As the head volunteer of the Christmas Store in Indianapolis, Nancy Hollinden leads a group of dedicated, year-round volunteers who offer families in need a place to shop for toys, clothing and household items for Christmas at the Catholic Charities Indianapolis venue. Here, the member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis shares a light moment with David Bethuram, executive director of Catholic Charities for the archdiocese.

The story is one of Nancy Hollinden’s favorites from the Christmas season. Actually, this touching scene happened the day after a Christmas when Hollinden and her fellow year-round volunteers helped to make the holiday special for 800 families in need—including providing clothes and two toys for every child in these families.

“I was shopping at Walmart on the day after Christmas—because that’s when you get the great bargains—and I had a huge shopping cart full of things for the Christmas Store,” recalls Hollinden, a member of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis. “The gentleman who was checking me out inquired about my large amount of stuff. I told him I was buying for a charity, and we gave these gifts to children at Christmas. He said, ‘Oh, I was one of those kids. I want you to know that my whole life long, I never, ever got anything for Christmas except from someone like you. You are doing a wonderful thing.’”

The 75-year-old grandmother pauses before she adds, “I just had tears in my eyes.” She had the same reaction when an elderly couple showed up one day at the Christmas Store in Indianapolis, one of the two Catholic Charities settings in the archdiocese—the other store is in Terre Haute—where people in need come to choose brand-new gifts for members of their family: “They were grandparents living on Social Security, and they were in need of the new gifts for their young grandchildren. The gentleman turned to me and said, ‘I have never seen such joy on a face before.’”

Christmas stores bring holiday hope, love to hundreds of families in need

By John Shaughnessy

Memories of loved ones and the virtue of hope are focus of inaugural ‘An Evening of Lights’

By Mike Krokos

Advent is a season of hope, and our hope resides in something beyond what the world can offer, something beyond any given moment in this life. And unlike the secular world where many people think of hope as wishful thinking or feeling, our faith teaches us that it is one of three theological virtues—along with faith and love.

“As the Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, ‘These three virtues are the foundation of all other virtues,’” said Archbishop Charles C. Thompson to approximately 200 people during the inaugural “An Evening of Lights” program on Dec. 7 at Assembly Hall at the Archbishop Edward T. O’Meara Catholic Center in Indianapolis sponsored by the archdiocesan Catholic Community Foundation (CCF).

Modeled after the annual Vatican Christmas tree lighting and Nativity reflection begun in 1982 by the late St. John Paul II in St. Peter’s Square, the first-ever archdiocesan Christmas trees brought the joy of a simple gift to hundreds of families in need at Catholic Charities Indianapolis and the Christmas store in Terre Haute.

Vatican renews call for peace, negotiated solution on Jerusalem

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Following days of violence and backslash after U.S. President Donald J. Trump’s decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the Vatican appealed for “wisdom and prudence” to prevail.

The Holy See “reiterates its own conviction that only a negotiated solution between Israelis and Palestinians can bring a stable and lasting peace, and guarantee the peaceful coexistence of two states within internationally recognized borders,” the Vatican said in a Dec. 10 statement.

President Trump announced his decision on Dec. 6 to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, Israel, fulfilling a promise he made during his presidential campaign.

The announcement sparked anti-U.S. protests throughout Asia and the Middle East, including a four-day protest in the Palestinian territories, the news service Reuters reported. An Israeli security guard in Jerusalem, the report said, was in critical condition after he was stabbed by a Palestinian man at the city’s bus station.

Pope Francis expressed his “sorrow for the clashes in recent days” and called for world leaders to renew their commitment for peace in the Holy Land, the Vatican said.

The pope “raises fervent prayers so that the leaders of nations, in this time of special gravity, commit themselves to avert the clashes in recent days,” and called for world leaders to renew their commitment for peace in the Holy Land, the Vatican said.

Trump’s decision also drew warnings from Middle Eastern and European leaders that overturning the United States’ long-standing policy would further complicate peace negotiations.
By line.

The episode broadcast on Dec. 6 focused on the line, “Lead us not into temptation.”

Father Marco Pozza told the pope that friends have asked him, “Can God really lead us into temptation?”

“Is this not a good translation,” the pope said.

The standard versions of the prayer are translated from the Latin, which was translated from the New Testament in Greek.

While he said nothing about ordering a new translation, Pope Francis noted how the French bishops had decided that beginning on Dec. 3, the first Sunday of Advent, French Catholics would change a new translation, Pope Francis noted.

The Italian and English translations of the Lord’s Prayer line: “The Lord’s Prayer says, “our sins result from our own free will. We ask Him not to allow us to be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one’; on the contrary, he wants to set us free from evil. We ask Him not to allow us to be taken the way that leads to sin.”

Donors can still make contribution to Indiana Tax Credit Scholarship program according to Kim Pohovey, director of Scholarship.
WASHINGTON (CNS)—Although Christmas this year is the day after the fourth Sunday of Advent, Catholics looking to count a Sunday evening Mass on Dec. 24 for both that Sunday obligation and Monday’s Christmas Mass obligation will have to think again.

The U.S. bishops already saw this coming at the beginning of the year and said Catholics should attend separate Masses for the two days.

A newsletter issued in February by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Divine Worship noted that a “two-for-one” Mass cannot occur in the very rare circumstances when two of the six holy days of obligation—the feast of the Immaculate Conception or Christmas—fall the day before or after Sunday.

“When consecutive obligations occur on Saturday-Sunday or Sunday-Monday, the faithful must attend Mass twice to fulfill two separate obligations,” the committee said.

The reason Catholics might consider the idea of receiving dispensation from a Monday Mass likely stems from the U.S. bishops’ vote in 1991 to lift the obligation to attend Mass on holy days of obligation that fall on Saturdays or Mondays. But that vote was only for three of the six holy days: the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God on Jan. 1; the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on Aug. 15; and the Solemnity of All Saints on Nov. 1.

This does not apply to Christmas and the feast of the Immaculate Conception, which is on Dec. 8. Most dioceses, including the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, have transferred observance of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, which is on Dec. 8, to the following Sunday.

The committee’s newsletter offers a nuanced explanation of the required Mass attendance on holy days falling before or after Sundays, noting that a “dubium,” which is Latin for a request for clarification, about the possibility of “simultaneous fulfillment of obligations was answered in the negative by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy and approved by Blessed Pope Paul VI in 1970.”

The committee notes that this clarification was not issued as a conclusive and authoritative interpretation, but it has weight since it was backed by the Vatican and the pope.

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The newsletter also points out that in the absence of a “definitive interpretation by the Holy See, attendance at the evening Mass shared by the two holy days is indeed sufficient to fulfill both obligations,” but the caveat here is that the Church’s intention in providing vigil Masses was “never envisioned as a legal loophole, and, hence, separate obligations remain.”

