



# The Criterion

Serving the Church in Central and Southern Indiana Since 1960



## Rejoice in the Lord

Christmas is a feast of joy in heaven and Earth, page 5.

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*“She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21) (CNS/Bridgeman Art Library)*



# Holy Cross, St. Philip Neri hope to build bonds through merger

By John Shaughnessy

The Christmas season has always been known as a time for bringing people together.

And the east side Indianapolis parishes of Holy Cross and St. Philip Neri have long been known for their generous outreach to people in need—especially during the holiday season.

For decades, members of Holy Cross Parish have distributed Christmas food baskets to families, while St. Philip parishioners have collected clothes and toys to make Christmas brighter for children and their parents through their “Christmas with Christ” effort.

That shared sense of generosity is one of the bonds that members of both communities have pointed to as Holy Cross Parish merged into St. Philip Neri on Nov. 30.

The two parishes united through the *Connected in the Spirit* planning process—part of the plan for the four Indianapolis deaneries that Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin announced in May.

“We have two very dynamic, active and engaged parishes coming together,” says Father Christopher Wadelton, administrator of St. Philip Neri Parish. “Having a common outreach toward people in need will help us come together, and have an even greater sense of community on the east side of Indianapolis. I see us doing great things together.”

Members of the combined faith community saw a successful start in that direction when about 500 people—with strong representation from both

Holy Cross and St. Philip—came together for Mass on Dec. 7 at St. Philip.

“I was overwhelmed,” says Ann Litton, a member of St. Philip since the early 1970s. “We were hoping to fill the church, and we did. People were in the choir loft. The choirs of St. Philip and Holy Cross combined.”

The Mass of unity also reflected one of the gifts and the opportunities of the two parishes merging. In actuality, there are three communities that are coming together, Father Wadelton notes. There are the former members of Holy Cross, the English-speaking members of St. Philip and the Spanish-speaking members of St. Philip.

Symbolizing the desire to connect the three communities, the Dec. 7 Mass was celebrated in both English and Spanish. And one of the highlights of the Mass was a liturgical dance that the Hispanic group Efeta performed to an English-language song.

“The reception afterward was well-attended, too,” says Father Wadelton. “People mingled. There was a strong feeling of community. I heard a number of people from Holy Cross who were appreciative of all the planning and the hospitality.”

As the former parish council president of Holy Cross, Mike Barrett says that people in the parish “had a lot of different reactions” when the *Connected in the Spirit* decision was made to merge Holy Cross into St. Philip.

“There is some loss that it’s not Holy Cross Parish anymore. Some were born and raised in the parish. Others have come along at different points. Holy Cross



*“We have two very dynamic, active and engaged parishes coming together. Having a common outreach toward people in need will help us come together, and have an even greater sense of community on the east side of Indianapolis. I see us doing great things together.”*

—Father Christopher Wadelton, administrator of St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis

was their home,” Barrett says. “But there’s also hope. And there’s relief that the community will continue as part of St. Philip Parish.”

Part of that relief came in knowing that Holy Cross Central School will continue to be open as part of the Mother Theodore Catholic Academies. Relief has also come in the decision to have the former Holy Cross Church become Holy Cross Chapel and continue as a worship site for St. Philip Neri Parish.

At 8:30 on Thursday mornings, Mass will be celebrated at the chapel for the school community of Holy Cross Central. A Mass will also be celebrated in Holy Cross Chapel at 9:15 a.m. on Sundays.

“The archbishop has allowed us to continue to use the church as a worship site,” says Father Wadelton. “The chapel can also be used for weddings, funerals and baptisms as long as there is a pastoral reason.”

At the same time, St. Philip Neri

Parish will have just one parish council, one finance committee and a combined liturgy committee, among other plans to unite the communities. The two groups that represent the St. Vincent de Paul Society are working together as one. And there are plans to combine the two Christmas outreach efforts next year.

“We’re working together as we move forward as one parish,” Father Wadelton says. “My hope is that we will become one parish with two worship sites, and we’ll all be members of the same parish. I see movement in that direction already.”

Members of both communities share that hope.

“We have to continue to work together, find ways to get to know each other, and help each other on our journey,” Barrett says. “When we do, we will be a viable Church presence on the east side.”

Litton agrees, “Both parishes were really strong, and we’ll be even stronger as we come together.” †

## SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral announces Christmas liturgies

The Christmas liturgical schedule for SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, 1347 N. Meridian St., in Indianapolis is as follows:

### SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Dec. 24—5 p.m. vigil Mass.  
Also, Midnight Mass with Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin scheduled as the principal celebrant with prelude starting at 11:40 p.m.  
Parking is available behind the cathedral for the 5 p.m. Mass and Midnight Mass. Parking is also available for Midnight Mass at the Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., from 10 p.m.-2 a.m.  
Dec. 25—10:30 a.m. Mass. †

## End 2014, begin 2015 with New Year’s Eve Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral

Coming to downtown Indianapolis for New Year’s Eve?

If so, you are invited to attend the Solemnity of Mary Mass that will be celebrated at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral at 5 p.m. on Dec. 31 for the holy day of obligation.

Parking is available behind the cathedral. †

## Official Appointments

Effective November 26, 2014

**Rev. Randall Summers**, pastor of St. Louis Parish in Batesville, assigned to temporary residence and sacramental assistance at St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus.

Effective January 14, 2015

**Very Rev. Stanley Pondo**, vicar judicial, Metropolitan Tribunal, appointed

administrator pro tem of St. Louis Parish in Batesville, with residence there and continuing as vicar judicial part time.

**Rev. Bernard Cox**, returning from a leave of absence, assigned to residence at St. Simon the Apostle Parish in Indianapolis and offering sacramental assistance there.

*These appointments are from the office of the Most Rev. Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Archbishop of Indianapolis. †*



## Pope Francis’ prayer intentions for January

- **Peace**—That those from diverse religious traditions and all people of good will may work together for peace.
- **Consecrated life**—That in this year dedicated to consecrated life, religious men and women may rediscover the joy of following Christ and strive to serve the poor with zeal.

(To see Pope Francis’ monthly intentions, go to [www.ewtn.com/faith/papalPrayer.htm](http://www.ewtn.com/faith/papalPrayer.htm).)

## The Criterion and Catholic Center are closed from Dec. 24 to Jan. 4 for Christmas holiday

This week’s issue of *The Criterion*, which is our annual Christmas publication, is the last issue of 2014.

*The Criterion* will be published again on Jan. 9, 2015, and resume its weekly schedule. The Archbishop O’Meara Catholic Center will be closed from Dec. 24 through Jan. 4 in observance of the holidays.

Archdiocesan agencies will reopen at 8 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 5, 2015. †

## On the Cover

Mary and the child Jesus are depicted in a 15th-century painting by Pietro di Sano. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated on Dec. 25. (CNS/Bridgeman Art Library)



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## NEWS FROM YOU!

Do you have something exciting or newsworthy you want to be considered to be printed in *The Criterion*?

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# Connected in the Spirit planning process tops local news stories

By Brandon A. Evans

Changes that parishes in the four Indianapolis deaneries saw as a result of the *Connected in the Spirit* planning process was voted the top local news story of 2014—followed closely by the appointment of auxiliary Bishop Christopher J. Coyne to lead the Catholics of southern Indiana, and the ordination of four men to the priesthood.

Other stories of note included coverage of the record \$6.1 million raised for Catholic schools, the U.S. Supreme Court decision to uphold religious liberty for closely held businesses—including one in Madison—and Indiana’s bishops supporting a proposed state amendment to define marriage as between one man and one woman.

Following the tradition of other news agencies, *The Criterion* editorial staff votes each year for the top 10 local stories that were published in our newspaper.

Many of the top 10 stories selected this year were covered in multiple articles. Read this article online to browse the links to all the original coverage.

Among the hundreds of locally produced news stories during 2014, here is our “Top 10” list:

## 1. The work of *Connected in the Spirit* continues with changes to parishes in the Indianapolis deaneries.

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin spoke before hundreds of clergy and lay Catholics at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on May 21 to announce the latest decisions made as part of the *Connected in the Spirit* planning process.

The changes, which affected Indianapolis parishes, included the closing of three parishes: Holy Cross, Holy Trinity and St. Bernadette, all of which were merged with nearby parishes as of Nov. 30.

Additionally, other parishes were linked in such a way that they will begin—or continue—to share a priest, other staff members and create joint programs, ministries and committees; still others would create partnerships to collaborate with nearby parishes.

Archbishop Tobin said that the goal of the ongoing process is to help parishes “discern where God is leading the Church in central and southern Indiana, and to discuss how the Archdiocese of Indianapolis should change its structures in order to carry out its mission today and in the future.”

The decisions followed on the heels of a busy 2013, which saw changes that affected 26 of the 27 parishes in the Batesville Deanery, along with three other nearby parishes.

Additionally, several appeals to the Vatican to re-open parishes in the Batesville and Terre Haute deaneries were denied.

## 2. Bishop Christopher J. Coyne takes on a new leadership role in southern Indiana.

Starting in October, auxiliary Bishop Christopher J. Coyne—who up to that point was serving as vicar general in Indianapolis in assistance to Archbishop Tobin—assumed pastoral responsibility for the Catholics in the New Albany, Seymour and Tell City deaneries in southern Indiana.

Bishop Coyne also now serves as administrator of Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Augustine parishes, both in Jeffersonville.

“We are fortunate to have two bishops to serve the Catholic communities of central and southern Indiana, and I would like to make the best use of our episcopal ministry,” Archbishop Tobin said in a letter that was read in parishes in September. “It is my hope that this new appointment will contribute to advancing the mission of the Church and take advantage of Bishop Coyne’s many gifts.”

Bishop Coyne was originally appointed to Indianapolis in 2011. Initially, he dedicated much of his time to leading the archdiocese after Archbishop Emeritus

Daniel M. Buechlein suffered a stroke and was eventually granted an early retirement in the fall of the same year.

The dramatic change in current leadership also meant that Msgr. William F. Stumpf was appointed moderator of the curia and an additional vicar general.

## 3. Four men are ordained to the priesthood for the archdiocese.

Nearly 1,000 people—including more than 80 priests—filled SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral on June 7 to witness the priestly ordination of four men: Daniel Bedel, David Marcotte, Benjamin Syberg and Timothy Wyciskalla.

All four are graduates of Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis, and received further priestly formation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad.

Archbishop Tobin asked all those present to pray for the new priests, that they can serve Christ’s truth and love with zeal.

Speaking directly to the four men, he said, “My brothers, you will be able to speak to the hearts of your people if you know their joys and their sorrows, their anxiety and their hope. You must never let the burden of administration or the pursuit of your own interests deafen you to the cry of our brothers and sisters who, like you, search for God and hunger for God’s word.”

## 4. A record \$6.1 million is raised to send children to Catholic schools.

It was announced at this year’s Celebrating Catholic Schools Values Award event on Nov. 5 that a record \$6.1 million had been raised this year to help children in the archdiocese receive a Catholic education.

The amount is more than twice the previous record: \$3 million raised in 2013.

“I hope you gasped as I did when I heard that figure,” Archbishop Tobin said at the event. “It’s an incredible sign of life in our archdiocese. A lot of you heard me thank God that last April at the Easter Vigil across the archdiocese, 1,000 people were received into the Church through baptism or through the profession of faith. This figure of \$6.1 million is another sign of our faith. It’s a sign of the generous gifts of people within the Church and without, because they believe in what we are trying to do with Catholic education.”

## 5. High court upholds religious liberty for closely held businesses.

On June 30, the U.S. Supreme Court—in a 5-4 decision—ruled in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* that closely held companies cannot be forced to comply with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s (HHS) mandate that requires nearly all employers to provide abortion-inducing drugs, elective sterilizations and contraceptives to their employees free of charge if the individual or families that own these businesses have religious objections to the mandate.

“Bill Grote is a member of a family that owns such a business,” reported Sean Gallagher. “Since 1901, the Grote family has owned the Madison-based Grote Industries, a global manufacturer of commercial vehicle lighting products.”

Grote said that when he learned of the ruling “I jumped up out of my chair. My wife Terry was in the room. I gave her a hug and a big smile. It’s a wonderful day.”

Grote and his son Dominic, the family-owned company’s president and chief executive officer, are members of Prince of Peace Parish in Madison and had previously argued their case with success before the U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago.

## 6. Indiana’s bishops voice their support for a proposed state amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman.

Glenn Tebbe, executive director of the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC), spoke on behalf of the Indiana’s six Catholic bishops on Jan. 13 during an Indiana House Judiciary Committee meeting to express their support of House Joint



Newly ordained Father David Marcotte ritually receives a chalice and paten from Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin during a June 7 ordination Mass at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. Assisting the archbishop is seminarian Anthony Hollowell, right. (File photo by Sean Gallagher)

Resolution 3 (HJR3).

The proposed state constitutional amendment defined marriage as a union between one man and one woman, and stated that other legal unions “identical or substantially similar to that of marriage” would not be recognized by the state.

In addition to supporting the proposed amendment, the state’s bishops also stressed the Church’s teaching on the dignity of every human person, including those persons with same-sex attraction.

A revised amendment was passed by the Senate, but because the language was changed from a resolution passed in 2011 it did not go to statewide voters this year.

A district court later in the year ruled, in the words of the bishops, “to redefine the institution of marriage as an emotional partnership between two consenting adults regardless of gender,” which effectively legalized same-sex marriage in the state of Indiana.

## 7. Archbishop Emeritus Buechlein marks 50 years of priestly life.

Retired Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein, currently in residence at Saint Meinrad Archabbey, celebrated the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination on May 3.

The archbishop, who led the archdiocese for 19 years, was ordained a priest as a Benedictine monk of the monastery by Archbishop Paul C. Schulte in 1964, and ever since has seen prayer as his primary focus.

“That was the case no matter what other aspects of his ministry came to the fore—priestly formation, pastoral leadership, catechesis or Catholic education,” wrote reporter Sean Gallagher.

