided from diocesan files across the nation.

It reported that a total of 4,392 priests, or 4 percent of those active during that period, had been accused of sexual abuse of children. It said 10,667 individuals claimed to have been abused during that period.

In the two years since the end point of that study, hundreds of additional allegations have been made.

Among numerous financial settlements between dioceses and abuse victims that were reached in 2004, several were global settlements with a number of victims that went into millions of dollars. Of particular note were:

- The Diocese of Orange, Calif., settled with 87 victims on Dec. 2 for a record sum. While the exact figure was not immediately released because of a court order, sources said it exceeded the former record of \$85 million that the Boston Archdiocese used in 2003 to settle with 541 victims.

- The Archdiocese of Portland, Ore., announced in February that it settled with 133 victims for \$53 million.

- The Diocese of Davenport, Iowa, settled 37 claims for \$9 million on Oct. 28, just days before it was prepared to enter bankruptcy protection proceedings.

- The Springfield Diocese settled with 46 victims in July for \$7 million plus proceeds from the sale of two diocesan properties.

- The Diocese of Oakland, Calif., reached a \$3 million settlement with a woman who was repeatedly raped and ritually attacked by a priest for four years when she was a young child.

The number of claims and amount of compensation sought forced three dioceses to take the unprecedented step of a Church body filing for bankruptcy protection under Chapter 11 of the federal Bankruptcy Act.

Portland, in July, was the first to file. Even after settling with 133 victims, it faced more than 60 additional abuse claims and just the top 20 of those sought more than \$300 million.

The Diocese of Tucson, Ariz., followed suit in September, facing claims by 33 plaintiffs. In December, the Diocese of Spokane, Wash., did the same, citing 125 people identified as potential sex abuse claimants and saying its potential liabilities amount to more than \$80 million.

Heading the Spokane Diocese is Bishop William S. Skylstad, who was vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for the past three years and was elected in November to be president for the next three years.

The outgoing USCCB president was then-Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., who will enter history as the man who guided the bishops through the one of the gravest crisis ever faced by the U.S. Catholic Church. In December, Bishop Gregory, the first African-American to hold the USCCB's highest office, was named archbishop of Atlanta.

Linked at least in part to the sexual abuse crisis were the parish closures announced in 2004 by Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley of Boston. In May, he began implementing a plan to close 83 of the 357 parishes in the archdiocese. He cited declining attendance, fewer clergy to serve the parishes and financial austerity measures needed to offset a 50 percent drop in archdiocesan income since the abuse scandal broke there in 2002.

In the spring, the USCCB Administrative Committee agreed to a request by several bishops to postpone a second nationwide audit of diocesan compliance with sex abuse and child protection standards until the bishops had a chance to discuss the

issue in November. The National Review Board objected vigorously, saying the bishops' child protection charter mandated that the board review and publish annual compliance reports, which could not be done in 2004 in the absence of new audits.

The board's objections forced the bishops to review the issue at their June national assembly near Denver, and they agreed to undergo new audits in every diocese before the end of the year.

The Church and politics

The question of Communion for Catholic politicians whose policy positions conflict with basic Church teachings began to turn into a national debate in January when Archbishop Raymond L. Burke of St. Louis told reporters he would give Kerry a blessing, not the Eucharist, if Kerry approached him for Communion while campaigning in his archdiocese.

In the months that followed, a number of other bishops weighed in, some suggesting Communion should be denied to dissenting Catholic politicians and others saying they considered it pastorally inappropriate to use the Eucharist as a weapon in such circumstances.

In a pastoral letter in May, Bishop Michael J. Sheridan of Colorado Springs, Colo., said not only are politicians out of communion with the Church if they support abortion, embryonic stem-cell research and euthanasia, but those who vote for such politicians also place themselves outside the Church. Neither should receive Communion until they recant their positions and go to confession, he said.

In a statement issued at their June assembly, the bishops declared that politicians who act "consistently to support abortion on demand" risk "cooperating in evil and sinning against the common good."

They said all Catholics are required to examine their conscience on their worthiness to receive Communion, but added that a canonical decision to deny Communion to anyone rests with each bishop in his own diocese because of "the wide range of circumstances involved in arriving at a prudential judgment" in each case.

In a campaign speech in Florida before the election, Kerry said his faith gave him "values to live by and apply to the decisions I make."

He noted that the bishops "have suggested that as a public official I must cast votes or take public positions—on issues like a woman's right to choose and stem-cell research—that carry out the tenets of the Catholic Church." He said his response is, "I love my Church; I respect the bishops; but I respectfully disagree."

The Bush re-election campaign had its own flaps over its Catholic outreach and efforts to galvanize the vote of frequent churchgoers.

In August, Deal Hudson, publisher of the Catholic magazine *Crisis* and chief unofficial adviser to the Bush administration on Catholic issues over the past four years, abruptly resigned as Catholic outreach coordinator for the Bush campaign on the eve of revelations that he had resigned his professorship at Fordham University 10 years ago because he got a student drunk and had sexual relations with her.

The Bush campaign's Web site had a special section addressed to Catholics,



A woman receives Communion during Mass at a church in Washington. Vatican officials have said that the best thing that could come of discussions about voting this election year is if Catholics think more seriously about their worthiness for Communion.



Democratic presidential nominee Sen. John F. Kerry of Massachusetts shakes hands with U.S. President George W. Bush after their third and final presidential candidates' debate on the campus of Arizona State University in Tempe, Ariz., on Oct. 13.

prominently featuring photos of the president's meeting last summer with the pope. The campaign sought membership lists of Catholic parishes and Protestant congregations to use in the campaign—a practice that brought objections from religious leaders.

The Bush strategy of focusing on weekly churchgoers succeeded. According to exit polls, Kerry won a majority of the votes among Catholics and Protestants who do not attend church regularly, but the Bush majority among weekly churchgoers, both Catholic and Protestant, gave him the winning margin in the election.

Many political commentators were surprised that the exit polls showed 22 percent of Americans ranking "moral values" as the issue that mattered the most—ahead of terrorism, the economy, Iraq, taxes, health care or education. Those who cited moral values as their chief concern voted for Bush by better than a 4-1 margin.

Although the exit polls did not seek to specify the moral values that voters were concerned about, three of concern to the Church were abortion, embryonic stem-cell research and same-sex marriage.

In 2004, abortion opponents suffered court defeats on the 2003 Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act as federal judges in New York, Nebraska and California declared the law unconstitutional. They won a victory in November, however, when Congress adopted an omnibus appropriations bill containing the Hyde-Weldon Conscience Protection Amendment. That provision, which the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association challenged in court on Dec. 13, protects the right of hospitals, health plans and other providers of medical care to decline to provide, pay for or refer for abortions.

In October, the U.S. bishops launched a national ad campaign, "Let's find cures we can all live with," pointing out that results of adult human stem-cell research are already helping people with Parkinson's disease and heart and nerve diseases, while embryonic stem-cell research has not resulted in any therapeutic uses. The Church opposes embryonic research because it entails the destruction of human embryos.

In a California referendum, voters on Nov. 2 approved a 10-year, \$3 billion state commitment to funding human embryonic stem-cell research. The state's bishops had strongly opposed the measure.

There were referendums in 11 states on Nov. 2 and in two other states earlier in the year to add language to state constitutions that would explicitly define marriage as a union of a man and a woman. Voters approved all 13 referendums.

The flurry of activity to add constitutional protection to laws against same-sex marriages came in reaction to a 2003 decision by the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts declaring it unconstitutional to bar same-sex couples from marrying.

The U.S. bishops backed a federal constitutional amendment to uphold the traditional definition of marriage.

In November, describing the weakening

of marriage as a major social, cultural and Church problem, the U.S. bishops approved a project to write a national pastoral letter on marriage that will serve as a focal point for a multifaceted pastoral plan to strengthen and support marriage.

At their November meeting, the bishops also approved the first *U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults*, approved Spanish-language liturgical texts for use in the United States for the celebrations of marriage, infant baptism and the *quinceanera*, the customary celebration in many Hispanic cultures to mark a girl's 15th birthday.

Ecumenism

On the ecumenical front, the bishops approved the USCCB becoming a founding member of a new national ecumenical body, Christian Churches Together in the USA. The organization is intended to provide a forum that will bring together Church leaders of the Catholic, Orthodox, historical Protestant, historical racial and ethnic, and evangelical and Pentecostal traditions, promoting greater mutual understanding and common prayer and Christian witness. It is to hold its first assembly in 2005.

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission completed its work on a common statement, "Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ." It must be approved for publication by the appropriate authorities in each Church before it will be released.

Earlier in the year, the Vatican's chief ecumenist, Cardinal Walter Kasper, visited Moscow in an effort to smooth the troubled relations between the Catholic and Russian Orthodox Churches.

One sticking point for the Russian Orthodox is the renewed efforts of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in 2004 to be elevated to a patriarchate by the pope. Most other Eastern Catholic Churches are patriarchates. Pope John Paul urged more ecumenical dialogue in Ukraine.

Civil presidential elections in Ukraine sparked a national crisis in November when thousands took to the streets protesting the apparent massive fraud that gave an unearned narrow victory to the Russian-backed candidate. The nation's Catholic bishops and other religious leaders, except the Russian Orthodox, protested and called for a new election with international monitors. The Supreme Court invalidated the election on Dec. 3 and set a new election for Dec. 26.

In other news of special Catholic or religious interest in 2004:

- Pope John Paul announced plans for a new regional synod of bishops of Africa to meet the needs and challenges of the rapidly growing Church there. The U.S. bishops formed a new committee on Africa to strengthen ties with the Church there and channel much-needed financial aid from U.S. Catholics.

- The Vatican published a *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, the first comprehensive compilation of official Catholic social teachings, in English and Italian.

- CRS quietly pulled its non-Iraqi staff out of Iraq in June out of fear for their safety because insurgents were increasingly kidnapping and executing foreign workers.

- Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*, opened in February. It grossed \$370 million in U.S. theaters alone and its videotape/DVD release in August set a first-week sales record of 9 million units.

- Pope John Paul broke new ground on women in Vatican positions when he appointed two female theologians to the International Theological Commission and named Harvard Law School professor Mary Ann Glendon to head the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences.

- Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien, who resigned as bishop of Phoenix after he was arrested in June 2003 for leaving the scene of an accident in which a pedestrian was killed, was convicted in February and sentenced in March to 1,000 hours of community service and four years of probation. It was believed to be the first time a U.S. Catholic bishop has been convicted of a felony. †

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

*Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King:
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"*

*Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th' angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"*



The birth of Jesus, as told in the Gospels

By John F. Fink

For this Christmas, let us meditate on the birth of Jesus as told in the Gospels. We are familiar with the story, of course, but perhaps a closer look at the Scriptures will give us a few new insights.

Let us begin with Mary and Joseph. Mary's Hebrew name was Myriam. It's surprising that the only other woman with that name in the entire Old Testament was Moses' sister, yet the name was popular when Jesus' mother lived. We know of Mary of Magdala, Mary of Bethany, Mary of Cleophas, but also two of King Herod's 10 wives and three other members of his family.

When we pick up the story, Mary is betrothed to Joseph, a man who had noble blood because he was a descendent of King David. Unfortunately, by this time, 1,000 years after the time of David, his house had fallen into obscurity. Joseph was a laborer, sometimes referred to as a carpenter, but the Greek word used is *tekton*—a master builder who worked with timber and iron, but mainly stone.

To say that Mary and Joseph were betrothed means that they were husband and wife—they were married. It was not just an engagement. Marriage for the Jews at that time consisted of two parts. The first part was the consent of both parties in the presence of at least two competent witnesses—the actual wedding. But they continued to live apart while a celebration was being planned for the solemn entry of the bride into the groom's home.