The divine worship committee also expresses hope that Catholics would want to go to Mass two days in a row, saying: “It would be hoped, of course, that Catholics foster a love for the sacred liturgy and hold a desire to celebrate the holy days as fully as is reasonably possible.”

There also is the tiniest amount of wiggle room. The committee acknowledges that situations arise where fulfilling Mass obligations on consecutive days is either impractical or impossible for an individual or a family, and in these cases pastors can grant individual dispensations. Similarly, diocesan bishops “may examine their regional circumstances and grant general dispensations or communications, while permitting their pastors to make judgments in individual cases,” the committee said, but such judgment calls are exceptions to the general rule.

The bishops’ committee also has looked ahead to when this will happen again. In the next 12 years, Christmas will fall either on a Saturday or a Monday four times and the feast of the Immaculate Conception will fall on either of those days three times.
Waiting in joyful hope, Advent brings out the best in us

“As we come closer to the great feast of Christmas, we’re right to proclaim that our hearts are filled with joy. Yes, there is much pain and sorrow ahead. Yes, evil will assert itself, and great crimes will be committed in the name of righteousness and God’s holy will. But our faith assures us that when it is coming whom we do not recognize because our eyes are blinded by sin. That one is Jesus, our Savior, the cause of our rejoicing. Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!” (Archbishop Charles C. Thompson)

In his “Christ the Cornerstone” column this week, Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson writes about the season of Advent. He tells us that Advent has an element of penitence to it because it is a time for watchful waiting and preparation for the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. But more fundamentally, the archbishop says, Advent is a time of great rejoicing. Advent calls us to a renewed sense of wonder, because if we are to properly live for the world long for—the truth of our existence revealed in the most unremarkable way, the birth of a little child, the most vulnerable and innocent of all God’s creatures. How unlike the commercial pre-Christmas season with all its noise and impatience? How different from the preoccupation with material things, and with the buying and selling of trinkets and gadgets and the latest fashions? None of these things can truly satisfy us. What we long for is something far greater. With all our hearts, we long for a Person, the Blessed Hope, Jesus Christ.

Can it really be true that what we seek most desperately in our heart of hearts, our deepest and most ardent longing, will come to us in this way? No artifice. No pomp or circumstance. No bravado. Will he really come like a thief in the night, noticed only by outcasts and foreigners, and laid in a manger with an ox and an ass?

Advent prepares for, and makes possible, the Christmas miracle. Christ comes, again and again, year in and year out, because of the eager anticipation of all who want a better life. That includes immigrants and refugees who are desperate to find a new home for themselves and their families. It includes people who are homeless and hungry—here in Indiana and throughout the world. It includes those who suffer from serious illnesses, and whose only desire is to be well again. It even includes people who bicker and disagree with each other about the best ways to make life better for themselves and for us.

God’s promise makes thousands of years ago to send a savior who would free us from the consequences of sin was fulfilled by the Christmas miracle. To prevent us from forgetting the meaning and importance of that miraculous, holy night 2,000 years ago, Jesus comes again. And again. He comes in the daily Eucharist. He comes wherever two or three are gathered in his name. He comes whenever “the least of these, my brothers and sisters” (Mt 25:40), are fed and clothed, visited in prison or in a hospital, and therefore given genuine hope and comfort by one or more of his disciples.

Waiting for things to get better can be very frustrating. That’s why there is so much impatience among us. It is true love we wait for the Lord’s coming. In the meantime, our hearts are empty until they can be filled once again with the grace and mercy of God. So, we are tempted to be frustrated and disillusioned by the current state of things in the Church, in society and in our own homes and families. Advent is all about waiting patiently—and eagerly—for the Blessed Hope, Jesus Christ, who will come again this Christmas and in all the future Christmases until the end of time. He will satisfy our longing. He will turn our sorrows into joy.

During Advent, we renew this profound hope. In spite of our longing and frustration, life is not as bad as it seems. The hopes and fears of all the years are addressed with radical simplicity in the Christmas miracle. Love comes to us in the form of a child, calling us to throw off all our anxious burdens and cast aside the baggage of our imperfect adulthood.

It is good that one wait quietly for the Lord’s salvation (Lam 3:26). Let’s examine our hearts, and also our actions. Let’s lift up our minds and hearts and hands to the Savior who has already come but who is coming again on the last day. When that day comes, all our frustrations and fears will be wiped away. Finally, we will know peace.

—Daniel Conway

Reflection/Andrew Pike

Catholic Energies can help parishes live ‘Laudato Si’

In his 2015 encyclical letter “Laudato Si’, On Care for Our Common Home,” Pope Francis states, “There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gasses can be drastically reduced” (#28).

Reporting from the COP23 climate talks held in Bonn, Germany, in November, the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) echoes that sentiment and reminds us that, while advocacy is important, individual actions are just as important.

“Economic change is needed to address climate change. But systemic change, by its nature, is a slow process. The urgent challenge of climate change requires that we take action in our homes and parishes now. GCCM believes that “individual change is important to catalyzing systemic, institutional change.”

Endorsed by Pope Francis, GCCM (globalcatholicclimatemovement.global) is a global network of more than 400 member organizations and parishes with a community of thousands of Catholics responding to the pope’s call to action in Laudato Si’. You may know them from their hashtag, #livelaudatosi. One dimension of their goal, as stated on its website, is “to help the Catholic community lead by example and dramatically shrink its collective carbon footprint.”

Our parishes are being called upon to do their part. Local individuals and groups can make a real difference. They are able to install a greater sense of responsibility, a strong sense of community, a readiness to protect others, a spirit of creativity and a deep love for the Earth (#179).

One way we can begin is to implement changes on our parish campuses to save energy. Studies show that up to 40 percent of the energy used in a building is wasted. Saving energy in our parishes also has the benefit of saving money on utilities; that money can then be used for other important things.

Parishes may want to eliminate energy waste and save money but not know where to start. The complexity of a typical Catholic campus with multiple structures built at different times can be intimidating when trying to develop an energy efficiency plan.

The Catholic Climate Covenant, a member organization of GCCM, developed a program designed to help parishes do just that. Called Catholic Energies, this program is designed to guide Catholic campuses, churches, schools, hospitals and other Catholic organizations through an energy assessment, design a plan for energy savings, and implement energy efficiency projects that reduce energy costs. They can also provide assistance in funding the projects.

Last, Catholic Energies chief operating officer, said the program emerged in 2016 from hundreds of conversations with pastors, parish staff members and organizational leaders about the need for practical steps on behalf of the environment. For more information on this program, go to catholicenergies.org.

Saving money in our parishes is a laudable goal. But more importantly, making changes to reduce energy use serves as an example and dramatically demonstrates our commitment to the principles of Laudato Si’. Our parishes can serve as role models for the community. This is truly putting our faith in action.

How has your parish been successful in reducing its energy use? Please contact us at creationcare@archindy.org and share your story.

