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News Briefs

Pope says nuclear moral limit reached

ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT FROM BANGLADESH (CNS) — The Cold War policy of nuclear deterrence appears morally unacceptable today, Pope Francis said.

St. John Paul II, in a 1982 message to the U.N. General Assembly, said deterrence “may still be judged morally acceptable” as a stage in the process of ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

But, Pope Francis said, “the very possession” of nuclear weapons “is to be firmly condemned.”

The world’s nuclear arsenals, he said, “are so sophisticated that you risk the destruction of humanity or a great part of humanity.”

Pope Francis said he was not dictating “papal magisterium,” or formal church teaching, but was raising a question that a pope should raise: “Today is it licit to maintain the nuclear arsenals as they are or, to save creation and to save humanity, isn’t it necessary to turn back?”

The weapons are designed to bring one side victory by destroying the other, he said, “and we are at the limit of what is licit.”

Pope names Brownsville auxiliary bishop

WASHINGTON — Pope Francis has named Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri Oratorians Father Mario Alberto Aviles, a pastor in Hidalgo, Texas and procurator general of the Oratorians, to be Auxiliary Bishop of Brownsville, Texas.

Bishop-designate Aviles, 48, has led the Confederation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri since 2012.

Father Aviles was born in Mexico. He joined the Congregation of the Oratory in Mexico City in 1986 and in 1988 he moved to the Pharr Oratory in Texas.

Father Aviles attended the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome where he earned a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy in 1998.

He was ordained a priest on July 21, 1998. He then earned a master of divinity degree from Holy Apostles in Cromwell, CT in 2000. Additional education includes a master’s degree in educational leadership from the University of Phoenix.

Our Lady of Lourdes celebrates 60-year anniversary



Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton celebrates the 60th anniversary Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Winterville, with, from left, Permanent Deacon Thomas E. Graham, Msgr. Kurt H. Kemo, pastor Our Lady of Lourdes and Blessed Sacrament parishes, and Permanent Deacon Mark A. Erste. (Photo by Orsatti)

By Dino Orsatti
Editor

WINTERSVILLE — Parishioners at Our Lady of Lourdes, Winterville, took a stroll down memory lane after Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton celebrated the 60th anniversary Mass.

In his homily, Bishop Monforton said milestones are important, remembering that his parents met 60 years ago. But more importantly, “I challenge every one of you to make

your community better in the years ahead.” The bishop cited bringing people back to the church as an example of making the community better.

“It’s my home, it’s my church,” said Irene Rozsa, 91, who has been a member of Our Lady of Lourdes since day one. This day had special meaning for Rozsa, who still has vivid memories of the church’s beginning.

Dec. 12, 1957, just a few days before the centennial
To Page 4

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE DIOCESE OF STEUBENVILLE

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Representatives from Catholic Woman’s clubs in Beverly, Bridgeport and Marietta participate in the Box of Joy program in Marietta, from left, Donna Turner, Theresa Bryniarski Leo, Nancy Morris, Linda Caldwell, Robin Cleveland, Janet Steinel, Sue Lambert, Linda Ishmael, Elaine Schott, Barbara Trytko and Ila Nagy. Annette Schaad is not pictured. (Photo provided) • Story/Page 2

Diocesan deaneries help children experience the joy of Christmas

By Dino Orsatti
Editor

RICHMOND — Help from three deaneries within the Diocese of Steubenville will be putting Christmas smiles on the faces of 539 children, all of whom live in dire poverty in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Nicaragua, as part of Cross Catholic Outreach's Box of Joy ministry program.

Cross Catholic Outreach's Box of Joy ministry is going to brighten the Christmas for more than 60,000 children this year.

The Box of Joy program is organized by Catholic schools, parishes and groups across the United States and facilitated by Cross Catholic Outreach.

Mother of Hope Deanery Council of Catholic Women sent 17 cases, filled with 285 individual Boxes of Joy, to the organization's distribution center in Florida last month, including 13 boxes from the "Little Flowers Girls Club," a group of 27 students from Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School, Steubenville. The girls do a work of mercy each month.

Toys, school supplies, clothes and other useful items were collected and eventually distributed to the less fortunate. Mother of Hope Deanery includes parishes in Jefferson, Harrison and Carroll counties.

Janet Steinel, project leader, and Robin Cleveland, Catholic Woman's Club president, reported that parishioners at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, St. Mary School, and the Knights of Columbus Council 478, Marietta, filled 200 boxes for Visitation Deanery. St. Bernard Parish, Beverly, also delivered boxes to the basilica.

St. Joseph Church Catholic Woman's Club, Bridgeport (Presentation Deanery), collected 54 Boxes of Joy.



Father John J. "Jack" McCoy, pastor of St. John Fisher Parish, Richmond, and St. Joseph, Amsterdam, bestows a final blessing over Boxes of Joy donated from throughout Mother of Hope Deanery. (Photo provided)

The Box of Joy ministry is in its fourth year, tripling and surpassing its goals every year and giving families, churches and individuals the opportunity to help children experience the joy of Christmas in places where gifts are rare or nonexistent due to poverty.

"While gift giving is not the meaning of Christmas, it does help us remember the reason for Christmas — the birth of Jesus and how our Lord received gifts from strangers," said Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach.

Cavnar said, "Serving Jesus through helping these children experience the

joy of opening up presents is a beautiful way to show the love of Christ and see that love reflected in their happy faces."

CCO Development Officer June Law-

rence said the Box of Joy program "provides students, parishioners and Catholic groups, such as the Council of Catholic Women and Knights of Columbus, a simple and tangible service experience that has both a material and spiritual impact on the poorest of the poor in developing countries."

Cross Catholic Outreach piloted the Box of Joy ministry in 2014 with just two dioceses participating. Every year, the number of churches and groups has grown tremendously, as more churches and families see the program as a tangible way to show love and compassion to children in desperate need.

"Some kids live in homes without electricity or running water, or homes with dirt floors. Some kids live in the most impoverished areas," says Father Thomas J. Rodi, Archbishop of Mobile, Alabama.

Joelle Bucci, Catholic Woman's Club president at St. John Fisher Parish, Richmond, and project leader for Mother of Hope Deanery Council of Catholic Women, said, "We are pleased with the response we got from our fellow CWCs in Mother of Hope Deanery and look forward to involving the parishioners more in the coming years."