After the betrothal but before Mary moved into Joseph's home, remarkable things began to happen. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary. The name Gabriel means "the power of God," and he had appeared in Scripture before. He appeared to Daniel to announce 70 weeks of years [seven times 70 years] and the coming of an anointed one (Dn 9:20-25). He also appeared to Zechariah to announce the birth of John the Baptist.

How did Gabriel appear? He probably had a body because Luke says that Zechariah had seen him. After his greeting to Mary, he tells her not to fear, and we can probably infer that Mary was startled by his sudden appearance.

Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive a son who "will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father" (Lk 1:32-33).

Mary would have known, as all Jews did, that this was a description of the long-awaited Messiah.

But Mary was still puzzled because she had taken a vow of virginity that Joseph, apparently, was willing to accept—probably because he was an older man who looked upon his role as supporter and protector.

"How can this be," she asked, "since I have no relations with a man?" (Lk 1:34).

We have to wonder what Mary thought about Gabriel's answer: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" (Lk 1:35). As a good Jewish girl, she surely didn't know that there are three persons in the one God. Probably she thought the angel meant simply that the power of God would make this possible, especially since Gabriel continued, "And the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

Whatever she thought, it was enough for her to quickly give her consent: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

And with those words, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity entered her womb—and, indeed, into our human race. Or, as St. John put it, "The Word was made flesh" (Jn 1:14).

Another thing that Gabriel told Mary was that her kinswoman, Elizabeth, was six months pregnant. We can marvel at the complete confidence that Mary had in Gabriel's words because she at once made arrangements to join a caravan for the 90-mile trip from Nazareth to Elizabeth's home in Ain Karin, near Jerusalem. Did she tell Joseph that she was making the trip? If so, how did she explain how she knew about Elizabeth's pregnancy? All we can do is speculate.

Mary was gone for three months, presumably through the birth of John the Baptist. By the time she returned to Nazareth, she was at least three months pregnant. We presume that this is when Joseph learned about the pregnancy. Matthew's Gospel then picks up the story.

Matthew makes it clear that Joseph was "her husband" but also that Mary was found to be with child "before they lived together" (Mt 1:18). It was, therefore, during that period between the actual marriage and the time that Mary moved into Joseph's home. In the small village of Nazareth, some of the women would have noticed Mary's condition, and she was undoubtedly the subject of gossip. It was not sinful for a husband and wife to have sexual relations during this period, but it was highly unusual. The townspeople doubtlessly thought that that was what had happened.

Joseph, though, knew better, and we can imagine the shock he experienced. He obviously believed that Mary was carrying someone else's child—which meant that she had committed adultery. He didn't want to expose Mary to shame though (or subject her to death by stoning, the penalty for proved adultery), so he decided the best course was for him to divorce her quietly.

That would have been difficult to do in a small village. Nevertheless, that was his intention until he had a dream in which an angel (Gabriel again?) told him, "Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her" (Mt 1:20). The angel also told him to call



This Nativity scene from the late 15th century is in the Vatican Museums art collection.

Mary's son Jesus "because he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21).

Joseph, like Mary, had intense faith so he did what the angel said "and took his wife into his home" (Mt 1:24), thus again confirming that Mary was already his wife but hadn't yet moved into his home.

We now return to Luke's Gospel for the details surrounding Jesus' birth. Luke tries to put the birth in historical context, during Emperor Caesar Augustus' reign.

Augustus began life as Octavius. Together with Mark Antony, he avenged his great-uncle Julius Caesar's death by destroying Brutus. Then he conquered Antony and Cleopatra at the sea battle of Actium to become sole ruler of the Roman world. He was emperor for 25 years at the time he ordered a census that took Joseph and Mary back to Bethlehem.

Bethlehem is where Jacob's wife, Rachel, died and was buried, and where Ruth went to live with her mother-in-law. Ruth's great-grandson, David, was born there. So it had an illustrious history. But by the time of Jesus' birth, it was a small village of about 1,000 villagers. The census had packed it with many people, and Mary and Joseph were unable to find room in the inn. Besides, they needed privacy for Jesus' birth.

They found it in a cave. In the back of the cave was a stable for animals, including, presumably, the donkey on which Mary rode during the trip. Perhaps there was also an ox already in the stable. It

was there that Mary gave birth, "wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger" (Lk 2:7).

He could hardly have been born in more lowly conditions. And who were his first visitors? Shepherds, who were members of the lowest class of Palestinian society, visited because they, and only they for the time being, were invited to do so. Later, there would be learned men from the East, but for now it was only lowly shepherds.

An angel invited the shepherds, proclaiming to them the good news that "a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord" (Lk 2:11):

- Savior—the one who would rescue humanity from sin and alienation from God.
- Messiah—the long-awaited "anointed one."
- Lord—the term usually applied to Yahweh.

After the shepherds left, "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). It's the first of four occasions that Luke speaks about Mary pondering the meaning of the events of which she was a part.

We must do the same as we reflect on the great mystery of the Incarnation—that God assumed our human nature and was born of the Virgin Mary.

(John F. Fink is editor emeritus of The Criterion.) †

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Incarnation means vulnerability, intimacy and community

By William Thompson-Uberuaga
Catholic News Service

Branded on my memory is the almost endless afternoon when our younger daughter did not return home from school in her usual way. As an hour passed, I grew more despondent and phoned my wife, asking her to come home from work.

I phoned everyone I could think of, hoping someone might know something. It was getting dark, and I thought of having to call the police. My wife returned home and tried her best to calm me, but I know she was feeling the pain, too.

It was only a few hours, but they were so long. And it hurt so much. That's what I remember the most: the hurt, the pain.

Then the phone rang. Our next-door neighbor calmly said, "Would you like us to send your daughter home now?"

Apparently our daughter had gotten home a bit before I did and promptly did what I always told her to do: Go over to the next-door neighbors.

That memory makes me think how vulnerable we humans are. Parents are vulnerable to their children. Spouses are vulnerable to one another's experiences. Friends are likewise vulnerable—and on it goes in a rippling way.

I suspect the experience I've just recounted has been shared by many parents. It would be almost impossible for us, I suspect, given the pain we felt, to imagine the pain of those whose children and loved ones never return home.

Incarnation, as many have noted, means vulnerability.

Without vulnerability, it is hard to imagine how we could live a really human, in-the-flesh, life. If we allowed our fear of being hurt to cramp us, life

would be rather dreary. However, vulnerability on its own would be deadening.

Vulnerability is meant to be the other side of intimacy. Because we are close to others, we can be hurt by them—either by what happens to them or what they do to us.

But intimacy, when it works, is so good, and the vulnerability we experience seems so worth it.

- Intimacy can keep vulnerability from turning into sheer victimhood for all concerned.
- Vulnerability can keep intimacy real and expansive.

Incarnation, it seems, means intimacy.

The Christmas feast of the Incarnation is an appropriate time to think of a divine form of vulnerability and intimacy. God's becoming flesh somehow has to involve a profound expression of God's embrace of these two.

Like the mystery of the union of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ, we never will be able to comprehend fully how God becomes vulnerable and intimate in Jesus. But that God does so, without ceasing to be God, seems a rather clear implication of the Incarnation.

When considering this mystery, I always like to fall back on Pope Leo the Great's advice: In the Incarnation, God is not diminished, but humanity is enhanced.

My wife, myself and our two daughters were very much a family and community that evening after our younger daughter's "return." The vulnerable intimacy created a community. Inasmuch as we all kept our hopes and strength up throughout it all, we cannot help but believe the mysterious presence of the incarnate God was there.

Incarnation means community and



Mary and the child Jesus appear in the center panel of a triptych attributed to 15th-century Italian monk and painter Fra Angelico. The artwork is a holding of the Uffizi in Florence, Italy. The Dec. 25 Christmas feast commemorates the incarnation of the divine word at the birth of Christ.

family too, it seems. The Word becomes flesh and in doing so makes it possible for us to become a community and family with one another, in and through Christ.

Vulnerability, intimacy and community: We are invited to meditate on this

threesome as something of a window into the mystery of Christmas.

(William Thompson-Uberuaga, Ph.D., is a theology professor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pa.) †

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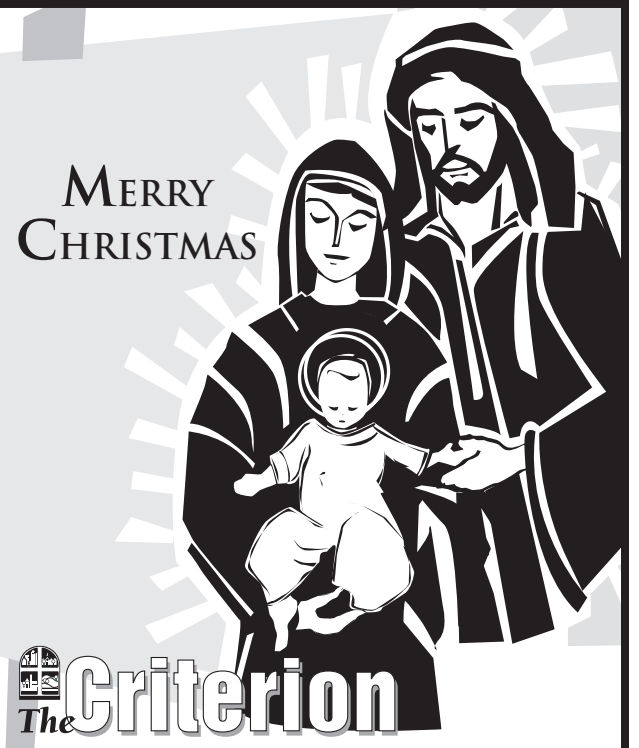
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Several hundred Filipino Catholics celebrate Advent Mass and novena

By Mary Ann Wyand

Several hundred Filipino Catholics were thrilled to celebrate *Simbang Gabi*—a traditional Advent novena of Masses in the Philippines—for the first time in the archdiocese during a 4 a.m. Mass on Dec. 18 at St. Michael the Archangel Church in Indianapolis.

“*Simbang*” means “Mass” and “*gabi*” means “night” or “evening” in the *Tagalog* language used by many Filipinos.

A few other members of area parishes joined the Filipino Catholics for the before-dawn Advent liturgy, also known as *Misa de Gallo*, which was started in the 1660s by missionary friars in the Philippines as a nine-day novena to usher in the birth of Jesus. The early morning Mass enables Filipino farmers to worship before beginning their work in the fields.

In the Philippines, the nine-day novena is offered at the hour when roosters crow to announce the coming of a new day as a way to thank God for his gift of Jesus and to ask for a bountiful harvest.

Father Kenneth Taylor, pastor of St. Michael Parish and director of the archdiocesan Commission for Multicultural Ministry, was the celebrant for the liturgy, which focused on prayers for justice, righteousness and peace in the world.

“We are here celebrating *Simbang Gabi* because we are eagerly anticipating the birth of Jesus and the coming of Christ into our lives,” Father Taylor said. “It is that anticipation, that eagerness, that brings us together this morning.”

The Messiah is coming to bring justice to the world, he said. “We know, whether it be in the Philippines or in the United States, we are in need of the justice and peace that God can bring. We know that people are fighting with one another, people are oppressing one another and people are mistreating one another, and we yearn for that justice and righteousness and peace that the prophets have promised us.”

On every continent, he said, “whether it be in Africa or South America or North America or Asia or Europe, we have people who are far away from God’s vision of righteousness, God’s vision of peace and

God’s vision of justice.”

But as people of faith and hope, Father Taylor said, we are called to live out the virtues of peace, harmony and unity to help change the world for the better.

“People who have hope can be like Joseph,” he said, “who took Mary into his home as his wife on the word of God even though the circumstances were very unusual and mysterious, and he didn’t know what was going on.