“Every challenge was its own grace,” Archbishop Buechlein said. “Even [my] stroke had a way of waking me up to what’s really meaningful in life. Cancer was the same way. That’s the way I took it into prayer.”

## 8. Daughters of Charity say goodbye after 133 years of ministry in the archdiocese.

“In 1881, four Daughters of Charity arrived in Indianapolis to establish a ‘house for the sick’ in an unused seminary downtown. So began what is now known as St. Vincent Hospital,” wrote reporter Natalie Hoefler.

“As in 1881, there are now four Daughters of Charity in Indianapolis. They will leave in June, thus ending 133 years of service of the order in the archdiocese.

“During those 133 years, more than 300 Daughters of Charity have ministered, leaving behind the legacy of St. Vincent Health, a system of 21 hospitals statewide.”

The announcement that the sisters would leave the archdiocese—and the Lafayette Diocese as well—came in October of 2013, and was finalized with a Mass of Thanksgiving at the SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis on April 28.

“Today, sisters, we thank God for you,” said Archbishop Tobin in his homily. He commented on “the impressive legacy

that [the Sisters] leave behind, which certainly is a tribute to [Daughters of Charity co-founders] St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac—a health system that will continue to provide care for the underprivileged, the poor and the marginalized.”

## 9. A year of pro-life news culminates with the opening of a Women’s Care Center next to Planned Parenthood.

The new Women’s Care Center on the north side of Indianapolis was blessed by Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin on Nov. 19, opening its doors next to the state’s largest Planned Parenthood abortion facility.

“Founded in South Bend, Ind., in 1984, Women’s Care Center is a 100 percent donor-funded organization that builds facilities near abortion centers,” reporter Natalie Hoefler wrote. “At its 23 facilities spread among seven states, they offer free counseling and ultrasounds to women considering abortion, and support women during and after pregnancy.”

The opening came in the same year that Affiliated Women’s Services, one of Indianapolis’ four abortion centers, closed its doors, and also when a former Planned Parenthood nurse walked away from her line of work and now is a staunch pro-life advocate.

Pro-life legislation—including a requirement for abortion centers to have a physician on backup at a local hospital in case of complication—was also passed in the state.

The archdiocese also combined its pro-life and family life offices to better integrate the two ministries.

## 10. Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary celebrates 10 years of priestly formation.

Ten years ago this fall, Archbishop Emeritus Buechlein opened the Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary with six seminarians, all who lived on the campus of Marian University in Indianapolis.

A decade later on Sept. 8, “approximately 230 people gathered on the grounds of a former Carmelite monastery that the seminary has called its home since 2008 to celebrate the many ways in which the seminary has grown over its first decade,” wrote reporter Sean Gallagher. “That growth was on display in the presence of the 42 seminarians from eight dioceses and archdioceses currently enrolled at the seminary.”

Archbishop Buechlein was unable to attend the event, but recorded a message, saying, “To you seminarians, students at [Bishop] Bruté, congratulations on this anniversary. My thanks to you, for you have indeed become a house of joy, a happy community, a community fueled by joy and the happiness that comes from living a true human life made so by being grounded in faith, charity and hope.”

(To read the original coverage, including additional links of interest, click on the headline for this story on our website at [www.CriterionOnline.com](http://www.CriterionOnline.com).) †





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

Most Rev. Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., Publisher  
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John F. Fink, Editor Emeritus

## Editorial



"Nativity at Night" by Italian Baroque painter Guido Reni depicts the birth of Christ in a Bethlehem manger. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated on Dec. 25. (CNS/Bridgeman Art Library)

## We celebrate the Incarnation

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14).

That's how John's Gospel reported the magnificent mystery of the Incarnation, the amazing fact that Almighty God actually lowered himself to become a human being. That's the mystery we celebrate this Christmas.

Let us rejoice as we celebrate the birth of a baby in Bethlehem, but let us remember that he was far more than just a human baby.

John tells us as plainly as possible, "In the beginning was the Word" (he existed from all eternity), "and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn 1:1). To make it even clearer, he identifies the Word with creation, saying, "All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be" (Jn 1:3).

We Catholics will profess our belief in the Incarnation when we recite the Creed on Christmas, as we do every weekend. We say that we believe in "one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God," who "was born of the Virgin Mary and became man."

St. Paul taught the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. In his Letter to the Philippians, written perhaps as early as 55 A.D., he quoted a hymn that already existed: "Jesus Christ, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness" (Phil 2:6-7).

Paul wrote about God sending his Son in other letters, too. For example, to the Galatians he wrote, "When the fullness of time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman" (Gal 4:4). To the Romans he wrote, "Sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3).

This has been the belief of Christians down through the centuries—that Jesus was true God, existing from all eternity and through whom all things were made, but at a particular moment in history also became a human being. He was both God and man, fully human with all our imperfections and weaknesses except sin, while remaining

the perfect and infinitely powerful God. He is not part God and part man, or some confused mixture but fully human while remaining God.

But why did God choose to assume our human nature? Various reasons are given: The Word became flesh in order to save us by reconciling us with God; so that thus we might know God's love; to be our model of holiness; to make us partakers of the divine nature.

The ultimate reason, though, is because God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation, our redemption, in it. That couldn't be done by just any human, but it did require a human to do it. Since Jesus is both divine and human, he is the one and only mediator between God and humans.

Because we have been redeemed by the God-man, we humans can share God's divine nature. Ever since the beginning of Christian theology, the reason for the Incarnation has been "so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God" (St. Irenaeus, second century).

St. Leo the Great wrote, in a passage that is read in the Office of Readings of the Liturgy of the Hours of Christmas day, "In the fullness of time, chosen in the unfathomable depths of God's wisdom, the Son of God took for himself our common humanity in order to reconcile it with its creator. He came to overthrow the devil, the origin of death, in that very nature by which he had overthrown mankind."

Later in the same passage, St. Leo wrote, "And so at the birth of our Lord the angels sing in joy: 'Glory to God in the highest,' and they proclaim, 'Peace to his people on Earth' (Lk 2:14) as they see the heavenly Jerusalem being built from all the nations of the world. When the angels on high are so exultant at this marvelous work of God's goodness, what joy should it not bring to the lowly hearts of men?"

We wish you a happy and blessed Christmas.

—John F. Fink

## Be Our Guest/Daniel Elsener

### Preparing leaders for service to the Church and the world

I hope you've heard the news: Marian University's Football Knights are headed to the NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) national championship game in Daytona Beach, Fla., on Dec. 19, to play the Southern Oregon University Raiders. The game is scheduled for 3 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, and will be broadcast on ESPN, WFNI 107.5 FM in Indianapolis and streamed online at [www.muknights.com](http://www.muknights.com). I hope you can join us!

Marian University is committed to excellence in every endeavor. Our success in athletics mirrors our success in the classroom; our students, faculty and staff simply want to be the best at what we do. Marian's mission is to prepare our students for transformational leadership positions in a variety of professions.

Athletics is just one of the laboratories on campus where leadership development occurs. More than one-third of our undergraduates participate in intercollegiate athletics, and they are learning the importance of teamwork, accountability, discipline, perseverance through adversity, and the pursuit of excellence. We're building character and developing leaders

through athletics.

Our athletic director, Steve Downing, has ingrained into the culture at Marian University the principle that academics always come first, and he has set up study tables to ensure our student-athletes succeed in the classroom. Steve and our coaches have their priorities in the right order, and we're putting student-athletes on the field that our alumni and fans can be proud of. We believe that athletics build character, especially when combined with the kind of values that a Catholic university like Marian espouses.

Marian's mission is to be a great Catholic university in the Franciscan and liberal arts tradition.

Marian University is on the rise. We're collaborating with the Archdiocese of Indianapolis to provide academic formation for students at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary. We're also preparing lay women and men for ministry in Catholic parishes and schools through our award-winning San Damiano Scholars program. We're helping to solve Indiana's doctor shortage by opening the state's first new medical school in over a century. We're training teachers to serve in Catholic schools as well as public, private and charter schools in very diverse regions and circumstances.

We have record enrollment, and our freshman class has the best average GPAs and SAT scores in the history of the

See ELSENER, page 15

## Making Sense of Bioethics/Fr. Tad Pacholczyk

### Are womb transplants immoral?

A recent news report described the unusual story of a baby's birth from his grandmother's womb. A 29-year



old woman from Sweden, born without a uterus, received a transplanted womb from her mother, the same womb that had brought her into the world a generation earlier. The woman then became pregnant

through *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) and delivered a healthy baby boy.

The research had been dogged by controversy and questions: Could a transplanted womb from a post-menopausal woman be "triggered" back into action once it had been introduced into the body of a younger woman? Could a transplanted uterus effectively provide nourishment to a growing baby during all the gestational stages of a pregnancy? Would such a costly and risky surgery involving two people, mother and daughter, donor and recipient, be justifiable? Are such transplants

ultimately ethical?

The specific circumstances involved are critical to determining whether this novel type of transplant is ethical.

Various medical anomalies can cause a woman to be missing a uterus. A congenital disease called Rokitansky syndrome can cause the uterus to develop anomalously, or not form at all. Uterine cancer or other serious gynecological issues may necessitate that a woman undergo a hysterectomy, resulting in permanent infertility.

The womb is a unique organ with a highly specific function, and the transplantation of a healthy womb into a woman who lacks one due to a birth defect or disease is loosely parallel, some would say, to a situation where a patient's kidney fails, and another person donates a healthy replacement organ.

Yet others would say that the womb is not a vital organ like a kidney, and while the transplantation of a womb is directed toward improving a patient's quality of life, it clearly does not constitute life-saving surgery like a kidney transplant.

Therefore, womb transplants require strong ethical justifications.

See PACHOLCZYK, page 15

## Letter to the Editor

### Widower's column offers heartfelt wisdom for those who have lost loved ones

I am writing in regard to Bill Dodds' "Your Family" column in the Dec. 5 issue of *The Criterion*. I want to say thank you for putting into words what I am sure is in the hearts of many widowers.

I lost my husband, Rob, on Dec. 27, 2011, and as Dodds states, "It feels like long ago and like yesterday."

Every word in this column is so true, and my hope is that it reaches many. I would like to offer two more suggestions.

One is to try to avoid asking "How are you?" That question is so immense for any widower to respond to, which is

why we most always say "fine" which is far beyond the truth. Try asking a specific question that focuses on one thing that relates to that individual.

Also stay away from saying, "Let me know if I can do anything." Though well-intentioned, that puts the responsibility on the widower to ask for help which can be difficult. Rather choose a specific task, chore or errand for that person, and plan to follow through with it, even if it is just showing up for a visit.

We all have much to learn about each other in each of our individual lives that God has given us. Thank you again, Bill Dodds, for sharing part of your life and your gift of writing with us.

Ellen Henke  
Greenwood



ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO JOSEPH W. TOBIN



REJOICE IN THE LORD

ALÉGRENSE EN EL SEÑOR

## Christmas is a feast of joy in heaven, on Earth

Merry Christmas!

Do you think the saints and angels celebrate Christmas in heaven? I hope so. This is a wonderful feast—filled with warmth and love, peace and joy. I know that every day is wonderful in heaven, but I'm sure that even heavenly bliss can be increased—at least one day a year—with the magnificent sounds of an angelic choir and the brilliant glow of yet another shining star!

I can just imagine the joy that our Blessed Mother and all the saints must feel on this very special day. Do you suppose that if we asked them with humble hearts this Christmas Day, they would open the gates of heaven—just enough—to let their joy overflow, filling our troubled world with at least a small share of the happiness and peace they possess in eternal life with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

We associate “joy” with Christmas. Do you know what joy is? Have you experienced it lately?

In his autobiography, *Surprised by Joy*, the English writer C. S. Lewis speaks of joy as something very different

from pleasure or even happiness. Joy is something deeper, richer and more elusive. It takes us by surprise and affects us profoundly. Joy is the satisfaction of deepest desires. It is intimately connected to the longing for God that St. Augustine referred to when he wrote that our hearts are restless until they find their ultimate rest in God.

When I was a boy in elementary school, the sisters gave us a very simple—but profound—tool for learning what joy is. They told us that when you spell j-o-y, the “j” stands for Jesus who should always come first in our lives. The “o” stands for others who come second. And the “y” stands for yourself. Place Jesus first, others second, and yourself last of all, and you will know joy.

Isn't it amazing how these simple teaching devices cut right to the heart of the matter? Volumes of philosophy, theology and spirituality have been written on the concepts of joy and happiness. The nuances they contain are important, I guess, for the fullness or accuracy of our understanding, but what the sisters taught is no less profound. If you place Jesus

first in your life, if you think of others before you think of yourself, you will be surprised by joy!

Jesus Christ is the greatest Christmas gift, the source of all real joy. He is the gift of God the Father, who became one of us in all things but sin by the power of Holy Spirit. This amazing gift was first given to Mary, and then to all of us, to save us from the destructive power of sin and death. This is the joy, the fulfillment, of all human desiring. This is what we celebrate today—on Earth as, I hope, in heaven. This is the day when we call to mind most vividly the mystery of the Incarnation and the joy of Christ's birth.

All other Christmas gifts pale in comparison to this one: “*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him*” (Jn 3:16-17).

On Christmas Day, and throughout this joyous season, we are invited to join with Mary, and all the angels and saints, in a joy-filled festival of happiness and peace.

In heaven, there are no tears, no sorrow and no worries about tomorrow.

Because heaven is not really a place—a geographic location—but is an experience of loving closeness (communion) with the God who is our hearts' desire, it's hard to imagine what this grand celebration of joy looks like. We use images of music and dancing and sumptuous food because that's what our earthly celebrations are like.

The joy in heaven on Christmas Day cannot be accurately described in earthly words or images, but we believe with all our hearts that those who have gone before us to our heavenly home rejoice on this day. And, as I say above, we hope and pray that this joy will spill over and bring peace on Earth—today and always.

Jesus is our j-o-y. When you place him first, others second and yourself third, everything falls into proper perspective.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for this marvelous gift of your love. Help us be good stewards of joy by sharing it generously with others this Christmas season.