Letter to the Editor

No amount of gun legislation will change current culture of death, reader says

In the “Be Our Guest” column in the Dec. 1, 2017, edition of The Criterion, Greg Erlandson of Catholic News Service misstated a golden opportunity to explore the reasons behind “mass murder and our culture of death.”

Instead, he provided a series of statistics about gun crimes. He quoted Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, who said, “a culture of life cannot tolerate, and must prevent, senseless gun violence in all its forms.”

The problem is that we don’t live in a culture of life in this country, and no amount of gun legislation will change that. Essentially, we are reaping what we have sown. Over 1 million unborn children are aborted each year legally, and yet we expect children not to be abused.

Pornography is available on every smart phone and computer, and we are surprised when women are treated as objectified sexual objects. Hollywood serves up a constant diet of violence, and yet it is successful. Why? The polarization inherent to identity politics changes on our parish campuses to save energy. Studies show that up to 40 percent of the energy used in a building is wasted. Saving energy in our parishes also has the benefit of saving money on utilities; that money can then be used for other important things.

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(Andrew Pike is a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianapolis and of the archdiocesan Commission for Creation Care. He serves as co-chair of the archdiocesan Office of Pastoral Ministries. For help starting a creation care team or for more information, contact Deacon Michael Braun at 317-236-1531 or mbraun@archindy.org.)
Rejoice always! And pray without ceasing

“Yo desbordé de alegría en el Señor, mi alma se regocija en Dios. Porque él me vistió con las vestiduras de la salvación y me envolvió con el manto de la justicia, como un esposo que se ajusta la diadema y como una esposa que se adorna con sus joyas” (Is 6:5-10).

El tiempo de Adviento tiene un componente penitencial puesto que es una época de esperanza y preparación para la venida de nuestro Señor Jesucristo. Pero en el tercer domingo de Adviento (Gaudete Sunday) nos recuerda que estamos llamados a “estar dispuestos a alegría en el Señor” y a proclamar su grandeza a través de nuestras acciones y nuestras palabras.

El domingo de gaudete debe su nombre a la palabra latina “regocijense.” En su Primera Carta a los Tesalonenses, san Pablo nos exhorta a que estemos “siempre alegrés” y a que “queremos sin cesar” (1 Tes 5:16-17). Si tomanos en serio a san Pablo, reconoceremos que estas dos instrucciones tienen mucho en común: que es más fácil decidir que cumplirlas.

La vida es difícil, llena de dolor y de amarguras a veces. Cómo podemos mantener una verdadera actitud de alegría constante? De igual forma, ¿cómo podemos “orar sin cesar” cuando nuestras vidas tan ajedreadas nos devoran tanto tiempo, esfuerzo y atención? Incluso para los monjes y las monjas de claustro a veces es un desafío rezar constantemente. Como siempre, cuando nos sentimos turbados ante las exigencias de la vida cristiana, observamos a María, la Madre de Dios y nuestra y su ejemplo nos muestra el camino.

En respuesta a la primera lectura del domingo de gaudete, la Iglesia nos invita a rezar con María el fantástico cántico conocido como el Magnificat. “Mi alma canta la grandeza del Señor, y mi espíritu se extumba de gozo en Dios, mi salvador, porque me ha unido con bondad a la pequeña de tu servidora” (Lc 1:46-48). Esta fue la respuesta de María ante la difícil noticia de que iba a ser la madre de Nuestro Señor. Instintivamente sabía que esta enorme responsabilidad conllevaría mucho dolor y penurias, y que esta enorme responsabilidad conllevaría mucho dolor y penurias, y que en su lugar encontraría alegría. Sí, es cierto que en el camino encontraremos mucho dolor y sufrimiento; sí, el mal se mantendrá firme y se cometerán crimes en el nombre de Dios y nuestra madre y su ejemplo nos muestra el camino.

Conforme nos acercamos a la gran festividad de la Navidad, con toda razón proclamamos que nuestros corazones están llenos de alegría. Sí, es cierto que en el camino encontraremos mucho dolor y sufrimiento; sí, el mal se mantendrá firme y se cometerán grandes crímenes en el nombre de Dios y nuestra madre. Pero nuestra fe nos asegura que aquellos que se mantengan firmes pueden retener lo que es bueno y que la justicia y la bondad de Dios triunfarán en el final. "No extingan nunca vuestro amor al Espíritu—nos dice san Pablo—“no desprecien las profecías; examen todo y quedense con lo bueno” (1 Tes 5:19-21)."
Events Calendar

December 20
Calvary Massacene
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, 1752 Scheller Lane, New Albany. The Longest Night: A Mass of Consolation, for people experiencing loss during the holidays, all are welcome, 7-7:30 p.m. Information: 812-945-2374, tyost@cbhna.org.

December 21
Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House, 5353 E. 56th St., Indianapolis. Leave the Light On: Sacrament of Reconciliation, 7 a.m.-7 p.m. Information: 317-545-7681, ext. 107 or www.archindy.org/fatima.

Experiencing experiments
Ben McCall, left, and Christina Troll, students at Cardinal Ritter Jr./Sr. High School in Indianapolis, perform an experiment at Purdue University on Nov. 9. They were among 11 students from the school’s Advanced Placement (AP) chemistry class who participated in a kinetics laboratory experience during the “AP Fridays” program at Purdue that day. The program is open to any Indiana high school, and was developed to provide students and their teachers with the time and support needed to conduct suggested labs in a guided-inquiry format on a college campus. For more information about AP Fridays, contact Sarah Nem at s nem@purdue.edu or 765-494-7891. (Submitted photo)

Tony and Judy (Miller) Ardizzone, members of St. Jude Parish in Indianapolis, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on Dec. 26. The couple was married at Sacred Heart Church in Indianapolis on Dec. 26, 1967. They have four children: Angela Kendall, Tony, Joseph and Michael Ardizzone. The couple also has seven grandchildren.

St. Philip Neri Parish to host Christian-Muslim prayer service on Dec. 17
A Christian-Muslim prayer service called “Discovering the Common Love of Jesus and Mary” will be held at St. Philip Neri Church, 550 N. Rural St., in Indianapolis, from 4-5 p.m. on Dec. 17. Father Chris Wadelton, St. Philip Neri Parish to host Christian-Muslim prayer service on Dec. 17. (Submitted photo)

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Providence Associates celebrate 10 years
Providence Associates smile after a service on Nov. 18 during which 22 men and women made their first commitment as a Providence Associate with the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in St. Mary-of-the-Woods. The ceremony coincided with the 10-year anniversary celebration of the program. Providence Associates are men and women of faith who choose to have an intentional relationship with the sisters. There are currently more than 200 associates in the United States and Taiwan. For more information about the associate program, contact Debbie Dillow at dillow@spsmw.org or 317-250-3294. (Submitted photo)
Finding Christmas this While attending to others

If we want to encounter Jesus this Christmas, we need to step outside the neon lights of the Christmas commercial and enter into the shadows where homeless travelers like Mary and Joseph are found. To find the infant Jesus, we must refuse to make Christmas “a feast where the protagonists are ourselves. A Christmas that empties out, pleases the mind, brings joy, and serves to engender in us the faith we must have in order to be ready to receive God in the manger, utterly dependent on others for his tenderness, born poor and fragile with profound simplicity. The noise of divinity in order to become like us in all things but our selfishness and sinfulness.

