Pope, bishops pray for victims of Egyptian mosque attack

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis led pilgrims in prayer for the victims of a bombing at a mosque in Egypt’s northern Sinai region.

Addressing thousands of people gathered in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis said he received news of the attack with “great sorrow.”

“May God deliver us from those tragedies and sustain the efforts of all those who work for peace, harmony and coexistence,” the pope said after reciting the Angelus on the feast of Christ the King on Nov. 26.

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), was among other Catholic leaders who condemned the attack, calling it a “monstrous terrorist attack on innocent people at prayer.”

The Nov. 24 attack took place at the Al-Rawdah Mosque in Bir al-Abd. More than 300 people, including two dozen children, were killed when at least 40 attackers detonated a bomb, then gunned down worshippers as they fled. More than 120 others were wounded in what is being described as the deadliest modern-day attack in Egypt’s history.

The Egyptian prosecutor’s office said it believed the attack was coordinated by Islamic State militants and was targeting Muslims who practice Sufism, an Islamic mysticism.

Remembering the victims and the wounded, Pope Francis called on Christians to pray for those who were “so severely affected” by the attack that occurred during prayers at the mosque.

“If the people, in that moment, prayed. We, too, in silence, pray for them,” he said. Following news of the bombing, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said the pope was “profoundly grieved” by the loss of life and condemned the attack as a “wanton act of brutality.”

The Egyptian prosecutor’s office said it believed the attack was coordinated by Islamic State militants and was targeting Muslims who practice Sufism, an Islamic mysticism.

And consider this story about John. He had just finished making height-appropriate tables in the second-grade classroom of teacher Ian Narwold when she rewarded him with some candy. Yet on the way out of the classroom, John gave the treat to a second-grader who he had noticed was working hard.

“I think someone who is working hard and paying attention to the teacher deserves it more,” John says about the gesture.

Gifts of the hands and heart

Seventh-grader John Meer can be seen at St. Louis School in Batesville with his tool kit, including a hammer or two, as he selflessly serves the school community taking care of repairs. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Handy seventh-grader leaves his mark on the lives of students and teachers

BATESVILLE—The more you learn about 13-year-old John Meer, the more you keep smiling.

Consider this story about John, a seventh-grader whose ability to fix things with his hands may only be surpassed by the way he uses his heart to carve a special place in the lives of the students and teachers at St. Louis School in Batesville.

A couple of years ago, a classmate had a wobbly desk, so John brought in an Allen wrench to tighten it and a 5-foot-long level to check it. And ever since, he’s been using his time before school and even during recess to secure bookcases, fix broken chairs, repair picture frames and tighten wobbly desks around the school.

“I was just thinking one day, while I was eating my lunch, of all the things the teachers had done for me through the years, and I just wanted to pay them back for it,” he explains. “I help my mom a lot in the kitchen, too, because she helps me with my homework. I even made breakfast in bed for her on her birthday, but she didn’t eat it there because it would be too messy.”

NAYPYITAW, Myanmar (CNS)—The plight of the ethnic Muslim minority in Myanmar’s Rakhine state was front and center in speeches by Pope Francis and Aung San Suu Kyi, but neither publicly used the word Rohingya.

After private meetings on Nov. 28 with Myanmarese President Htin Kyaw and Suu Kyi, the state counselor and de facto head of government, the pope and Suu Kyi gave formal speeches to government officials and diplomats gathered at a convention center in Naypyitaw, the nation’s capital.

Suu Kyi, leader of the process to bring democracy to Myanmar and winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, publicly acknowledged. “Of the many challenges that our government has been facing, the situation in Rakhine has most strongly captured the attention of the world. As we address long-standing issues—social, economic and political—that have...
points that guide John’s life—fixing things and helping others. As the sixth of nine children of Nancy and Clifford “Kip” Meer, John has been pitching in on the family farm near Batesville for as long as he can remember, and trying to follow in his father’s footsteps for just as long.

“He’s just inspired me over the years,” John says about his dad. “I’ve been in the woodshop here and there. I’ve built things. I made a lamp. I made a step stool that you can flip back and it’s a chair. I like doing electrical work, too. And I can swing a hammer as well as I can swing an axe.”

Still, the gifts of his heart outshine the talents of his hands, say the people who have watched him grow up at St. Louis School through the years.

“John inspires me and everyone around him to serve others selflessly with the gifts that God has given us,” says Jenny Lents, a seventh-grade teacher who has had her desk chair repaired by John. “He continually asks how he may be of help, and if he is given any treats for his service, he gives them away to another student.”

“He has a heart of gold, and he knows his stuff,” says first-grade teacher Jessica Laker, who had a wooden bookcase in her classroom repaired by John. “He always asks if there’s anything he can do. He even read a chapter of a book to my first-graders the other day.”

Ian Narwold notes that her second-grade students “look up to John, and try to be like him. John is living out the Catholic faith. He’s helping.”

John’s contributions of hands and heart recently led to another memorable moment at St. Louis School.

“He’s giving back the best way he can”

A few weeks ago, a representative of a catalog company came to the school with some sample products to show the principal, Chad Moeller. One of the items immediately caught Moeller’s attention—a ratchet tool kit.

Knowing that John often borrows tools from him or maintenance director Wade Laker, Moeller thought the tool kit would be a nice gift for John for all he has done at the school. The principal also arranged a presentation during which some of the teachers gave the tool kit to John. It’s the one reward that John has kept for himself.

“I thought the teachers at St. Louis must like me a lot to give me this,” John says, smiling. “It made me feel happy that I’m a student at St. Louis, and they allow me to do what I like to do.”

What John does best, Moeller says, is serve as a role model—for children and adults.

“John has found a way to use his passion and skill to give back to the teachers and school that he loves,” the principal says. “He’s giving back the best way he can.”

On this morning during recess, John carries the tool kit with him as he walks into the first-grade classroom where he is scheduled to give a presentation on the careful use of tools the day before. When they see him, the first-graders smile at him and approach him easily.

“As you can see, I have a lot of student friends,” John says.

Moments later, he’s stopping in the second-grade classroom of Narwold. After a few moments there, he starts to head toward the door and back to his seventh-grade classroom. Pausing for a moment, he turns to Narwold and smiles as he says, “Anything you need fixed today, my door is always open.”

Readers are invited to share favorite Christmas memories

The Criterion invites readers to submit a brief story about a special holiday memory for possible inclusion in our annual Christmas issue, which will be published on Dec. 22.

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

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

Send your story to The Criterion, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46202 or by e-mail to editor Mike Krokos at mkrokos@criterionindy.org by the Dec. 12 deadline. †

In Washington on the day of the attack, Cardinal DiNardo said: “Terrorist acts can never be justified in the name of God or any political ideology, and the fact this attack took place at a mosque, a place of worship, is especially offensive to God.”