*Feliz Navidad!* †

## La Navidad es una fiesta de alegría en el Cielo, celebrada en la Tierra

¡Feliz Navidad!

¿Ustedes creen que los santos y los ángeles celebran la Navidad en el Cielo? Espero que sí. Esta es una fiesta maravillosa, repleta de efusividad, amor, paz y alegría. Sé que en el Cielo todos los días son maravillosos, pero estoy seguro de que la felicidad celestial aumenta todavía un poquito más, por lo menos una vez al año, al magnífico compás de coros celestiales y el resplandor de otra estrella titilante.

Apenas puedo imaginarme la alegría que deben sentir nuestra Santa Madre y todos los santos en este día tan especial. ¿Creen que si les rogáramos con humildad de corazón en este Día de Navidad, nos abrirían las puertas del cielo, aunque sea una rendija, para que esa alegría fluya y colme nuestro mundo afligido, al menos con una pequeña cuota de la felicidad y de la paz que experimentan en la vida eterna junto al Dios Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo?

Asociamos la Navidad con la alegría. ¿Acaso saben qué es la alegría? ¿La han sentido recientemente?

En su autobiografía titulada, *Surprendido por la alegría* (*Surprised by Joy*) el escritor inglés C. S. Lewis habla acerca de la alegría como algo muy distinto del placer o incluso de la felicidad. La alegría es algo más profundo, más intenso y más impreciso; nos toma

por sorpresa e influye tremendamente sobre nosotros. La alegría es la satisfacción de los deseos más profundos. Está estrechamente vinculada al anhelo divino al que alude San Agustín al escribir que nuestros corazones no tienen sosiego hasta que encuentran el descanso supremo en Dios.

Cuando era yo un niño de escuela primaria, las Hermanas nos dieron una herramienta muy sencilla y muy profunda a la vez, para aprender el significado de la alegría. Nos dijeron que al deletrear la palabra alegría (en inglés “joy”), la “j” es de Jesús que siempre tiene que ser lo primero en nuestras vidas. La “o” de los otros que vienen de segundo; y la “y” del yo. Coloquemos a Jesús de primero, a los otros en segundo lugar y al “yo” en tercer lugar, y sabrán lo que es la alegría (*joy*).

¿No les parece increíble que una técnica de enseñanza tan sencilla encierre un significado tan poderoso? Se han escrito numerosos libros de filosofía, teología y espiritualidad sobre los conceptos de la alegría y la felicidad. Supongo que las sutilezas que resaltan son muy importantes para llegar a comprenderlos a plenitud y con exactitud, pero eso no quiere decir que lo que las Hermanas nos enseñaron sea menos trascendental. Si ponemos a Jesús de primero en nuestras vidas, pensamos en

los otros antes que en nosotros mismos, ¡los sorprenderá la alegría!

Jesucristo es el máximo regalo de la Navidad, es la fuente de la alegría verdadera; es el obsequio del Dios Padre, que se convirtió en uno de nosotros en todo menos en el pecado, por el poder del Espíritu Santo. Este maravilloso regalo le fue entregado primero a María y luego al resto de nosotros para salvarnos del poder destructivo del pecado y de la muerte. Esta es la alegría, la satisfacción de todos los anhelos humanos. Esto es lo que celebramos hoy en la Tierra, así como en el Cielo (espero). Este es el día en el que evocamos más vívidamente el misterio de la Encarnación y la alegría del nacimiento de Cristo.

Todos los demás regalos de la Navidad resultan mediocres al compararlos con este: “*Porque tanto amó Dios al mundo, que dio a su único Hijo, para que todo el que cree en él no se pierda, sino que tenga vida eterna. Dios no envió a su Hijo al mundo para condenar al mundo, sino para salvarlo por medio de él*” (Jn 3:16-17).

En el día de Navidad, y durante toda esta temporada de júbilo, se nos invita a unirnos a María y a todos los ángeles y santos, en un festival de paz y felicidad, lleno de alegría. En el Cielo no hay lágrimas, no hay dolor ni preocupaciones

acerca del mañana. Puesto que el cielo no es en verdad un lugar, una ubicación geográfica, sino la experiencia de vivir en amorosa cercanía (en comunión) con un Dios que es el anhelo de nuestros corazones, cuesta un poco imaginarse cómo será esta enorme celebración de alegría. Empleamos las imágenes de coros musicales, danzas y lujosos banquetes porque así es cómo lucen nuestras celebraciones terrenales.

La alegría en el Cielo durante el Día de la Navidad no se puede describir exactamente con palabras o imágenes mundanas, pero creemos con todo el corazón que aquellos que han partido antes que nosotros a nuestro hogar celestial se llenan de júbilo en este día. Y, tal como dije antes, esperamos y rezamos para que esta alegría se derrame y traiga paz a la Tierra, hoy y siempre.

Jesús es nuestra alegría: cuando lo colocamos a Él de primero, a los otros en segundo lugar y al “yo” de tercero, todo cae en su debido lugar.

Gracias, Padre Celestial, por el maravilloso regalo de Tu amor. Ayúdanos a ser buenos administradores de la alegría para compartirla generosamente con los demás durante esta temporada navideña.

¡Feliz Navidad! †

*Traducido por: Daniela Guanipa*



## Events Calendar

### December 19

Northside Knights of Columbus Hall, 2100 E. 71st St., Indianapolis. **Catholic Business Exchange Mass**, breakfast and program, "Faith in the Fast Lane," Ed Carpenter, race car driver and owner, Verizon IndyCar Series, 7-9 a.m., \$15 members, \$21 non-members, breakfast included, bring an unwrapped toy for the annual Toys 4 Tots campaign, wear your best Christmas outfits. Reservations and information: [www.catholicbusinessexchange.org](http://www.catholicbusinessexchange.org).

### December 20

St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3354 W. 30th St., Indianapolis. **Helpers of God's Precious Infants**, Mass and Divine Mercy Chaplet at 8:30 a.m., followed by prayer at a local abortion center, and continued prayer at the church for those who wish to remain.

Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guest House Chapel, 200 Hill Drive, St. Meinrad. **Longest Night Service**, prayer, Scripture and music acknowledging God's presence for those mourning and struggling with loss during the holidays, 6 p.m. CST. Information or RSVP (requested but not required): 800-987-7380 [jkeller@abbeycaskets.com](mailto:jkeller@abbeycaskets.com).

### December 27

St. John the Evangelist Church, 126 W. Georgia St., Indianapolis. **Faithful Citizens Rosary procession**, Mass, 12:10 p.m., procession following Mass. Information: [faithful.citizens2016@gmail.com](mailto:faithful.citizens2016@gmail.com).

### January 2-24

Theatre on the Square, 627 Massachusetts Ave., Indianapolis. **Late Nite Catechism play**, instructive comedy recommended for Catholics and non-Catholics

alike, Fri. and Sat. 8 p.m., Sun. 5 p.m., tickets \$20-\$30 available online at [www.tots.org](http://www.tots.org) or call 317-685-8687.

### January 10

Bravo Restaurant, 2658 Lake Circle Drive, Indianapolis. **Marriage on Tap**, "Instilling a Love of Catholicism in Our Children," 7-9:30 p.m., \$35 per couple includes dinner and one drink ticket per person, register by Dec. 28 at [www.stluke.org](http://www.stluke.org). Information: Ramona, 317-258-2761.

### January 22

SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral 1347 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. **Local Solemn Observance Day of Prayer and Penance, 42nd Anniversary of Roe v. Wade**, Mass, noon, prayerful public witness, 1:15 p.m., Benediction and dismissal, 2:30 p.m. Information: 317-236-1551 or [ericke@archindy.org](mailto:ericke@archindy.org).

## Retreats and Programs

### January 2

Mount Saint Francis Retreat Center, 101 Mt. St. Francis Drive, Mt. St. Francis. **First Friday devotions and lunch**, 11:45 a.m. Information: 812-923-8817 or [retreats@mountsaintfrancis.org](mailto:retreats@mountsaintfrancis.org).

### January 3

Kordes Center, Monastery Immaculate Conception, 841 E. 14th St., Ferdinand. **Spanish Program, "The Epiphany 2015,"** Benedictine Sister Joan Scheller, presenter, 2-6 p.m., no charge, evening meal will be served, please bring a dessert to share, registrations due Dec. 31. Information: 812-367-1411, ext. 2636 or [www.thedome.org/programs](http://www.thedome.org/programs).

### January 5

Mount Saint Francis Retreat Center, 101 Mt. St. Francis Drive, Mt. St. Francis. **Mondays at the Mount**, Franciscan Brother Bob Baxter, 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Information: 812-923-8817 or [retreats@mountsaintfrancis.org](mailto:retreats@mountsaintfrancis.org).

### January 7

Benedict Inn Conference and Retreat Center, 1402 Southern Ave., Beech Grove. **Personal Retreat Day: Spend a Day with God**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., \$35 per person includes a room for the day and lunch, spiritual direction available. Information: 317-788-7581 or [www.benedictinn.org](http://www.benedictinn.org).

(For a complete list of retreats as reported to The Criterion, log on to [www.archindy.org/retreats](http://www.archindy.org/retreats).) †



Sisters of Providence General Superior Sister Denise Wilkinson, right, reads with Anna Fan during a welcome ceremony on Nov. 13. (Submitted photo)

## Anna Fan enters Sisters of Providence as postulant

On Nov. 13, Anna Fan, a native of Taiwan, was received into the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, as a postulant.

During her time of postulancy, Fan will learn about the Sisters of Providence, their community practices, traditions and ministries. She will meet with Providence Sister Marsha Speth, director of postulants, once a week for instructions and individual conferences.

In addition, Fan will work as a volunteer once a month in the local area,

as well as take time volunteering with other Sisters of Providence across the country.

Fan will live within the formation community of the Sisters of Providence, located in Owens Hall.

Her relationship with the Sisters of Providence began while volunteering with Sisters of Providence at Miracle Home in Taiwan in 2011.

After a year as a postulant, Fan will be eligible to enter into the first year of the novitiate, when she will receive the title of sister.

## VIPs



**Charles "Charlie" and Margaret "Peggy" (Cashman) McIntosh**, members of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 26.

The couple was married on Dec. 26, 1964, at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church in Indianapolis.

They are the parents of four children, Kimberly Dickson, Kelly Gordon, Margaret McIntosh and Molly O'Connor.

They also have six grandchildren. Their children send their love and congratulations. †

## New Albany Deanery Youth Ministry to celebrate 50th jubilee Mass on Jan. 11

Catholic Youth Ministry of the New Albany Deanery will celebrate a 50th jubilee Mass at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 1752 Scheller Lane, in New Albany at 3 p.m. on Jan. 11.

The theme will be "50 Years of Faith, Family and Friends."

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin will be the principal celebrant.

Those who have been involved in the ministry throughout the years will be involved, and any priest who has served in the deanery is especially invited.

All are welcome to participate in this special liturgy. †

## Catholic Radio Indy offers six-week 'Catholics Returning Home' program

Catholic Radio Indy, 8383 Craig Street, Suite 280, in Indianapolis, will offer a six-week series titled, "Catholics Returning Home" from 10-11:30 a.m. beginning on Jan. 16.

The sessions are for non-practicing Catholics who are seeking answers to

questions about returning to the Church.

If you know of someone who has left the Church, please invite them to join us.

Deadline for registering for this series is Jan. 12.

For more information and registration, call 317-870-8400. †

## Woman professes first monastic vows with Sisters of St. Benedict in Beech Grove

On July 12, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, along with family members and friends, witnessed the first monastic profession of Sister Susan Elizabeth Rakers.



**Sr. Susan Elizabeth Rakers, OSB**

1989, and later received her master's degree in management from Lake Forest

Graduate School of Management in Lake Forest, Ill. Prior to her entrance to the community, Sister Susan Elizabeth was employed by United Health Group.

She was a member of Holy Spirit Parish at Geist in Fishers, Ind., in the Lafayette Diocese, where she was an active volunteer in the youth ministry program. She also volunteered at the Lord's Pantry and Anna's House in Indianapolis. Presently, Sister Susan Elizabeth works in the Development Office at the monastery.

First monastic profession covers a span of three to six years. During this time, the sister lives as a vowed member while continuing study, ministry and discernment of a lifelong commitment. She practices and commits herself to the vows of obedience, poverty, celibacy, stability and conversion of life. †



# Exchange of letters shares story of Savior's early plight

By John F. Fink

*(Archeologists in Egypt were surprised recently to discover this letter from a woman named Elizabeth. It was sent from Ein Karem, Israel, at the beginning of our present calendar, about 1 A.D., or perhaps even earlier. It's unknown if the recipient received the letter.)*

Dear Mary,

Zechariah and I were thrilled to receive your letter because we had no idea what had happened to you, and we were worried sick. We were surprised, of course, to learn that you are now in Egypt, but glad to learn that you, Joseph and Jesus are all well.

News travels fast here, as you know, so we were shocked, but not surprised, to learn that King Herod had sent soldiers to Bethlehem to kill all the boy babies under 2 years old. When we heard the news, Zechariah hurried over to Bethlehem since it's only seven miles away, hoping that he wouldn't find you there.

I had faith that you had been able to escape because, after all, I know that your son Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, so he couldn't have been killed by Herod. I was, after all, the first person to recognize that your child is God himself.

That's why, when you were so kind as to visit me and help me during my pregnancy with John, I was inspired to say to you, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk 1:42-43).

It was remarkable that, as you greeted me on your arrival, John leaped for joy in my womb. I said to you at that time, "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled" (Lk 1:45). After all, my own husband, Zechariah, didn't believe the angel when he appeared to him, and he ended up being struck dumb until John's circumcision.

You have certainly had some unique experiences since you were here for John's birth. While you were nine months pregnant, you took that 80-mile

trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem just because the Messiah was to be born in the City of David—and, of course, because of that silly census that required everyone to register in the towns of their ancestors.