“... The Messiah is going to bring justice and peace and righteousness,” Father Taylor said. “... It is something that God has promised, and it will happen. So we can begin to live those virtues now even in the midst of a world that seems to want to live by the exact opposite of those values ... in the midst of a world that is so violent. We can live those values now because we are people of hope. This novena is a great opportunity to strengthen that sense of hope within us.”

St. Monica parishioner Marlon Alfonso of Indianapolis, president of the Philippine Barangay Club of Indiana, said more than 500 Filipino families are members of this organization that continues their country’s customs and traditions in the United States.

During the Mass, a collection was taken to benefit recent typhoon victims in the Philippines.

“Because of the flooding there a few weeks ago,” Alfonso said, “a lot of people lost their homes in some of the poor areas of the Philippines.”

The opportunity to celebrate *Simbang Gabi* in the archdiocese was “really wonderful,” he said, “because the [Filipino] people are wanting to have a part of their tradition during December to capture that moment although they are not in the Philippines. It’s kind of giving them some type of reminiscing on their past, trying to get a hold of what they are missing from the Philippines since they cannot be home. It’s like trying to go back [home] again through tradition.”

It’s important for Filipino teenagers and children to learn their country’s cultural and religious customs so they can carry on those traditions, he said, and “keep our culture alive here in the United States.” †



Above, St. Gabriel parishioner Veronica Cabrera of Indianapolis, from left, and St. Monica parishioners Dr. Amy del Mundo and Finy Lumanlan, both of Indianapolis, sing with the Filipino choir during an Advent concert before the *Simbang Gabi* Mass at 4 a.m. on Dec. 18 at St. Michael the Archangel Church in Indianapolis.

Left, St. Monica parishioner Marlon Alfonso of Indianapolis welcomes several hundred Indianapolis-area Catholics to the traditional early morning Filipino Advent liturgy on Dec. 18 at St. Michael the Archangel Church. He is wearing a *barong tagalog*, a traditional Filipino shirt made of fabric created from pineapple leaves.

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Readers share favorite Christmas memories

Grandpa saved Christmas by 'fixing' the leaky roof

By Brien Krieger

Special to The Criterion

It was colder than I remembered. Indoor temperatures were balmy compared to outdoors. The snow from Thanksgiving lay at the bottom of the 11-inch snow-pack. Eleven inches of glacier kept me wondering about the North Pole. The whitish old snow was crusty on top with a mirror finish and only an occasional crack creating tiny crevasses.

This December was going to be the best yet. My 10th birthday was in June and now I was old enough to know that when Santa checked his list that my name would be there in bold type, clearly printed and on the "nice side" of his ledger. This year was different. My brother was only good when Mom reminded him. I was good all year.

The wood stove was mostly for decoration and the white pine sure looked classy in the corner of the living room. Its green scent filled the room, creating a holiday aroma of fresh pine mingling with the smell of butter cookies baking in the oven.

The stone fireplace was still used for heating the living room. The holiday warmth had been building over the last two weeks. I was looking forward to eating the rum balls and Mexican wedding cake cookies as well as playing with our cousins and unwrapping presents.

Grandpa drove over from the west side. A few packages lay in the pickup's front seat. They were wet with melted glove snow and German sheperd slobber when he handed them to me to set under the tree.

"Boy, it's a nice Christmas Eve day," he said, shaking off the drops. The sun finally broke through the clouds, and rays were melting the shoveled walk and drive.

Grandpa joined Dad out back. Together they scraped, picked and hoed the snow ice from the water trough, spigots and well. The icicles dropped their hot sparks, making indentions in the snow bank, and cold water ran down the gutters and tile.

I got my boots on and joined in the chores. My younger brothers and one sister waited inside, content to stare at the mystery of the Nativity scene and the foil icicles draped down the Christmas tree.

After I finished my chores, the children's cries poked at my eardrums as I entered the house and quickly closed the door with only a little winter cold let inside. My outside chores were done, but the work had only started. A small but constant stream of melting ice water dripped from the ceiling above the tree and flowed down the angel-top ornament, over the glass globes and onto the green plaid tree skirt. A puddle was forming in front of the tree on the fireplace hearth.

It's over, I thought sadly. It's all over before Santa Claus arrives! It's over before I get that new baseball mitt and bat. It's over before I taste the first candy cane. It's over.

I ran back outside as fast as I could to get help.

"Grandpa! Grandpa!" I yelled, my tears not freezing, and trying to hold onto my 10th year of maturity.

Grandpa was wise and ingenious, molded into a tall, slightly leathery man. He calmed me with a pat on the back and a gentle finger swipe under my eye. Together we walked back to the house and surveyed the dripping water above the tree.

Come to find out, the gutter had built an ice dam and the melt had backed up under the roof flashing next to the chimney. Water ran down Santa's flue and leaked through the ceiling above our Christmas tree. It was wet, and surely Santa would not leave presents for children in such a mess of a celebration. I started to cry again, quietly. It was my responsibility as the eldest child to cry quietly.

"Get me the fireplace poker!" Grandpa said.

I dragged the metal poker out of the corner and handed

it to Grandpa. He proceeded to lay it on top of the fired wood stove. The gray-black finish crumpled off with the heat, and a hint of redness bled out of the iron.

"Get me my thick leather gloves," he said, and I did.

Father had already set the ladder next to the downspout at the troubled corner of the house. Grandpa climbed up the ladder with the poker in his hand and slowly stuffed it down the vertical ice jam. After two more poker heatings plus two poker pushes, the water stopped dripping indoors. The ice dam melted, the water flowed down the gutter through the downspout and the silver lining of Christmas appeared again.

The other children and I clapped our hands and sang "Jingle Bells." Papa joined in with "Here Comes Santa Claus," and we closed our chorus with "Away in the Manger."

The puddle got mopped up and the wrapping dried. Sleep came easily that night to all in our home.

(Brien Krieger is a member of St. Susanna Parish in Plainfield.) †

Angelita let her light shine by caring for her sick mother

By Carmen A. Henson

Special to The Criterion

Youth, with its brimming energy, can accomplish a lot of things. So it was that, during my years in high school, it was possible for me to be involved in a variety of activities.

At the top of my list was the catechetical instruction that entailed going out to selected public elementary schools to spread the Word of the Lord to little children who have not heard of it and to inspire others who have been baptized to increase their faith.

The school motto at my alma mater, St. Bridget College in the Philippines, is "Luceat Lux Vestra" or "Let Your Light Shine." So, armed with the good will to share my faith with others and with the enthusiasm of youth, I signed up to take an hour during the day to perform this mission.

The eagerness of those young children to know about God and the goodness that he is made me look forward to each day's session. Added to this was the welcoming attitude with which I was received as the messenger of the Good News.

These children came from different backgrounds and some came from poor families. One child especially caught my attention. Her name was Angelita, and she liked helping me carry my catechetical materials back to the bus when the classes were over.

I would give her some cookies or candy to show my appreciation. She was always grateful, but I noticed that she never ate them. Finally, since it was getting close to Christmas, I brought her a little basket of fruits and nuts. She did not eat them either. Curious to know if she did not



Vatican tree

The Vatican Christmas tree is lit by moonlight in St. Peter's Square on Dec. 15. The tree was donated from a mountainous area in northern Italy where Pope John Paul II skied 20 years ago.

like the treats, I asked her why she did not eat them.

She told me that she saved them to take home to her mother, who was sick. She said her mother had tuberculosis and had been bedridden for a long time.

Her father died of heart disease when she was 5 years old, and her mother had been taking odd jobs to support the two of them. After her mother became sick and could not work, a married aunt began helping them out financially as much as she could, which barely made ends meet since she herself had a big family.

Ever since her mother became bedridden, Angelita took over the household chores, rushing home after school to prepare supper and take care of her mother before doing her homework.

I felt so humbled but, at the same time, so blessed! Here I was thinking I was so great teaching this little girl about the Lord and yet she has shown herself to be a hero and so unselfish, taking on a giant task at so young an age and not even thinking about it.

But by the same token, I thanked God that I had the privilege of seeing a manifestation of his goodness through the example of little Angelita.

The following day, I referred—through a friend who was a social worker—the case of little Angelita and her mother to the welfare office. They were later included in the register of indigent families who regularly received aid from the government in the form of basic foodstuffs and clothing.

I went on with my life, progressing through college and, later on, the business world. But I still remember little Angelita who, in my eyes, was really the little angel her name meant.

(Carmen A. Henson is a member of St. Lawrence Parish in Indianapolis.) †

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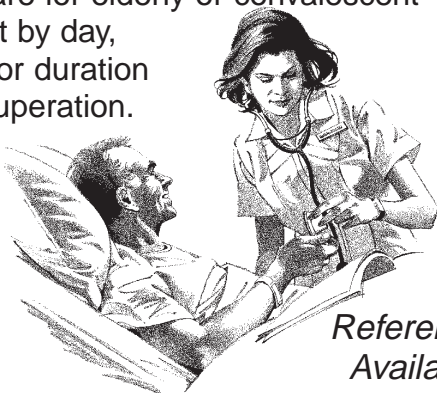
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Prelude to Christmas was always exciting time for children in the 1920s

By Anna Margaret O'Sullivan

Special to The Criterion

It may be that time intensifies memories, or perhaps it merely preserves them. About that I can't be sure, but I vividly remember the interval between Thanksgiving and Christmas, back in the 1920s, as taut, exciting and crackling with suspense.

Everyone had secrets. Gifts were being readied, and no one was allowed to spy. An unfinished gift was hastily whisked under an apron or cushion if the wrong person blundered into the room at the wrong time. The intruder assumed a blank expression, of course, and pretended to have observed nothing unusual.

We children—the three of us—believed implicitly in the surveillance of Santa Claus' birds. We knew they were out there watching us with eagle eyes, listening and ready to fly to the North Pole to report any child's misbehavior to Santa.

If I spoke sharply to my little brother and grabbed back a toy of mine that he had appropriated, I always looked apprehensively out the window to see if any birds were within earshot. To make up for my selfishness, I patted my brother's curly head and gave the toy back to him.

It was not part of the myth that good deeds, if any, were reported on our behalf, only the naughty ones, but making amends was worth a try. We really didn't quarrel much because it was more fun to have a good time playing together, but I'm sure my mother and grandmother noticed our suddenly saintly behavior in the weeks before Christmas.

The house was full of delicious smells, and samples of fudge and vinegar taffy appeared on the dining room table.

In one of our blissful holiday customs, Mother established herself in front of the fireplace with a bag of nuts—pecans, hazelnuts, black or English walnuts, hickory nuts, etc.—a hammer and a flat iron upside down in her lap. Everybody in turn received a cracked nut, but had to winkle out the kernels by himself or herself with nut picks and fingernails. We liked English walnuts, which were the easiest to eat, but my favorite was

hickory nuts, which were the hardest of all to get the nutmeats out of the shells.

As Christmas drew nearer, when twilight fell, carolers from one of the village churches strolled through the gently falling snow to remind their listeners of the silent and holy night, of the holy family that had taken refuge in a stable because the inn had no more available room, and of the manger in which slept the Light of the world—sought out by the Three Wise Men bearing symbolic gifts.

Christmas Eve was a time of almost unbearable suspense. The minutes passed like hours, dragging slowly along into the night. Long before daybreak, we pelted down the stairs in the icy morning—our house had no furnace—oblivious to the cold, seeking the stockings that we had hung up for Santa Claus the night before.

Fascinating bulges in each stocking revealed an orange—less commonly available then than now—as well as a satiny red apple, handfuls of candy and peanuts in the shell, small toys and that symbol of Christmas, a tantalizing red and white striped candy cane curving out of the top of each stocking.

That matchless interlude between Thanksgiving and Christmas is one of the memories I relive every year during the holidays. I hope children these days are building memories equal to those of the fabled, nostalgic Olden Days.