“The Catholic Church in the United States mourns with the people of Egypt at this time of tragedy, and assures them of our prayerful solidarity,” Cardinal DiNardo said in a statement. †

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Pope Francis urges bishops to exercise authority as judges in annulments

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—A diocesan bishop is the sole judge in the streamlined process for handling marriage annulments, Pope Francis said.

The simplified process “is not an option or ‘brieff’ process,” applies only to cases that meet certain specific conditions. The pope made his remarks during an audience on Nov. 25 with canon lawyers, phases of the briefer process, the pope said.

This process, known as the “abbreviated” or “briefer” process, applies only to cases that meet certain specific conditions.

The pope encouraged them to be close to those who are suffering and who expect help “to restore peace to their consciences and God’s will on readmission to the Eucharist.” The new process “is an expression of the Church that is able to welcome and care for those who are wounded in various ways by life and, at the same time, it is an appeal for the defense of the sacredness of the marriage bond,” he said.

Pope Francis used the occasion to clarify and strongly emphasize a bishop should not delegate completely the duty of deciding marriage cases to the offices of his curia, especially in the streamlined process for handling cases of clear nullity that were established with new norms that took effect at the end of 2015. The norms were outlined in two papal documents, “Mitis Inde Dominus Iesus” (“The Lord Jesus, the Gentle Judge”) for the Latin Church and “Mitis et misericors Iesus” (“The Meek and Merciful Jesus”) for the Eastern Catholic Churches.

Pointing out the clear role of the diocesan bishop as sole judge in the briefer process was meant to help apply the new laws and increasingly recover an appropriate practice of sainthood, he said.

The diocesan bishop has always been charged with exercising judicial power personelly or through others, but, the pope said, that principle has been interpreted in such a way that the bishop no longer personally exercises that power and delegates “almost everything to the tribunals.”

Given the unique nature of the abbreviated process in determining the nullity of marriages, the pope set out a number of points that he deemed to be “decisive and exclusive in the personal exercise of the role of judge by the diocesan bishop.”

The abbreviated process was to simplify and speed up the processes necessary to determine and declare the truth about the nullity of a marriage, in other words, declaring that it never existed as a valid sacrament.

The changes, the pope wrote in 2015, were motivated by “concern for the salvation of souls,” and particularly “charity and mercy” toward those who felt alienated from the Church because of their marriage situations and the perceived complexity of the Church’s annulment process.

By John Shaughnessy

Collection assisting retired religious offers a way to say thanks


Thank YOU for being one good person.

For more on the Retirement Fund for Religious, go to retiredreligious.org.
Mass is not a show, but a beautiful, transformative encounter with Jesus

Pope Francis has taken notice of how some of us Catholic Christians behave during Mass. And if his recent comments are any indication, we would do well to slow down, center ourselves in those times and always remember that taking part in a liturgy and receiving the Eucharist are, as the bishops at the Second Vatican Council taught, “the source and summit of the Christian life.”

In his recent Wednesday general audience talks at the Vatican on the liturgy, Pope Francis has reflected on what the Mass really is and why it is so important. But in the process, he has also let our family of faith know in no uncertain terms that some of us fail to focus our hearts on God during this time.

“Our faith teaches us that the Eucharist is the focal point of God’s saving action. Jesus making himself present in the bread, ‘broken for us, saving act, Jesus making himself present in the bread, “broken for us, our family and I see so many cellphones in the air,” the pope said. “And not just by the lay faithful, some priests and bishops, too.”

But our Holy Father also reminds us, the Mass, as a “memorial,” is more than just remembering an event from the past. It makes that event present and alive in a way that transforms those who participate in it. If we’re being honest with ourselves, not even a photograph can duplicate that.

Every celebration of the Eucharist is a beam of that sun that never sets, which a beam of that sun that never sets, which...
Waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ

Este fin de semana celebramos el primer Domingo de Adviento. Parece mentira, ¿verdad? Cúlmina otro año eclesiástico y comenzamos nuevamente a observar el año de gracia, la temporada litúrgica que define nuestro culto y nuestro ejercicio de fe cristiana.

El Adviento es una temporada litúrgica especialmente viva. Es rica en simbolismo y referencias a personajes muy reales del Antiguo Testamento, entre ellos, el profeta Isaías y el pueblo de Israel, hearken from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth, rouse your power, and come to save us” so that we “will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your Name” (Ps 80:2-3,19).

The truth is that we have turned away from God, and our guilt has carried us away like the wind. Now we need the help of God’s grace to see what is right in front of us—the loving mercy of God who has never left us and who welcomes us home to his loving arms.

Advent is a season of grace, a time of year when we “wait for the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:7). This “revelation” is not something esoteric or complicated. It is a person, Jesus Christ himself, who comes to us in many diverse ways and invites us to be united with him.

Advent is a period of waiting, a time of expectation and longing. Advent prepares us to celebrate Christmas without falling into the trap of superficial or unrealistic expectations. It teaches us that the greatest gift of Christmas is the Lord, and not just the second coming of Christ. Advent shows us that a personal encounter with Jesus Christ is what we truly need, and that his coming again—this Eucharist, at Christmas and at the end of time—will be a source of everlasting joy.

Advent is the Church’s way of helping us keep our eyes open. It’s also a season filled with reminders that the Lord is coming “whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning” (Mk 13:33-37).

May he not come suddenly and find us asleep at the wheel. May we use this holy season to help us remember the mystery that God is-with-us at all times—yet to come. A season of waiting and preparation is always. It reminds us that all the joys we hope for at this time of year (and always) reminds us that all the joys of Christmas, and of the Lord’s second coming, come to us—if we learn to wait for them prayerfully.

Each time we celebrate Mass, we acknowledge that we are waiting for the Blessed Hope, Jesus, to come again. This waiting is easier said than done. It requires patience, trust and a firm belief that God will hear and answer our prayers. We hope that the Lord will give us everything we desire and need, and that his coming again—this Eucharist, at Christmas and at the end of time—will be a source of everlasting joy.

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December 5
McCauley Centre, 702 North Shore Dr, Jeffersonville. Professional Advisors Professional Development Seminar, for attorneys, accountants, financial advisors and life insurance representatives, addressing Catholic Community Foundation, Ethics in Charitable Estate Planning, Gift Planning with Retirement Plans, 8:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. fee, includes continental breakfast and box lunch, registration required at www.archindy.org. 317-236-1482, cf@archindy.org.

Mission 27 Resale, 132 Leota St., Indianapolis. Senior Discount Day, every Tuesday, seniors get 30 percent off clothing, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., ministry supports Indianapolis St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Providence Spirituality & Development Center, 702 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Double. Information: 812-535-2952, provctr@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org/providence-center/events. December 6
Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Solo Seniors, Catholic, educational, charitable and social singles, 50 and over, single, separated, widowed or divorced. New members welcome: 6 p.m. Information: 317-245-0777.

Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center, 1400 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Professional Advisors Professional Development Seminar for attorneys, accountants, financial advisors and life insurance representatives, addressing Catholic Community Foundation, Ethics in Charitable Estate Planning, Gift Planning with Retirement Plans, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., free, includes continental breakfast and box lunch, registration required at www.archindy.org. 317-236-1482, cf@archindy.org.

December 7

December 9
Sisters of Providence Motherhouse Grounds, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana. Poetry as Spiritual Practice: Reading, Praying and Writing. Providence Sister Mary Montgomery presenting, read, write and share poetry as prayer and life experience, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., $45 includes lunch. Registration deadline: Jan. 15. Information and registration: 317-555-2952, provsac@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org/providence-center/events.

January 20
Providence Spirituality & Conference Center, 1 Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana. Poetry as Spiritual Practice: Reading, Praying and Writing. Providence Sister Mary Montgomery presenting, read, write and share poetry as prayer and life experience, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., $45 includes lunch. Registration deadline: Jan. 15. Information and registration: 317-555-2952, provsac@spsmw.org or www.spsmw.org/providence-center/events.

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

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

December 15-17
Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guest House and Retreat Center, 200 Hill Dr, St. Meinrad. Sing Yo Noil, Benedictine Father Noel Mueller, 5255 single, $425 double. Information: 812-357-6585 or noie@smac.edu.

January 16

VIPS
Joseph B. and Mary Ann (Kelly) Klein, members of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 1. The couple was married at St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 1, 1967. They have three children: Carrie Fazio, Kristopher and Matthew Klein. The couple also has three grandchildren. The couple will celebrate with a family dinner.

Mark and Mary Jane (Hahn) Felts, members of Holy Spirit Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary on Dec. 2. The couple was married at the former Holy Cross Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 2, 1987. They have four children: Chris, Mike, Nick and Tony Felts. The couple also has 12 grandchildren.

Paul J. and Jean L. (Meister) McMullen, members of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Stillwater, Okla., and former members of the archdiocese, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 2. The couple was married at the former St. Bernadette Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 2, 1967. They have five children: Jennifer Kurena, Kristopher, Matthew and Matthew Klein. The couple also has 12 grandchildren.

A celebration was held with family and friends in Indiana on Oct. 1.

Bake Sale benefitting sisters to be held at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods on Dec. 9

The Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods and the Providence Associates will host a bake sale at O’Shaughnessy Dining Hall, 1 Sisters of Providence, Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, from 12:30 p.m.-4:30 p.m. on Dec. 9. Items for sale include cookies, brownies, pies, fudge and cakes, and sweet breads baked by Providence Sister Rosemary Schmale and other Sisters of Providence.

Most items will be available for a free will offering, and all proceeds from the bake sale will go to the sisters and their ministries in education, health, service and advocacy.

For more information, contact Providence Associate, free, to director Debbie Dillon at 317-250-3294 or debdillo@spsmw.org.

Vox Sacra (Sacred Voice) to hold Advent and Christmas concert on Dec. 16

The Schaefer Cantorum of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, is presenting its second annual concert of Advent and Christmas music at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Kanesville Street, in Indianapolis, at 7 p.m. on Dec. 16. It will feature works by Byrd, Sweelinck, Vaughan Williams and more.

For more information, contact the archdiocesan Office of Worship and Evangelization at 317-236-1483, 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1483, cml@archindy.org or visit www.voxsacra.com.

Vox Sacra (Sacred Voice), the Schola Cantorum of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, is presenting its second annual concert of Advent and Christmas music at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, 1530 Kanesville Street, in Indianapolis, at 7 p.m. on Dec. 16.

St. Bernadette Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 2, 1967. The couple has three children: Carrie Fazio, Kristopher and Matthew Klein. The couple also has three grandchildren. The couple will celebrate with a family dinner.

Saints for a day
Eighth-grade students from St. Nicholas School in Ripley County pose in the costumes they wore for an All Saints’ Day litl at St. Jose Sanchez del Rio they wrote and performed for the school on Nov. 2. Pictured in the front row are Nathan Schuman, left, Rebecca KrSby, Anna Hudsolop, Levi Ludwig and Gregory Kline. In the back row are Andrew Rennkamp, left, Dylan Steward and Andrew Strzok. (Submitted photo)

Saints for a day
Eighth-grade students from St. Nicholas School in Ripley County pose in the costumes they wore for an All Saints’ Day litl at St. Jose Sanchez del Rio they wrote and performed for the school on Nov. 2. Pictured in the front row are Nathan Schuman, left, Rebecca KrSby, Anna Hudsolop, Levi Ludwig and Gregory Kline. In the back row are Andrew Rennkamp, left, Dylan Steward and Andrew Strzok. (Submitted photo)
Parishes throughout the archdiocese have scheduled communal penance services for Advent. The following is a list of services that have been reported to The Criterion.

**Batesville Deanery**
- Dec. 1, 6 p.m. at St. Mary, Greensburg
- Dec. 2, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, Beech Grove
- Dec. 3, 6 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Shelby County
- Dec. 4, 7 p.m. at St. Vincent de Paul, Napoleon
- Dec. 5, 6-7 p.m. at St. Mary, Rushville
- Dec. 6, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Philip Neri, Greensfield
- Dec. 7, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Paul, St. Meinrad
- Dec. 8, 6-7 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, New Albany
- Dec. 9, 8-10 a.m. at St. John the Baptist, Sellersburg
- Dec. 10, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at St. Monica, Jennings County

**Bloomington Deanery**
- Dec. 1, 7 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 2, 7 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 3, 7 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 4, 7 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 5, 7 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 6, 7-8 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 7, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 8, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 9, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 10, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 11, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 12, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 13, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 14, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 15, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 16, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 17, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 18, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 19, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 20, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 21, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 22, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 23, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 24, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 25, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 26, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 27, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 28, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 29, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 30, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown
- Dec. 31, 8-9 p.m. at St. Luke, Brownstown

**Connersville Deanery**
- Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 13, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 14, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 15, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 16, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
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- Dec. 27, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 28, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 29, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 30, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle
- Dec. 31, 7 p.m. at St. John’s, New Castle

**Indianapolis East Deanery**
- Dec. 6, 7 p.m. at Holy Spirit
- Dec. 11, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower)
- Dec. 17, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes
- Dec. 23, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes
- Dec. 30, 7 p.m. for Our Lady of Lourdes

**Indianapolis North Deanery**
- Dec. 12, 7 p.m. at St. Pius X
- Dec. 18, 7 p.m. at St. Pius X
- Dec. 24, 7 p.m. at St. Pius X
- Dec. 30, 7 p.m. at St. Pius X

**Indianapolis South Deanery**
- Dec. 1, 7 p.m. at St. Jude
- Dec. 7, 7 p.m. at St. Barnabas, St. Mark the Evangelist and St. Roch, at Beech Grove
- Dec. 13, 7 a.m. at St. Francis and Clare of Assisi, Greenwood
- Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Ann