Of course, Zechariah and I also went over to Bethlehem to register, and hoped to see you there. The place was so crowded, though, that we decided not to try to stay overnight, so we walked back to Ein Karem.

I learned from your letter that Jesus was born in a cave, and you wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because you couldn't find room in the inn either. At least Joseph was able to find some shelter for you.

And then you wrote about the shepherds who visited you. You must have wondered what on Earth was going on when they appeared at the cave. But they, too, were told by an angel what I already knew, that "a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord" (Lk 2:11).

Thank you for writing about your purification in the Temple in Jerusalem and your presentation of Jesus to the Lord. You told me that Simeon also recognized Jesus as the Messiah. And then those wise men from the East also recognized Jesus as the Messiah. That must have been exciting, to have those men stop and present their gifts to Jesus.

But it seems that every time something good happens to you, something bad follows. Simeon celebrated the coming of the Messiah, but then he had to go and tell you that a sword will pierce you, whatever that means. And the celebration with the magi was followed by Joseph's telling you that you had to flee to Egypt to get away from Herod's soldiers.

I hope you won't have to remain in Egypt very long. When you decide it's safe for you to return to Nazareth, I hope you'll stop to visit us on the way and stay at least a few days. John and Jesus should get to know one another. John has already gotten big.

Zechariah and I are both well, and we send our best wishes. We are keeping you in our prayers.

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



A mosaic of the Holy Family marks a revered site at the Coptic Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary in the Cairo suburb of Maadi. Coptic tradition holds that Mary, Joseph and Jesus rested there during the flight into Egypt. The church sits a few miles outside Cairo on the left bank of the Nile River. (CNS photo/Dana Smillie)

## Archdiocese seeks representatives to attend 2015 World Meeting of Families



Special to *The Criterion*

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis is seeking families and individuals to become part of an archdiocesan representative group at the 2015 World Meeting of Families that will be held from Sept. 20-28, 2015, in Philadelphia.

Pope Francis has confirmed that he will attend the gathering, and celebrate Mass on Sept. 26 for an estimated 1 million people.

Families and individuals from across central and southern Indiana will be selected to represent the archdiocese by application or nomination process, which includes family demographics and an essay

portion with three questions:

1) What gifts and strengths do you bring that would be beneficial to the pilgrimage to the World Meeting of Families?

2) What do you hope to learn during the pilgrimage?

3) How do you plan on bringing back what you learn to your family, parish and community to enhance and build up the Christian family in the Church and society within the Archdiocese of Indianapolis?

The application and nomination deadline is Jan. 13, 2015.

The group from the archdiocese will be diverse in family type (nuclear, single-parent, blended, grandparents as parents), state of life (married, divorced, never married, religious, priest, deacon) as well as in age, location in the archdiocese and ethnicity.

This will be the eighth World Meeting

of Families, and will take place in the United States for the first time. It is expected to draw thousands of attendees from more than 150 countries and more than 1 million pilgrims for the Sunday Mass at which Pope Francis will be the principal celebrant.

The theme for the 2015 World Meeting of Families, "Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive," emphasizes the impact of the love and life of families on society. This worldwide gathering will allow families to hear distinguished speakers, share thoughts, participate in dialogue and prayer and work together to grow as individuals and families while focusing on the role of the Christian family in the Church and society.

The World Meeting of Families was initiated by St. John Paul II to strengthen the sacred bonds of families across

the globe.

The first World of Families took place in Rome in 1994, the International "Year of the Family," and has been held in Rio de Janeiro (1997); Rome (2000); Manila (2003); Valencia, Spain (2006); Mexico City (2009); and Milan (2012).

Financial assistance for participating in the weeklong pilgrimage to Philadelphia may be available.

For more information, to nominate a family or to apply as a family to represent the archdiocese at this historical event, please visit [www.archindy.org/wmf2015](http://www.archindy.org/wmf2015) or contact Scott Seibert at 800-317-236-1527 or 317-236-1527 or e-mail [sseibert@archindy.org](mailto:sseibert@archindy.org).

For general information regarding the World Meeting of Families as well as parish and school catechetical resources, visit [www.worldmeeting2015.org](http://www.worldmeeting2015.org). †

## Sacramental marriage brings grace to share God's love, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—With the strength of the grace that comes from the sacrament of marriage, Catholic families are called to proclaim God's love to the world, Pope Francis said.

God's love gives birth to the family, and that love must be "the center of all its human and spiritual dynamism," the pope wrote in a letter on Dec. 9 to Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, which will sponsor the Sept. 22-27 World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia next year. Repeating his promise to attend



Pope Francis

the gathering in Philadelphia, Pope Francis thanked the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for generously committing itself to organize and host the event as a "service to the universal Church and to families on every continent."

The October extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family, and the general assembly of bishops scheduled to meet in 2015, are attempting to identify the most urgent needs of families today and to devise pastoral responses to them, he said.

However, the pope wrote, "the values and virtues of the family, its essential truths, are points of strength on which to build the nuclear family and are not up for discussion."

The Vatican released the text of the pope's letter on Dec. 10, shortly after he spoke about the synod at his weekly general audience. He told people gathered in St. Peter's Square that no one at the extraordinary synod

"called into question the fundamental truths about the sacrament of marriage: its indissolubility, unity, fidelity and openness to life."

Preparing for the World Meeting of Families in September and for the general Synod of Bishops on the family a few weeks later, he said, the Church is seeking ways "to proclaim the Gospel of marriage and the family" in a way that responds to "the social and cultural contexts in which we live."

"The challenges of these contexts stimulate us to enlarge the spaces of faithful love open to life, to communion, mercy and solidarity," the pope said. Catholic couples, priests and parish communities must "let themselves be guided by the word of God, which is the foundation for the holy construction of the family as a domestic Church and of the family of God." †



# Readers share their favorite Christmas memories



A girl holds a figurine of baby Jesus as Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Dec. 14. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

## 'A child is born to us'—giving hope to grandparents

By Jim Welter

The Scripture readings for the Christmas season speak to us of those who waited and longed for the birth of a child. The story of Elizabeth and Zechariah, who were “advanced in age,” comes to mind as does the story of Simon and Anna, who spent years in the temple waiting and praying for the birth of Mary’s child.

My wife and I walked that Advent journey in a very special way nine years ago as we waited and longed for the birth of our first grandchild. And what a special joy it was to finally welcome Calvin Joseph Welter into the world at 11:49 p.m. on Christmas Day!

As we surrounded the hospital bed to get our first glimpse of Calvin Joseph, emotions poured forth: “Welcome to our world, Calvin!” “We’ve been waiting for you, little guy! We love you.” “Don’t be afraid, we’ll take care of you.”

That night, the words of Advent seemed to be written just for us: “A child is born to us, a son is given to us.” “God is with us.” “Don’t be afraid.” “What will this child be?” “A child shall lead them.” Someone reminded us that there would not be another day like that one, on which the feasts of Christmas and Hanukkah converged, for another 400 years. Suddenly, even Isaiah’s idyllic vision of peace—“the lion will lie down with the lamb”—seemed somehow possible.

For some years now, I have been identifying with the “more mature” characters as I read the stories in Scripture. And now, as a grandparent, I’m also experiencing that sense of generational connectedness and the sense of life being “passed on” that is so often expressed in those stories.

The most enduring message I heard in the hospital room on that most special Christmas Day was the one spoken countless times in both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures: “Do not be afraid.”

It is spoken to the life that is beginning: “Do not be afraid—we have been waiting for you; we love you and we’ll take care of you!”

And it is spoken to the life that is ending: “Do not be afraid—we are waiting for you; we love you and we’ll take care of you!” Life is a circle. We have nothing to fear.

A child is born to us—God’s love made visible.

(Jim Welter is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis.) †

## A father’s tales delight children

By Cecelia Stevens Kiley

Christmas Eve was very special at our house.

My sister and I would climb up on Dad’s lap and become a captive audience as he filled our imaginations with the fantasy and spirit of Christmas through his wonderful stories. Filled with awe, we listened to Dad recall the adventures of Santa’s little elves, who would sometimes get lost in a snowstorm way up at the North Pole. Then there would be the sad story of

the Little Match Girl forced out into the cold by a cruel father to sell matches—ultimately freezing to death.

But perhaps my father’s recount of The Happy Prince was the most thought provoking. Dad’s voice was soft, loving and had the ability to bring about tears as we learned how the prince gave away his wealth to help the poor.

I believe Dad could have given Hans Christian Andersen a good run for his money!

(Cecelia Stevens Kiley is a member of Holy Trinity Parish in Indianapolis.) †

## Christmas homilies remembered

By Natalie Hoefler

Of the many Christmas homilies I’ve heard in my life, two stand out.

The first occurred nearly 25 years ago, when my brother and I were both dating non-Catholics.

Both of our significant others agreed to join us for Christmas midnight Mass. My brother and I both knew the priest, a wonderful, faith-filled African man. A hospital chaplain, he had been without sleep for almost 24 hours. He was tired during that Mass, a state which made his accent stronger and harder to understand.

During his homily, he kept referring to the “sandy cloud.” Over and over he mentioned the “sandy cloud.” All four of us flashed confused glances at each other, especially the two non-Catholics!

Finally it dawned on me what the priest was saying in his tired, thick African accent. As my whispered explanation made its way one by one to my date, my brother’s date and then my brother, it was hard not to laugh as understanding then humor lit their faces one at a time: “He’s talking about Santa Claus!”

While the man I dated is just a memory, the woman my brother dated is now his wife and a convert to Catholicism—despite the crazy

Christmas homily about the “sandy cloud!”

The second homily I remember had a more meaningful impact.

It was given by Msgr. Paul Koetter at St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis about 15 years ago.

He spoke of how Christmas cards depicting the peaceful manger scene probably misrepresent the reality of the actual event. A young woman giving birth to a first child in a smelly stable with animals all around, far from home and with no familiar women to help—chances are it was pretty chaotic, Msgr. Paul noted.

But there, in the middle of all the chaos, was God incarnate.

And so Msgr. Paul offered some advice that I have used in my own life and shared with many others over the years: Look for God in the chaos. That advice has helped me—and friends and family—more than once during a chaotic situation or time in life to stop, breathe and look for God’s presence. It never fails—he’s always there, just as he was in the middle of that cold, smelly, hectic stable.

(Natalie Hoefler is a reporter for The Criterion and a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis.) †

## A lesson in the gift of giving

By Madelyn Denniston Keach

It had snowed all Christmas Eve day that Christmas of 1948, and the excitement of Christmas was reaching its peak!

Mother had the four of us bathe and get to bed early in anticipation of Christmas morning. We heard the front door open and our father’s voice say to mother, “Dot, call Mr. Baugh and have him meet me at the store.”

Mr. Baugh owned the only general store in our small town of 500 people. “Oh, and ring up, Mr. Fisher, and anyone else you can reach.”

My mother, concerned about all this fuss asked, “What is going on?”

“I just came from my last house call, and this family has absolutely nothing for Christmas, and I want to get a tree, food, clothes and presents for all of them.” The door slammed, and out into the bitter cold night our father went with a Christmas mission in his heart.

The small group of townspeople gathered at the general store with arms of food, clothes, presents and a tree. Later that evening, they all went out to deliver the best Christmas ever for this family.

My father was like that all of his life, always thinking of the other person when

it came to his patients. He graduated from Tufts Medical School, became a general practitioner and served in western Kentucky, then later he became a pediatrician.

Our mother shared that story with us often, and the lesson learned is having compassion for others. Our Father in heaven shows compassion for us in the gift of his Son. The Son shows compassion for us in the gift of our salvation. The Holy Spirit shows compassion for us in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have given themselves to us—go therefore and give them to others! This is what we have been called to do! Serve with compassion!

This is an excerpt from a poem I wrote in honor of my dear father:

Being a physician, your Hippocratic Oath wholeheartedly taken  
Bound your family to a life unwittingly forsaken  
You and your family were at the mercy of the sick  
Compassion for others was our chosen edict.

I now realize that our chosen edict is a gift and a blessed, God-given legacy!

(Madelyn Denniston Keach attends Mass at Mount St. Francis in Floyd County.) †

## Christmas on the run was always fun

By Norbert Schott

Midnight Mass was a given in our family. Indianapolis was our home; Sacred Heart Parish was our home and family.

Dad was a grocer and closing the store at 6 p.m., getting home, eating supper and then “cleaning up” for the big Mass was “life on the run.” Why? One small bathroom, and seven people to use it!

We took turns, but Mom was first because she was a soprano in the Christmas choir. She had to be in the choir loft by 11 p.m. Who would miss the beautiful carols and songs

before Mass? Sometimes Dad did.

He was still “on the run,” waiting his turn and then “dressing up.” He drove the second run on the way with the rest of the family.

Oh, I forgot one more run. We opened the Christmas gifts at 9 p.m., a tradition that was never broken.

Store, “clean up time,” gifts, sharing and singing and then “running” to church. I wouldn’t give up those memories for anything! Holiday joy “on the run.”

(Norbert Schott is a member of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Greencastle.) †

## The perfect gift for a special mother

By Mary Ellen Pelus

My mother was a petite woman, who had trouble finding clothes to fit her.

Many times, I would help her alter slacks and help her break in new shoes. As she became older, her poor diet as a young child growing up in poverty caught up with her. She developed osteoporosis, a much more painful condition than people realize. The curvature of her spine created breathing problems, difficulty digesting and pain when standing for long periods of time. This also added to her dilemma of finding clothes that fit properly.

My mother never asked for much; she was always grateful for all that God had given her. We called her a living saint.

A few years ago, I had my best Christmas with my mother. She’s hard to buy for, but I bought what turned out to be that special gift for her.

My mother needed a new hooded winter coat. I was shopping in a local clothing store when I saw a 3/4-length winter coat prominently displayed out on a clothes rack right next to a main aisle. It was as if the coat was there for only me to see, and I immediately thought of my mother. The length was perfect for her short stature, there was no defined waist, and its straight lines made it the perfect coat.

In addition, it even had the type of hood she liked: not too large and no drawstrings to pull around her eyes. This coat was made for my mother!