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(The Criterion’s editorial committee)
The joy of a simple gift
The Christmas Store in Terre Haute will also bring the joy of the season to more than 700 families this year, according to Jennifer Buell, development director of Catholic Charities Terre Haute. The stories from families in Terre Haute are also touching, including one about a man who arrived with a purpose beyond the holidays to thank the store that offers services. His focus was on the area of household items from which families also get to choose.

When his opportunity came to choose a household item, he quickly responded that he didn’t need to look around at what was available. Buell said he ‘had been watching a box the whole time, hoping someone wouldn’t take it’.

‘Provided for what it was and why it meant so much to him, he announced. ‘It’s this set of dishes there are people living in our house, and we can’t all eat together because we don’t have enough dishes.’

Buell still thinks about the man and the reality of a family not having enough dishes to eat together—and how a simple gift like that meant so much to him.

That’s how important this is to people’

The emphasis of the Christmas Store in both Indianapolis and Terre Haute is to serve people in need, not based upon their religion, Hollinden says.

At the Christmas Store in Indianapolis, every family that is helped is referred by one of 90 social service agencies. Some of the store’s ‘customers’ arrive in wheelchairs and walkers. Once, a person came in a hospital bed. Recently, a woman came for her scheduled time just two hours before she was being induced into labor.

That’s how important this is to people,’ Hollinden said. ‘We had a single mom who had five children of her own. Her sister died, and she took in all six of her sister’s children. So she was a single mom with 11 kids. I got to know her. She told me that she got all the older kids through high school and kept them out of gangs. She’s so grateful for what the Christmas Store has done for her family.

11 parishes, the three schools and the many people who have consistently donated toys, household items and money through the years. She’s especially touched by the donations of Catholic school children who send their folders, backpacks, writing pads, quarters, dimes and nickels to the Christmas Store in Indianapolis.’

‘It’s wonderful, wonderful thing. It’s the feeling she gets on Christmas. ‘When I celebrate Christmas with my own family, I’m happy to know we’re generous. They want to help other people. We couldn’t do it without them.’

She views her efforts for the Christmas Store as an expression of her faith. ‘You have Jesus saying, ‘Whatever you do for the least of my people, you do for me.’ It embodies the Catholic faith. Pope Francis is always stressing how much we need to help people in need. And all of us are helping people in need. It’s just a wonderful, wonderful thing. So is the feeling she gets on Christmas.’

At the Christmas Store in Terre Haute, volunteer P.J. Rubin, in the red Santa hat, helps a shopper find just the right gifts at the Catholic Charities Terre Haute venue that will help more than 700 families enjoy this Christmas year. (Kimberly Janse photo)

At the Christmas Store in Indianapolis, volunteers create a welcoming atmosphere for families in need to shop for toys, clothing and household items. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

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At the Christmas Store in Indianapolis, volunteers create a welcoming atmosphere for families in need to shop for toys, clothing and household items. (Photo by John Shaughnessy)

Some see crunch time, others negotiation time, for immigration woes

10

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Supporters who work with the U.S. government as part of the Trump administration have drawn criticism for their actions in recent months, with some lawmakers calling for their removal from the country.

In November, the Trump administration proposed a rule change that would require immigrants to be able to prove that they are able to support themselves independently. Some lawmakers have criticized the rule change as discriminatory and have called for its repeal.

The TPS program, as it is popularly known, has been around for 27 years and provides a work permit and reprieve from deportation to immigrants from some countries recovering from conflicts or natural disasters.

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In 1217, St. Francis of Assisi commissioned a group of his friars to start a mission in the Holy Land to protect the sanctity of the region where the Son of God dwelled. Now, 800 years later, that mission continues—with the additional intent of maintaining a Christian presence in a land where hardships and persecution of followers of Christ have caused their population to dwindle.

“Our Church (there) is dying,” said Franciscan Father Vasko, president of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL), at a fundraising event in Indianapolis on Oct. 21. “It needs to be rebuilt. At present there are only 150,000 Christians, or 8 million people. If that continues to go down, most Church officials are saying that within 60 years there will be no Christians from the very place that Christ founded His Church.”

Event guest speaker Msgr. Frank P. Lane of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio—whose 50 years as a priest include service as a chaplain, teacher, writer, radio host and more—spoke to the crowd of more than 150 about why keeping a Christian presence in the Holy Land is “such a critical, crucial undertaking on the part of our Church … [and] for the sake of civilization itself.” Too often, you get into the idea that … religion is a problem without ever realizing what it contributes to a society.”

In a talk outlining reasons why maintaining a Christian presence in the Holy Land is imperative, he began with the Christian concept of justice as healing, an idea introduced by Christ as a juxtaposition to the Middle East’s form of revenge as justice: “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

According to chapter 5 of the Gospel of Matthew and chapter 6 of the Gospel of Luke, Msgr. Lane said, “Justice basically is a form of medicine for an illness within a society. … It’s the sense of curing the ill through penance or punishment which has always been within the Christian mindset—suffering, suffering together. … The presence of Christianity in all parts of the world has to be there to bring into the society this particular element of civilization.”

The Church must also continue in the Holy Land to secure the physical presence of Christ in the form of the sacraments, he said, “… a healing presence in the midst of a broken world. There’s a Church teaching that each person is sacred because they are created in the image and likeness of God is also of imperative value, he said. This belief “is something that Christianity must share with the world. In a world twisted by hate and violence as it is, it isn’t their problem—is it’s not knowing who we are. Without this sense of self identity, we don’t know who our neighbor is.

The proclamation of the love of God for us in the incarnation of Jesus and in the creation of ourselves is that seed which needs to be planted in the midst of every society. … It is an emergency situation in the Holy Land.”

Ultimately, Msgr. Lane said, “God has placed (the Franciscans) in the Middle East to be the root and the spring and the life of a new kind of understanding, a new era of possibility.”

One way in which the FFHL helps to maintain such concepts in the Holy Land is “to extend that Christianity through higher education for these young people there who, once they get a scholarship, have great academic standing,” said Father Peter. “But unfortunately, they’re very poor. So we’re looking for those young people to be the future leaders of the Holy Land.”

As an example, Father Peter shared the story of a girl in the Palestinian-controlled town of Bethlehem who lost both parents in the span of three years. She was left to care for her younger sister. “She wanted to become a nurse, and she applied to our foundation grant for college,” the Franciscan priest said. “Here’s a girl with no parents. She’s working, trying to take care of her sister and going to college. She became a nurse, and she has never forgotten what the Franciscans did for her. … That’s a real success story.