For additional information about Cross Catholic Outreach and their ministry, visit their website, www.CrossCatholic.org.

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Bishop Monforton's Schedule

December

- 17 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 8:30 a.m.
- 18 Meeting with Community of God's Love, Steubenville, noon
- 19 "Misa con Hermanas," Mass with Spanish Sisters, Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus, at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Oratory, Lovers Lane, Steubenville, 9 a.m.
- 20 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 8:30 a.m.
Radio segment WDEO 990AM, 10:15 a.m.
Confessions, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 7 p.m.
- 21 Mass, followed by Christmas party with chancery staff, Steubenville, 4:30 p.m.
- 22 Confessions, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 10 a.m.
- 24 Mass, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Toronto, 11 a.m.
Christmas Vigil Mass, Catholic Central High School, Berkman Theater, Lanman Hall, Steubenville, 4 p.m.
- 25 Midnight Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 12 a.m.



St. John Central Grade and High School, Bellaire, collect canned goods for those in the Bellaire community in need of assistance for the holiday season. The canned goods were collected for the local food pantry at Bellaire United Methodist Church. In exchange for collecting canned goods, students were given a "dress down" day. Pictured with the items for the food pantry, from the front left, are Max Blinco, Gavin Cole and Cady Watts. In the back, from left, Nancy Hughes, food pantry volunteer, Justus Kirkland, Tom Myers, food pantry volunteer, and Mykhia Bennet. (Photo provided)

Pope Francis names Auxiliary Bishop Knestout new bishop of Richmond

WASHINGTON — Pope Francis has named Auxiliary Bishop Barry C. Knestout of the Archdiocese of Washington as the new bishop of Richmond, Virginia.

Bishop Knestout was born in Cheverly, Maryland, on June 11, 1962. He attended Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where he earned a Master of Divinity degree in 1988 and a Master of Arts degree in 1989.

He was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Washington on June 24, 1989.

Assignments after ordination included: priest secretary to Cardinal Theodore McCarrick (2003-04); pastor, St. John the Evangelist Parish, Silver Spring (2004-06); and the Archdiocesan Secretary for Pastoral Life and Social Concerns (2006-08).

Named monsignor by Pope John Paul II in 1999, he was then named moderator of the curia in April 2007, and assisted Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl in overseeing administrative affairs.

On Nov. 18, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI named Msgr. Knestout auxiliary bishop of Washington and titular bishop of Leavenworth, Washington. He was ordained a bishop by then-Archbishop Donald Wuerl on Dec. 29, 2008.

He has been a member of the administrative board of the Maryland Catholic Conference and the episcopal moderator of the American Catholic Correctional Chaplains Association.

He serves as the Regional IV representative on the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People as well as the episcopal liaison to the diocesan fiscal management conference.

Bishop Knestout will be the 13th bishop of the Diocese of Richmond, succeeding the late Bishop Francis Xavier DiLorenzo, who passed away Aug. 17, 2017.

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Our Lady of Lourdes

From Page 1

year of Lourdes, Bishop John King Musio established Our Lady of Lourdes, as a mission of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Wintersville, under the direction of Father John E. Costlow.

The mission was located on Bantam Ridge Road, Wintersville, and services were first held on Christmas Day 1957 in an 80-year-old farmhouse. Irene's husband, Gabriel, who died several years ago, and their daughter, Patty, attended that first Mass.

The parishioners gradually turned the old farmhouse into a more fitting worship space. On Aug. 21, 1959, Our Lady of Lourdes became an independent diocesan mission, separated from Blessed Sacrament Church, but administrated by its pastor.

In May, 1961, Bishop Musio asked that plans be made to construct a new church hall, and the initial steps were taken for the construction of the present church. Oct. 22, 1962, ground was broken for construction of the church. The first Mass in the new structure was celebrated June 18, 1963.

Our Lady of Lourdes was raised to the



Our Lady of Lourdes first Mass in 80-year-old farmhouse. (Photo provided)

status of a parish June 9, 1982, and Msgr. Gerald E. Calovini was appointed the first pastor. Msgr. Kurt H. Kemo was appointed

the pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes and Blessed Sacrament parishes in 2008.

Irene Rozsa has been involved in many

capacities with the church, as an extraordinary minister of holy Communion and lector. Irene Rozsa's daughter, Irene Ann, was 8-years-old when the church was established. It has noteworthy memories for her as well. While she was confirmed at Our Lady of Lourdes, her children and grandchildren were also baptized there.

Irene Ann has been singing with the church choir for about 35 years, and she said several other members of the choir have been singing just as long.

There are also coffee socials after every Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes. "It's a very friendly, faith-filled community," according to the younger Rozsa. "There is never a problem finding volunteers for church functions. We enjoy helping out and working together."

Terry Long, a 30-year member of the church and converted Mormon, echoed those sentiments, "It's a very close family relationship here."

Now the family at Our Lady of Lourdes is being asked to make their community better. It's a challenge they all appear to welcome.



Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton blesses the Nativity scene and the Advent wreath at the Nutcracker Village, with assistance from Domenic Nelson, at the Historic Fort Steuben, Steubenville, left. The Diocese of Steubenville is sponsoring the Pope St. John Paul II nutcracker, right. The Nutcracker Village and Advent Market continues through Jan. 7, 2018. (Photos by Orsatti)



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March for Life announces location, tentative speakers for march and rally

WASHINGTON/STEUBENVILLE (CNS) — March for Life organizers announced in a Dec. 6 briefing a tentative group of speakers, a theme and other details for a Jan. 18 conference and expo and Jan. 19 march and rally in Washington.

In the Diocese of Steubenville and the Steubenville area, plans are being made for the attendance of the march and rally. Students from Franciscan University of Steubenville are planning to attend the march, as well as members from Knights of Columbus Council 478, Marietta.

Also, the Upper Ohio Valley Right to Life Society in Steubenville is planning to sponsor a bus to travel to the march.

“Love saves Lives” is the theme of the 2018 march, said Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life, adding that the group also wants to focus on the sacrifice involved with bringing life into the world but also in the interactions with one another. One of the speakers who will talk about that during the event is Pam Tebow, mother of former football player Tim Tebow, said Mancini.