**Indianapolis West Deanery**
- Dec. 6, 7 p.m. at St. Mary, Queen of Peace, Danville
- Dec. 7, 9-11 a.m. at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School
- Dec. 14, 6-7 p.m. at St. Anthony and St. Christopher at St. Christopher
- Dec. 18, 7:30-8 p.m. at Holy Angels and St. Rita (Indianapolis East Deanery) at St. Rita
- Dec. 19, 7 p.m. at St. Thomas More, Mooresville
- Dec. 20, 7 p.m. at St. Susanna, Plainfield
- Dec. 21, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany
- Dec. 22, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany
- Dec. 23, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany
- Dec. 24, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany
- Dec. 25, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany
- Dec. 26, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany
- Dec. 27, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany
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- Dec. 29, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany
- Dec. 30, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany
- Dec. 31, 7 p.m. at St. John the Baptist, New Albany

**New Albany Deanery**
- Dec. 5, 7-8 p.m. at St. Anthony of Padua, Clarksville
- Dec. 6, 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Knobs, Floyd County
- Dec. 8, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 9, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 10, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 11, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 12, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 13, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 14, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 15, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 16, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 17, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 18, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 19, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville
- Dec. 20, 6-7 p.m. at Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jeffersonville

**Terre Haute Deanery**
- Dec. 3, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute
- Dec. 4, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute
- Dec. 5, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute
- Dec. 6, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute
- Dec. 7, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute
- Dec. 8, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute
- Dec. 9, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute
- Dec. 10, 7:30-8:30 p.m. at St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Terre Haute

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eroded trust and understanding, harmony and cooperation between different communities in Rakhine, the support of our people and of good friends who only wish to see us succeed in our endeavors has been invaluable.”

“The road to peace is not always smooth,” she told the pope, “but it is the only way that will lead our people to their dream of a just and prosperous land that will be their refuge, their pride, their joy!”

In his speech, Pope Francis was even less specific, although he repeatedly insisted that the rights of each member of society and each ethnic group must be respected. He praised the role of the United Nations and the international community in supporting peace efforts, presumably also in their condemnations of the discrimination and persecution of the Rohingya, a Muslim minority.

“The future of Myanmar must be peace, a peace based on respect for the dignity and rights of each member of society, respect for each ethnic group and its identity, respect for the rule of law, and respect for a democratic order that enables each individual and every group—not one excluded—to offer its legitimate contribution to the common good,” Pope Francis said.

The pope said he wanted to visit the country to strengthen the small Catholic community and “to offer a word of encouragement to all those who are working to build a just, reconciled and inclusive social order.”

Myanmar’s “greatest treasure,” he insisted, “is its people, who have suffered greatly, and continue to suffer, from civil conflict and hostilities that have lasted all too long and created deep divisions.”

Pope Francis praised Suu Kyi for convoking the “21st Century Panglong Union Peace Conference,” a series of meetings that began in 2016 between the government and militant groups from more than a dozen ethnic groups in Myanmar.

The Rohingya are not included in the peace process since the government does not consider them to be a Myanmar ethnic group, but rather foreigners.

Religious communities must play a role in the process of reconciliation and integration, the Pope said. “Religious differences need not be a source of division and distrust, but rather a force for unity, forgiveness, tolerance and wise nation building.”

In addition to helping heal “the emotional, spiritual and psychological wounds of those who have suffered in the years of conflict,” he said all religions “can help to uproot the causes of conflict, build bridges of dialogue, seek justice and be a prophetic voice for all who suffer.”

Archdiocesan parishes to host Our Lady of Guadalupe celebrations

Special to The Criterion

The following Masses and special events for the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe throughout central and southern Indiana were reported to The Criterion.

Holy Spirit Church, 7243 E. 10th St., Indianapolis.
• Dec. 9—7 p.m. St. Juan Diego feast day Mass and rosary.
• Dec. 10—7 p.m. Mass, re-enactment of the apparitions, dance to follow

St. Ambrose Church, 325 S. Chestnut St., Seymour.
Dec. 3—Dec. 11 Novena Prayer recitation
(The rosary will be prayed in the church)
• Dec. 3—6 p.m.
• Dec. 4—6 p.m.
• Dec. 5—6 p.m.
• Dec. 6—6 p.m.
• Dec. 7—6:30 p.m.
• Dec. 8—6 p.m.
• Dec. 9—6:30 p.m.
• Dec. 10—6 p.m.
• Dec. 11—6 p.m.
• Dec. 11-11 p.m. rosary and intercessions
• Dec. 12—midnight-1:30 a.m. serenade by Nueva Creacion Choir, 1:30-2 a.m. hymns by Jose Aron. 2-3 a.m. Shalom Choir from St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, 3-4 a.m. rosary, 4-5 a.m. Alma Misericordia Choir, 5-6 a.m. malaltatius. 2-2:30 p.m. representation of apparitions by St. Ambrose School students, 5-6 p.m. procession, 6 p.m. Mass followed by fellowship and dinner in the parish center.

St. Bartholomew Church, 1306 27th St., Columbus.
• Dec. 11—10:30 p.m. procession, 10:45 p.m. rosary, 11:30 p.m. dance and narratives, midnight malaltatius followed by hot chocolate and sweet bread.
• Dec. 12—4 p.m. Mass in Spanish, dinner following.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, St. Andrew Campus, 235 S. 5th St., Richmond.
• Dec. 12—7 p.m. Mass

St. Gabriel the Archangel Church, 6600 W. 34th St., Indianapolis.
• Dec. 11—7 p.m. re-enactment of the apparitions, 8 p.m. rosary, 9 p.m. music by the Grupo de Ovacion, 9:30 p.m. Aztec dance, 10 p.m. Grupo Alliance, 10:30 p.m. Danza Matachines, 11 p.m. Grupo Confidentes, 11:30 p.m. Grupo Coro Latino de San Gabriel.

• Dec. 12—midnight Mass, 8:45 a.m. Mass in English, 6 p.m. bilingual Mass with Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, 8 p.m. Mass in Spanish followed by a procession.

St. Joseph Church, 125 E. Broadway St., Shelbyville.
• Dec. 12—7 p.m. rosary, 7:30 p.m. Aztec dance, 8 p.m. Mass, 9 p.m. procession and blessing of Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine, 9:30 p.m. fellowship, food and serenade.

St. Margaret Mary Church, 2405 S. 7th, Terre Haute.
• Dec. 11—11:30 p.m., rosary of the Virgin Mary and malaltatius.

• Dec. 12—7 p.m. Mass.