(Anna Margaret O'Sullivan is a member of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Franklin.) †

St. Vincent de Paul volunteers find true meaning of Christmas

By Margaret Polak

Special to The Criterion

Of the 73 Christmases I have lived through, none has been as memorable as the first Christmas that my husband, Jim, and I volunteered for the St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Indianapolis.

Having received a call about a family of 13 children who had very little, we decided to spend Christmas Eve shopping for them so that they, too, would have Christmas presents.

Starting with a tree then going from the youngest child to the oldest—it took the great part of the afternoon—we



Bethlehem

A woman lights a candle at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity on Dec. 15. The traditional Christmas tree and decorations that adorn the city's Nativity Square will not be erected until shortly before the holiday season out of respect for the 40-day period of mourning following the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

shopped for each of the children and bought gifts for the parents then returned home, gift-wrapped the presents and delivered them.

Never expecting to hear from them, but just grateful that we could share what God had given to us, we gave thanks on Christmas morning for that family, who helped us to know even more the true meaning of Christmas.

As we were having our Christmas dinner, the telephone rang. It was the mother of the 13 children calling to express her gratitude and tell us there would have been no Christmas gifts without our shopping trip. The mother was crying and so were we, and when we told our five children about her call there wasn't a dry eye among them.

God had truly blessed us in being able to share with the less fortunate.

There were many other St. Vincent de Paul holiday visits, but none were so memorable as that special Christmas, which gave real meaning to the word "Christmas." It also started our 25-year ministry as volunteers for the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

(Margaret Polak is a member of St. Luke Parish in Indianapolis.) †

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Father's gift made lasting Christmas heirloom for girl

By Anita Thompson
Special to The Criterion

Firm and confident were the carpenter's hands as he carefully helped us fashion the wooden stable in which to lay the Christ child.

Following the vision in his head, the artist-become-woodworker sketched and cut and then demonstrated how to assemble the wooden pieces needed to complete the design.

Father, son and daughter worked side by side at Dad's workbench, sharing conversation and anticipation. By the time darkness fell, the sawing, carving, nailing and staining had become a sturdy home for the ceramic Holy Family.

The year was 1955. My brother was in the fourth grade, I was in the third grade, and we were having a crèche-making contest in our classroom. Back then, there were two grades to a classroom in our Catholic school.

Dad was actually helping us construct two identical stables, one for each of us. Surprisingly, neither of us won the contest, but we gained something much more valuable than a blue ribbon.

My dad's patient love in taking on such a project, and the creativity and camaraderie we experienced in that cold wintry garage returns as a precious memory for me each December.

As I place the stable under my Christmas tree each year, I recall my now 84-year-old father as a young, energetic, loving and gifted man, who guided me in creating a cherished Christmas heirloom.

(Anita Thompson is a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis.) †

Children surprise their mother with a trip to Alaska in 1995

By Pamela Proctor
Special to The Criterion

One of the sweetest memories that stirred up in my mind is the Christmas of 1995. My siblings and I were able to surprise our mother, Jeannine Domesick, with the dream trip of her life.

Dad and Mom made many sacrifices to make sure their five charges were fed and clothed and their needs were met. Mom was a stay-at-home mother until the youngest child was in school. After that, she got a job in the school kitchen so she would always be home when we were out of school.

To this day, I am grateful for her generosity of always being there for us. I always felt loved, wanted and accepted. She believed in me and always tried to support me in my endeavors and decisions. She raised us to love God and made sure we went to church. She also encouraged us to be involved in activities that would round us out, whether it was church or school related.

Our father had purchased some property on a small lake in 1972 and built their dream house for our family but, unfortunately, he died shortly after we moved there.

On one hot summer day in July, some family members and I were paddle-boating on Mom's lake. We talked about our dreams and wishes for ourselves and for Mom, and somehow traveling came up in our conversation.

Except for a trip to Hawaii that Dad had won through his work, Mom and Dad's vacations were limited to taking the family on day trips to parks, swimming holes, on

picnics and for rides in the country.

After Dad died, we knew that if Mom was to go anywhere outside the Midwest, it would have to be others helping that become a reality. We decided on that day at the lake that we would bring joy to her sweet heart by giving her a dream trip to Alaska.

We thought it would be fun if her best friend, Aurelia Wheeler, was able to go with her, so we made contact with her children to see if they would be willing to surprise their mother with the same trip. Needless to say, they were thrilled with the idea. All summer and into the fall, we planned and worked hard on the wonderful surprise that we had for their Christmas presents.

On Christmas Day, we could hardly contain ourselves and keep the little kids quiet about it! We gave her small gifts like a camera, new clothes for her trip and a stuffed Alaskan Husky. She had no clue what we were up to until she opened a scrapbook that revealed what was being given to her. Truly it was a Kodak moment seeing her in absolute glee over her upcoming trip to Alaska with her dear friend. We had a bottle of wine to celebrate with our ecstatic mama!

Mom is 75 now and will probably never get another trip like that again. I will always be grateful for being able to repay in a very small way what she has given us.

She has given us the greatest gifts of faith in and love for God, family and friendships that God sends us in our lives. The scrapbook of Alaska is a gentle reminder of the goodness of God in a woman like my mom.

(Pamela Proctor is a member of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood.) †

Family celebrates birth of Jesus as the greatest Christmas gift

By Bridget Schlebecker
Special to The Criterion

As the first week of Advent approaches, "it" begins. Boxes are carried up from the basement, in from the garage and down from the closets. The Advent wreath takes its place in the center of the dinner table.

The garland and lights find their familiar nesting. The simple evergreen is transformed into a spectacle of lights and glittering ornaments.

And lastly, with great care and deliberation, the

Nativity scene is assembled piece by piece with each figure placed facing the empty manger. There is no sign of the infant Jesus. We await with great anticipation his coming, and so the manger remains empty.

The shopping frenzy begins. Soon ribbons and wrappings begin to occupy room after room, but the manger remains empty.

Gifts for Grandma, Mom, Dad and our cousins lie in wait of bows and adornment, but the manger remains empty.

Delicious aromas fill the house as cookies are decorated and enjoyed, but the manger remains empty.

Stockings are hung, and we wait for him to arrive as the manger remains empty.

Then, on Christmas Eve, with great anticipation and excitement, a very special cake is baked. The little ones all participate in the decorating. The giggles resound throughout the kitchen.

Soon after, the mess is cleaned up. The children are tucked into bed and reluctantly fall asleep until Christmas morning.

Christmas! As the laughter and excitement echo through the house, loving tokens are exchanged and gifts are opened in delight.

With each present comes the question, "Did you get it?"

The response is "No" until finally someone reaches into the pile of presents for a large box. It is beautifully wrapped.

One of the children asks, "Do you think it's in here? Oh! It is!" and the excitement builds.

The unwrapped present reminds us of the greatest of all gifts. It is the missing piece to the Nativity scene—the infant Jesus.

Mom quietly goes into the kitchen and brings out the special cake made the night before. It holds a single white candle, and the icing is decorated with the words "Happy birthday, Jesus!"

We all gather around the Nativity scene as the infant Jesus is placed in the manger. Then, with robust voices, adults and children break into the greatest of all Christmas carols.

"Happy birthday to you," we all sing together. "Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, dear Jesus, happy birthday to you."

(Bridget Schlebecker is a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Indianapolis.) †

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The spirit of Christmas is the spirit of love

By Lisa Marie Taylor
Special to The Criterion

I believe in Santa Claus. I met him face to face through the spirit of a young child and the hope of a young mother.

In early January of 1991, I was sitting behind the desk in my second-grade classroom at St. Mary School in Rushville when Katie ran into the room with an excited voice.

"Mrs. Taylor! Mrs. Taylor! Santa visited me and look, my dad got a picture," she said as she reached out to give me the Polaroid photo she held tightly in her hand.

There it was. I couldn't believe it. Santa's red sleeve was caught in their front door.

"And look! He gave me this bell and a note, just like the story you read to us," she said as she rang the bell that hung from a ribbon around her neck.

As she turned to leave, tears filled my eyes at the pure belief and excitement of a child. No other gift was more important that year.

About a month earlier, I met with each parent during parent-teacher conferences at the school. I explained to each of them that I would be reading a book called *The Polar Express* to the class.

I told them Santa had given me a small package to place under each child's tree—a bell on a ribbon and a note.

I explained that I wanted the children to understand the true spirit of Christmas and that love lives in each one of us as we believe. I asked them to place the package under their tree.

With tears in her eyes, one mother of five children expressed her belief in the true spirit of Christmas.

"I believe in Santa!" she exclaimed. She reached for a tissue as she explained that there were many years when she wondered how she would be able to afford to give Christmas presents to her five children. And yet somehow, some way, they had Christmas every year.

"Santa lives in the spirit of Love," I told her.

Today I am a stay-at-home mother of four children. Every year, my husband and I wonder how we are going to give our kids a nice Christmas without the use of credit cards.

Given no other choice, in May of this year we ripped up the credit cards. This year would be a credit-free

Christmas. But as each month approached and no gifts were bought, I wondered again how my husband and I would be able to do it.

We prayed. And we turned it over to God.

An overtime check answered our prayer. Christmas will be small, but each gift was bought with care. Each gift was bought with a special thought for each child. It will be a wonderful Christmas with the true spirit alive as we share what we have with those we love.

The spirit of Christmas is alive in each of us as we share love with one another.

And through this belief, I have come to know the Holy One, the child Jesus born in a stable.

I saw him in the kindness of a friend who gave from the heart this year.

I was inspired by him while I watched my husband care for our family.

I heard him in the messages of Father Jim Farrell and Father John McCaslin, our priests at St. Barnabas Parish.

I was encouraged by him as my parents cared for my children in various ways.

I saw him in the joy of my children as they prayed with precious hearts of innocence.

I saw him in the gift of a stranger, who gave to our family with love.

I heard him in the quietness of my nightly prayers.

I met him in the day-to-day living.

I believe that many years ago a Son was born so that we can know the incredible love of a Father for his children—the true spirit of Christmas.

"God is love, and anyone who lives in love is living with God and God is living in him. And as we live with Christ, our love grows more perfect and complete" (1 Jn 4:16b-17).

(Lisa Marie Taylor is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis.) †

World War II soldiers had to leave behind many of their Christmas presents

By Mary C. Vinci
Special to The Criterion

One of my most memorable Christmas memories was during World War II.



Christmas angels

Decorative angels flank the Rockefeller Center's Christmas tree, a 71-foot Norway spruce set aglow with more than 30,000 lights in New York on Nov. 30.

My two brothers were called to active duty during the war. One brother was sent to Europe and the other brother was sent to the Hawaiian area.

At the beginning of the Christmas season, I sent them each a package containing many items made especially for servicemen and women.

I was so happy to receive a special thank you letter from my brother stationed in Europe.

He was fighting in the Battle of the Bulge during the Christmas holiday.

In his letter, he indicated that the service members were informed that their company had to retreat, and they were told by their commander that they could only take along one Christmas package. Other presents from family members and friends would need to be left behind.

I remember so well that the present my brother chose to keep with him was the one from me because the package was so compact and held a variety of items.

This was a very joyous Christmas for me, and a memory that I have cherished all my life.

(Mary C. Vinci is a member of Holy Name Parish in Beech Grove.) †

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SIMPLY THE BETTER CHOICE.

Christmas mystery of Incarnation remains unfathomable

By Dan Luby

We instantly recognize all the icons of the Christmas season, and they are comforting to us.

But there also is a subtle risk in this. Knowing precisely what everything means at this time of the Incarnation—anticipating exactly what to expect—can invite an imperceptible but powerful shift of our attitude from comfort to complacency.

Are we open to being surprised by Jesus, as his first followers were?