“Her story for choosing life for Timmy is beautiful,” Mancini said. Tebow’s doctors told her she had to have an abortion to save her own life, but she refused and delivered a healthy boy.

Another person who will share her story is Kelly Rosati, a March for Life board member, who has adopted four children previously in foster care, Mancini said.

She said the organization also wants to provide a focus for the work done by pregnancy centers and maternity



Pro-life advocates attend the 2017 annual March for Life in Washington. March for Life organizers announced at a briefing that “Love saves Lives” is the theme for the 2018 march planned for Jan. 19. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)

homes that help women who find themselves in an unplanned pregnancy.

“Those homes are totally about providing resources for women facing unexpected pregnancies and they’re often given a bad rap,” she said.

A day before the rally and march, the March for Life organization will host a conference and an expo, as well as a session with instructions on how to track legislators’ votes and provide “tools to lobby.”

Because the National Park Service has a refurbishing project that makes it too expensive to be on the grounds of the Washington Monument, the noon march, the main event on Jan. 19, will begin instead on the National Mall between Madison Drive and Jefferson Drive in Washington she said, and then will proceed down Constitution Avenue. The march will head toward the U.S. Capitol and then proceed outside the Supreme Court of the United States.

Congressmen Dan Lipinski, an Illinois Democrat, and Chris Smith, a Republican from New Jersey, have confirmed their attendance, Mancini said.

“The March for Life is nonpartisan, or bipartisan, we’re also nonsectarian, we always try to get people from both sides of the political aisle to speak at the March for Life,” she said, adding that it’s not always an easy task.

The annual event marks the Supreme Court’s 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade* and its companion case, *Doe v. Bolton*, that legalized abortion.

The March for Life also has invited White House officials to speak, she said, but gave no indication of whether they would attend. Vice President Mike Pence spoke at the event last year.

The organization has a full list of events at: <http://marchforlife.org/mfl-2018/rally-march-info>.

For additional information about the Diocese of Steubenville’s office of marriage, family, and respect life, visit the diocesan website, www.diosteub.org/family.

Pope: Superficiality, hypocrisy cause division between heart and mind

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The wisdom of the church fathers regarding the interior life of the person, often split between outward success and inner emptiness, continues to be a relevant subject today, Pope Francis said.

In a message to participants in a public session of all the pontifical academies, the pope said that such issues “inevitably demand reflection on the inner and intimate essence of the human being.”

The subject of consciousness, self-awareness and the human heart, he said, are relevant in today’s world, which is “often characterized by concern with appearance, superficiality, the division between heart and mind, interiority and exteriority, consciousness and behavior.”

In his message, which was read by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, the pope reflected on the public session’s theme, “‘In interiore homine’ (The inner man): Research paths in the Latin tradition.”

The theme is inspired by one of St. Augustine’s early writings, “De vera religione” (“The true religion”), in which he states that truth of God dwells within the person.

St. Augustine’s reflections on “what true harmony consists of” and his call to perceive “the image of God” within one’s heart “are of extraordinary interest also in our times and are worth repeating to ourselves,” the pope said.

Those statements, he said, must be shared especially with young men and women who are “caught up in the labyrinths of superficiality and banality, of the external success that conceals an inner emptiness, of the hypocrisy that masks the split between appearances and the heart, between the beautiful and cared-for body and the soul, empty and arid.”

Pope Francis encouraged the members of the pontifical academies, especially those who are teachers, to pass down to younger generations “the wisdom of the fathers enclosed in the texts of Latin culture.”

Educators, he said, must “know how to speak to the

hearts of the young, know how to treasure the very rich heritage of the Latin tradition to educate them in the path of life, and accompany them along paths rich in hope and confidence, drawing from the experience and wisdom of those who have had the joy and the courage to ‘return to themselves’ to pursue their own identity and human vocation.”



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St. John Paul II The Spirit as Gift

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon

“Why did God make me?” is one of the first questions in the old Baltimore Catechism, a booklet that some of us still remember from grade school. We still remember the answer: “God made me to know, to love and to serve him in this world and to be happy with him in the next.” It’s still a good question and a good answer; it encompasses a great deal of sophisticated theology in few words.

In our study of St. John Paul’s articles on *God, Father and Creator*, we saw that God created the world and ourselves out of love. Love is the basic and primeval *gift*. Love is the thing we are really giving when we give a material gift of any kind. Such a gift is but a token – a symbol – of what we are offering: in reality, a gift of “our self.” That’s what love is. St. Thomas Aquinas puts it this way: “Love is the reason for a free gift which is given to a person out of love. The first gift, therefore, is love. ... Thus, as the Spirit proceeds as love, he proceeds also as First Gift” (“Summa Theologica”).

What God possesses not only in abundance, but infinitely and exclusively, is existence. When he shared that with creatures, he was, in a sense, sharing himself with us. He called creatures into being so that he could extend the love that existed from all eternity between himself and the Son to other beings. Such is the only possible reason we can imagine!

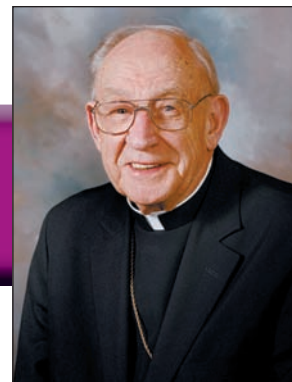
We have seen in our reflections on the Holy Spirit that God’s love, just as his knowledge of himself, is a person – the Holy Spirit. That knowledge (actually a single, infinite idea) generates the person of the Son. From that love proceeds the person of the Holy Spirit. When he gives men and angels his love, he gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit. He shared with us, therefore, the same Love-Spirit that he shares with the Son. Of course, we do not have the infinite capacity to receive that love in its entirety as does the Second Person. What we do share is, in fact, the Father’s gift to his Son in the Son’s *human*

“We have seen in our reflections on the Holy Spirit that God’s love, just as his knowledge of himself, is a person – the Holy Spirit.”

nature – the nature the Son shared with mankind in the incarnation. The Son received that gift totally and completely. We receive it only according to our finite capacity. John Paul refers to several New Testament passages to illustrate this: In his meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus promised “living water that would well up to eternal life” (Jn 4:14). “If you know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him” (Lk 11:13). The Spirit brings with him spiritual knowledge and power: “You will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The pope points out that “The Holy Spirit is revealed to us not only as a Gift ... but also as Gift subsistent in the very inner life of God.” It brings us into God’s interior life – that of the Trinity, itself! That is why we can say that though this Gift, we share the very life of God himself! We also call it “grace,” a word that simply means “gift” (in Latin, “gratia,” the root of such words as gratitude, grateful, ingrate, etc.)