My excitement turned to disappointment when I discovered the needed size was not to be found. The salesperson immediately called

other stores and finally found one in another state. The other store was going to gift wrap it and ship it free of charge to my mother, in time for Christmas!

The package arrived on Christmas Eve. On Christmas morning, my brother stopped by to drive our mother to Mass, as he has every Sunday and holy day since my father’s passing. He convinced her to open the package before they left for Mass. She was pleasantly surprised with the coat, but more than that, she was so excited to have it fit so perfectly!

When she walked into church that Christmas morning, she felt so special. My mother was like a child showing off her new coat.

My mother proudly wore that coat for about seven years. It was warm, fit her to a tee and the hood did not block her sight when she wore it on cold winter days.

Sadly for us, my mother passed away. When my brothers and I were clearing out her house, we decided to give the coat to someone special in my mother’s life—Aunt Mary. She was almost the same size as my mother, and she too lived the servant’s life as my mother, always giving to others and willing to do without for the sake of others. My mother would have wanted it that way. I’m sure Aunt Mary enjoyed that coat as much as my mother did.

Christmas isn’t about lots of presents under the tree; it is about thoughtfulness in giving.

Jesus’ birth was our gift over 2,000 years ago. The joy that coat gave my mother was my special Christmas gift, symbolic of the gift we need to be to others.

(Mary Ellen Pelus is a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis.) †

## Of giving—and getting—at Christmas

By Mark Hummer

Christmas is a season and a time for giving one’s time, talents and gifts in life.

While working in long-term care in Fort Wayne, I would bring the young adult group that I was a member of at the time from St. Jude and St. Charles parishes, and we would go caroling for the residents and throw everyone a big Christmas party.

When I did long-term care in the ‘90s in Swanton, Ohio, the residents and I would participate in the town’s local Christmas parade and throw candy and treats to

the children.

Every year, we visit family in the Toledo, Ohio, area, and then go to Michigan on Christmas Day to see Mom and Dad. A few years ago, the weather was too bad to go to Michigan, so we had to turn back to Indy. We couldn’t find any restaurants open. We stopped at the Medical College of Ohio, where my wife Siming used to work, and the hospital was giving away free Christmas Day meals.

(Mark Hummer is a member of St. Christopher Parish in Indianapolis.) †

## A beautiful Christmas Eve Mass

By Mary Withem

In 1960, we moved our young family to The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Parish, with Father Louis Gooete as our pastor. We experienced a lovely, old renovated barn as our church and a new grade school for our children. The most beautiful of the services was the Christmas Eve Midnight Mass. People came from far and wide to witness the birth of Jesus in our humble church, beautifully decked out on Dec. 24.

In November of 1965, a fire took that church, but soon a new building was under way—while having Masses and the

sacraments in the school cafeteria—to meet the needs of the growing parish.

The parish couldn’t wait for its completion, and so on a cold Dec. 24 in 1968—with space heaters, makeshift seating and power tools scattered around—we were among the many families attending Midnight Mass. The little ones were in footed PJs, and everyone had a blanket over our laps. It was a beautiful Christmas Eve Mass, so aptly presented in our Nativity Church—a night I’ll forever remember!

(Mary Withem is a member of St. Jude Parish in Spencer.) †



The Nativity scene and Christmas tree are seen in St. Peter’s Square following the unveiling of the creche at the Vatican on Dec. 24, 2013. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

## The tree that made for a memorable Christmas—and a humorous confession

By John Linehan

It was the Christmas season of 1971. I was asked by Father Lee, rector of St. Mary’s Seminary in Catonsville, Md., to take the college-owned pick-up truck and go get a Christmas tree. He also gave me the college checkbook with a few pre-signed checks. I went around to a few tree lots, but just couldn’t find the right tree. The snow was coming down quite heavily, so I didn’t think I would have much time.

While driving back to the college somewhat disappointed that I was empty-handed, I saw the perfect tree. It was not in a tree lot, it was growing on the side of the road along the interstate. I went back to school and picked up my roommate and a chainsaw. I had some experience felling trees, so I was pretty confident I could get it to land right where I wanted it—in the back of the pick-up truck.

The snow was continuing to come down fiercely, and the wind was howling all around us. I set the truck into position and started the chainsaw. The tree fell with perfect precision right into the truck—square down the middle of the truck, causing the roof to dent downward. We shut the doors as best we could and leaned our heads out the windows for the ride home. We quickly became snow covered as we made our way back to school.

We (I) misjudged the size of the tree. There was no way the 30-foot pine would fit into the building, so we tethered it in the courtyard. I still had all the checks left, so we borrowed another vehicle and went to the local Kmart to buy some lights—1,800 huge outdoor lights in all, plus 16 extension cords, 24 boxes of large ornaments and a very large star for the top. Soon, lots of fellow students joined in decorating the tree. Extension cords were run through the windows in the dorms.

I’m certain that the lights could be seen for miles, and it was possibly the inspiration for *National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation*.

To my weak defense, I was given no budget and no limitations on the size of the tree. But none of that helped my case. Most of the faculty was appalled, not at the \$5,000 damage to the truck, or the \$473 for the decorations, but the mere fact that the tree was deemed to be an eyesore and was ordered to be removed the following day.

That night, which was a Friday, a few of us gathered around the tree for one last moment. A couple of students were returning to the dorm from a Christmas program and had their guitars in hand. They started playing “Silent Night.” We all stood around and began singing other Christmas songs. Soon, several more students joined and the crowd began to swell. Some faculty members, hearing the noise, came out to investigate. They joined in the song as well.

Father Evers, the dean, came up next to me and put his hand on my shoulder. “Good party,” he said. I told him the tree would have to come down tomorrow. “Oh, no it won’t. We haven’t had a moment like this in a long time. Thank you.” Soon, students began plugging in the extension cords in their rooms. All 1,800 lights came on—and miraculously no fuses were blown. The snow began to lightly fall. It was truly a “*Gaudeamus*” moment.

Several hundred students gathered that night. It was my first semester at St. Mary’s, so I had nothing to compare it with. But I was truly humbled by all the students’ comments, students that thought that I had planned this program all along. Father Lee publicly thanked me during Mass the following day and announced that nightly vigils would be held—around the Christmas tree in the courtyard.

(John Linehan is a member of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis.) †

## An unexpected Christmas surprise

By Mj Krauter

My favorite memory of all time took place when I was about 6 years old. It was Christmas Eve, and we were getting ready for Mass. I could hear the whirring of Mother at the sewing machine, and knew with a little disappointment that it would be handmade doll clothes for the dolls picked up earlier at the St. Vincent de Paul store for the girls, and wooden toys (made by Dad) for the boys. With 13 siblings, this was not an unusual Christmas.

We all bustled about ironing last-minute outfits, or the older ones tried to wrangle us little ones into our Christmas best. There was a soft blanket of snow outside, and I knew that even with the meager Christmas offerings, at least there would be fresh snow for us to enjoy tomorrow.

Just as we were walking out the door, the phone rang. I happened to be the closest, so I answered it. A deep voice on the other end

of the line said, “Merry Christmas—go look in the car!”

All of us kids scurried outside to see Dad’s car lights on and overflowing with presents, front and back seats! We ran on angel wings to Midnight Mass while Mother and Dad, arm in arm, brought up the rear. The sweet snow continued to blanket us as we made our way to Mass, an extra special gift from God on Christmas.

When we returned home and were allowed to open just one of the presents, it turned out each child got a brand new toy and a brand new outfit! Mother always wondered, but we didn’t find out until years later that the older boys (newly married) had pitched in so us little ones could have the best Christmas ever. This happened twice in my childhood, the two times that Dad was without a job at Christmas.

(Mj Krauter is a member of St. Simon Parish in Indianapolis.) †



# Patroness of the Americas



Above, Dressed in traditional costumes, Minna Malcolmson, left, and Nathaniel Benefiel process toward the altar with their offering of red roses during a Dec. 12 liturgy honoring the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Our Lady of the Greenwood Church in Greenwood. It was the parish's 19th annual Mass honoring the patroness of the Americas. Our Lady appeared to St. Juan Diego in 1531 on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City. (Submitted photo by Tony Cooper)

Left, Msgr. Mark Svarczkopf, right, pastor of Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish in Greenwood, welcomes those attending the parish's 19th annual solemn Mass commemorating the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12. In his homily, Msgr. Svarczkopf said we all need to understand Our Lady of Guadalupe's message: "That we are all members of the human race, of equal dignity [and] of equal love." Pictured with him are, from left, altar server Allison Pena; Father Francis Joseph Kalapurackal; Conventual Franciscan Father Leopold Keffler; Father Harold Rightor; and Deacon David Henn. (Photo by Mike Krokos)

## Vatican report calls U.S. women religious to continued dialogue

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—A massive, detailed Vatican-ordered investigation of U.S. communities of women religious ended with a call to the women themselves to continue discerning how best to live the Gospel in fidelity to their orders' founding ideals while facing steeply declining numbers and a rapidly aging membership.

Although initially seen by many religious and lay Catholics as a punitive measure, the apostolic visitation concluded with the publication on Dec. 16 of a 5,000-word final report summarizing the problems and challenges the women themselves see in their communities, and thanking them for their service to the Church and to society, especially the poor.

The visitation process, carried out between 2009 and 2012 with detailed questionnaires and on-site visits, mainly by other women religious, "sought to convey the caring support of the Church in respectful, sister-to-sister dialogue," says the final report by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

The process attempted to help the Vatican "and the sisters themselves to be more cognizant of their current situation and challenges in order to formulate realistic, effective plans for the future," said the report, signed by Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, prefect of the congregation for religious, and Archbishop Jose Rodriguez

Carballo, secretary.

In summarizing the results, the congregation called for special attention in several areas, including: formation programs for new members; the personal, liturgical and common prayer life of members; ensuring their spiritual practices and ministries are fully in harmony with Church teaching "about God, creation, the Incarnation and redemption" in Christ; strengthening community life, especially for members living on their own or with just one other sister; living their vow of poverty while wisely administering financial resources; and strengthening communion within the Church, especially with the bishops and Vatican officials.

The Vatican, the report says, "is well aware that the apostolic visitation was met with apprehension and suspicion by some women religious. This resulted in a refusal, on the part of some institutes, to collaborate fully in the process.

"While the lack of full cooperation was a painful disappointment for us," the congregation writes, "we use this present opportunity to invite all religious institutes to accept our willingness to engage in respectful and fruitful dialogue with them. "A number of sisters conveyed to

the apostolic visitor a desire for greater recognition and support of the contribution of women religious to the Church on the part of its pastors," the report says. "They noted the ongoing need for honest dialogue with bishops and clergy as a means of clarifying their role in the Church and strengthening their witness and effectiveness as women faithful to the Church's teaching and mission."

In addition, it says, "some spoke of their perception of not having enough input into pastoral decisions which affect them or about which they have considerable experience and expertise."

The current Year of Consecrated Life, the congregation says, should be "a graced opportunity for all of us within the Church—religious, clergy and laity—to take those steps toward forgiveness and reconciliation, which will offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion to all."

The congregation's report does not make specific recommendations other than urging the entire Church "to offer fervent prayer for religious vocations," and to ask religious communities to ensure they provide "a solid, theological, human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral preparation" for religious life. †



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# Faith *Alive!*

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## The Word of God was made flesh to change humanity forever

By David Gibson

From a vantage point near the top of a large hill in Canada, my wife and I lingered to gaze late last summer upon a breathtaking view of the St. Lawrence River.

The weather was perfect that day, and as a visit to Quebec City drew to a close we wanted to take in this marvelous scene one last time, knowing it soon would become little more than a memory for us.

Naturally, we photographed the view in order to take a bit of it home with us. We knew, though, that our life was about to return to normal.

A familiar scene captivates Christians in a similar way, and at Christmastime they spend time gazing upon it. The scene depicts Mary, Joseph and the newborn Jesus. Shepherds are on hand, too, having received “good news of great joy” from an angel, who told them “This will be a sign for you: You will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger” (Lk 2:10, 12).

The scene adorns countless Christmas cards, conveying the season’s warmth. And families bring children forward after Christmastime Masses to view their parish’s nativity scene. They linger, and nowadays they may even photograph it with smartphones so as to take a bit of it home with them.

The great hope of Christmas, however, is that life will not return to normal after its celebrations draw to a close. Christmas stirs hearts; its welcome scenes attract our gaze. But Christianity affirms that the meaning of Christmas is not outside believers’ lives, ready to be left behind the way the St. Lawrence River or Mt. Rainier or the Grand Canyon get left behind when a vacation ends.

Christmas invites Christians not just to celebrate Jesus’ birth for a few days, but to let him come to life in us repeatedly in the year ahead. The hidden gift of Christmas is its commission, its mandate to Christians.

The child in the manger on Christmas is the Word of God made flesh. As Ireland’s Archbishop Diarmuid Martin once put it, entering into “the mystery of the Word made flesh” involves seeing “how we can sanctify the world around us, in all its corporeity, its bodily-ness, in its concrete expressions.”

The Gospel reading heard by those participating in the Mass of Christmas Day proclaims that “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (Jn 1:14). Notably, that biblical statement comprises two essential, interrelated points: first, that the Word of God “became flesh”; second, that the Word of God “made his dwelling among us.”

Focusing on the statement’s second part, allow me to inquire what difference it makes that the Word of God “made his dwelling among us.”

The child Jesus “remains forever the sign of God’s tenderness and presence in our world,” Pope Francis remarked during a May 2014 visit to Bethlehem. Like every other child, the infant Jesus was “vulnerable.” He needed “to be accepted and protected,” the pope



A family prays in front of a crèche following a Divine Liturgy marking the birth of Christ at Holy Family Ukrainian Catholic Church in Lindenhurst, N.Y. When Jesus Christ, the Word of God, took on human flesh, humanity was changed forever. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

pointed out. He stressed that “today, too, children need to be welcomed and defended from the moment of their conception.”