As Christmas approaches, plaster Nativity characters emerge from tissue-paper cocoons and resume their customary places around the manger. Familiar Christmas carols played on heirloom records create a scratchy, nostalgic soundtrack for these busy days. And in treasured stories read aloud, heard on the radio or seen in TV specials, the season's comforting narratives resound in our ears.

Christmas is so familiar! We respond to the images, we remember the feelings and we know the story by heart.

But the Jesus whose birth we celebrate at Christmas was neither familiar nor predictable to the people who were part of the original Nativity scene.

To the innkeeper in Bethlehem who could offer only a place among the animals in the stable, Jesus must have seemed an ordinary, if pitiable, baby—

Birth of Jesus is God's gift to us

By Brian M. Kane

The celebration of Christmas probably developed a few centuries after the founding of the Catholic Church. It replaced older pagan festivals with a message that God came into the world in a very particular place and time.

The Nativity holds the promise of our future life with God. The birth of Jesus, fully human and fully divine, in an out-of-the-way town in humble surroundings to a young poor Jewish woman is significant because of its particularity.

The birthday of Jesus is the beginning of a journey that starts at the crèche and ends in the cross and the Resurrection of Easter. And the Incarnation is a specific gift for each of us—a gift fulfilled in the complete sacrifice of God for each of us.

(Brian M. Kane is associate professor of theology at DeSales University in Center Valley, Pa.) †

another luckless child of poor and desperate parents.

But to the shepherds, to Joseph, even to Mary, the baby in the straw bed was an awe-inspiring mystery, evoking not only feelings of affection and gratitude, but of reverent fear as well.

And if the Jesus of Bethlehem was a mystery to those around him, so was the Jesus of Nazareth and of Cana and of Jerusalem. Jesus was to consistently confound the predictable expectations of all.

The public sometimes viewed Jesus as a hero and sometimes as a fool. His enemies regularly misunderstood his origins and the meaning of his words or deeds. He seemed to them to speak in riddles, urging forgiveness of enemies and describing mourning or persecution as sources of blessing.

Jesus gave time and energy and compassion to those people that society deemed unworthy: foreigners, prostitutes, tax collectors, the ritually unclean and the religiously lax.

Even Jesus' family and closest companions found themselves mystified by him, as their narrow preconceptions proved too cramped for the reality of his identity and mission.

Jesus' kinsman, John the Baptizer, went into the desert preparing for the glorious advent of the Lion of Judah. Instead, when the "one who is to come" finally arrived, he turned out to be the humble Lamb of God.

When Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" his friend, Peter, gave the right answer: "You are the Messiah."

But Peter's conviction that Jesus would enter into glory painlessly, without risk to himself or his followers, earned him a stinging correction from the Lord.

Saul of Tarsus thought he knew who Jesus was: a shameless heretic deserving of the public execution he received. What Saul discovered on the Damascus road was that Jesus was not his enemy, but his Lord.

On this side of Easter, the surprises Jesus consistently presented to the people of first-century Palestine seem understandable enough. With the advantage of post-Resurrection insight, we are not surprised in the same ways today.

Still, the Christmas mystery of the Incarnation, of God taking on human flesh and bone, sinew and emotion, remains unfathomable.

Christmas is a time to look in a fresh way at the mystery of who Jesus is—and who he is not—and what his becoming one of us means to the world.

If our expectations are too precise, our



Christmas is a time to look in a fresh way at the mystery of who Jesus is and also who he is not.

vision too predictable, we can miss him as easily as his earliest listeners.

When we conclude that our own uncertainties of faith or our failure to love put us beyond Jesus' forgiveness, we miss him.

When we see among us people we think are outside the reach of God's care, we are missing the truth of his Incarnation as surely as his first-century detractors.

When our generosity remains constricted and our imitation of Christ extends only to those we know and of whom we approve, not only do we miss him, but we limit the possibility of others feeling God's love in our imitation of him.

When we look for Jesus only in extraordinary circumstances or in explicitly

Church-related settings—on retreat or at Mass or in Scripture—we obscure our ability to recognize him in the ordinary and the secular, and we miss him.

Bethlehem is the reminder that no setting is so lowly, no situation so routine that Christ cannot use it to make himself known to us.

Christ made flesh: Christmas is the time to rediscover him in the warp and woof of ordinary human existence, which is forever transformed by God's unique, unrepeatable act of generosity and communion in the Incarnation.

(Dan Luby is director of the Division of Christian Formation for the Diocese of Fort Worth, Texas.) †

Discussion Point

Pray for peace in the world

This Week's Question

In your own words, what is the message of Christmas for these unique times?

"Peace. Christ brought peace, and we need peace."
(Margaret Dunnam, Chickasaw, Ala.)

"To carry the unconditional love of Jesus in our hearts throughout the year so that we can share it with the people we come into contact with!" (Nancy Turner, Saint Maries, Idaho)

"The message of Christmas in these troubled times is one of hope—that with the birth of Christ we have a

renewal of our hope and desire for peace. That was the message of the angels." (Paul Cerio, Fort Calhoun, Neb.)

"Peace in the world." (Jo Wojda, Mapleton, Ill.)

Lend Us Your Voice

An upcoming edition asks: If someone asked who God is for you, how would you respond?

To respond for possible publication, write to *Faith Alive!* at 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100. †



CNS photo by Bill Witman

From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink

God 'emptied himself' to become a human

Only one baby born into this world was born to die. Sure, it's true that all of us were created to know, love and serve God in this world in order to be happy with him in eternity after our death, but Jesus' purpose in life was to die. That was how his Father decided to redeem humanity.



Jesus was God who became man. He was not a man who became a god. His earthly existence began in Nazareth when he was conceived in his mother's womb, and we celebrate his birth in Bethlehem on Christmas, but he existed from all eternity. As he himself said, "Before Abraham came to be, I am" (Jn 8:58).

We marvel at how much God loves us, so much that, as St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians says, "he emptied himself" and "humbled himself" to become a human. Can we imagine a pet lover becoming an animal, emptying himself or herself of human powers and accepting the limitations of an animal, in order

somehow to gain more respect for animals? Yet that would be nothing compared to what God did when he became a human.

God, who created the universe and all in it, appears on earth as a creature. He who is all-powerful accepts our human frailty in every way except sin. He who is eternal lives in a specific time period. He whom even the heavens cannot contain arrives in a small town in

Judea and grows up in an even smaller village in Galilee. He who cannot die subjects himself to death in his human nature, "becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8).

When God became man, he was given the name "Jesus" because, as the angel told Joseph, "he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). Luke's Gospel says that the angel who appeared to the shepherds told them that a "savior" had been born. As savior, Luke sees Jesus as the one who rescues humanity from the condition of alienation from God. John the

'The only one who can save civilization is the savior who saves us from our sins.'

Baptist salutes Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29).

At the end of his 10-volume *A Study of History*, English historian Arnold Toynbee wrote about three types of savior: one who

believes in automatic progress; the warrior who is unable to sheathe his sword after he has conquered; and one who tries to save the world with philosophical sayings. He rejects all three. The

only one who can save civilization, he says, is the savior who saves us from our sins.

About Jesus, Toynbee wrote: "As we stand and gaze with our eyes fixed on the farther shore, a single figure arises from the flood and straightway fills the whole horizon. There is the Savior."

That is Jesus, whose human birth we celebrate this Christmas. He is the God-man who emptied himself of his divinity in order to accept our human nature so he could be the sacrificial lamb that takes away our sins. †

Cornucopia/Cynthia Dewes

Holy infant, so tender and mild

Remember new babies? Remember the snuffly little sounds they make, how sweet they smell and how soft their skin feels to a careful touch? Remember how their fists curl around our fingers and how their eyes gaze off into the distance as if to some otherworldly place?



Most of all of us have experienced the coming of a baby into the family. If it wasn't our very own or a new grandchild, it was our friends' baby, or a neighbor's, or maybe a new baby brother or cousin.

We remember the awe surrounding the event, even before the invention of reproductive wonders that are possible and commonplace nowadays. Lack of money, poor health, post-partum depression or whatever bad juju might be on hand at that moment in our lives, nothing seemed impossible to overcome when we looked at the new little one.

The very helplessness of the baby seemed to energize and empower us. We were needed to take care of that little critter, and by golly we'd do it! As has often

been said before, there's a good reason Christ came to us as an infant because a helpless baby demands attention. Loving attention.

Babies need total physical, emotional and spiritual support from the day they're born. In return, simple biology provides us with natural maternal and paternal feelings, and the stamina to persevere no matter how tired we become. Babies teach us unselfishness and empathy.

When a new baby arrives, the rhythms of a household slow down to a basic crawl. Time is divided into eating, sleeping and cleaning sessions, with long periods in between just sitting around holding baby, cooing at baby, silently admiring baby. It's big-time downtime, and world events, popular culture or almost anything else seem unimportant. So, while baby thrives, we're slyly given time to heal from whatever wounds life may have inflicted upon us.

We also tend to regard each other with new eyes when a baby comes on the scene. All of a sudden we see our spouse as a mom or a dad, our parents as grandparents, our children as siblings to the new sprout. The dynamics of family, friendships, neighborhoods change in subtle and not-so-subtle ways with the advent

of a new member. Relationships take on depth and complexity.

Responsibilities change according to our other duties besides tending the new baby. Perhaps we need to spend more time with an older child who's in a love/hate relationship with the interloper. Maybe we have to let housework go, short of being cited by the health department. And sometimes we must allow others to step in and help us, including a mother-in-law we would rather impress with our efficiency.

This is a time when priorities become super-important. Naturally, baby's needs must be met first, and everything else gets attention as needed. For instance, a new daddy and a new mommy need each other's attention almost as much as their babies do. And both need to be in prayerful touch with God, who sent this sweet gift.

Yes, God was right about sending our Messiah as a baby. Because, most of all, it's from loving our own babies that we learn how much God loves us. That is, unsparingly, without reservation, to death and beyond.

(Cynthia Dewes, a member of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.) †

Faithful Lines/Shirley Vogler Meister

Looking beneath the surface of Christmas songs

Did you know that the beloved Christmas hymn "O Holy Night" was "requested by a priest, written by a poet who would later split from the Church, given soaring music by a Jewish composer and brought to Americans to serve as much as a tool to spotlight the sinful nature of slavery as to tell the story of the birth of a savior?"



The quotation is from Ace Collins, an award-winning author who knows this holiday season's songs so well that he shares them in *Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas*, published three years ago and given to me by my daughter, Diane. I enjoyed it so much that I presented my copy to my sister, believing I could buy another book for myself. I couldn't locate it, but the following year Diane came through for me again, presenting it once again during our family's

annual St. Nicholas celebration. (The Feast of St. Nicholas is Dec. 6.)

Re-reading the book, I'm still amazed at the extensive research of Ace Collins' work—research that prompts me to ask readers:

Did you know that other Jewish writers and composers also helped produce Christmas songs other than "O Holy Night"?

Did you know that the lyrics of the simple and moving "Mary, Did You Know?" were written from the perspective of a reporter by a man who was a problematic child, but whose parents believed in and encouraged him?

Did you know that a husband-wife team with the first names of "Gloria" and "Noel" wrote "Do You Hear What I Hear?"—or that "The First Noel" was originally a folk tune dating back to 1833—or that "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" is probably the oldest Christmas carol, dating back to the ninth century?

Did you know that the "Twelve Days of

Christmas" was written as a teaching tool for Catholics who once went underground in England because of their faith, as did the Christians facing martyrdom in early Rome?

Did you know that a verse long ago discarded from "It Came Upon a Midnight Clear" is especially significant because of the current state of world affairs?—"and man, at war with men, hears not/the love song which they bring/O hush the noise, ye men of strife/and hear the angels sing."

The noise can be hushed with "O Holy Night" and "Away in a Manger" and "Silent Night" and "Do You Hear What I Hear?" and "I Wonder As I Wander."