The pope comments: “The Holy Spirit as Love-Person and uncreated God is at the origin of all other gifts poured out upon creatures, and as a source ... from which every created thing derives. He is like a fire of love ... which showers sparks of reality and goodness upon all things. ... This refers to the giving of existence through the act of creation and the giving of grace to angels and human beings within the economy of salvation. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote: ‘God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’” (Rom 5:5). St. Peter understood this when he announced to the crowd at the first Pentecost: “You must reform and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ that your sins may be forgiven; then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

The Fathers of the Church point out that our goal in life, i.e., our salvation, is to return to the Father after mankind’s alienation from him through original sin. That return is made possible by the work of Jesus, the “redemption.” It



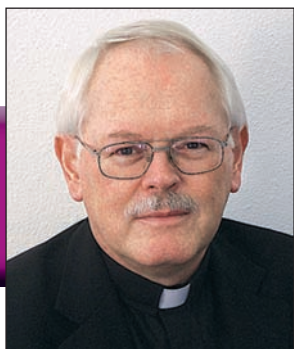
Bishop Sheldon

is, however, not accomplished without the participation of the Holy Spirit who acts on each individual. Such can be the case even before baptism, as St. Peter learned at the conversion of the Roman official, Cornelius, who, along with his family, visibly received the Holy Spirit even before he and his family were baptized. (see, Acts, Chapter 10). The Holy Spirit began that work after the first Pentecost and will continue it until the second coming of Christ at the end of time. This “grace of conversion” moves the soul to accept Christ and his work on our behalf. John Paul observes; “All things on the sacramental, charismatic and ecclesiastical-hierarchical levels, which serve this ‘return’ by humanity to the Father in the Son, are a multiform and varied outpouring of the one eternal Gift. This gift is the Holy Spirit. ...” The love of God the Father that was manifested first in the creation of man does not stop there. It continued with the gift of the Holy Spirit that raises mankind above a merely natural state to the status of sharing the divine life itself. This was the endowment, so to speak, of the life of God himself upon his rational creatures and the ultimate manner by which God would share his own existence. That love of God was unabated even after mankind’s fall into sin, and his rejection of God’s plan for us. It came to a climax in the redemption by his Son, incarnate as Jesus Christ. Throughout, the Holy Spirit was at work and continues so in the history of the world and of each individual, urging mankind’s return to the Father. In all this, the Holy Spirit is both the giver and the gift!

God’s Closeness

By Father Ron Rolheiser

There’s a growing body of literature today that chronicles the experience of persons who were clinically dead for a period of time (minutes or hours) and were medically resuscitated and brought back to life. Many of us, for example, are familiar with Dr. Eben Alexander’s book, “Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey into the Afterlife.” More recently, Hollywood produced a movie, “Miracles from Heaven,” which portrays the true story of a young Texas girl who was clinically dead, medically revived and



Father Rolheiser

who shares what she experienced in the afterlife.

There are now hundreds of stories like this, gathered through dozens of years, published or simply shared with loved ones. What’s interesting (and consoling) is that virtually all these stories are wonderfully positive, irrespective of the person’s faith or religious background. In virtually every case their experience, while partially indescribable, was one in which they felt a warm, personal, overwhelming sense of love, light and welcome, and not a few of them found themselves meeting relatives of theirs that had passed on before them, sometimes even relatives that they didn’t know they had. As well, in virtually every case, they did not want to return to life here, but, like Peter on the Mountain of the Transfiguration, wanted to stay there.

Recently while speaking at a conference, I referenced this literature and pointed out that, among other things, it seems everyone goes to heaven when they die. This, of course, immediately sparked a spirited discussion: “What about hell? Aren’t we judged when we die? Doesn’t anyone go to hell?” My answer to those questions, which need far more nuance than are contained in a short sound bite, was that while we all go to heaven when we die, depending upon our moral and spiritual disposition, we might not want to stay there. Hell, as Jesus assures us, is a real op-

tion; though, as Jesus also assures us, we judge ourselves. God puts no one to hell. Hell is our choice.

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The Steubenville Register

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Prepare the Way

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton

A voice of one crying out in the desert:

“Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths” (Mk 1:3).

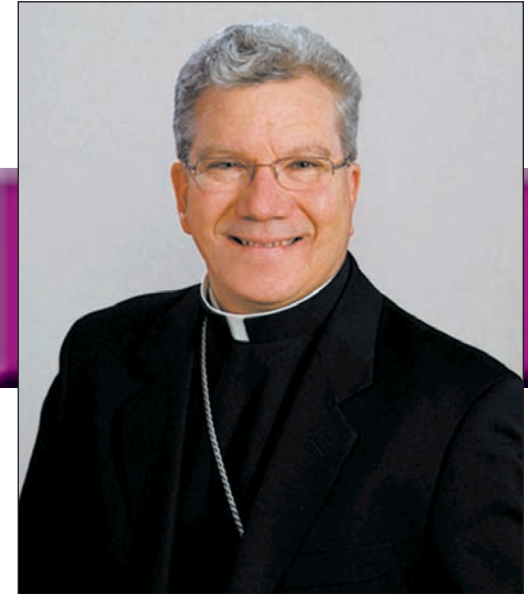
John the Baptist proclaims these words from the Prophet Isaiah as he announces Jesus’ pending arrival. This Advent season, especially an abbreviated one at that, as the Fourth Week of Advent will be measured in hours instead of days, is a period to ready ourselves for Jesus’ arrival. We do this not simply through quiet prayer, but also by boldly announcing our belief in our Lord and Savior through Christian witness.

We need go no further than to recall the story of Mary and Joseph as they prepared for Jesus’ birth, a time of profound hope. Joseph has a crucial role in salvation history, for he will name the child Jesus

and will be the loving protector of the Holy Family. Mary is to give birth to her Savior, our Lord and Savior. Throughout the drama before Jesus’ birth and before his entrance into his earthly ministry, there is no such thing as an insignificant role.