Pope Francis considered today’s children, like the infant Jesus, a sign for the world. “They are a sign of hope, a sign of life, but also a ‘diagnostic’ sign, a marker indicating the health of families, society and the entire world.” The pope continued:

“Such a frank and honest diagnosis can lead us to a new kind of lifestyle where our relationships are no longer marked by conflict, oppression and consumerism, but fraternity, forgiveness and reconciliation, solidarity and love.”

In the pantheon of gods honored by the ancients, there may have been those who were remote from human beings, arbitrary in their actions or supremely proud. But the Word of God made flesh reveals that the one God is not absent but very much present in the life of every person.

God “does not stay aloof from his creation but is involved, although mysteriously, in human history,” according to Passionist Father Donald Senior. The American biblical scholar said in 2013 that the God

revealed in the Bible “is a God who self-communicates, a God who is not self-contained but one who wishes to reveal himself to the world.”

Communication tends to improve a hundredfold whenever it is possible for two people to hear each other’s voices and, even better, speak face to face. This is where e-mails and text messages fall short. They have a capacity to hide feelings and emotions, and to reduce communication to its barest essentials.

Indeed, though, the Word of God made flesh communicates face to face. He is known as Emmanuel, meaning “God with us.”

Dwelling among people and walking alongside them, his face reveals the face of God. Recent popes call it a face of love and mercy.

Once again, though, the presence of the Word of God is a call to action. It is a call that invites Christians to do whatever they can to reveal the loving, merciful face of God to others.

(David Gibson served on Catholic News Service’s editorial staff for 37 years.) †

## The Scriptures offer us different perspectives on the birth of Christ

By Daniel S. Mulhall

Christmas is a time of music, decorations, family traditions, food and presents—for those who are fortunate.

At the center is the baby Jesus, usually seen surrounded by his mother, Mary, and Joseph, her husband. When St. Francis of Assisi introduced the nativity scene to the people of Greccio, Italy, in 1223, he did so to promote



Joseph Marcellino and his sister, Alexarose, dress up as Joseph and Mary during the annual Christmas pageant at St. Gerard Majella Church in Port Jefferson Station, N.Y. Celebrating the birth of Jesus can be a powerful reminder of God’s merciful love for all humanity. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

devotion to and worship of Jesus.

While Christmas marks a wonderful time of the year, have you ever wondered what we’re celebrating? Have you considered why Jesus was born or why God became man?

We recite the creed at Mass each Sunday and solemn feast day, proclaiming our belief that Jesus “became man.” This is known as the Incarnation, which means “became flesh.” It is one of the fundamental mysteries of the faith, a mystery rich beyond measure but one that we can never fully comprehend.

That being said, our love for God moves our hearts and minds to probe ever deeper into this mystery nonetheless. All inquiries about Jesus, his ministry and mission must begin with Scripture. While the New Testament writers reflect on these aspects of Jesus, there isn’t a passage that provides a comprehensive answer as to why God became man.

St. Matthew’s Gospel, likely written for a Jewish Christian community, emphasizes that Jesus is the fulfillment of God’s promise to send a Messiah, a successor to the Hebrew king, David. As such, Jesus fulfills the many prophecies in the Old Testament and then some. He’s not only the Messiah, but also the Son of God.

St. Luke offers a more complex story of who Jesus is and why he came. For Luke, Jesus is the presence of the Lord who breaks into this world through miraculous

means to bring glad tidings. Luke says that Jesus comes to show mercy, to disperse “the arrogant of mind and heart,” to throw down rulers and lift up the lowly, and fill the hungry with “good things” (Lk 1:50-55).

In Luke, we read that Jesus is here to “give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God” (Lk 1:77-78).

While the Nativity stories found in Matthew and Luke are the most familiar, the Gospel according to John gives us the most complete answer. John says God became flesh and lived among us so we could see his glory, and through that glory, experience God.

Pope Francis has called us to be a Church of mercy, to experience God’s mercy and to share it. How does our understanding of Christmas change if, when we look at the nativity scene and see the Christ child in the manger, our first thought is of God’s love for us?

How will our experience of Christmas change if we are overwhelmed with an appreciation of God’s mercy, and are moved to share that mercy with everyone?

Our Christmas celebrations may become richer and more meaningful when we celebrate the wonders that God’s loving mercy creates in our hearts and minds.

(Daniel S. Mulhall is a freelance writer and a catechist for adults. He lives in Laurel, Maryland.) †



From the Editor Emeritus/John F. Fink

## Old Testament: Ecclesiastes finds 'all things are vanity'

*(Fiftieth in a series of column)*

Of the seven Wisdom Books of the Old Testament, the one that I've often questioned is not the Song of Songs, which I'll discuss in my next column, but Ecclesiastes. I dislike its negative and pessimistic viewpoint.

It's another book that searches for the ultimate meaning and purpose of human life. Its conclusion is that "all things are vanity" (Eccl 12:8). The author examines the things that humans usually search for—wisdom, pleasure, riches, renown—and finds them all lacking, "a chase after wind" (Eccl 1:14).

Although this book doesn't have the prestige that Psalms and Job have, most people are familiar with some of the expressions that come from Ecclesiastes: For example, "You can't take it with you," or, "There's nothing new under the sun" (Eccl 1:9).

Most of us are also familiar with this

passage: "There is an appointed time for everything, and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant; a time to kill, and a time to heal; ... a time to weep, and a time to laugh; ... a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace" (Eccl 3:1-8).

The title Ecclesiastes is the Greek translation of the Hebrew name Qoheleth. The first verse identifies the speaker as "David's son, Qoheleth, king in Jerusalem." Since David didn't have a son named Qoheleth, the book was attributed to his son Solomon, known for his wisdom.

And what is Qoheleth's philosophy of life? It's summarized in the second verse: "Vanity of vanities! All things are vanity!" (Eccl 1:2). It's a Hebrew superlative expressing the supreme degree of futility and emptiness. Qoheleth has accomplished everything he set out to do, and yet he says that nothing has any lasting significance. Everything seems futile.

He considered even wisdom as futile: "I said to myself, if the fool's lot is to befall me

also, why then should I be wise? ... Neither of the wise man nor of the fool will there be an abiding remembrance" (Eccl 2:15-16).

But there is some positive advice. Qoheleth tells us to live for the moment, enjoy what we are doing because, like everything else in life, our pleasures are gifts from God. For him, the primary goal of life is living. Everything that promotes life is good, while anything that doesn't promote life is "a chase after wind" (Eccl 2:17).

This philosophy is OK as far as it goes, but for Christians it doesn't go far enough. It's good to reject as the purpose or goal of life the pursuit of earthly pleasures and rewards of human accomplishment, but Qoheleth had no notion of everlasting life. There is the barest hint of a future life in Qoheleth's last word: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is man's all; because God will bring to judgment every work, with all its hidden qualities, whether good or bad" (Eccl 12:13-14).

Qoheleth, though, didn't know what will happen after the judgment. †

Catholic Education Outreach/Margaret Hendricks

## A Promise to Keep marks 20 years of service in archdiocese

The A Promise to Keep (APTK) chastity program has grown from a "pilot program" sponsored jointly by St. Vincent Health and the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education to a ministry that has helped form "intentional archdioceses" throughout the archdiocese.

In 1994, along with Eve Jackson and Sylvia Brunette, I had the privilege of training the first groups of mentors. The vision behind the program was to utilize the strength of high school juniors and seniors who were positive role models striving to live chastely in their relationships.

The ultimate decision to live chastely lies with each individual regardless of one's age. With the many issues that challenge society today, there is wisdom in providing young adults the opportunities to take a leadership role in promoting a healthy understanding of chastity and the Theology of the Body.

To date, there have been more than 10,000 high school students who have served as mentors in APTK. They have presented the curriculum and shared their witness with more than 100,000 younger adolescents.

The first mentors turn 37 and 38 years old this year. These young adults are living

out their faith on college campuses, in the workplace and military. They are coming to the Church to be married, have children baptized and become active members in our parish communities.

Recently, a group of senior mentors spoke with me on the topic of leadership. They said younger adolescents do look up to them, so teens have a responsibility to be good leaders for others. Each mentor spoke about the solid role models active in their life.

One mentor, Libby, shared the fact she still remembered "Alexis" coming to speak to her seventh-grade class. Even as a junior high student, she knew Alexis was a great volleyball player. She described this day as an "ah-ha" moment, and thinking "if Alexis is standing up for this message and the values of APTK, then so can I!" She went on to say Alexis was a leader in her life and inspired her to become an APTK mentor.

After hearing this witness, I contacted Alexis. She was humbled to hear that, five years after she spoke to a group of seventh graders, she would be called a leader by one of those students. She went on to share with me that she still attended weekly Mass, was active in a Bible study in her sorority and was in a three-year relationship with her boyfriend, who had encouraged her to join him

in his commitment to remain abstinent until marriage. She said it was a virtue important to both of them before they met, but she gained strength from his leadership in their discernment process. This led to their decision to choose to date with a sense of purity.

While the primary emphasis of APTK is on sexual purity, the mentors are really promoting the dignity of the human person. APTK provides teens a venue whereby they are afforded the opportunity to teach what they believe. Finding opportunities to engage young adults in leadership positions is the right thing to do and is consistent with the Gospel message!

While I have shared the witness of only two young adults, there are many, many more just like them that hold dear the same values and are leaders in their families, schools and communities! The quote "Preach the Gospel at all times, when necessary, use words" describes profoundly many teens and young adults in our Church today. To God be the glory!

*(Margaret Hendricks is the archdiocesan coordinator for A Promise to Keep. E-mail her at [Mhendricks@archindy.org](mailto:Mhendricks@archindy.org). For additional testimonials, go to our website at [www.archindyym.com](http://www.archindyym.com).) †*

That All May Be One/Fr. Rick Ginter

## Common prayer among Christians promotes unity

*Ut unum sint.* That all may be one. At no other time of year is this longing of Christ for all Christians more evident than Jan. 18-25.

This is the period of the Church Unity Octave. Prayer among Christians seeking to express their longing for unity has been with us for more than a century.

The Church Unity Octave was first observed in January 1908. It begins with the feast of the Chair of St. Peter on Jan. 18, and concludes on the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul on Jan. 25. Those who observed it first were Anglo-Catholics (Episcopalians) and Roman Catholics, who gathered in a remote hillside chapel 50 miles from New York.

St. Pius X later gave his blessing to the Church Unity Octave. In 1916, Pope Benedict XV extended its observance to the universal Church. This recognition by papal authority gave the Octave its impetus throughout the Roman Catholic Church," notes Franciscan Father Timothy MacDonald, associate director of the Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute.

But there existed a barrier to common prayer among Christians. Roman Catholics and other Christians believed that they could not, in conscience, pray together. This was a vestige of the Reformation and its early mutual Catholic/Reformer condemnations.

In addition, the popes of the 19th century, though open to prayer for unity, insisted that this prayer be for the return to the Roman Catholic Church of other Christians. The views of the leaders of the Church on this pastoral practice developed until common prayer with other Christians became possible in 1964.

The Second Vatican Council's "Decree on Ecumenism" told Catholics that "in certain special circumstances, such as in prayer services for unity and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable, indeed desirable, that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren. Such prayers in common are certainly a very effective means of petitioning for the grace of unity, and they are a genuine expression of the ties which even now bind Catholics to their separated brethren" (#8).

In 1993, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity issued the "Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms of Ecumenism." It explicitly encouraged participation in the Church Unity Octave, which has become known as the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity." Today, the observance of the week of prayer belongs to all Christians sincerely interested in the fulfillment of Christ's prayer "that all may be one."

Sponsored by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and

the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, materials for the celebration of the Week of Prayer are the work of Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute in collaboration with the Commission on Faith and Order of the National Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Bishops' Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.

For more on the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and its history, log on to [www.geii.org](http://www.geii.org).

The next prayer service and its accompanying resources are based on a passage from the Gospel of John, in which Jesus asked the Samaritan woman: "Give me a drink" (Jn 4:7).

At 4 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 25, 2015, Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin will participate in a prayer service for Christian unity at SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis. Catholics from across central and southern Indiana are invited to participate in the service alongside Christians from other traditions.

In addition, a resource of daily prayer and reflection for home or group use spanning the days of Jan. 18-25 can be found at [www.saintpat.org](http://www.saintpat.org).

*(Father Rick Ginter is director of the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism. He is also dean of the Terre Haute deanery and pastor of St. Patrick and St. Margaret Mary parishes, both in Terre Haute.) †*

Faith and Family/Sean Gallagher

## Christ's birth shows us God's desire to be close to us

Babies like being carried around. Even when my 1-year-old son Colin can crawl from room to room, climb the stairs—especially when we're not looking—and is on the verge of taking his first steps, he still yearns to be held.

But kids obviously grow out of this stage. Part of it is that they just get too big to be hauled around. But psychology is involved, too.

As we grow older, we want to do things for ourselves. This is part of the natural maturing process.

So even if it were possible for us adults to be carried around like babies, we'd resist it. We like our independence too much.

Maybe that's why people who suffer from disabilities or older folks who find their ability to care for themselves degraded can struggle emotionally with their loss of independence.

Babies, on the other hand, don't have a problem with being dependent. In fact, they seem to crave it to such an extent that my wife, Cindy, and I find it a bit of a hardship.

I know there will come a day when we'll be sad that we can no longer carry our children. But we're not there yet.

As Colin has grown over the past year, I say more frequently, "Goodness, you're heavy," when I pick him up. And it's a daily frustration for Cindy to do household tasks one-handed while carrying Colin.

Babies desire being held primarily because they want to be close to other people, and perhaps their mother in particular.

This isn't surprising. After all, Colin was as close to Cindy as could be for the first nine months of his existence as he grew in her womb. It stands to figure that he'd want something of that closeness after his birth.

Many of these same realities about babies being held, their motivation, dependence and independence can help us see Christmas in a new spiritual light.

Christ could have come from heaven as a conquering hero. Many of the Jews of his day may have expected the Messiah to reveal himself in just that way.