Also, let us listen with our hearts to these words in "O Little Town of Bethlehem": "hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell—O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel."

(Shirley Vogler Meister, a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, is a regular columnist for The Criterion.) †

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

Children are the supreme gift of marriage

A few months ago, my wife and I started practicing a tradition in our home that I



know other families and religious orders use. I (and others) call it "blessing out."

Just before I leave for work in the morning, I kneel on one knee, my wife places a hand on my head and she prays that God may bless me on my

way and bring me back home in safety.

Well, a few weeks ago, after noticing that my son Michael's powers of observation and vocabulary have been growing rapidly, I asked him instead of my wife to pray the blessing.

Despite my intuition, I was joyously surprised when after I knelt down on one knee before him, he put a hand on my shoulder and said, "Keep safe, come home, Father, Son, Holy Spirit."

Can Michael grasp in any fundamental way the meaning of such a prayer? Certainly not in a way that adults can. But that does not mean that there wasn't a great amount of significance to what he did that morning and has continued to do since then.

For me and my wife, Michael's little blessing is a touching sign of the great truth, founded in Sacred Scripture and proclaimed at the Second Vatican Council in the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," that children "are the supreme gift of marriage" (#50).

These toddler steps that Michael is taking in his life of faith are a great blessing to us because they help us see how God not only stooped to cooperate with us in Michael's very creation but continues to do so as we help, by his grace, to bring him closer to his Son.

I witnessed this in another way recently when Michael was playing with a little Nativity set that we had given him. At one point, he couldn't find baby Jesus and so was walking around the living room crying out, "Baby Jesus, where are you?"

He has also taken a wise man and pretended that he was flying in an airplane. Funny, I thought they came by camels. I wonder if modern wise men in their jets would chart their course by GPS instead of a star?

Now just over 2-and-a-half, Michael is really starting to be able to celebrate Christmas with us. This has helped us see that the feast of Christ's birth is not just an occasion to take joy in that event of 2,000 years ago, it is also a time for us to see the powerful truth embodied in the birth of every child.

For when Christ was born so long ago, he not only revealed God to man, but also man to himself. In gazing upon him and, by extension, the Holy Family, we begin to see what it truly means to be human.

To be human is to take joy in the creation of life and its coming to birth. It is also, admittedly, a struggle that we can only endure with the grace God provides. Surely Mary and Joseph experienced this soon after Jesus' birth when a tyrannical king forced them to flee as refugees.

My wife and I experience no trials as horrific as those born by the Holy Family. And although raising Michael is still quite trying at moments that we experience most every day, I am convinced through the touching yet revealing moments described above that what the Church teaches is true.

Children are indeed the supreme gift of marriage. This is a message of the feast of Christmas that I believe is sadly too often overlooked amid the hustle and bustle of buying, giving, receiving and returning so many gifts.

The greatest gift, of course, came to us in the birth of a little child 2,000 years ago in a land far away. It continues to echo in our world today in the birth of every child. †

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph/

Msgr. Owen F. Campion

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, Dec. 26, 2004

- Sirach 3:2-7, 12-14
- Colossians 3:12-21
- Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

The Book of Sirach is part of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament.



As are many other books in this body of writings, it is highly practical.

When these books were written, albeit at different times and in different places, Jewish parents and elders needed to pass along to their contem-

poraries and to future generations a knowledge of the Revelation given to the Chosen People by God.

Very often, the culture around them was hostile. Of course, they had to confront the irreligious leanings of human nature.

In this reading, the book looks very carefully at the basic unit of society and of civilization, namely the family.

It calls for honor to be paid to parents. Here, the egalitarian sense of the ancient Jewish writings is clear. While the father is acknowledged as head of the household, the mother is entitled to equal respect and veneration. She is in no sense merely a servant or secondary figure.

Especially, Sirach calls upon children to care for their parents when their parents are old.

The second reading for this feast is from the Epistle to the Colossians.

The first part of the reading is addressed to all disciples. It admonishes followers of Christ to love one another. More than a charming platitude, this advice asks the faithful to forgive one another and to be concerned about one another.

In the next part of the reading, Paul urges wives to obey their husbands. It is obviously a thought much influenced by the culture of the time. However, he

doesn't end his admonition with these words. He says that husbands should love their wives.

This advice may seem to be little better than a truism. At the time of Paul, spouses rarely wed for love. Parents offered their daughters to the most promising suitors. In a sense, it was almost as if the father of the bride sold his own daughter to the highest bidder.

Once married, wives often merely were toys or means to the end of parenthood or domestic tidiness for the husband.

The fact that Paul urged husbands to love their wives was revolutionary.

St. Matthew's Gospel supplies the last reading.

Of the four Gospels, only Matthew and Luke mention details of the Lord's birth and early years on earth. This reading is the familiar story of the flight into Egypt.

Shrines in modern Egypt declare themselves to be the sites of the Holy Family's movement away from the threat of the king's order in Judea, or of their respite in Egypt. In fact, by using "Egypt," this Gospel is not as geographically precise as some might prefer.

What is certain is that the Holy Family fled from Palestine to safeguard Jesus. They fled into the unknown, into pagan territory, indicated by the term "Egypt."

Finally, this text identifies Jesus of Nazareth, whom many heard and saw, as one and the same as the child born of Mary and rescued by divine intervention from the plots of an evil king.

Reflection

Still in the warmth and happiness of Christmas, we today follow the Church into reflecting upon the Holy Family, and by extension upon family life itself.

These readings have strong, practical lessons. Families must bond themselves in love. Parents must love children. Children must love parents. Spouses must love each other.

Most importantly, no family can

Daily Readings**Monday, Dec. 27**

John, Apostle and Evangelist
1 John 1:1-4
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12
John 20:1a, 2-8

Tuesday, Dec. 28

The Holy Innocents, martyrs
1 John 1:5-2:2
Psalm 124:2-5, 7b-8
Matthew 2:13-18

Wednesday, Dec. 29

1 John 2:3-11
Psalm 96:1-3, 5-6
Luke 2:22-35

Thursday, Dec. 30

1 John 2:12-17
Psalm 96:7-10
Luke 2:36-40

Friday, Dec. 31

1 John 2:18-21
Psalm 96:1-2, 11-13
John 1:1-18

Saturday, Jan. 1

The Blessed Virgin Mary,
Mother of God
Numbers 6:22-27
Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8
Galatians 4:4-7
Luke 2:16-21

Sunday, Jan. 2

The Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

Monday, Jan. 3

The Most Holy Name of Jesus
1 John 3:22-4:6
Psalm 2:7-8, 10-12a
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday, Jan. 4

Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious
1 John 4:7-10
Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8
Mark 6:34-44

continued on page 21

survive simply by loving. Threats await all families, not only threats from evil rulers. Families need God's protection.

The Lord's mission is clearly stated in

Matthew's Gospel. Every Christian has a mission. The role of the family is to support each member's mission, as Mary and Joseph supported the mission of Jesus. †

Question Corner/Fr. John Dietzen**Belief in fallen angels is rooted in Scripture**

My question arises not only from my own curiosity, but also from my children's questions. I realize that no one can say whether or not anyone is in hell since we have no window into God's mercy. But I don't understand this "irrevocable choice" of the angels, which the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*



speaks of (#393).

What made it irrevocable? Why was there no turning back? (Illinois)

It is Catholic teaching, going back centuries, that some angels sinned against their Creator in such a grave way that they lost their presence with God forever.

This belief is rooted, most of all, in numerous Scriptural passages, in both the Old and New Testament, such as Satan falling from heaven (Lk 10:18), being driven from heaven (Rv 12), and "the devil and his angels" occupying a place apart from God, where those who reject our Lord's command of love and service to neighbor are destined to go (Mt 25:41).

Apart from this, and that we humans enjoy the guardianship of some angels, we know little or nothing about details of the angels' nature and fate. Our information comes almost entirely from philosophical reasoning about what pure spirits must be like, and from the often obscure references mentioned in the Scriptures.

Endless theological guesses have tried to identify what their sin may have been, but there is general agreement that somehow it involved a grievous offense of pride against God.

If angels, as Christians believe, have no body or bodily functions and passions like ours, they are simply incapable of many of the immoral actions that we

humans are prone to in life.

This begins to address your question about how angelic sin could be irrevocable. One of the consequences of the angels being pure spirits would be that their intelligence and will functions quite differently from ours. They would not seem subject to all the limitations and weaknesses of mind that afflict human beings, especially considering the consequences of "original sin."

Whatever our original fault may have been exactly (the catechism calls it "sin" only in an analogical sense) or precisely how it came about, the natural limits that our human nature places on us are worsened by the fact that this nature is somehow wounded. We are inclined to stumble, fall, misjudge and see so many circumstances only partially and darkly. All of us have plenty of personal experience of this sightlessness and frailty.

As the catechism notes, quoting Vatican Council II, our weak situation extends even "to the negative influence exerted on people by communal situations and social structures that are the fruit of men's sins" (#407, *Church in the Modern World*, #37).

Apparently none of this infirmity and partial blindness would apply to angels. Because of their nature, their intellects not being clouded as ours are, their knowledge would be more immediate and encompassing, and their decisions more definitive. They would, so to speak, become aware of nothing "tomorrow" that they didn't know today.

In other words, there would be no surprises in the consequences of their rejection of intimate friendship with God, no new insights or wonder to bring them to repentance.

It's a most interesting subject that arouses our curiosity, but I believe this is about as far as we can go in speculating about the fall of the angels.

The catechism discusses the angels' sin briefly in #391-395. †

My Journey to God**Abide With Us, We Pray**

Of gifts received and given
None greater will abide
Than that of presence given
In Christ, our peace and guide

Born to us this day
Our Advent waiting whole
No sin prevent incarnate love
In longing, open souls

All souls of every station
Creation's chorus sing
Of Him, the Babe of Bethlehem
Who with Him peace doth bring

Peace in broken families
Peace in nation's strife
Peace in all depression
Peace, restore our life

Oh Child of light and wonder
Oh Prince of Peace all days
From manger hallowed cometh
Abide with us we pray

By **Father Joseph B. Moriarty**

(Father Joseph B. Moriarty is the sacramental minister of Good Shepherd Parish in Indianapolis and the vocations director for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. The Virgin Mary and Christ Child are depicted in a 15th-century painting by Italian master Masaccio. In the work titled "Madonna col Solletico," or "Tickling Madonna," the infant Jesus grasps Mary's arm as she gently touches his chin. The painting is located in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, Italy.)



CNS photo courtesy Art Resource/Scala

The Active List

The Criterion welcomes announcements of archdiocesan Church and parish open-to-the-public activities for "The Active List." Please be brief—listing date, location, event, sponsor, cost and time. Include a phone number for verification. No announcements will be taken by telephone. Notices must be in our office by 5 p.m. Thursday one week in advance of (Friday) publication: The Criterion, The Active List, 1400 N. Meridian St. (hand deliver), P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, IN 46206 (mail); 317-236-1593 (fax), mklein@archindy.org (e-mail).

December 24

Holy Rosary Church, 520 Stevens St., **Indianapolis**. Catholic Choir of Indianapolis, 4 p.m. concert before Christmas Eve Mass. Information: 317-636-4478.

December 26

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. *Khris Kwanzaa* celebration, *Umoja* jazz fest, following 10 a.m. Mass. Information: 317-632-9349.

MKVS and DM Center, **Rexville** (located on 925 South, .8 mile east of 421 South, 12 miles south of Versailles). Mass, 3:30 p.m., with Father Elmer Burwinkel. Information: 812-689-3551 or e-mail frburwink@seidata.com or log on to Schoenstatt Web site at www.seidata.com/~frburwink.