This time of year calls us back to our origins, the origins of our salvation. This story of our salvation instructs us to make Jesus our priority and our faith the vehicle by which we live out the words of the Prophet Isaiah. There is no insignificant role in salvation history and “riding the bench” of faith is not a viable position.

The third, and last full week of Advent, accompanies us right to the doorstep of the Christmas Vigil next Sunday evening. While the Fourth Sunday of Advent, and the Fourth Week of Advent for that matter, cannot be briefer, we still can properly ready ourselves for the great celebration of Jesus Christ’s Nativity. As Joseph placed his trust in the Lord, a confident trust, you and I can prayerfully prepare ourselves before we kneel in front of the infant Jesus’ manger, celebrating the birth of all hope.



Bishop Monforton

Full Of Grace (Readings – Fourth Sunday of Advent, Dec. 24)

By Father Paul J. Walker

The Advent season gives us three striking figures to consider and upon whom to reflect:

- Isaiah – the prophet who invited us to stretch our imaginations enough to envision that “Day of the Lord” when swords would become plowshares; war and the preparations for war would vanish, and nature itself would share the harmony and peace that is God. What a vision! Highways in the wasteland; valleys filled in; mountains made low; crooked ways straight; and all people filled with the vision of the glory of God!

- John the Baptist – the fire and brimstone wanderer-in-the wilderness calling for repentance and renewal with an appearance and message that assaulted and likely terrified people. There is urgency in his cry! What if time runs out for us?

- Mary of Nazareth – a less grand and certainly unsavory option between Isaiah and John – barely a teenager, poor and of no particular account, this “woman wrapped in silence,” who shows us how to wait and how to hope.

The liturgy invites us on the fourth Advent Sunday to keep Mary company and to look at the mystery of the Lord’s coming through her eyes. But with typical artistry and extreme delicacy, Luke puts together a story that is the divinely authorized presentation of what Mary experienced – an experience that is itself incommunicable. So through a story, with an admirably



Father Walker

structured dialogue filled with references to the Hebrew Scriptures, he relates the substance of the event to us (remember, none of the four Evangelists was eyewitness to the events they relate). The story is not interested in picturesque details – it was not written to satisfy our curiosity, but to reveal a mystery and nourish our faith, to gift us with wonder.

The second reading (see, Romans, Chapter 16, Verses 25-27) speaks eloquently of the mystery – this divine secret, long kept hidden in shadow and silence but now revealed – the secret of the overthrow of the principalities and powers which hold humanity captive and enslaved: prejudice, lust for domination over others, competition for greater wealth, suspicion, violence, wars and the provocation of war, intolerance of others who do not look or think as we do ... etc.

The overthrow of these powers, of which Mary will sing in her Magnificat, is sure and decisive because it does not come with the decrees of the mighty and powerful, but with the conversion and transformation and deepening fellowship of the powerless! Just look at the circumstances in which the mystery unfolds – they are as Mary’s answer implies, not auspicious. Surely this is not the way most of us would have planned it. Yet, the scene is so typical of human experience. God so often works “from below” in human affairs (like leaven working through dough). God works from unlikely and marginal situations in history – through the poor and the despised, those who are apparently unimportant and of little or no worth as the world sees them.

Mary, by the grace of God and her cooperation with it, and with her heart dwelling in the hopes and dreams of Israel (the dreams of Isaiah, the faith of the psalm writers, the visions of Ezekiel and Daniel, of new heavens and a new earth), was open enough, empty enough, her imagination elastic enough to allow her to reflect, ponder, wonder, question and to give her “yes,” even though not always clear about the message. Indeed her “yes” went on throughout her life; a “yes” uttered often within pain and darkness. Here is the pain any mother knows of letting go of an only son or daughter; the pain of not fully understanding her son’s mission; the dark-

ness of Calvary and the limp body cradled once again in her arms.

The last Advent Sunday invites us to “ponder” Mary, not just *think* about Mary but take her into our heart imagining her journey as our own – she is one of us (“our tainted nature’s solitary boast”). When our life seems to unravel and we seem to be wandering in darkness, when we’re afraid or weak, or have no answer to those ultimate questions, we can look to Mary, for she trusted that the shadows and darkness and the mystery were gracious because God dwells there. Mary is a model and a fellow traveler for our journey. She is the one who will mark the trail and offer a way to follow – a way to say “yes” to God’s abiding presence in our life. But a way that’s not always crystal clear, a way that often offers only hints and intimations in the darkness ... *unexpected* places where we struggle to do the good; where we hurt; where we fail and fall; where we are diminished and weary; where the light is fragile and dim. Into all these places Mary has journeyed herself and she waits there to help *us* by her *example* and her prayer. Mary’s faith (her ability to see and respond to “Emmanuel, God-with-us”) did not remain on the level of her first, somewhat shaky response. It grew, through the darkness of the cross into the light of the *Resurrection*. So must ours!

As we leave Advent, we could savor the words of noted Scripture scholar, George Montague, in a little book called “Riding the Wind”:

The experience of Mary is one of the most precious gifts of the Spirit.

She is a charism of the Spirit in Person.

From her, I learn to believe more purely, to discern the Spirit more clearly; to listen to the Word more intently, and to await more creatively the hour of the Lord’s coming.

Father Walker is a Diocese of Steubenville priest and a former director of the diocesan Office of Worship. Retired from active parish ministry, he continues to reside in his hometown, McConnellsville, where he often celebrates Mass at St. James Church.

God's Closeness

From Page 6

However it was what happened after this discussion that I want to share here: A woman approached me as I was leaving and told me that she had had this exact experience. She had been clinically dead for some minutes and then revived through medical resuscitation. And, just like the experience of all the others in the literature around this issue, she too experienced a wonderful warmth, light and welcome, and did not want to return to life here on earth. Inside of all of this warmth and love, however, what she remembers most and most wants to share with others is this: *I learned that God is very close. We have no idea how close God is to us. God is closer to us than we ever imagine!* Her experience has left her forever branded with a sense of God's warmth, love and welcome, but

what's left the deepest brand of all inside her is the sense of God's closeness.

I was struck by this because, like millions of others, I generally don't feel that closeness, or at least don't feel it very affectively or imaginatively. God can seem pretty far away, abstract and impersonal, a deity with millions of things to worry about without having to worry about the minutiae of my small life.