“Another one was a girl who decided she wanted to take business courses. Later on, she then became a nun. There’s all sorts of stories where there’s one parent missing, there’s three kids. That’s who the friars are here for—to help those Christians exist in an honorable way.”

According to Father Peter, 425 Christian students in the Holy Land have received a free college education through the FFHL, 260 of whom are currently studying. Of those who have graduated, 85 percent are working in law, accounting, medicine, education, banking and other professions. The remaining 15 percent are women who have gotten married and are continuing to raise Christian families. All of the scholarship recipients have stayed in the Holy Land. “Half of Christians in the Holy Land is something noted by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, who was present at the event. “Arab Christians have been under a great deal of oppression and persecution, especially in the last few years,” he said. “Fewer and fewer are there. The foundation is trying to maintain that Christian presence in the Holy Land by supporting those who are trying to live there, trying to maintain the sacred places there, those who are continuing to try to live out the Gospel there. This [event] is a great sign of support, prayer and concern for those people.”

Father Peter expressed his gratitude to the crowd for such support. “We’ve been doing this for the last 25 years, and we see it paying off,” he said. “It’s a confirmation from the vicar of Christ to us saying, ‘keep trudging along.’ It only takes one candle to light the darkness. I hope you can be a candle to light the darkness for those young people who are desperately seeking your help.”

—Franciscan Father Peter Vasko, president of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land

Iraq archbishop, Pence meet to discuss plight of persecuted Christians

WASHINGTON (CNN)—Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Bashar Warda of Irbil, Iraq, reported that he and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence “had a substantial discussion on the prospects of the Christians, and other religious minority communities Iraq.”

The archbishop met with Pence on Dec. 4. The visit came during an extended visit to the United States. Part of his trip included several events during and after the Week of Awareness for Persecuted Christians on Nov. 26-Dec. 2.

Pence is to visit the Middle East in late December. He had his discussions there will focus on protecting religious minorities, especially Christians, the continued threat imposed by the Islamic State and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Archbishop Warda said he updated Pence on the situation facing Christians, and expressed our hope that peace would soon come to Nineveh.

“One behalf of people, I expressed our gratitude for his promise of swift assistance to our communities who suffered genocide at the hands of ISIS,” the archbishop said. Catholic News Service received an e-mail with his remarks from the Knights of Columbus.

“I noted the importance of having the U.S. and the Vatican work with the three major Christian groups together through the Nineveh Reconstruction Committee, and the importance of this group in the resettlement of thousands of Christians in Ninewah and in furthering the unity of the Christian communities in Iraq,” Archbishop Warda said.

The prelate also said he described to the vice president “the importance of the aid and support we have received” from the Knights of Columbus and Aid to the Church in Need.

At the end of their meeting, Archbishop Warda gave Pence a crucifix from the town of Karamles, which was targeted and badly damaged when ISIS invaded. “I also asked him of our prayers and told him that if he ever visits Iraq, he is most welcome in Irbil,” he added.

In a tweet, Pence said he had “an important dialogue” with Archbishop Warda about President Donald Trump’s “commitment to directly assist persecuted Christians and religious minorities in Iraq” heading to the Middle East this month to discuss U.S. plans to accelerate funding and other projects in the region.

The Knights recently completed a fundraising for a $2 million initiative to rebuild Karamles, a predominately Christian town in Ninewah. On Oct. 25 in a keynote address at the Solidarity Dinner for the Washington-based group In Defense of Christians, Pence announced the Trump administration would provide direct U.S. aid to persecuted Christians in the Middle East and route it through the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The aid will go to “faith-based and private organizations” to help those who are persecuted in the region, Pence said.

Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Bashar Warda of Irbil, Iraq, is seen during a memorial Mass for victims of the Islamic State at the St. John Paul II National Shrine in Washington on Nov. 28. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)
Indiana town embodies Santa Claus and his spirit of love, peace, joy

By Katie Rutter

Catholic News Service

SANTA CLAUS, Ind.—Belief in that iconic Christmas figure, the rotund merry man with a bag full of presents, inspires thousands of children to write letters addressed to Santa Claus each year.

Surprisingly, many of these wish lists actually do get delivered to Santa Claus. But rather than landing in a magical workshop at the North Pole, the notes wind up in “Santa Claus” each year.

“We have already answered 5,000 letters, and we’ll be getting more this month,” Patricia Koch, founder of the Santa Claus Museum and Village, told Catholic News Service (CNS) on Dec. 2. “They come from the U.S.A. and from all over the world.”

Koch and a dozen other volunteers work long hours to “help” Santa answer the letters that find their way to the Santa Claus post office. Koch calls this letter-writing a ministry and is dedicated to keeping the spirit of Santa Claus alive in the town, person, and place.

“Our world can become very self-centered and commercialized,” she explained, “so I think Santa Claus has that spirit of love and forgiveness and peace and joy.”

The town itself, with a population just over 2,400, “is one of the most magical little towns you’ll find,” said Koch.

St. Nicholas, also known as Nicholas of Myra, was bishop of Myra in present-day Turkey, who lived from about 280 to 343. He was the orphaned son of wealthy parents, and according to an ancient story, threw bags of gold through the windows of an impoverished family in the dead of night. “In later versions, he drops a bag of gold through the chimney where it lands in a stocking that was hung there to dry,” explained Adam English, chair of the Christian studies department at Campbell University.

“Just looking at his acts, we just see this kindness and seeing those who were less fortunate,” said Father John Evansville, Ind., Diocese after the man who inspired the traditional names of the three wise men. Unsurprisingly, the name stuck, and the site of the church in the Evinsville, Ind., Diocese after the man who inspired the myth: St. Nicholas.

“Growing up as a Christian, you want to share your gifts and from that comes generosity all year long. And especially during every Sunday liturgy. Historical documents confirm that Nicholas attended the Council of Nicaea in 325. While his direct contributions, if any, are unknown, it was during this council that the Nicene Creed was written. You have echoes of the voice of St. Nicholas every Sunday when we recite the creed, which for me as a big St. Nicholas fan, indebted to him for so many things in my life, that’s important to me,” said Father Marquis.

“Still, for Santa enthusiasts, even this depiction echoes Christian beginnings that were simply transformed by American culture. “I use the expression ‘extreme makeover,’” explained Father Joseph Marquis, a Byzantine Catholic priest who operates the St. Nicholas Institute. His program, based in Detroit, teaches the saints’ story to professional portrayers of Santa.

“They took away his miter and gave him a triangular cap, and his bishop’s coat was shortened and lined with fur. The candy cane is an evolution from the crozier,” Father Marquis said.