December 27

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. *Khris Kwanzaa* celebration, *Kujichagulia*, 7 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

December 28

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave.,

Indianapolis. *Khris Kwanzaa* celebration, *Ujima*, 7 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

December 29

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. *Khris Kwanzaa* celebration, *Ujamaa*, 7 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

December 30

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. *Khris Kwanzaa* celebration, *Nia*, 7 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

December 31

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., **Indianapolis**. Catholic Charismatic Renewal, New Year's Eve Mass, music, praise, worship, 11 p.m., Mass, 11:30 p.m. Information: 317-927-6565.

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. *Khris Kwanzaa* celebration, *Kuumba*, Night Watch Service, 10 p.m.-midnight. Information: 317-632-9349.

December 31-January 1

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St. **Indianapolis**. "New Beginnings—A

New Year's Eve Retreat," Father James Farrell, presenter. Information: 317-545-7681.

January 1

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. *Khris Kwanzaa* celebration, Mass, 10 a.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

January 2

Marian College, Ruth Lilly Student Center, 3200 Cold Spring Road, **Indianapolis**. Epiphany Party and Baby Shower, noon-2 p.m., sponsored by People of Peace Secular Franciscan Order Fraternity, benefits Holy Family Shelter in Indianapolis. All are welcome. Bring a generous gift of diapers, size 4 or 5, or other baby items. Information: 317-955-6775.

January 3

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, 1752 Scheller Lane, **New Albany**. Catholics Returning Home, six-week series, 7:30-9 p.m. Information: 812-945-3112.

January 6

Terre Haute Deanery Pastoral Center, 2931 Ohio Blvd., **Terre Haute**. Divorce and Beyond, program for men and women in the "mourning state of divorce," eight-week series, \$20 registration fee, includes book. Information: 812-232-8400 or e-mail sue@thedeanery.org.

January 10-14

Kordes Retreat Center, 841 E., 14th St., **Ferdinand**. "Arriving at a Place of Peace: Six Degrees of Reconciliation." Information: 812-367-2777 or 800-880-2777 or e-mail kordes@thedome.org.

January 11

St. Matthew Parish, 4100 E. 56th St., **Indianapolis**. Catholics Returning Home, six-week series, 7 p.m. Information: 317-7435.

January 12

Marian College, Allison Mansion, 3200 Cold Spring Road, **Indianapolis**. Indiana Catholic Conference, "Science and Ethics: Stem Cells and Cloning," Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, presenter, 7 p.m. Information: 317-236-1455.

January 14

Holy Rosary Church, 520 Stevens St., **Indianapolis**. Lumen Dei meeting, Mass, 6:30 a.m., breakfast in Priori Hall, pro-life program, Father Denis Wild, presenter, \$10 per person. Information: 317-919-5316.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish,

10655 Haverstick Road, **Carmel, Ind.** (Diocese of Lafayette). Couple to Couple League, wine and cheese social, 6:30-9 p.m., suggested donation, \$10 per couple. Information: 317-848-4486.

January 14-16

Monastery Immaculate Conception, **Ferdinand**. Single Catholic women, ages 19-40, invited to experience Benedictine way of life. Information: 800-738-9999.

Daily

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., **Indianapolis**. Liturgy of the Hours, morning prayer, 7:30 a.m., evening prayer, 5:15 p.m.

Holy Rosary Church, 520 Stevens St., **Indianapolis**. Tridentine (Latin) Mass, Mon.-Fri., noon; Wed., Fri., 5:45 p.m. Information: 317-636-4478.

St. Joan of Arc Parish, 4217 Central Ave., **Indianapolis**. Leave a telephone number to be contacted by a member of the prayer group. Prayer line: 317-767-9479.

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church, Chapel, 4720 E. 13th St., **Indianapolis**. Perpetual adoration. Information: 317-357-3546.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, Chapel, 335 S. Meridian St., **Greenwood**. Perpetual adoration.

St. Thomas More Church, 1200 N. Indiana St., **Mooreville**. Perpetual adoration. Information: 317-831-4142.

Weekly

Sundays

Holy Rosary Church, 520 Stevens St., **Indianapolis**. Tridentine Mass, 9:30 a.m. Information: 317-636-4478.

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. Mass in Vietnamese, 2 p.m.

Christ the King Church, 1827 Kessler Blvd., E. Dr., **Indianapolis**. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, 7:30-9 p.m., rosary for world peace, 8 p.m.

St. Gabriel Church, 6000 W. 34th St., **Indianapolis**. Spanish Mass, 5 p.m.

Mondays

St. Thomas the Apostle Church, 523 S. Merrill St., **Fortville**. Rosary, 7:30 p.m.

Our Lady of the Greenwood

Church, Chapel, 335 S. Meridian St., **Greenwood**. Prayer group, 7:30 p.m.

St. Roch Church, 3600 S. Pennsylvania St., **Indianapolis**. Holy hour, 7 p.m.

Marian Center, 3356 W. 30th St., **Indianapolis**. Prayer group, prayers for priests and religious, 9 a.m. Information: 317-257-2569.

Cordiafonte House of Prayer, 3650 E. 46th St., **Indianapolis**. Monday silent prayer group, 7-p.m. Information: 317-543-0154.

Tuesdays

St. Joseph Church, 2605 St. Joe Road W., **Sellersburg**. Shepherds of Christ rosary, prayers after 7 p.m. Mass.

Holy Name Parish, 89 N. 17th St., **Beech Grove**. Prayer group, 2:30-3:30 p.m.

St. Joan of Arc Parish, 4217 Central Ave., **Indianapolis**. Bible sharing, 7 p.m. Information: 317-283-5508.

St. Luke Church, 7575 Holliday Dr. E., **Indianapolis**. Marian Movement of Priests, prayer cenacle, Mass, 7-8 p.m. Information: 317-842-5580.

Holy Spirit Church, 7243 E. 10th St., **Indianapolis**. Bible study, Gospel of John, 7-8:30 p.m. Information: 317-353-9404.

Cordiafonte House of Prayer, 3650 E. 46th St., **Indianapolis**. Tuesday silent prayer hour, 7-p.m. Information: 317-543-0154.

St. Joseph Church, 125 E. Broadway, **Shelbyville**. Rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet after 8 a.m. Mass.

Wednesdays

Divine Mercy Chapel, 3354 W. 30th St. (behind St. Michael Church), **Indianapolis**. Marian prayers for priests, 3-4 p.m. Information: 317-271-8016.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, Chapel, 335 S. Meridian St., **Greenwood**. Rosary and Chaplet of Divine Mercy, 7 p.m.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, 5692 Central Ave., **Indianapolis**. Marian Movement of Priests, prayer cenacle for laity, 1 p.m. Information: 317-253-1678.

Holy Rosary Church, 520 Stevens St., **Indianapolis**. Adoration of the Blessed

Sacrament, between Masses, noon-5:45 p.m. Information: 317-636-4478.

SS. Francis and Clare Church, 5901 Olive Branch Road, **Greenwood**. Mass, 6:30 a.m., adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 7 a.m.-8 p.m., rosary and Divine Mercy Chaplet, 11 a.m., Benediction, 8 p.m. Information: 317-859-HOPE.

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. Young adult Bible study, 6:15-7:15 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Chapel, 46th and Illinois streets, **Indianapolis**. Prayer service for peace, 6:30-7:15 p.m.

St. Thomas More Church, 1200 N. Indiana St., **Mooreville**. Mass, 6 p.m. Information: 317-831-4142.

Thursdays

Holy Name Church, 89 N. 17th Ave., **Beech Grove**. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Benediction, 5 p.m., Mass, 5:30 p.m.

St. Malachy Church, 326 N. Green St., **Brownsburg**. Liturgy of the Hours, 7 p.m. Information: 317-852-3195.

Our Lady of the Greenwood Church, Chapel, 335 S. Meridian St., **Greenwood**. Faith-sharing group, 7:30-9 p.m. Information: 317-856-7442.

St. Lawrence Church, Chapel, 6944 E. 46th St., **Indianapolis**. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mass.

St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., **Indianapolis**. Adult Bible study, 6 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

Christ the King Chapel, 1827 Kessler Blvd., E. Dr., **Indianapolis**. Marian prayers for priests, 5:30-6:30 a.m.

Fatima Knights of Columbus, 1040 N. Post Road, **Indianapolis**. Euchre, 7 p.m. Information: 317-638-8416.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Parish Hall, 1125 S. Meridian St., **Indianapolis**. Adult religious education, 7:30 p.m. Information: 317-638-5551.

Cordiafonte House of Prayer, 3650 E. 46th St., **Indianapolis**. Thursday silent prayer group, 9:30 a.m. Information: 317-543-0154. †



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Fellowship and refreshments will be available after Mass. Private security will be available at both parking lots; behind the Cathedral and behind the Catholic Center (corner of Illinois and 14th St).

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Daily Readings, continued from page 19

Wednesday, Jan. 5
John Neumann, bishop
1 John 4:11-18
Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13
Mark 6:45-52

Thursday, Jan. 6
Blessed André Bessette, religious
1 John 4:19-5:4
Psalm 72:1-2, 14, 15bc, 17
Luke 4:14-22a

Friday, Jan. 7
Raymond of Peñafort, priest
1 John 5:5-13
Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20
Luke 5:12-16

Saturday, Jan. 8
1 John 5:14-21
Psalm 149:1-6a, 9b
John 3:22-30

Sunday, Jan. 9
The Baptism of the Lord
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7
Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 9-10
Acts 10:34-38
Matthew 3:13-17

Monday, Jan. 10
Hebrews 1:1-6
Psalm 97:1, 2b, 6, 7c, 9
Mark 1:14-20

Tuesday, Jan. 11
Hebrews 2:5-12
Psalm 8:2ab, 5-9
Mark 1:21-28

Wednesday, Jan. 12
Hebrews 2:14-18
Psalm 105:1-4, 6-9
Mark 1:29-39

Thursday, Jan. 13
Hilary, bishop and doctor of
the Church
Hebrews 3:7-14
Psalm 95:6-11
Mark 1:40-45

Friday, Jan. 14
Hebrews 4:1-5, 11
Psalm 78:3, 4bc, 6c-8
Mark 2:1-12

Saturday, Jan. 15
Hebrews 4:12-16
Psalm 19:8-10, 15
Mark 2:13-17

Sunday, Jan. 16
Second Sunday in
Ordinary Time
Isaiah 49:3, 5-6
Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-10
1 Corinthians 1:1-3
John 1:29-34

MARRIAGE SUPPLEMENT



Marriage ANNOUNCEMENTS

Be a part of our Marriage Supplement

February 4, 2005, issue of The Criterion

If you are planning your wedding between January 30 and July 1, 2005, we invite you to submit the information for an announcement on the form below.

Pictures

You may send us a picture of the bride-to-be or a picture of the couple. Please do not cut photograph. The picture must be wallet-size and will be used as space permits. We cannot guarantee the reproduction quality of the photos. Please put name(s) on the back of the photo. Photos will be returned if a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed.

Deadline

All announcements and photos must be received by Thursday, January 13, 2005, 10 a.m. (No announcements or photos will be accepted after this date).

— Use this form to furnish information —

Clip and mail to:
ATTN: BRIDES, The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, IN 46202
Deadline: Thursday, January 13, 2005, 10 a.m.