St. Mary Church, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis.
• Dec. 3-11—Novenas in homes, businesses and church
• Dec. 11—8 p.m. meet at Monument Circle, 9 p.m. pilgrimage to St. Mary Church, 9:30 p.m. traditional dance, 9:45 p.m. rosary in English, 10:15 p.m. rosary followed by a mid night Mass in Spanish, 6 p.m. procession from parking lot to church, 6:30 p.m. rosary in English, 7 p.m. Mass followed by fellowship in the Marian Center.

St. Mary Church, 415 E. Eighth St., New Albany.
• Dec. 11—7 p.m. Mass, malaltatius.

• Dec. 12—7 p.m. Mass, malaltatius, meal to follow.

St. Monica Church, 6131 N. Michigan Road, Indianapolis.
• Dec. 11—8-11:59 p.m. rosary, performance, Mariachi, Chilenos.
• Dec. 12—midnight Mass with Aztec dance, 7 p.m. Mass with Aztec dance, reception to follow in gymnasium.

St. Philip Neri, 550 N. Rural St., Indianapolis.
• Dec. 11—6:30 p.m. Our Lady of Guadalupe activities. 11 p.m. Mass followed by refreshments and a pellota in the gymnasium, activities conclude at 1 a.m.

• Dec. 12—4 p.m. Mass, dancers, musicians, re-enactment of the apparitions, 7 p.m. solemn Mass with dancing and music to follow until 9 p.m.
Basketball legend praises volunteers who serve seniors

By Sean Gallagher

Bobby Plump is a legend across the Hoosier state. As a senior at Milan High School in Milan in 1954, Plump hit a last-second shot to win the championship in his team’s senior year’s Indiana High School Athletic Association boys basketball tournament. Plump and his teammates from their small school in southeastern Indiana beat their much larger opponent from Muncie Central High School in Muncie in a hard-fought championship game at Hoinkle Fieldhouse on the campus of Butler University in Indianapolis.

That championship run and Plump’s game-winning shot were immortalized and shared with the world far beyond Indiana in the 1986 Oscar-nominated movie “Hoosiers.”

On Oct. 15, Plump came to the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis to serve as the keynote speaker and inspiration for Catholic Charities Indianapolis’ (CCS) Hoosiers for Seniors dinner event to share memories of playing for his high school team, and to praise the teamwork of Catholic Charities staff members and volunteers who serve seniors in its eldercare programs.

“All of you people who are giving your time are marvelous,” Plump said. “Look at the person next to you and smile. Doesn’t that feel good? That’s what you people do for these people that you’re volunteering for.

“If you can smile every day forever, you’re going to make somebody’s life happier.”

Another guest at the event relayed the attendees with his own basketball stories, even if they didn’t result in glory. Indianapolis Mayor Joseph Hogsett recounted the time he was on the bench for the varsity basketball team for Rushville High School in Rushville, and he scored a basket in its opposing team’s goal.

Hogsett’s true positive at the Hoosiers for Seniors event was to encourage the people who participate in and support Catholic Charities Indianapolis’ programs for seniors.

“It’s been a great blessing to me because it may be a little like doing something for somebody else,” she said.

Camps for homeless youth

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (CNS)—Though rain and high winds forced many of the 40 students and adults inside during the fifth annual “Homeless for a Night” campout at Good Shepherd Parish in Alexandria on Nov. 18, it brought greater awareness to the problem of homelessness.

Cardboard boxes, tarps, sleeping bags and extra layers of clothing—only what they could fit in a small box—filled the lawn outside Good Shepherd.

Campers spent time in the afternoon working together to assemble the makeshift cardboard shelters, sometimes laying plastic underneath the boxes for protection from the rain, and covering boxes with tarps or plastic bags before going inside for Mass. The campers returned to their shelters at 9 p.m. after an evening of fun activities.

“Arlington Catholic Herald, newspaper of the Diocese of Arlington. "The activities [got] the campers thinking about how hard it can be to have a place to live.”

Madeleine Oettel, grants manager at Catholic Charities, was full of praise for the vigil Mass and spoke of the recognition that is in our midst. We look at our own poverty—to be poor, to actually experience what it is like to have nothing.”

Bishop Burbidge blessed the campers at the end of Mass.

“Every day is a day for the poor and for us to respond in compassion and love,” he said. “This designation that Pope Francis has given to us helps us to recognize the poverty that is in our midst. We look at our own poverty—to be poor in spirit is actually a gift. The poverty of spirit helps us realize that without God we have nothing.”

At the end of the event, campers gave a presentation to the campers and parishioners. As part of the campout, parishioners collected boots and socks for the Rising Hope United Methodist Church hypothermia shelter in Alexandria.

Prior to the campout, Arlington Bishop Michael F. Burbidge celebrated the vigil Mass and spoke about the World Day of the Poor initiated by Pope Francis, which was taking place for the first time this next day.

“Every day is a day for the poor and for us to respond in compassion and love,” he said. “This designation that Pope Francis has given to us helps us to recognize the poverty that is in our midst. We look at our own poverty—to be poor in spirit is actually a gift. The poverty of spirit helps us realize that without God we have nothing.”

Bishop Burbidge blessed the campers at the end of Mass.

“How proud you must be of some of the young people who will tonight participate in the homeless campout to actually experience what it is like to be cold, to be homeless, to have chills, knowing that our brothers and sisters, members of God’s holy family, live that way every day,” said Bishop Burbidge.

Isabella Winarski, a fifth-grader at Woodley Hills Elementary School in Alexandria, said the experience taught her that other people go through homelessness for days. “We are doing this for one day,” she said. “When I see them on the streets, I think of this and how I experienced it and know how it feels, and it was a not a good experience.”

Nicholas Zasso, a freshman at Virginia Tech, said he enjoyed the campout service project, even if it is only for one night. “Even if we are not experiencing the whole part of being homeless, it still makes you think about it more and puts you in the mindset to want to do something to help,” Zasso said.

The following morning, campers shared their take on the experience. “One thing that came out in the debriefing in the morning was the parallel between the slow removal of complications from being outside, then the rain, then the wind, then the temperature drop—and the slow stripping of dignity that people go through as they lose work, or the ability to bathe and wash their clothes to the point that we walk past them without a glance or a word,” said de Angel.

Derek Rogers, youth minister at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Vienna, Va., brought 14 teens to the campout.

“They have blessed them with incredible housing,” he said. “When the teens are in the cardboard boxes, they say, ‘Oh, my gosh, I have so many blessings.’ When they can have that kind of perspective put in place, that is worth it to me.”
New book says people should be Catholics because the Church is true, good and beautiful

Brandon Vogt now works for Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop Robert E. Barron’s Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, but in this book he explains why he converted and was received into the full communion of the Church as a 20-year-old mechanical engineering student at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Fla.

In doing so, he acknowledges, he went in the opposite direction of most people his age. Choosing to be Catholic in today’s culture is provocative and countercultural. All the more reason, then, for young people to read this book. At 178 pages, the book is a fast read. Vogt tells how carefully he studied the Church’s claims and how he prayed, read, thought and discussed the Church. He finally became a Catholic, he writes, for the same reason as G.K. Chesterton: that Catholicism is true. But, he says, it’s also good and beautiful, so the book is divided into three parts: Catholicism Is True, Catholicism Is Good, and Catholicism Is Beautiful.