Nicholas of Myra likely lacked the rounded figure characteristic of a diet of milk and cookies. His place in history would paint a stature hardened by persecution, perhaps even bearing the scars of torture. A contemporary of the emperor Diocletian, Nicholas lived through the most terrible persecution of the early Church and was himself imprisoned.

“We know for sure his nose was broken,” said Father Marquis, referencing historical research done on the bones of the saint.

“They tortured his priests who were members of his flock to make them recant, and he wouldn’t do it,” Father Marquis said.

Nicholas of Myra also was hailed as a defender of justice, which might have led to Santa’s common question to young children, “Have you been good?” and the naughty-nice list that he must “check twice.” According to tradition, the bishop found out that a local judge had accepted a bribe and falsely condemned three men to death.

“Nicholas ran to the spot and literally grabbed the sword out of the executioner’s hand,” related Father Marquis.

“He pointed right at the guy for condemning them to death, and the man actually confessed that he took money to convict them,” he said.

St. Nicholas Church hosted a visit from its namesake to anticipate his Dec. 6 feast day. A white-bearded man wearing a mitre and long red robes made a surprise appearance at the Sunday Vigil Mass on Dec. 2, and handed out ornaments to all the parishioners.

Father Marquis said.

“Growing up as a Christian, you want to share your gifts you want to give of yourself,” said Father Bortz. “The true Christian is St. Nicholas, that’s generosity all the time.”

Katie Rutter is a freelance writer and member of Charles Borromeo Parish in Bloomington. To watch a related video, go to https://bit.ly/2iEbkgz.

**Online Lay Ministry Formation**

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis has partnered with the University of Notre Dame and Catholic Distance University (CDU) to offer for-credit online theology classes:

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EDUCATION
Faith

Inner joy can nurture us in busy days before Christmas

By Maureen Pratt

The church is upon us. Christmas is near, and there is too little time, too much to do and still more to come. We’re supposed to shout, “Joy to the world!” but the actual feeling of joy might seem quite distant or exhausting, for we carry a photographic insistence that we smile even when we really don’t feel like it.

The wonderful readings for this Third Sunday of Advent come to the rescue of our harried hearts. Each in its own way brings this blessed time into comforting focus, and as a gift for today and tomorrow, provides effective ways that we can grasp and cultivate lasting joy, not from external sources, but from deep within, where Christ dwells and the Holy Spirit moves.

First, the reading from Isaiah (Is 61:1-2, 10-11) helps us reorient ourselves from our daily, more mundane tasks to an inner purpose that leaps forth with a robe of salvation. “With joy like the joy of a bridegroom...” (Is 61:10).

Second, the Gospel acclamation (Lk 1:46-48) echoes the readings before it and leads us into a glorious Gospel passage—St. John 1:6-8, 19-28—that invites us to reflect on our faith beginnings: our baptism.

Most of us probably do not remember being baptized. As the wise, wriggly babies, we were very simple-minded (adorable, yes, but, still simple-minded), caring most to eat, sleep, crawl and repeat. Even if a few of us were the paragon of cherubic virtue (a very few), the likelihood of being aware of what was happening as adults generally guided us through the first sacrament is, well, unlikely.

Yet, as clueless as we were as babies about the great mystery unfolding in our lives, that early initiation set us on a pivotal path of faith.

In subsequent years, we grow and find that early baptism sets us on a journey of faith. In the midst of our current frazzled state! Encountering Christ in Advent brings joy and peace beyond understanding.

Encountering Christ in Advent brings joy and peace beyond understanding

By Effie Caldarola

Rejoice always! Those words from St. Paul in his First Letter to the Thessalonians reverberate through the ages, through prayer and song, again and again. We are called to rejoice always!

This Advent, we take time to pray with St. Paul, one of history’s most compelling figures. A focused and immense man, he initially dedicated himself to persecuting followers of Jesus. Then, after a dramatic encounter on a journey to Damascus left him blinded and dazed, St. Paul changed course entirely.

He had encountered Christ, personally and vividly, and his life would never be the same. St. Paul, we ask you to help us understand the indescribable joy that an encounter with the risen Christ can bring.

In our lives, we seek happiness. We ask, St. Paul, that you help us to understand the difference between the superficial things of this life that sometimes bring us brief happiness and the deep down, impregnable joy for which we yearn and which will shepherd us through life’s hardest moments.

St. Paul, in your letters, we sometimes find you in prayer. We ask you to help us sit with you in the dank, humid environment of a Roman prison. Help us to be with you in the quiet of prayer. We ask you to be present to the scene or incident that you encountered in the filthy conditions, the darkness of a lonely Roman night.

Help us to understand those things that imprison us this Advent season. Amid the twinkling lights and the gaily wrapped presents, help us, as we spend time with you, to enumerate what sometimes hinders our joy.

Are we lonely for someone we miss this season, and feel our hearts cannot endure the absence? Are we discouraged by the waste and overabundance that sometimes mark the holidays? Are we struggling against overconsumption, either of food, alcohol or other substances that enslave us? Are we feeling financially anxious or insecure? Is our faith sometimes overwhelmed by the evil present in our world?

St. Paul, the tables have been turned for you as you embraced Christ. You, the pursuer, became the hunted. The persecutor had become the persecuted. How did you encounter Christ, personally and vividly?

We remember the words of Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical “Deus Caritas Est” (“God Is Love”): “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction” (#1). We ask you to help us share in boundless joy in the coming days.

We pray for the grace, this Advent season, to encounter, as St. Paul did, a person, the person of Christ who brings us a peace that the world cannot give, a joy and peace surpassing understanding, a joy not confined or constrained by prison walls.

(Effie Caldarola is a freelance writer and a columnist for Catholic News Service.)
Annual worship service offers chance for faiths to be one in prayer

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU) is annually celebrated on Jan. 18-25. This period is bracketed by the Chair of St. Peter and the Conversion of St. Paul. This “octave” (eight days) offers an intense time for prayer and reflection.

Each year, the Pontifical Commission for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches chooses a theme for a region of the world whose Christian leaders are invited to prayerfully prepare a prayer service. Special care is taken in choosing the Scripture passages, symbols, gestures and songs that reflect the cultural and historical context of the region. But these must be universal enough to be used in other regions of the world.

The 2017 theme for the archdiocesan Office of Ecumenism is “The Human Side.” The theme encourages everyone to reflect on ways we can be isolated during this time of Advent, and then to allow the Holy Spirit to help us discover the unobstructive grace that can lie in the very fact of being sick,” arrested or isolated.

The word “Advent” (adventus in Latin) can actually be translated as “presence” or “arrival.” Typically, this is a time to think about the first thing that comes to mind. We think first of the waiting, or anticipation of the arrival. This translation helps us see the different focus—on God’s presence and closeness, his love—and the blessing he brings in his presence.