Moreover, as Christians, we believe that God is infinite and ineffable. This means that while we can know God, we can never imagine God. Given that truth, it makes it even harder for us to imagine that the infinite Creator and Sustainer of all things is intimately and personally present inside us, worrying with, sharing our heartaches, and knowing our most guarded feelings.

Compounding this is the fact that when-

ever we do try to imagine God's person, our imaginations come up against the unimaginable. For example, try to imagine this: There are billions of persons on this earth and billions more have lived on this earth before us. At this very minute, thousands of people are being born, thousands are dying, thousands are sinning, thousands are doing virtuous acts, thousands are making love, thousands are experiencing violence, thousands are feeling their hearts swelling with joy, all of this part of trillions upon trillions of phenomena. How can one heart, one mind, one person be consciously on top of all of this and so fully aware and empathetic that no hair falls from our heads or sparrow from the sky without this person taking notice? It's impossible to imagine, pure and simple, and that's part of the very definition of God.

How can God be as close to us as we are to ourselves? Partly this is mystery, and wisdom bids us befriend mystery because anything we can understand is not very deep! The mystery of God's intimate, personal presence inside us is beyond our imaginations. But everything within our faith tradition, and now most everything in the testimony of hundreds of people who have experienced the afterlife, assures us that, while God may be infinite and ineffable, God is very close to us, closer than we imagine.

Father Rolheiser, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate priest, is president of the Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio. Additional information about Father Rolheiser's ministry is available on his website at www.ronrolheiser.com.

Pope Francis says prepare way for the Lord with prayer, acts of charity

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Advent is a time to make a renewed commitment to prayer and to caring for others, Pope Francis said.

"It is a time to recognize the holes to be filled in our lives, to smooth the roughness of pride and make space for Jesus who is coming," the pope said.

Before reciting the Angelus prayer with an estimated 20,000 people gathered in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis spoke about the Sunday Mass readings and particularly

about the ways in which people today could respond to the prophet Isaiah's call to prepare the way of the Lord.

Isaiah says "every valley shall be filled in" and "every mountain and hill shall be made low" in preparation for the coming of the Savior.

The personal valleys or voids to be filled, the pope said, are "sins of omission," especially "the fact that we do not pray or pray seldom."

The other omission, he said, is in taking

care of others. Not only does charity alleviate material needs, but it can be an occasion for the giver to be like John the Baptist in "opening paths of hope in the desert of arid hearts."

The mountains and hills that need to be laid low, he said, are "pride, haughtiness and arrogance," which fill one's heart, leaving no room for the Lord.

After the Angelus prayer, the pope reminded the crowd in the square that it was the U.N. Human Rights Day and that members of the

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons were about to accept the Nobel Peace Prize at a ceremony in Oslo, Norway.

The conferral of the prize on Human Rights Day "underlines the strong tie between human rights and nuclear disarmament," the pope said. "In fact, working to protect the dignity of all people, particularly the weakest and most disadvantaged, also means working with determination to build a world without nuclear weapons."

Catholic liturgies avoid Christmas decorations, carols in Advent season

WASHINGTON (CNS) — During the weeks before Christmas, Catholic churches stand out for what they are missing.

Unlike stores, malls, public buildings and homes that start gearing up for Christmas at least by Thanksgiving, churches appear almost stark save for Advent wreaths and maybe some greenery or white lights.

"The chance for us to be a little out of sync or a little countercultural is not a bad thing," said Paulist Father Larry Rice, director of the University Catholic Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

By the same token, he is not about to completely avoid listening to Christmas music until Dec. 24 either. The key is to experience that "being out of sync feeling in a way that is helpful and teaches us something about our faith."

Others find with the frenetic pace of the Christmas season it is calming to go into an undecorated church and sing more somber hymns like "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." But that shouldn't be the only draw, noted Jesuit Father Bruce Morrill, who is the Edward A. Malloy professor of Catholic studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee.

He said the dissonance between how the church and society at large celebrate Christmas is that the church celebration begins, not ends, Dec. 25. The shopping season and Christian church calendar overlap, but don't connect, he added.

And even though Catholic churches—in liturgies at least—steer clear of Christmas carols during Advent and keep their decorations to a minimum, Father Morrill said he isn't about to advise Catholic families to do the same.

"It's hard to tell people what to do with their rituals and symbols," he said, adding, "that horse is out of the barn."

He remembers a family on the street in Maine where he grew up who didn't put their Christmas decorations up until Dec. 24 and didn't take them down until Candlemas, commemorating the presentation of Jesus in the Temple, which is the 40th day of the Christmas season.

He is pretty sure that family's children or grandchildren aren't keeping up that tradition.

Father Rice similarly doesn't give families a lot of advice on when to do Christmas decorating, but when he has been pressed on it, he said, he has advised families to do it in stages—such as put up the tree and have simple decorations on it and then add to this on Christmas Eve. It's a joyful time, he said, which Catholics should tap into.

Celebrating Advent is a little tricky in campus ministry, he noted, since the church's quiet, reflective period comes at the same time as students are frantic over exams, papers and Christmas preparations.

This year, the day before the start of Advent, he said students planned to gather to decorate the Catholic center with purple altar cloths, pine garlands and some white lights.

As Father Morrill sees it, decorating churches with white lights or greenery almost bridges the secular and religious celebrations of Christmas and that's okay by him.

Liturgical notes for Advent posted online by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops—<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/advent>—points out that the liturgical color for Advent is purple, just like Lent—as both are seasons that prepare us for great feast days.

It says Advent "includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas. This penitential dimension is expressed through the color purple, but also

through the restrained manner of decorating the church and altar."

It also points out that floral decorations should be "marked by a moderation" as should the use of the organ and other musical instruments during Advent Masses.

The way the church celebrates Advent is nothing new. Timothy Brunk, a Villanova University associate professor in theology and religious studies, said it began in the fourth century in Europe but has never had the history or significance of Easter for the church.

But even though Advent doesn't have the penitential pull of Lent—where people give

something up for 40 days or do something extra—that doesn't mean the season should slip by without opportunities for spiritual growth.

Father Rice said it's important for Catholics to engage in spiritual preparation for Christmas even in the middle of all the other preparations.