But instead of manifesting himself to the world in a show of force, Jesus came among us in just the opposite way—in a total lack of power. He first showed himself to the world as a helpless, dependent baby who, almost more than anything else, just wanted to be held.

This desire was surely an expression of God's yearning for us to be close to him.

Isn't that at the heart of the meaning of Christmas? In being born in Bethlehem, Christ showed us how close God is to us and how close we can be to him.

His birth was the first step seen by the world at large—after his being conceived in the womb of Mary—in healing the breach between God and humanity caused by the fall of Adam and Eve.

The reconciliation of heaven and Earth was finally achieved in Christ's passion and death when Mary once more held in her arms her son—battered, bruised, dead, but soon to rise to a new and eternal life.

Christmas should renew in our hearts and minds the beautiful reality that, in Christ coming among us, we now can become children of our heavenly Father and be held forever in his arms. †



Fourth Sunday of Advent/Msgr. Owen F. Campion

# Sunday Readings

Sunday, December 21, 2014

- 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
- Romans 16:25-27
- Luke 1:26-38

The first reading for this weekend is from the Second Book of Samuel. The two Books of Samuel once were a single volume. Translations and editions over the centuries divided this one volume into two.



David is the principal figure in these books. The ancient Hebrews looked upon David much more than as a king. Beyond all else,

he was God's chosen representative, given kingship so that his laws and directives might provide an atmosphere in which the people more fervently could follow God and be loyal to the Covenant.

For this weekend's second reading, the Church offers us a reading from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

This epistle was Paul's masterpiece. It appears first in sequence among the 14 epistles attributed to Paul, placed in Bibles immediately following the Acts of the Apostles, because it is the longest of his letters.

As indicated by its title, Paul sent this letter to the Christians of Rome. In the first century, Rome was the center of the Mediterranean world in every respect—political, economic and cultural. It also was the largest city in the Roman Empire. Not surprisingly, this great imperial capital had within it a broad array of ideas and religions, Christianity among them.

In this weekend's reading, as often elsewhere, Paul asserts his own vocation as an Apostle, called by God so that "all the Gentiles" might believe in and obey God, "who alone is wise" (Rom 16:26).

For the final reading this weekend, the Church proclaims a beautiful part of the infancy narrative from St. Luke's Gospel. It is the story of the Annunciation, the event when the angel Gabriel came into the presence of Mary, a young Jewish

woman, in Nazareth in Galilee, to inform her that she would be the mother of the long-awaited Redeemer.

The reading abounds with meaning. Luke makes clear that Mary was a virgin, and that the conception of the Redeemer would not be the result of any human relationship. Behind this fact is the reality that God, as Creator and the provider of order to the universe, can do anything. He is almighty. The Redeemer will be the Son of God. He will be David's successor and, as such, a king.

His coming will fulfill God's promises, spoken by the prophets all through the ages, to bring life and salvation to the people. His birth will be the ultimate fulfillment of the ancient Covenant.

Vital to the message of the story is Mary's response: "I am the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say" (Lk 1:38). Only because of her faith and obedience was the Redeemer's birth enabled.

### Reflection

In each of these readings, the Church makes a very important point. God reaches out to us. He is not impossible to see or to hear. He is in Jesus.

The outreach occurs in the face of our own inadequacy and limitations. Blindness and weakness are not the only problems. We are marred by sin, distancing us from God. God is almighty. God is love. These are the most consoling points here.

God's great love for us prompts the dispatch of such leaders and teachers as David, Paul, and indeed the Lord Jesus, to guide us to union with God and therefore to peace in our hearts now and life in eternity.

So the Church closes Advent and approaches Christmas with a message of love. God loves us. He does not leave us helpless in our own powerlessness. He reaches to us to draw us to the divine presence itself. We are not doomed.

It is up to us to respond. Do we accept God? Or, do we turn God away? It is that simple. †

## Daily Readings

### Monday, December 22

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

### Tuesday, December 23

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

### Wednesday, December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16  
Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29  
Luke 1:67-69  
Vigil of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)  
Isaiah 62:1-5  
Psalm 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29  
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25  
Matthew 1:1-25  
or Matthew 1:18-25

### Thursday, December 25

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)  
Midnight  
Isaiah 9:1-6  
Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13  
Titus 2:11-14  
Luke 2:1-14  
Dawn  
Isaiah 62:11-12  
Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12  
Titus 3:4-7  
Luke 2:15-20  
Day  
Isaiah 52:7-10  
Psalm 98:1-6  
Hebrews 1:1-6  
John 1:1-18  
or John 1:1-5, 9-14

### Friday, December 26

St. Stephen, the first martyr  
Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59  
Psalm 31:3cd-4, 6-8b, 16bc, 17  
Matthew 10:17-22

continued on page 16

## Question Corner/Fr. Kenneth Doyle

# Applause from the congregation is not a fitting part of the worship at Mass

**Q**I have noticed that when the choir sings a piece of music especially well, someone inevitably starts to applaud and the rest of the congregation follows suit. I think that this detracts the solemnity of the Mass. Is it just me, or should applause be reserved for musical performances outside of Mass? (Georgia)



**A**The Church has no specific "rules" for or against applause at Mass, so we are

left to reason for ourselves according to what comports with the purpose and spirit of the liturgy. Fundamentally, I agree with your observation. The singing or playing of music during Mass is not a performance. It is meant to glorify God, sanctify the faithful and bring worshippers closer to the Lord.

All of which inclines me in the direction of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later to become Pope Benedict XVI), who wrote in 2000 in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* that "whenever applause breaks out in the liturgy because of some human achievement, it is a sure sign that the essence of the liturgy has totally disappeared and been replaced by a kind of religious entertainment."

There are moments in certain liturgical celebrations when applause is welcomed, although not explicitly called for. For example, in the ordination of a deacon, priest or bishop, there is a point at which the congregation is invited to give its approval to the candidate "according to local custom," which in the United States usually results in applause.

Apart from such instances, it seems inappropriate during Mass to break the flow of the liturgy and spirit of prayer by clapping. Having said that, we are properly grateful to pastoral musicians for adding beauty and reverence to the celebration of the Mass. Perhaps that gratitude could best be expressed once the closing hymn is completed—either by applause or by taking the time to compliment members of the choir personally.

**Q**In the past, we celebrated every fall the feast of Christ the King. But I notice that now this feast is called "Christ, King of the Universe," and that prompts

my question. The Nicene Creed says, "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and Earth, of all things visible and invisible." It seems to me that this makes God the Father the King of the universe, not Jesus Christ.

We know very little of what's out there beyond ourselves in the entire universe. Are there other solar systems with living beings created by God? Did those planets and cultures need to be saved also, as Christ did for the Earth's inhabitants? What is the basis for expanding the title of this feast? (Wisconsin)

**A**You are correct as to the current title of the feast. In 1925, as a response to growing nationalism and secularism, Pope Pius XI instituted the feast of Christ the King. He wanted to highlight the fact that the kingdom of Jesus was one not of pomp and power, but of love and service. It was then celebrated on the last Sunday of October.

In 1969, Blessed Paul VI gave the feast a new title and a new date. It is now called formally the solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, and is marked on the last Sunday of the liturgical year, one week before the first Sunday of Advent.

If you read further down in the Nicene Creed, it is said of Jesus that "through him all things were made," which I would take as a warrant for calling Christ the king of the universe itself, not just the sovereign of our small planet.

But your question raises an interesting topic: the possibility of intelligent life in other parts of the universe. On this matter, the Church has no fixed position, and the current name for the feast makes no declaration.

The matter of extraterrestrial life is a scientific question, not a theological one. Nothing in the Scriptures confirms or contradicts the possibility. The part that fascinates me is whether such beings would be fallen or unfallen? Would they need redemption? Would the Son of God have visited them as he came to live with us? We don't know. What we know is that Jesus showed us how to live and offers to us a path to heaven.

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

## My Journey to God



## A Christmas Toast

By Dr. C. David Hay

Let's tip a glass of Christmas Past  
And times we held so dear,  
For now's the time to reminisce  
And sip a bit of cheer.  
Dwell not on sorrow in our lives  
But raise our spirits high;  
Though cherished ones may go their way,  
Their memories never die.

Give prayer for virtues that we have,  
Forgive the ones we lack;  
Keep our sights on future goals

And failure at our back.  
Make a vow to treasured friends  
To always keep in touch—  
The things we take for granted  
Are the ones that mean so much.

Live our lives as best we can  
That peers may one day say:  
We left the world a better place  
Because we passed this way.

(Dr. C. David Hay is a member of St. Joseph University Parish in Terre Haute. Fireworks explode over the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on Dec. 6.) (CNS photo/Abel Al Hashlamoun, EPA)



# 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.

**BATTISTA, Mary**, 78, Holy Family, Richmond, Nov. 30. Mother of Patricia Buonsante, Lesa Leno, Norman and Ronald Battista. Sister of Hazel Weaver. Grandmother of 15. Great-grandmother of 14.

**BERRY, Mary Eileen (Chrisman)**, 83, Holy Cross, Indianapolis, Dec. 5. Mother of Laura DeMore, Kathleen Graham, Maureen Huck, Jennifer Pipkin, Edward and George Berry. Sister of Esther Butrum and Doris Wilson. Grandmother of eight.

**BUJWID, Marc J.**, 60, Our Lady of Providence, Brownstown, Nov. 30. Husband of Rebecca Bujwid.

**CARNEY, Marian**, 89, St. Patrick, Terre Haute, Dec. 3. Wife of Bernard Carney. Mother of Peg Finzel, Sue, Michael and

Patrick Carney. Sister of Harold Wuest. Grandmother of five.

**COFFEY, Rosamond**, 95, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Dec. 6. Mother of Barbara Marer, Anne Piersol, Deborah Sova and Tom Coffey. Sister of Raymond Loesch. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of one.

**DUFEK, Kathleen Florence**, 87, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Dec. 1. Mother of Paula DeLong and Suzanne Mulligan. Grandmother of seven. Great-grandmother of three.

**FLAMION, Irene**, 91, St. Paul, Tell City, Dec. 7. Mother of Linda Avenatti, Carolyn Pfeiffer, Diana Wright, Ralph and Roger Flamion. Sister of Christine Hawkins. Grandmother of nine. Great-grandmother of 10.

**FOLTZ, Joan**, 81, St. Andrew, Richmond, Dec. 2. Mother of Nancy Grubb, Diana Sjuts and Dan Foltz. Grandmother of five. Great-grandmother of one.

**FRY, Velma I.**, 88, Immaculate Conception, Millhousen, Dec. 4. Mother of Donald and Kenneth Fry. Sister of Wanda Meyer and Carol Young. Grandmother of six. Great-grandmother of five.

**HANLEY, Bernard Martin**, 88, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Nov. 27. Father



## Christmas in Vienna

People pack into the popular Christkindmarkt to shop and see the Christmas illuminations in Vienna's Rathauspark on Dec. 8. Vienna is known for its outdoor Christmas markets with handcrafted Christmas ornaments, which are popular destinations for locals and tourists during Advent. (CNS photo/Chaz Muth)

of Melissa Murphy, Lawrence Shotts and Thomas Hanley. Brother of Regina, David, Joseph, Martin and Richard Hanley. Grandfather of six. Great-grandfather of four.

**HERTEL, Julie A.**, 54, St. Gabriel, Connersville, Dec. 6. Wife of Scott Hertel. Mother of Megan Weber, Brady and Dustin Hertel. Sister of Tammy Sharp. Grandmother of four.

**HILL, Rose Marie**, 55, Sacred Heart, Clinton, Nov. 24. Wife of Larry Hill. Mother of Katie Wilson and Grant Hill. Daughter of Irvin Major. Sister

of Andy Padish, John and Tony Major. Grandmother of two.

**KUEBEL, Philma Martha**, 76, St. Lawrence, Lawrenceburg, Dec. 3. Mother of Linda Caseltine, Della Graf, Marita McNimary and Maurice Kuebel. Sister of Virginia Back, Rosemary Hountz and Marcella Schutte. Grandmother of three.

**KULESA, Joseph M.**, 88, St. Pius X, Indianapolis, Dec. 6. Husband of Elizabeth Kulesa. Father of Christine Collins, Carol Siniawski, Constance Tellman and Joseph Kulesa. Brother of Frances Dubczak, Edmond and

Raymond Kulesa. Grandfather of 11. Great-grandfather of three.

**LAUDICK, Rick**, 56, St. Mary, Greensburg, Dec. 3. Father of Rikki Hege. Son of John and Mila Laudick. Brother of Jane Eckert, Julie Himes, Linda Humpert and Denny Laudick. Grandfather of four.

**LOREY, Albert Joseph, Jr.**, 82, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville, Nov. 30. Father of Karen Muntz, Diana Willoughby, David, Garry, Jeffrey, Joseph and Ralph Lorey. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of 18.

**McCABE, Linda**, 66, St. Mary, New Albany, Dec. 3. Wife of Michael McCabe. Mother of Christopher and Kyle McCabe. Sister of Jill Crompton, Kerry Rike and Pat Evans.

**MUSSIO, Victor L.**, 82, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Dec. 1. Father of Debra Duke and Vicki Teverbaugh Feazell. Grandfather of two. Great-grandfather of one.

**PRINCE, Sue Ann (Burlton)**, 77, St. Martin of Tours, Martinsville, Dec. 8. Mother of Joyce Deem, Pam Taylor, Dennis, Mark and Mike Prince. Grandmother of 13. Great-grandmother of 16.

**REWARD, Nancy (Sahm)**, 84, St. Joan of Arc, Indianapolis, Nov. 25. Mother of Teresa Miller, Josie Shannon, Charles,

Jimmie, Thomas and William Revard. Sister of Walter Sahm. Grandmother of 12. Great-grandmother of eight.

**RUSSELL, Andrew P.**, 40, St. Bartholomew, Columbus, Dec. 2. Father of Anna, Eleanor and Charlie Russell. Son of Louis and Karen Russell. Brother of Regan Littrell.