Each part has multiple chapters and each chapter has sub-parts. But the chapter heads give a good idea of how he treats each part. Catholicism is true, he says, because God exists, because we need religion, because Jesus is God, and because Jesus started the Church. Catholicism is good, he says, because it was built western civilization, because of its heroic charity, because it doesn’t go with the times, and because it offers true forgiveness. Catholicism is beautiful, he says, because it cherishes beauty, because it lifts us up, and because it’s for everybody. Vogt insists that his book isn’t just a conversion memoir—there are lots of those—but an appeal to readers that they should consider Catholicism. Even exploring the Catholic Church is an act of rebellion in this culture, he says. “It’s not rebellious to get drunk, criticize institutions, pursue sex and money, or come out as an atheist,” he says. “Everyone’s doing that. Those are all mainstream. What’s truly radical is to consider a Church that billions of people have embraced throughout history, but millions of people today dismiss as bigoted and outdated.”

Maybe the Catholic Church is wrong, evil and ugly, as it’s portrayed, he says. Or, “Maybe in a strange and confused world, the Catholic Church looks so backward because everyone else is facing the wrong direction.” It’s an excellent book for Catholics, young especially young Catholics, and for anyone who is asking the important questions of life.

Contraceptive mandate battle still on: States fight religious exemptions

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Little Sisters of the Poor, who have been known for their care for the poor elderly, have been in the spotlight for the past six years with their objection to the federal government’s requirements to provide insurance coverage of contraceptives, abortifacients and sterilization for their employees. They hoped the issue was behind them after a new rule was issued in October by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) granting an exemption to the mandate for religious nonprofits who oppose it on religious grounds.

But days after the rule was issued, Pennsylvania and California filed legal challenges to the new federal exemption.

Delaware, Maryland, New York and Virginia joined California’s lawsuit to become the first plaintiff group to file a motion for a preliminary injunction seeking to prevent the new rule from going into effect.

This means the Little Sisters of the Poor are going back to court.

Mark Rienzi, senior counsel at Becket, the law firm representing the sisters, said in a Nov. 21 press call that the HHS rule “should have been the end of the story,” and the end of a “long and divisive culture war.”

But with these lawsuits in place, said he Becket is preparing to file a brief on behalf of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and he also said the sisters want the justices to hear their arguments, noting that the case is more than state’s attorneys general arguing against the federal government.

Rienzi said the sisters will echo what they’ve said all along: that the government doesn’t “need nous to give our contraceptives,” and that they should not be punished for acting in accordance with their faith. He said the cases will be heard in December.

A statement issued by Sister Loraine Marie Maguire, mother provincial of the Little Sisters, based in Denver, said: “We just want to be able to continue our religious mission of caring for the elderly poor as we have for over 175 years. We pray that these state governments will leave us alone and let us do our work in peace.”

Rienzi called the states’ fights “political grandstanding” that is trying to take away rights from religious groups. He also said none of the states has come forward with someone who had contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization insurance coverage through an employer before and is now going to lose it.

He also said the lawsuits were “deeply ironic” since some states—such as Pennsylvania and Virginia—don’t even have a mandate and others have broad religious exemptions in place.

The lawsuits claim that the exemptions to the Affordable Care Act’s contraceptive, abortifacient and sterilization mandate pushes the cost burden to states.

In the California suit, Attorney General Xavier Becerra said the HHS ruling providing the religious exemption violates constitutional amendments because it allows employers to use religious beliefs to discriminate against employees and denies women their rights to equal protection under the law.

When the HHS ruling was announced this fall, Catholic Church officials said it “correT incorrects an anomalous failure by federal regulators that should never have occurred and should never be repeated.”

The statement by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, then-chairman of the USCCB’s Committee for Religious Liberty, said the decision to provide the religious and moral exemption to the HHS mandate recognizes that faith-based and mission-driven organizations and those who run them “have deeply held religious and moral beliefs that the law must respect.”

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Page 10 The Criterion Friday, December 1, 2017
God can come into our lives in unexpected ways in Advent

By David Gibson

“Let us see your face.” The whole Church repeats this five-word, heartfelt plea to God four times during Masses on the first Sunday of Advent. Heard in the resounding psalm after the first biblical reading, it echoes this repeated plea to God throughout human history. God is always coming into our lives in unexpected ways in Advent.

“Light up your face and we shall be saved” (Ps 80:4).

Does it make sense for the Christian family to beg God at the Advent season’s beginning to reveal his face? Doesn’t the memory of the one born 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem reveal this—the one frequently described as God’s face in this world?

“Christ is the face of God, which is never darkened,” Pope Francis told bishops from around the world in September 2016. When he called in April 2015 for a Holy Year of Mercy throughout the Church, he stated emphatically: “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. These words well will sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth.”

This, then, is no distant Lord. As the Gospel of St. John plainly states, the Word made flesh: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14).

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By Msgr. J. Brian Bransfield

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Recentlly, I enjoyed an opportunity I hadn’t had in a very long time. When I visited my friend in the living room of her house, it happened to stop by with her 3-week-old infant. Her sister, graciously let me hold her little girl and I melt. Rosie smelled like lavender baby soap but she slept peacefully in my arms for 15 minutes while we visited in the living room of her house. “My kids were never this little,” I said, as I stared down at the 8-pound child in my arms. I truly couldn’t believe Henry and Margaret being that size. I asked how mom and baby were doing, she replied, “Honestly—perfect,” she said. She went on to tell me how well everything had gone—from the ease of birthing the baby to the fact that the little darling—with the most amazing bright blue eyes—had slept through the night the past four nights. “Even Bruno loves her and takes care to walk softly around her,” she added. (Bruno is their gigi dog.)

She told me that she absolutely loved being a parent.

The Human Side/Fr. Eugene Hemrick

Advent season offers us a time to put our house in order, start anew. There’s no better time than Advent for putting our house in order.

The house of which we speak is our personal house—being bombarded by a topsy-turvy world the environments to which we are exposed. Two years ago, the Sacred Heart Bilingual Parish of the International Catholic University, with the association editor at Emory University, wrote Jennice Vilhauer, director of Emory University’s adult outpatient psychotherapy program. “We need to be creatures of habit, and many times the biggest obstacle to change is our current way of doing something.”

• Be honest with yourself. Recognize and admit patterns that lead to procrastination (like leaving the hardest work for last, when you have less energy). Productive study environments to minimize distractions and interruptions.

• Schedule breaks into your study strategy. Stand up, walk around the room, stretch, and breathe deeply. Now get back to work!