Please print or type:

Name of Bride: (first, middle, last)

Daytime Phone

Mailing Address City State Zip Code

Name of Bride's Parents

City State

Name of Bridegroom: (first, middle, last)

Name of Bridegroom's Parents

City State

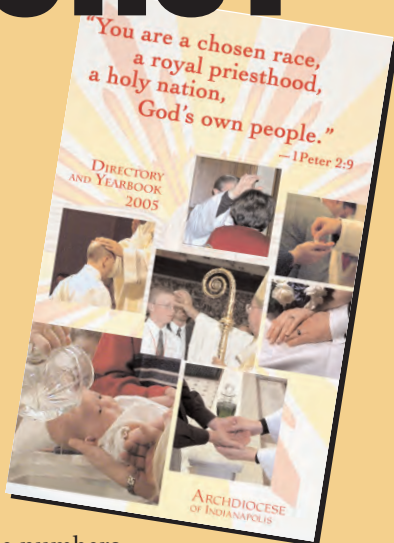
Wedding Date Church City State

Signature of person furnishing information Relationship Daytime Phone

Photo Enclosed No Picture

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Find the answers in the new, 2005 edition of the Directory and Yearbook for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.



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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.

AMOS, Helen Louise, infant, St. Mary, Rushville, Dec. 17. Daughter of Matthew and Cynthia (Siefert) Amos. Sister of Jacob, Nicholas and Tyler Amos.

BARNHORST, Howard J., 83, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Dec. 8. Father of Nancy Koening, Beth Ann, Noreen, Brian and Howard Barnhorst Jr. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of three.

BIERMAN, Arthur A., Jr., 75, St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyds Knobs, Dec. 13. Husband of Julia Bierman. Father of Annette Lipps, Carol McLean,

Gary Sr. and Gregory Bierman. Brother of Patsy Egler, Frank Sr., Lewis and Merel Bierman. Grandfather of 11.

CRAWFORD, Carolyn J., 63, St. Michael, Indianapolis, Dec. 5. Wife of Jerry Crawford. Mother of Jay Crawford. Sister of Edith Costin, Bill, Charles and Stu Byram.

DUMBSKY, Margaret M., 76, Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville, Dec. 4. Daughter of Lucille F. Dumbky. Sister of Delores Begrowicz, Barbara Tropsic, Mary Lou, Alfred and Hubert Dumbky. Aunt of several.

ENDRIS, Jack, 77, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Dec. 8. Husband of Patricia Endris. Father of Jackie Robbins and Mark Endris. Brother of Mary Jean, Dean and Jim Endris. Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of one.

ESSEX, Lena (Lonsinger), 101, Holy Name, Beech Grove, Nov. 30. Mother of Mary Ann Kinney and Alice Shelton. Grandmother of nine. Great-

grandmother of 23. Great-great-grandmother of six.

FICARA, C. Anthony, 81, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Dec. 6. Father of Terry Shields, Lisa, Anthony, Kevin, Matthew and Thomas Ficara. Brother of Beatrice Flain and Rocco Ficara. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandfather of eight.

FISCHER, Thomas Scott, 38, St. Paul, Tell City, Dec. 12. Son of Jerry and Kate Fischer. Brother of Sophia Etensohn and Patrick Fischer.

FOX, Joseph Trent, 6, SS. Francis and Clare, Greenwood, Nov. 12. Son of Bart and Christie Fox. Brother of Elizabeth, John and Michael Fox. Grandson of John and Betty Cragoe and Bill and Barbara Fox. Great-grandson of Jack and Chib Andrews and Merle and Norma Scudder.

GIACOBINO, Margaret C., 92, Sacred Heart, Clinton, Dec. 14. Mother of Teresa Garver. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of 16.

GUTZWILLER, Matthew M., 31, St. Louis, Batesville, Dec. 14. Son of Michael and Jean Ann (Krekeler) Gutzwiller. Brother of Brent Gutzwiller. Grandson of Audrey Gutzwiller and Mary Krekeler.

KARG, Velma M., 79, Holy Spirit, Indianapolis, Dec. 3. Wife of Waldemar Karg Sr. Mother of Waldemar Karg Jr. Grandmother of one.

KELLER, Ronald William, 69, St. Malachy, Brownsburg, Dec. 8. Father of Kitt Gyskewicz, Kelly Ann Johnson, Kimberly Ann Marcum, Kerri Wilkening, Kipp and Korrine Ann Keller. Grandfather of 14.

McCONNELL, Charles, Jr., 82, Sacred Heart, Clinton, Dec. 11. Father of Patricia Boatman and Mike McConnell. Brother of Patricia Bushar and Ronald McConnell. Grandfather of two.

MEYER, Helen (Marrs), 76, St. Paul, Sellersburg, Dec. 9. Mother of Carol Holmes, Charles, Clark, Jeffrey and Richard Meyer. Sister of Judy Lewis, Margie Martin and Jean Roberts. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of five.

MOSCATO, James, 73, St. Vincent de Paul, Bedford, Dec. 6. Husband of Jo Ann Moscato. Father of Deborah Moscato. Brother of Rose Crane, Mary Hall, Nancy Schroder and James Paledino.

NAVARRA, Audrey M., 95, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 10. Mother of Mary Jo Dietz,



Prayers in Bethlehem

Sister Saore Eligia Di Palma, from Italy, lights a candle before Mass on Dec. 19 at St. Catherine Church, adjacent to the Church of the Nativity, in Bethlehem, West Bank.

Barbara Hitchcock and Tудie Navarra. Sister of Jack Foster. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of 21. Great-great-grandmother of 11.

PICCIONE, Rockie Michael, 84, Holy Name, Beech Grove, Dec. 3. Husband of Mary Lucille (Welsh) Piccione. Father of Donna Anderson, Lois Reeder, Providence Sister

Mary Jo Piccione, Cathy, John, Michael and Thomas Piccione. Grandfather of 14. Great-grandfather of 19. (correction)

PIERS, Barbara J., 74, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Indianapolis, Dec. 3. Wife of Arthur Piers. Mother of Sandra Lawler and Gary Piers. Brother of John Archer. Grandfather of three.

RAMSEY, James Lensy, 83, St. Michael, Cannelton, Dec. 2. Husband of Hazel M. (Lawalin) Ramsey. Father of Charlene Daum. Brother of Mary Edith Evans. Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of one.

RAVELLI, Gabriel M., 76, St. Mary, Rushville, Dec. 15. Husband of Opal Ravelli. Father of Andrea Anzalone, Maria Hankins, Kathy Rankin, Bernadette, Gabriel II and Joseph Ravelli. Brother of Berni Santos and Bernadette Ravelli. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of 13.

RIEHLE, Magdalen, 88, St. Anthony of Padua, Morris, Nov. 18. Mother of Janet, Lois, Rita, Gerald, Lawrence and Richard Riehle. Sister of Veronica Wuestefeld. Grandmother of 15. Great-grandmother of two. Step-grandmother of two. Step-great-grandmother of one.

RIORDAN, Carole S., 65, Christ the King, Indianapolis, Dec. 6. Wife of Daniel Riordan. Mother of Brian, Daniel Jr. Kevin and Michael Riordan. Sister of Mary Grinwis, Debbie Nettles, Maureen Ruedisueli, Kathleen Shannehan, Patricia Whalen, Joseph, Michael, Terry and Tom Sheahan. Grandmother of nine.

SCIFRES, Alexander Jarrett, stillborn, Dec. 7. Son of Travis and Denise (Davis) Scifres. Brother of Ethan Scifres. Grandson of Patricia Kerekes, Dennis Davis and Norman Scifres. Great-grandson of Jim Davis.

SCHOETTNER, Dolores E., 80, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 10. Wife of Lawrence Schoettner. Mother of Theresa Nobbe and Paul Schoettner. Sister of Rosemary Scheidler, Lucille Wallpe and Carl Wenning. Grandmother of three.

TREUCHET, Norbert P., 86, Holy Name, Beech Grove, Dec. 1. Stepfather of Diane Trefry Adams and Sandra Ford. Grandfather of three. Great-grandfather of seven.

VAUGHN, Thomas Leo, Jr., 55, St. Roch, Indianapolis, Dec. 15. Father of Sarah Carter, Chris and Thomas Vaughn III. Son of Frances Vaughn. Brother of Carol Patterson, Jan Stetzel and Rick Vaughn. Grandfather of eight. †



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- St. Francis of Assisi

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Glen Ritchey, Business Manager
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church
14598 Oakridge Rd.
Carmel, IN 46032

High School Principal

Bethlehem High School, Bardstown Kentucky, is seeking a principal beginning in the 2005-06 school year. Candidates must be successful educators with proven administrative experience, and be committed to a strong academic and spiritual program for the school community. Strong leadership and communications skills are also desired.

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For more information about Bethlehem High School, visit our web site at www.bethlehemhigh.org.

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ICC to present series on embryonic stem cell research

The Indiana Catholic Conference is presenting a series of events featuring an eminent Catholic neuroscientist and ethicist who will address the debate regarding embryonic stem cell research.

Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of education for the National Catholic Bioethics Center based in Philadelphia will address the complex issues surrounding this research at three events in January.

"A Primer on Stem Cell Research: Science, Ethics and Public Policy" will be held at 4 p.m. on Jan. 11 at the Lilly Auditorium at the library of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

Father Pacholczyk will be featured with Dr. David Slocum, director of the IU Center of Regenerative Biology and Medicine, and Dr. Eric Meslin, director of the IU Center of Bioethics. All three will not only give their perspective, but also respond to questions from the medical and scientific community.

Father Pacholczyk will also speak on "Science and Ethics: Stem Cells and Cloning" at 7 p.m. on Jan. 12 in the Chapel in Marian Hall at Marian College, 3200 Cold Spring Road, in Indianapolis.

The newly formed Marian College Center for Ethics in Business and the Professions is co-sponsoring this event.

Lastly, Father Pacholczyk will speak on "Stem Cell Research Myths: Getting the Science and the Ethics Straight" at 7 p.m. on Jan. 13 at Malloy Hall on the campus of the University of Notre Dame in Notre Dame, Ind..

The Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture and the Diocese of Fort Wayne/South Bend Office of Family Life are co-sponsoring this event.

The Indiana Catholic Conference said in a press release that "the debate regarding stem cell research is a serious topic for the nation and in particular Indiana, due to our state's efforts to become a life science and biotech center for research and products."

(For more information about these events, call Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference, at 317-236-1455 or 800-382-9836, ext. 1455, or e-mail gtebbe@archindy.org) †

Saint Meinrad receives \$1.7 million grant for new institute

By Brandon A. Evans

Saint Meinrad School of Theology in St. Meinrad was recently awarded a \$1.7 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to fund programming at the newly established Saint Meinrad Institute for Priests and Presbyterates.

The new institute will provide education, formation and mentoring to priests during two key points: when they are first ordained and when they first become a pastor.

"The Lilly Endowment grant will aid us in providing further programming that speaks directly to the mission of the School of Theology: the initial and ongoing formation of priests," said Benedictine Father Justin DuVall, vice rector and provost of the school.

Saint Meinrad is one of 20 schools to receive the grant, part of the Endowment's national initiative titled "Making Connections," which is designed to find ways to expand and engage collaborations that will foster excellent clergy and engage congregations.

"By their participation in the institute's programs," Father Justin said, "new priests and new pastors can be holier, healthier and happier. This, in turn, will enable them to better lead and minister to their parishioners."

The program for freshly ordained priests will help them make the transition from seminary to parish life. It will also give the men opportunities to interact with other new priests from various dioceses.

For new pastors, the institute will support them as they take on a leadership role, and groups of 15 to 20 pastors will participate in a two-year program to orient and mentor them in their new position.

The Institute will also work with dioceses to strengthen their presbyterates, that is, the group of ordained priests and their bishop.

The director of the institute is Father Ronald Knott, a priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville, who recently served as the director of vocations for that diocese and the pastor of the Cathedral of the Assumption Parish in Louisville.

Lilly Endowment's "Making Connections" initiative also seeks to address the declining number of young people entering the ministry.

"We are hopeful that another benefit of this continuing education and formation for priests and presbyterates may be the encouragement of more vocations to the priesthood," Father Justin said. "Men who are discerning a vocation to the priesthood are attracted to a life that appears to be fulfilling and rewarding." †

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