**SANDERS, Major Virginia**, USAF, Retired, 43, St. Jude, Indianapolis, Dec. 9. Mother of Abigail, Cecelia and Torey Dunn II. Daughter of William Sanders. Sister of Veronica Thatcher, Mary Bill and Chris Sanders.

**SEVILLE, Genevieve J.**, 90, St. Ambrose, Seymour, Nov. 25. Mother of Kevin Seville. Grandmother of three. Great-grandmother of four.

**SPENCER, Sharon L.**, 70, St. Christopher, Indianapolis, Dec. 5. Mother of Shelly Sabo and Tom Spencer. Grandmother of four.

**WALLACE, Roland W.**, 78, St. Mary, Navilleton, Nov. 26. Husband of LaVerne (End) Wallace. Father of Janet Kruer, Jill, Brian, Jerry and Michael Wallace. Brother of Joyce Pruhs, Kay Wise and Richard Wallace. Grandfather of 10. Great-grandfather of one. †

### At this holiday season

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul expresses its grateful THANK YOU ...to our volunteers who donate their time so selflessly ...to our donors who contribute their financial support so generously ...to our clients who teach us the value of resilience so hopefully ...to Our Heavenly Father for the supreme gift of His Divine Son.

May the peace and joy of the Christ Child be with you this Christmas season.



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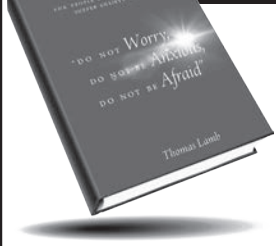


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# Bedford parish celebrates 150 years, reaches out to community

By Sean Gallagher

The Catholic population has never been dominant in Lawrence County.

To this day, Catholics make up only approximately 4 percent of the southern Indiana county's population.

But throughout much of the 150-year history of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Bedford, Catholics in Lawrence County have been prominent in the broader community from the pride they've taken in their beautiful limestone church to their outreach to all people in need.

"Their desire and hope and their love for God and the Church—plus their sacrifice of time, talent and treasure—has been a rich foundation," said Father Richard Eldred, St. Vincent's pastor since 2005. "It shows in the church building ... and, more importantly, in the family of God here."

Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin gathered on Oct. 26 with Father Eldred, other priests who have served in the parish and many of its members to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its founding by celebrating a festive Mass and sharing a catered meal afterward.

The Mass was celebrated in the parish's church building, which was built in 1893 with limestone quarried in the local area. Known at the time as the "Cathedral of Southern Indiana," it was designed by its then-pastor, Father John Bogemann, and featured stained-glass windows made in Belgium and purchased at the 1893 World Fair in Chicago.

Many members of the parish at the time worked in the local limestone industry and sculpted the church's altars and Communion rail.

At 83 and a member of the parish for most of his life, Bob Drehobl has experienced more than half its history. He attended the anniversary Mass and dinner.

"It was a good celebration," said Drehobl. "There were memories. And we were looking forward to the future."

In an interview with *The Criterion*, he recalled Father William Boland, pastor of the parish from 1935-47.

"Father Boland was a soft-hearted, easygoing priest," Drehobl said. "But he looked like he was going to tear you apart when you came up to him. He was very stern looking, but very soft."

He said a later pastor, Father Lawrence Weinzapfel, was an effective leader who helped the parish build a new school building in the early 1960s when an older facility had been condemned.

"He seemed to be able to get things done without any problems," Drehobl said. "He raised the funds for the new school before we even broke ground for it. It just happened so easily."

The people at the parish also made an impression on Drehobl when he was a teenager. At the time, his mother was suffering from tuberculosis, and he had a brother who was also hospitalized. His father was frequently away from



Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin celebrates Mass on Oct. 26 at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Bedford during a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Bloomington Deanery faith community. Assisting at the Mass are Deacon David Reising, left, and Loral Tansy, master of ceremonies. Concelebrating at the Mass are Father Rick Eldred, pastor of the parish, Jesuit Father Jack Heims and Msgr. Frederick Easton. (Submitted photo)

home taking care of the sick members of the family, so his Catholic neighbors pitched in to help.

"The families who lived around us were primarily Catholic," he said. "[They] were always looking after us, taking care of us, making sure we had plenty to eat and [going] to school."

The faith that has been instilled in the members of St. Vincent de Paul served as a support for longtime parishioner Linda Fitzpatrick when her husband died 31 years ago when she was 43.

"I got more involved in the parish after he passed away," said Fitzpatrick, 74. "I joined the choir and became the youth minister, in fact. I worked very hard [in that] for eight years. ... I got a lot of support from the parish."

The foundation of Fitzpatrick's faith had been laid when she was educated by Franciscan sisters in the parish's school.

The Catholic population of Lawrence County was small then, much like it is now. The parish served as the setting for much of the social life of the faithful of the area.

"Back in the 1940s and '50s, the parish was your social life," she said. "We had a little drum and bugle corps and a little orchestra [in the school]. The ladies [of the parish] would have bazaars and dinners in the upstairs auditorium in the old school. That's just where your social life was."

Even though the Catholic population of Lawrence County has always been relatively small, Drehobl said that they've always reached out to help others.

Today, members of the parish are active in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, which operates a successful thrift store on land leased from the parish.

It also helped start Becky's House, a homeless shelter in Bedford for women and children that is operated by archdiocesan Catholic Charities.

Father Eldred noted that much of this outreach involves Catholics of Lawrence County collaborating with members of other Christian congregations in the area.

"At times, you can't tell who belongs to what congregation," Father Eldred said. "We're just there doing God's work. And yet, we brought in close to 20 people into the Church last year in the [Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]. We're still welcoming and inviting ..."

Father Eldred credits much of the parish's outreach to help people in need and in evangelization to the prayers offered up 24 hours a day in the parish's perpetual adoration chapel, which was established shortly before he became pastor.

"It has to be the people's prayers," he said. "The enrollment in our school is up. The attitude of unity and excitement is positive." †

## ELSENER

continued from page 4

university. We're competing for national championships in football and cycling on a regular basis. If you want to be a part of a growing organization that is transforming our community and beyond, Marian University is the place to be!

When we say that we're preparing students to be "transformational leaders,"

we mean that we want all Marian graduates—regardless of their religious background or faith tradition—to be women and men of character who embody the Catholic Franciscan values that set us apart from the other great universities in Indianapolis and central Indiana.

We take as our model the Blessed Virgin Mary, our patroness. We acknowledge Mary as the "*Sedes Sapientiae*" ("Seat of Wisdom") whose humility, courage and fidelity to

God's will made her the first Christian disciple—a servant leader who inspires all who know her to follow Jesus, her son, and to "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).

There's an old joke that goes something like this: "Father, does Jesus care which team wins our championship football game?" the eager fan asked. "No," the priest replied, "but his mother does."

At Marian University, we believe that Mary, our mother and our patroness, cares deeply not about winning or losing, but

about forming leaders who will make a difference in their personal lives, in their families, in business and their professions, and in service to the Church and to the communities they will serve.

Please join all of us at Marian University in supporting the Football Knights, and all our students, as they prepare for victory on the playing field and in their daily lives.

(Daniel Elsenner is president of Marian University in Indianapolis.) †

## PACHOLCZYK

continued from page 4

As we reflect on the ethics surrounding new medical treatments and technologies, it can help us to recall the general principle, enshrined in the *Catechism of the*

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*Catholic Church*, that the morality of a human act depends on three factors: the object, the end, and the circumstances involved. An act is morally good only if all three of these factors are morally good. If any one of them is bad, we recognize that the overall act itself becomes morally bad.

For example, a diva using her voice to sing a passage from a famous opera has the morally good *object* of performing a beautiful and artistic musical composition. The *end* for which a diva might sing would be to perfect her singing skills—also morally good. But if she decides to do it at 3 a.m. in a dormitory, so that it disturbs the sleep of her neighbors, then the *circumstances* would not be good, and we would conclude that the action of singing in that way by the diva is, in fact, morally bad.

In the case of carrying out a womb transplant, the object of the act would be good, namely, to restore a woman's bodily wholeness by transplanting a healthy womb in situations where she lacks one. The end for which the womb transplant would be carried out would also be good, namely, to achieve a pregnancy.

But particular circumstances can easily render the womb transplant immoral. If the transplant were done for the purposes of pursuing a pregnancy through IVF, this circumstance would render the entire act of the womb transplant morally bad and disordered, given that IVF is invariably immoral as a means to engender new human life. All reported instances thus far of womb transplants followed by successful pregnancies have arisen because of the use of IVF.

A similar problem with the circumstances of the transplant could arise if the womb that was used for transplant had been donated by a healthy woman still in her reproductive years, who harbored a contraceptive intention and no longer desired to have more children of her own with her husband. In such a situation, her uterine donation would cause her to become sterile, and would represent a seriously flawed moral circumstance that would likewise render the action of receiving the transplanted womb unethical on the part of the other woman.

When might a womb transplant be morally acceptable? If a uterus were transplanted from either a deceased or a freely-consenting, post-menopausal woman to another woman whose ovaries, fallopian tubes and other reproductive tissues were then able to function so she could conceive a child within the marital embrace, rather than through IVF (and assuming minimal medical risks to both donor and recipient), the womb transplant could represent an ethical means of resolving her uterine-factor infertility.

In conclusion, the specific circumstances of both the donor and recipient are crucial in discerning the ethical appropriateness of this unusual procedure.

(Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience at Yale University and did post-doctoral work at Harvard University. He is a priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as director of education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See [www.ncbcenter.org](http://www.ncbcenter.org).) †



## Daily Readings Cont.

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### Saturday, December 27

St. John, Apostle and evangelist  
1 John 1:1-4  
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12  
John 20:2-8

### Sunday, December 28

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph  
Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14  
or Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3  
Psalm 128:1-5  
or Psalm 105:1-6, 8-9  
Colossians 3:12-21  
or Colossians 3:12-17  
or Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19  
Luke 2:22-40  
or Luke 2:22, 39-40

### Monday, December 29

St. Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr  
1 John 2:3-11  
Psalm 96:1-3, 5b-6  
Luke 2:22-35

### Tuesday, December 30

Sixth Day within the Octave of Christmas  
1 John 2:12-17  
Psalm 96:7-10  
Luke 2:36-40

### Wednesday, December 31

St. Sylvester I, pope  
1 John 2:18-21  
Psalm 96:1-2, 11-13  
John 1:1-18

### Thursday, January 1

The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord: Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God  
Numbers 6:22-27  
Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:16-21

### Friday, January 2

St. Basil the Great, bishop and doctor of the Church  
St. Gregory Nazianzen, bishop and doctor of the Church  
1 John 2:22-28  
Psalm 98:1-4  
John 1:19-28

### Saturday, January 3

The Most Holy Name of Jesus  
1 John 2:29-3:6  
Psalm 98:1, 3cd-4, 5-6  
John 1:29-34

### Sunday, January 4

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, January 5

St. John Neumann, bishop  
1 John 3:22-4:6  
Psalm 2:7bc-8, 10-12a  
Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

### Tuesday, January 6

St. André Bessette, religious  
1 John 4:7-10  
Psalm 72:1-4, 7-8  
Mark 6:34-44

### Wednesday, January 7

St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest  
1 John 4:11-8  
Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13  
Mark 6:45-52

### Thursday, January 8

1 John 4:19-5:4  
Psalm 72:1-2, 14, 15bc, 17  
Luke 4:14-22a

### Friday, January 9

1 John 5:5-13  
Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20  
Luke 5:12-16

### Saturday, January 10

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

### Sunday, January 11

The Baptism of the Lord  
Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7  
or Isaiah 55:1-11  
Psalm 29:1-2, 3-4, 9-10  
or (Response) Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6  
Acts 10:34-38  
or 1 John 5:1-9  
Mark 1:7-11

## Count down to Christmas by counting your blessings, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—No saint was ever known for having a “funeral face,” Pope Francis said. The joy of knowing one is loved by God and saved by Christ must be seen at least in a sense of peace, if not a smile.

Celebrating the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, on Dec. 14, Pope Francis paid an evening visit to Rome’s St. Joseph Parish, meeting with the sick, with a group of Gypsies, with a first Communion class and with dozens of couples whose newborn babies were baptized in the past year.

“Be joyful as you prepare for Christmas,” he told them at Mass, urging as a first step that people thank God each day for the blessings they have been given.

A Christian’s Christmas joy has nothing to do with “the consumerism that leads to everyone being anxious [on] Dec. 24 because, ‘Oh, I don’t have this, I need that’—no, that is not God’s joy.”

With Christmas “less than 15 days away, no 13 days, let us pray. Don’t forget, we pray for Christmas joy. We give thanks to God for the many things he has given us and for faith, first of all.”

Earlier in the day, reciting the Angelus with visitors in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis blessed the statues of the Baby Jesus that will take center place in Nativity scenes in Rome schools, churches and homes. Addressing the children who brought their figurines to the square, the pope said, “When you pray in front of your creche at home, remember to pray for me, like I will remember you.”

At the end of the Angelus, volunteers distributed a little booklet, marked “gift of Pope Francis,” containing the texts of the Our Father and Hail Mary and other “traditional prayers,” as well as prayers drawn from the Psalms and the “five-finger prayer.” Using the fingers on one hand, the prayer guides people in praying for those closest to them, for those who teach, for those who govern, for those who



A man holds a figurine of the baby Jesus as Pope Francis leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on Dec. 14. The pope blessed figurines of the baby Jesus held by people in the square. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

are weak and—on the pinkie or smallest finger—for one’s own humility.

“The human heart desires joy,” the pope said in his Angelus address. “We all want joy; every family, all peoples aspire to joy. But what kind of joy are Christians called to witness? It is that joy that comes from closeness to God and from his presence in our lives.

“A Christian is one who has a heart full of peace because he or she knows how to find joy in the Lord even when going through difficult moments in life,” he said. “Having faith does not mean not having difficulties, but having the strength to face them knowing that we are not alone.”

When joy or at least peace shines through a person’s face, he said, others will wonder why, opening the possibility of sharing with them the Gospel. †

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— Mother Teresa

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