His advice: when you write a Christmas card, say a prayer for that person; while shopping, try to go about it in a slow and thoughtful way not frantically running around, and let someone take that parking space you were eyeing.

Those actions, he said, are modern works of mercy on a simple and immediate level.



Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, center, and Father Thomas F. Hamm, pastor of St. Louis Parish, Gallipolis, left of the bishop, celebrate a confirmation Mass at St. Louis Church. Pictured, from left, are Emmanuel Valadez, Juan Ortiz, Kiley Stapleton, Robyn Nance, Wendy Nance, Cadence Stapleton, Allan Stapleton, Robert Burdette, Justin McClelland, Austin Stapleton, Merry Stapleton, Teresa McConnell, Gretchen McConnell, Tony Easton and Kaitlyn Easton. (Photo provided)

Tests offer new information on date of site believed to be tomb of Christ

By Rhina Guidos

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Scientists who helped restore a shrine above the site believed to be the place where Christ was buried say testing of samples has dated the tomb to at least the fourth century.

The new information published recently by National Geographic is consistent with historical accounts that say Constantine, the first Roman emperor to stop persecuting Christians and who became one, began protecting the tomb around the year 326.

In the fourth century, Constantine is said to have sent a team from Rome to the Holy Land in search of the site, and after the group believed they had located it, they tore down a pagan temple on top of it and protected the tomb.

Over the centuries, the structures above the tomb have been the victims of natural and human attacks. At some point, a marble slab was placed on top of the tomb, perhaps to prevent eager pilgrims from taking home pieces of it.

In October 2016, when a team from the National Technical University of Athens was commissioned to restore the shrine around the tomb, which was in danger of collapsing, they also placed a moisture barrier to protect the tomb. It likely hadn't been opened in centuries, but the opportunity allowed the team to take samples.

"Mortar sampled from between the original limestone surface of the tomb and a marble slab that covers it has been dated to around A.D. 345," said National Geographic in a news story. Until the results were revealed to National Geographic in late November by scientist and professor Antonia Moropoulou, who directed the restoration project, there was no scientific evidence to support that the tomb was older than 1,000 years, the story says.

What's harder to pin down scientifically is evidence to prove that the person who was placed on the tomb's limestone rock shelf and buried there was Jesus of Nazareth. However, a documentary that aired on National Geographic's cable channel shows interviews with scholars who say oral history strongly supports the possibility that the location of the shrine is the place where Jesus is believed to have been buried, a place where Christians believe he returned to life.

"Why would people remember for several generations that this is the spot?" asked National Geographic



A conservator cleans the surface of the Edicule, the traditional site of Jesus' burial and resurrection, in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Old City of Jerusalem. (CNS photo/Oded Balilty, National Geographic)

archaeologist-in-residence Fred Hiebert in an interview with Catholic News Service.

In the absence of scientific data, you have to take into account people's traditions, village traditions, that pointed to the site, 300 or so years after the actual event of Christ's crucifixion, as the place where many believe he was buried, Hiebert said.

"In the television documentary, you will see a very good case for the historical accuracy of (the site) because we know from the scientific data that this is the same spot, the exact same spot, where the Emperor Constantine said, 'X marks the spot,'" Hiebert said, meaning that's where Christ was buried.

If you are a student of oral history and anthropology, it makes sense, said Hiebert, and it makes sense from a scholarly point of view.

"From an archaeological point of view, there's no con-

clusive proof. There's no DNA. There's no sign that says it, there's no artifact that says 'this is it' as opposed to over here," he said. "But I do believe the scholars in the film who say oral tradition is very strong, and if the unified oral tradition in this area was 'this is the spot,' then it certainly ranks pretty high. Can we prove it? No."

But Hiebert, who witnessed the restoration of the shrine from 2016-17 and was present for the opening of the tomb, said he remembered what a Greek church official said to him when he asked a question about the likelihood of the site's accuracy as Christ's tomb: Each person has to make the decision about what to believe.

"From an archaeological point of view, from a historical point of view, I can promise you that I can document that was pretty much the place that was identified in the fourth century (as the tomb of Christ), and for me that's as much personal satisfaction as I need," he said.

Cardinal says a Catholic university serves all in unity of faith, reason

By James Ramos

HOUSTON (CNS) — There are "no exclusions" in answering the call of the Gospel, especially in the university setting, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston said during a special Mass for the investiture of the new president of the University of St. Thomas. **(Cardinal DiNardo was born in Steubenville and was a classmate of David Zubik, who later became Bishop of Pittsburgh, at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.)**

Reflecting on the deep diversity in Houston, the cardinal encouraged Richard Ludwick, formally inaugurated as the university's ninth president to serve students, the city and the world.

"As president of a Catholic university, you are in a sense a theologian," Cardinal DiNardo said to Ludwick.

"By your prudence and judgment and your good discernment working in good collaboration with the faculty and the students here, something theological is happening here. ... The liberal arts has always been an institute here of theology and philosophy," the cardinal said.

Cardinal DiNardo called the growing number of first-generation students a hallmark of the university.

"Go out and teach all nations ..." Cardinal DiNardo told Ludwick. "How great it is to see that brilliant variety. But also, how brilliant to see the unity that comes, because this university sees the unity of faith and reason."

It almost appeared to be a self-fulfilling prophecy: Barely into his administration, Ludwick quickly saw his vision of a university that engages with the more than 2 million Catho-

lics in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, and with the wider community of 4 million in the city, come to life.

Just days into the first week of the fall semester and after the other-worldly solar eclipse entranced the nation, Hurricane Harvey churned through the Texas Gulf Coast. Two months prior to his official inauguration, Ludwick personally saw this "brilliant unity" shine when he navigated the flooded streets of Houston following Hurricane Harvey.

The school closed during the storm to focus on the safety and care of the community "during this time of suffering and grace. Even now, the despair of fear and flood is being overwhelmed by the love of neighbor and hope," Ludwick said in a university-wide email.

He was seen playing basketball with students trapped on campus, and made phone calls to other students during the university's #CeltCare - Harvey Student Relief Fund initiative, which raised nearly \$35,000 to support students with tuition, books and other education needs. A separate fund also supported faculty and staff affected by the floods.

"Ours is a community of goodness, discipline and knowledge," Ludwick said. "Each of those values will help guide our responses as we take a leadership role to rebuild Houston."