When we are sick, isolated or lonely, we are taken out of the rush of typical daily life, and we might experience God’s little encouragement to reflect and make intentional choices about our external activity or inner life. Benedict tells us “When I am sick, I am obliged to be still. I am obliged to wait. I am obliged to consider the ways we can be isolated during this time of Advent, and then to allow the Holy Spirit to help us discover the unobstructive grace that can lie in the very fact of being sick,” arrested or isolated.

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This weekend, the Church celebrates “Gaudete Sunday,” a name alluding from the opening word in Latin of the entrance antiphon for the Mass for the day. In Latin, “gaudete” is a command to “rejoice.” Rejoicing is not indicated because Advent, and its stress on prayer and penance, is half completed, but rather because Christmas is nearer. Another reason for rejoicing is that, hopefully, we all feel closer to God as a result of observing Advent with prayer, reflection and penance. If we have used Advent as intended by the Church, we are greater to a fuller communion with the Lord, the light of the world.

Preists may wear rose-colored vestments on this weekend, symbolizing the dark violet of Advent already being lightened by the forthcoming light of the Lord’s arrival in our souls and into the world.

The third part of Isaiah furnishes the first reading. When this passage was written, God’s people were weary and frustrated. They, or their forebears, had undergone the humiliation, uncertainty and misery of exile in Babylon. When finally allowed to leave Babylon and return to their homeland, they were understandably exulted over their arrival. When they found a sterile and parched land awaited them. Life was brutally hard. God had tricked them, providing for their release from Babylon only to subject them to further, worse trials at home? Did God even exist? Typically for this section of Isaiah, this reading glows with optimism. Whatever may be the reality of the moment, for those loyal to God, a wondrous future awaits. This reading urges us to use the remaining time in this season to seek God with all our hearts.

Excitedly, the liturgy proclaims that Jesus was obedient to God. Our lives...
LITURGY continued from page 1

“An Evening of Lights” event included a reflection by Archbishop Thompson, Sister Stephanie’s blessing and lighting of the archdiocese’s Christmas tree, and music by the archdiocesan choral group Vox Sacra.

For the event, members of parishes throughout central and southern Indiana were able to donate $10 or more to dedicate a luminaria in memory of a loved one. Approximately 160 luminarias were dedicated throughout central and southern Indiana. Nearly $2,000 was donated through the event, and CCF will place those monies in a fund to benefit the archdiocesan Catholic Community Foundation. For more information on the archdiocesan Catholic Community Foundation, visit archindy.org/CCF.) †

In the archdiocese, she served at St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis and at St. Michael the Archangel School in Clinton from 1977-83, and in Indianapolis at St. Michael the Archangel School (now St. Michael-St. Gabriel School) from 1955-58, 1959-63 and 1992-93, and at St. Lawrence School from 1963-64. She ministered at the motherhouse from 1993-2000 and at Marian University starting in 2000 before retiring from ministry in 2004. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100.

Franciscan Sister Stephanie Zimmer served in Catholic schools for 28 years

Franciscan Sister Stephanie Zimmer died on Dec. 5 at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in Oldenburg. She was 86.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Dec. 11 at the Motherhouse Chapel in Oldenburg. Burial followed at the sisters’ cemetery. Mary Magdalene Zimm was born on Sept. 18, 1931, in Indianapolis and grew up as a member of the former St. Catherine of Siena Parish. She entered the Sisters of St. Francis on Sept. 8, 1949, and professed final vows on Aug. 12, 1955.

Sister Stephanie studied education at Mariano University in Indianapolis. Xavier University in Cincinnati and the Catholic University of America in Washington, earning respectively a bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees at those schools. During 68 years as a Sister of St. Francis, Sister Stephanie ministered as an educator for 28 years in Indiana schools in Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. In the archdiocese, she served at St. Michael School in Brooklynville from 1952-55, St. Mary School in Greensburg from 1956-59, the former Sacred Heart School in Clinton from 1977-83, and in Indianapolis at St. Michael the Archangel School from 1993-2000 and at Marian University starting in 2000 before retiring from ministry in 2004. Memorial gifts may be sent to the Sisters of St. Francis, P.O. Box 100, Oldenburg, IN 47036-0100.

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson prepares to bless the archdiocesan Christmas tree, luminarias and a Nativity scene during the Dec. 7 “An Evening of Lights.” Assisting him is Father Patrick Beidelman, executive director of the archdiocesan Secretariat for Worship and Evangelization. (Photo by Mike Kroll)

HONORING OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles stands with his cross as he consecrates Mass honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 3 in Los Angeles. The Mass came ahead of the Dec. 12 feast day, which celebrates the appearance of Mary to indigenous peasant St. Juan Diego in 1531 near present-day Mexico City. Archbishop Gomez is vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

(CNS photo/Evander Taylor, Vida Nueva)

“Hope is the conviction of our being,” said Schliessmann, a member of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. “I thought this was a nice thing to do.”

Mary Schliessmann lit a luminaria in honor of her late husband, Jack, who died in 2012.

“Time goes so fast for me, and Advent was so special growing up, as was Lent,” said Schliessmann, a member of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis. “I thought this was a nice thing to do.”

Tom Hirschauer, also a member of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, said Archbishop Thompson’s message of hope brought comfort in knowing that the Church is “there for them during this season and in their time of need.”

Smith said that the holidays can be a time of sadness and loneliness as people miss loved ones, but noted that programs like this can help people in their time of need.

“Even in the midst of our sadness, of our grieving, we celebrate our hope, our confidence, our trust, our conviction, by God’s grace, that we will see our loved ones again, in the kingdom of heaven,” he continued.

“Do we ever really face that we have the face of God in us? Do we ever really face that?”

Lucy Thibault, a member of St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, prayerfully walks through the luminarias at the Dec. 7 “An Evening of Lights” program.
Endowment distributions fulfill response to social teaching

Many Advent Giving Trees are up in parish churches throughout central and southern Indiana, and tags are ready to be selected. Our participation in this activity is a response to Catholic social teaching. It challenges us to live our call to love our neighbor as we love God.

One archdiocesan initiative, the Catholic Community Foundation (CCF) Endowment, the Social Action Commission for St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis, is living out that call year-round by funding Christian social action initiatives at the parish, national and international levels.

Bill Spangler, chairman of the Christian social action commission at St. Luke Parish, recently shared with me, “Back in 2005, we helped the commission take $250,000, raised during a capital campaign and invest it in an endowment fund to be used for supporting Christian initiatives outside that parish.”

With the $12,000 to $16,000 income the endowment generates each year, the commission provides small grants, mostly $1,000 and under, to support projects in keeping with the goals of Catholic social teaching. The commission supports everything from local teachers’ outreach programs to groups working on fighting poverty in Appalachia, Honduras and Tanzania.

“I like the fact that most of our grants are small grants,” Spangler told me. “They go to help organizations that aren’t tremendously well-funded. Our grants are a good kick-starter for programs that are just gaining some wind or in desperate need of funding.”