• Persevere despite your fear of failure: it’s not back away from your goals, it’s a lack of motivation. Or did you actually care a lot about the project and still end up doing something else.

• Students’ reasons to procrastinate include not feeling ready, starting out, underestimating how long it takes to complete a task, perfectionism, trouble concentrating or poor organizational skills.

Procrastination can be defeated a step at a time. Ralph went to Mass daily, usually at noon. He was a conservative Catholic. "the right mood" to work is sabotaging their efforts. Here are ways to fight procrastination:

• Offer your schoolwork as a prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to enter into your work. "Ad maiorem Dei gloriam," meaning "For God’s greater glory" on top of task lists, or ask Mary for her intercession to stay focused.

• Set reasonable goals and commit. Remember, “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Getting started builds momentum and self-confidence.

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This weekend, the Church begins Advent. It begins the use of biblical readings from Year B of its three-year Sunday Mass reading cycle. It is also the start of a new liturgical year. Each liturgical year is carefully planned so that the seasons and the major feasts guide us through the Church’s worship into a closer relationship with God.

The first reading is from the third section of Isaiah, composed when the Jews were in a difficult situation. Years before, they had been allowed to return to the Holy Land from Babylon after being exiled there. But this return brought the people home to no paradise. Life was miserable. The prophet called for faith in God, not only as almighty, but as unrelentingly true to his covenant, to the divine pledge that he would protect his chosen people. The prophet appealed for relief to God in the name of the people, but without saying that the people were being treated unfairly, at least in terms of God’s care for them. Indeed, Isaiah made clear that sin led the people away from God. This estrangement has produced their woes.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians provides the next reading. Counseling the Christians of Corinth was a challenge for Paul. Not only did temptation and vice surround them on every side, but they also argued among themselves. Paul called them to faithfulness and sought to persuade them to put their differences aside. He saw the disciples there as having erroneous religious potential, despite the odds produced by their surroundings and the human inclination to sin. If they chose to cooperate with God’s grace, they would be able to be close to God and also imbue the goodness of Christianity into the circles in which they moved.

St. Mark’s Gospel is the source of the last reading. It offers us a theme found often in the New Testament, namely that Christ will come to Earth again. In this second coming, the Lord will be the great victor and the judge of all creation. By the time the Gospels were written—even in the case of the Gospel of Mark, thought to be the oldest of the four as they now exist—Christians were numerous enough and geographically distributed enough to catch the public eye, but not numerous enough or powerful enough to stand against their enemies. The culture was an enemy. Soon, the political system would be an enemy as well. Being a Christian became a capital crime, as the martyrs were horribly to know.

Understandably, the atmosphere was tense, uncertain and frightening. Thoughts of the second coming were naturally appealing. Jesus will come again, but we know not when. We do not know the future. In the meantime, we must acknowledge God, live in his law and trust in our reward. If we are with God, we need not fear.

Reflection

The prayers of the Mass are the united expression of faith of all believers, spoken through and by the celebrant, to proclaim our trust in Almighty God. We pray with the priest, in our faith and worship. Are we sincere? Does the priest praying the prayers at Mass represent our genuinely authentic faith, our absolute commitment to Christ? Mark’s Gospel greatly assists us in forming solid faith. Only God is permanent and real. Advent is an opportunity to grow in our union with God, to realize that God’s love for us is real. If we respond to the opportunity given to us by Advent, then Christmas becomes not a national holiday, or even a holy religious commemoration, but the moment when we encounter God, firmly believing that Jesus will come again, but also believing that here and now we know the Lord.

Masses of Christian Burial

Ode to Trees

By Cathy Lampers Dearing

O’ trees
You appreciate
The rhythm of things.
You understand and respond
To every season’s change
Though change and letting go
Isn’t always as easy
As it looks.
You live life in two worlds—
Solitary and solidarity
Embracing the gifts
And challenges.
Of both.
You have mourned the loss of many
Yet have remained rooted
Standing firm and tall
In faith.
You are great teachers
Of patient waiting
And how growth is slow
And takes time.
You remind us all to
“Look up!”
And treat what the Heavenly Father Is calling us to.

(Cathy Lampers Dearing is a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. Aspen trees display fall colors at the base of the San Francisco Peaks in Flagstaff, Ariz., on Oct. 3.) (CNS photo/Nancy Wiechec)

In certain parts of our country, Masses of Christian Burial at funeral homes are allowed. I think this is a wonderful idea, especially for small funerals. Who makes that decision or gives permission for this? (New York)

A library of death

A woman in the 19th century said, “Instead of resolving the problems of family welfare and the increasing poverty and crime, as the martyrs were horribly to know, we have resolved them by increased poverty rates in the fastest-growing regions of the world, it has urged prudent decision-making in the spacing of births, but has situated that choice in the consciences of parents, rejecting efforts by some governments to act by force through programs of artificial contraception, sterilizations and even abortions.

In April 2015, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences asserted that there is a determinable level of sustainable world population and that the common good requires maintaining that number. Two months later, though, in his encyclical “Laudato Si’ , on Care for Our Common Home,” Pope Francis offered a more nuanced and comprehensive view, “Instead of resolving the problems of the poor and thinking of how the world can be different, some can only propose a reduction in the birth rate. … To blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some is one way of refusing to face the issues” (#50).

In fact, in many developed countries population rates are more of a problem. In such countries, social safety net programs are threatened because of a declining number of income earners.

(Catholic Church)
Zimbabwe’s bishops urge new government to embrace country’s diversity

Addressing all Zimbabweans, the bishops said, “We thank God and congratulate you as a nation for displaying a high standard of maturity in the recent tensions” in the southern African country.

“They asked you all for your peaceful conduct, tolerance and cooperation during the military-assisted transition,” they said.

Mugabe resigned on Nov. 21, a week after Zimbabwe’s army seized control of the government. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in the capital, Harare, to celebrate.

The bishops said the goals of economic recovery and electoral reforms must be achieved before the general elections, scheduled for 2018.

Franciscan Sister Patricia Connor served in education, as librarian at Marian University

Franciscan Sister Patricia Connor died on Nov. 5 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in New Alsace from pneumonia.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 13 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery.

She was born on Sept. 6, 1929, in Hays, Kan., and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1955.

Sister Patricia was a graduate of Marian University in Indianapolis, and Rosary College in River Forest, Ill.

During 67 years as a Sister of St. Francis, Sister Patricia ministered as an educator for 22 years in Catholic schools in Indiana and Ohio, serving in the archdiocese at the former St. Paul School in New Albany from 1965-74.

Beginning in 1974, Sister Patricia began ministry as an assistant librarian at Marian University until her retirement in 2009. She was survived by sisters Lorrie Blackwell of Quinter, Kan., Gladys Connor of Salina, Kan., Kay Religa of Brooksville, Kan., and Karen Vail of Salina, Kan., and brothers James Connor of Catossa, Okla., and Larry Connor of WaKeeney, Kan.

Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of Providence, 1 Sisters of Providence Road, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN 47876.†

Vatican Christmas tree

A Christmas tree is positioned in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican on Nov. 23. This year’s tree is from Poland. (CNS photo/Blo Rosso)
Osgood parish celebrates 150 years as a family of faith

By Sean Gallagher

Over the past year, the members of St. John the Baptist Parish in Osgood have celebrated the 150th anniversary of the founding of their Bateville Deanery faith community in a variety of ways—social events, the dedication of a Marian shrine and a procession honoring the parish’s patron saint. But it was a surprise visitor to the parish’s anniversary Mass on Sept. 10 that may have been the highlight of all the events.

About 20 minutes before the start of the liturgy, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson arrived as its surprise principal celebrant. Last minute changes to his schedule allowed him to attend.

It meant a lot to Franciscan Sister Shirley Gerth, St. John’s parish life coordinator. “I’ve always believed in the God of surprises,” she said. “And this was one of the most pleasant surprises I’ve experienced. It was unexpected, but I welcomed him with open arms.”

Sister Shirley knew that Archbishop Thompson’s participation in the anniversary Mass was also meaningful for everyone who attended.

“He really made the celebration very, very special,” she said. “He did a wonderful job. His homily was excellent. He greeted all the people afterward, and was the last one in line for his food.”

Andy Miller, a young adult member of the parish, was a lector at the Mass. He and his family sat in the same area of the church during the liturgy in which several previous generations of Miller’s family have worshipped, right next to a stained-glass window that Miller’s great-great-grandfather donated to the parish.

“It’s amazing how many people have been there and raised their families there,” said Miller, 26. “It continues on and on. One hundred and fifty years is really important. That’s where I got all of my formation. It was really everything. It meant a lot. We had a good foundation that was given to us here.”

Jansing assists with liturgies in the parish, has served on its pastoral council and assisted with its youth ministry activities held nearby by St. Maurice Parish in Napoleon.

“It’s a matter of giving back, thinking back to all of the people that set an example for me as I was growing up,” she said. They passed the torch to people like myself. And so it’s important for me to do it for future generations.”

Over the years, Jansing has appreciated the small size of her faith community and how it serves the families of the small town of Osgood and the surrounding rural area.

“We’re a common, country type of folk,” said Jansing. “Everybody seems to know everybody. We really feel like we’re family. That’s easier to do when you’re a smaller church.”

Ruth Winningen, 90, has been part of the family of faith at St. John since around 1950.

“When we first moved here, there were 300 families in the parish and we knew them all,” said Winningen. “We went to church every Sunday. We’d have our big chicken dinner and festival during the summer.”

Ruth’s daughter Rosalie Calhoun is also a member of St. John, and has seen how the families of the parish reach out to help each other in times of need.

“It’s comforting,” said Calhoun, 70. “After all these years, you’re still doing the same things for families that have been there since almost the start of the parish.”

Sister Shirley said the faith of the people she ministers to at St. John has strengthened her own.

“Whenever I’m in the presence of a person whose faith is strong, it certainly deepens my own faith in God,” she said. “Witnessing people who have a strong faith is a great inspiration to me.”

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Oviedo, left, and Katie Miller, front row, Wyatt McCain, second row, and Renee Turry, all members of St. John the Baptist Parish in Osgood, bring up offerings during a Sept. 10 Mass at the Bateville Deanery faith community’s church to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its founding. (Submitted photo)

Members of St. John the Baptist Parish in Osgood enjoy a banquet on Sept. 10 at the Bateville Deanery faith community after a Mass celebrating the 150th anniversary of its founding. (Submitted photo)

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Very Joseph L. Newton, J CL
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The Criterion Friday, December 1, 2017
Flag Raising at St. Mary in North Vernon

This photo shows a flag raising event at St. Mary School in North Vernon. Though no date is given on the photo, it could depict celebrations related to the dedication of the school building by Bishop Denis O’Donoghue, former auxiliary bishop of Indianapolis, on June 21, 1908. St. Mary Parish was founded in 1861, and the school continues to operate in the building shown in this photograph.

(If you would like to comment on or share information about this photo, contact archdiocesan archivist Julie Motyka at 800-382-9836, ext. 1538; (317) 236-1538; or by e-mail at jmottyka@archindy.org.)

From the Archives

Indian Catholics sorry that papal invitation never came through

NEW DELHI (CNS)—As Pope Francis began his tour to Myanmar and Bangladesh, Catholics in neighboring India regret missing a chance to meet him in their homeland, nostalgically recalling past papal visits, reported ucanews.com.

Catholic groups began discussing plans to host the pontiff earlier this year, after the Vatican confirmed a papal visit to the region.

Nobody then expected a papal itinerary would not include India, a nation of 19 million Catholics. Cardinal Baselios Cleemis Thottunkal, president of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of India, said the Church in India was expecting to receive Pope Francis, “but it did not happen.”

In August, the Vatican announced that the Nov. 27-Dec. 2 journey would only include Myanmar and Bangladesh, whereas the original plan had been to visit India and Bangladesh.

The lack of an official invitation for Pope Francis to visit India is widely seen as being the result of political considerations by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government. The government is operated by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Observers say the BJP feared that Modi hosting Pope Francis would have alienated majority-Hindu voters ahead of scheduled 2019 national elections.

However, Cardinal George Alencherry of Ernakulam-Angamaly said the outcome had disappointed the entire Church in India. Cardinal Alencherry was scheduled to join a papal Mass in Bangladesh, ucanews.com reported.

A wide cross section of Indians interviewed by ucanews.com said a papal visit would have uplifted Christians facing violence and threats from extremist Hindu groups, especially in northern India.

One of those unhappy about Pope Francis not visiting India was Johana Xalxo, an Oraon ethnic minority woman and a school principal in New Delhi.

Xalxo, 52, said she was privileged to meet St. Pope John Paul II in 1986 when he toured some 15 Indian cities, including her city of Ranchi. She was part of a group that danced to welcome St. John Paul.

“It was an exciting experience,” she recalled.

Xalxo noted that papal visits lifted the morale of indigenous Christians, who often felt weak and neglected, providing them with a sense of belonging to a larger community. †

Roughly 94 percent of donations aid senior religious.

“My sister was to be a nun, and I was to be a mother,” says Notre Dame Sister Mary Ann Hanson (foreground), 79, “but God had other plans.” During 61 years of religious life, she has joyfully followed those plans. Along with the senior religious shown here—and 32,000 more across the United States—Sister Mary Ann benefits from the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Your gift helps provide nursing care, medications, and other necessities. Please be generous.

To donate:
Archdiocese of Indianapolis Mission Office
1400 North Meridian Street
Indianapolis IN 46202
Make check payable to Mission Office with Religious Retirement on the memo line.

Or give at your local parish December 9–10.

www.retiredreligious.org