Spangler also admitted that establishing an endowment fund was not his first thought. Fortunately, another commission member, Fred Hofheinz, who worked for Lilly Endowment, Inc. in Indianapolis, suggested establishing one through the Catholic Community Foundation.

“To see this go on year after year and have the kind of impact it has has been amazing,” said Spangler. “I would not have thought of it myself because outreach programs often look for help in immediate needs, but it’s been extraordinarily beneficial. Twelve years of really helping others, it’s a legacy that I think we are very proud of!”

If you find yourself wondering how you can also use endowment giving to create a legacy for Catholic ministries in need, feel free to reach out to me by email at cf@archindy.org or by phone at 1-800-382-9836, ext. 1482, or 317-236-1482. You can also visit our website at archindy.org.

Spangler will be happy to assist you in the same way we did St. Luke’s Christian social action commission.

From all of us at the Catholic Community Foundation, have a blessed Christmas and New Year!”

(Eliza Smith is director of the Catholic Community Foundation. Tax information or legal information provided herein is not intended as tax or legal advice and cannot be relied on to avoid statutory penalties. Always check with your legal, tax and financial advisors before implementing any gift plan.)

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Innovating with Faith/Elisa Smith

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Men and women contemplating a vocation to the priesthood, consecrated life or marriage should not be afraid because God wants only for them to experience the joy that comes from serving others, Pope Francis said.

“Our slowness and our sloth should not delay our response, and Christians need not be ‘fearful of our limitations and sins, but instead open our hearts to the voice of the Lord,’” the pope said in his message for the 2018 World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

“It will not fill our hearts if we keep standing by the windows with the excuse of waiting for the right time, without accepting this very day the risk of making a decision,” the pope wrote. “Vocation is always timely! The Christian mission is now!”

The papal message for the day of prayer, which will be observed on April 28, 2018, was released on Dec. 22 at the Vatican. The 2018 theme is “Listening, discerning and obeying the Lord’s call.”

In his message, Pope Francis said God’s call “is not as clear-cut as any of those things we can hear, see or touch in our daily experiences because God “comes silently and discreetly, without imposing on our freedom.”

Christians, he said, must learn to listen carefully and “view things with the eyes of faith” in order to listen to his voice, which is “drowned out by the many worries and fears that speak to our minds and hearts.”

“We will never discover the special, personal calling that God has in mind for us if we remain enclosed in ourselves, in our own way of doing things, in the apathy of those who feel that they are simply the actors in their own little world,” the pope said.

Listening is increasingly difficult in today’s society, which is “overstimulated and bombarded by information” and “prevents us from passing and enjoying the taste of contemplation” and discerning God’s plan, he said.

Often stilled by “the temptations of ideology and negativity,” he said, Christians need spiritual discernment which allows them to “discover the places, the means and situations through which God calls them.”

“Every Christian ought to grow in the ability to ‘read the signs of his own time,’ and to understand where and to what he or she is being called by the Lord, in order to carry on his mission,” Pope Francis said.

He also urged men and women to live out their call once it is discovered and “become a witness of God’s work here and now,” whether in marriage or priesthood or consecrated life.

“If [God] lets us realize that he is calling us to consecrate ourselves totally to his kingdom, then we should have no fear!” Pope Francis said.

“It is beautiful—and a great grace,” he said, “to be completely and forever consecrated to God and the service of our brothers and sisters.”

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VEY Rev. Joseph L. Newton, JCL

The Metropolitan Tribunal is seeking a full-time professional person to serve as Defender of the Bond to propose and clarify everything that can be reasonably added nullity or dissolution of marriage (cf. canon 1432). As Defender of the Bond, the applicant must possess a J.C.L or J.C.D degree from a recognized faculty of canon law and must be a Catholic in good standing.

The position involves the evaluation of initial petitions to see if there is anything that would warrant rejection of the petition for consideration; the offering of specific topical areas or questions to be asked of the parties or the witnesses; the reading and analyzing of completed cases for decision including the writing of an argument in accord with canon 1432; and the performance of other duties, as necessary, to contribute to the effectiveness of the Tribunal such as participating in Favor of the Faith, Pauline, and Ligament processes.

The position requires an understanding and acceptance of Church teaching and theology concerning marriage. Excellent oral and written communications skills, strong analytic skills, interpersonal teamwork, proven organizational ability, and sensitivity to confidentiality are also essential. Computer skills including word processing are very important for this position.

Please send a résumé and salary requirements by December 31, 2017 to: Very Rev. Joseph L. Newton, J.C.L

Archdiocese of Indianapolis • 1400 N. Meridian St. • Indianapolis, IN 46202

jnewton@archindy.org
St. Pius X Girls’ Track Team

The girls’ track team from St. Pius X Parish in Indianapolis was the runner-up in the girls’ division of the 1980 City-Wide Track meet. They posed with their trophies in this photo. The coaches in the back row, from left to right, are John Collins, Brian Walker and Bill Farney. If you know the names of any of the girls on this team, please let us know!

(Would you 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 jmotyka@archindy.org.)

Bishop Simon Bruté

From the ARCHIVES

If you are planning your wedding between Jan. 30 and July 1, 2018 or if you were married between July 1, 2017 and Jan. 30, 2018 and did not have your engagement announced in The Criterion, we invite you to submit the information for an announcement using the form below or electronically at www.archindy.org/criterion/local/forms3/wedding-form.html.

E-mailed photos
Photos should be saved in jpg format and be at least 500 kb. Color photos are preferred. We recommend to have a photo where the couple’s faces are close to each other. Please send your photo as an attachment to the following e-mail: cclark@archindy.org. Subject line: Spring Marriage (Last name). In the e-mail, please include the information in the form located below.

If you are unable to e-mail a photo, you may mail us a photo to scan with the bottom form. Please, no photocopied photos. If you want the photo returned, please include a return addressed envelope with a postage stamp on it.

Deadline
All announcements and photos must be received by 10 a.m. on Friday, Jan. 19, 2018. (No announcements or photos will be accepted after this date.)

Be a part of our Spring Marriage Edition
Feb. 2, 2018, issue of The Criterion

If you are planning your wedding between Jan. 30 and July 1, 2018 or if you were married between July 1, 2017 and Jan. 30, 2018 and did not have your engagement announced in The Criterion, we invite you to submit the information for an announcement using the form below or electronically at www.archindy.org/criterion/local/forms3/wedding-form.html.

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Award-winning parish

Donn Paquette, right, a member of All Saints Parish in Dearborn County, receives on behalf of his Batesville Deanery faith community an award from Jarred Holbrook of Indiana Landmarks, left, an organization dedicated to historic preservation in the state, during a Dec. 1 celebration at Hillforest Mansion in Aurora. The parish received the organization’s 2017 Rosemary Prentice Award for Historic Preservation for its work in restoration work done on its historic campuses. Looking on are members of All Saints’ music ministry. (Submitted photo)