In a previous interview, Ludwick said he remains "very firmly committed to (these) principles of the university," which "are certainly timeless and fit well within the Catholic intellectual tradition." He hopes to bring new ways to help others to discover "the richness of those never-changing values" and "be rooted in liberal arts and humanities."

Ludwick, who was president of the Independent Col-

leges of Indiana before being named to head the Houston university, sees guidance in St. John Paul II's "Ex Corde Ecclesia" ("From the Heart of the Church"), the pontiff's 1990 apostolic constitution on Catholic higher education.

He also said that even with "the traditional areas of learning for a Catholic institution that we must not forget the sciences and technology and other areas where we must also be engaged" while "keeping ever constant to those values we hold so dearly."

These hurricane relief efforts may well be guided by Ludwick's call to answer Jesus' great commission to the apostles to bring the good news to the ends of the earth.

"The charisms that I have been gifted with I think are those that allow me to function in an environment of higher education to help live out that greater commission," he said.

Cardinal DiNardo encouraged Ludwick to continue the good work of past presidents and administration and tackle the challenges of today's higher education.

"The sensibility here is that the church is not an infringement but in fact is an enlargement of mind, heart and the academic life and all things related to our most important people at the university: our students," Cardinal DiNardo said. "There's a great, great tradition here, at the same time, there's always a need for a newness and a beginning."

Located near downtown Houston, the University of St. Thomas was founded in 1947 by the Basilian fathers and enrolls 3,237 students in undergraduate and graduate schools. It also houses the St. Mary's Seminary and Graduate School of Theology, which is the archdiocese's seminary.

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Adena — A blessing of the “Bambinelli” (Baby Jesus), a tradition celebrated in Rome by the pope each year on the Third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, will take place at the celebration of the 4 p.m. Mass, Dec. 16, and the 11 a.m. Mass, Dec. 17, at St. Casimir Church.

A mini-penitential service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 19, at St. Casimir Church. Msgr. John C. Kolesar, pastor of St. Casimir and St. Adalbert Parish, Dillonvale, will be available for confessions that evening, or by telephoning him at the church rectory, (740) 546-3463.

Belle Valley/Caldwell/Carlisle/Fulda — Parishioners of Corpus Christi, Belle Valley; St. Stephen, Caldwell; St. Michael, Carlisle; and St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Fulda, are accepting cookies, which will be donated to Noble Correctional Institution, for Christmas. For additional information or to make a donation, telephone Father Wayne E. Morris, pastor of the Noble County Catholic community, at (740) 732-4129.

Churchtown — Traditional Latin Masses will continue to be celebrated at 12:30 p.m., Sundays, at St. John the Baptist Church.

Dillonvale — A blessing of the “Bambinelli” (Baby Jesus), a tradition celebrated in Rome by the pope each year on the Third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, will take place at the celebration of the 9 a.m. Mass, Dec. 17, at St. Adalbert Church.

Glouster — Holy Cross Parish will host the Trimble Township Community Choir in the presentation of “The Story of Christmas” at 7 p.m., Jan. 8, at Holy Cross Church.

Lowell — Our Lady of Mercy Parish CWC will participate in providing food for the Daily Bread Kitchen community luncheon Dec. 20, from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m., at the Knights of Columbus Council 478 hall, 312 Franklin St., Marietta.

Malvern — An Advent penance service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 19, at St. Francis Xavier Church.

Marietta — Gently used blankets are being collected by parishioners at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption and the Daily Bread Kitchen for a Jan. 3 blanket giveaway, which will be held from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m., at the Knights of Columbus Council 478 hall, 312 Franklin St.

St. Clairsville — A Christmas music presentation will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 17, at St. Mary Church.

New and gently used children’s shoes are being collected by parishioners of St. Mary Church, for the St. Clairsville Area Council of Churches clothes closet. For additional information, telephone Marie Crumbacher at (740) 526-0115.

Shadyside — Presentation Deanery Council of Catholic Women will meet for lunch and a meeting Jan. 7, at 1 p.m., at St. Mary Church hall.

Steubenville — A blessing of a child in the womb will take place at 1 p.m., Dec. 17, at Holy Rosary Church. No registration is necessary.

Temperanceville — An Advent penance service will be held following the celebration of the 9:30 a.m. Mass, Dec. 17, at St. Mary Church.

Around and About

Caldwell — HARP (Home Affordable Refinance Program) Missions will sponsor a “free soups for seniors and veterans” Dec. 16, beginning at 9 a.m., at 810 Main St.

Cambridge — Knights of Columbus Council 1641 will sponsor a monthly breakfast from 9 a.m. until noon, Dec. 17, at St. Benedict Church social hall.



Alumni from St. John Central Grade and High School, Bellaire, provide a Thanksgiving dinner for all students on the last day of school before Thanksgiving break. Approximately 200 people attended the dinner. (Photo provided)



Isaiah Tullius, left, and Connor Tullius, right, present checks to Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton. Isaiah and Connor, who are members of 4-H, decided to donate 10 percent of their profit from selling animals at the Washington County Fair, Marietta, to Catholic Charities USA for relief efforts of Hurricane Harvey. Also, they challenged other 4-H members to donate to the charity. Isaiah presents a check of \$75 and Connor presents a check of \$265 to Bishop Monforton during his visit to St. John Central School, Churchtown. Isaiah is a sixth-grade student at St. John Central School, and Connor is a former student of the school, now attending Fort Frye High School, Beverly, as a ninth-grade student. Isaiah and Connor are the sons of Mike and Ellie Tullius and are parishioners of St. John the Baptist Parish, Churchtown. (Photo provided)

Obituaries

Taft Bryan, 86, 320 W. 42nd St., Shadyside, St. Mary, Nov. 20.

Eileen Kramer Cernansky, 90, Toronto, St. Joseph, Dec. 4.

Mark E. Decker, 59, Blessed Sacrament, Wintersville, Nov. 21.

Mary E. DeMary, 78, Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, Nov. 29.

Evalia Gonot, 72, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville,

Nov. 6.

Jeanette R. Martin, 91, East Liverpool, St. Peter, Steubenville, Dec. 1.

Jean Rizzi Pollock, 92, 700 Walnut St., Martins Ferry, St. Mary, Nov. 28.

Harold F. Schockling, 92, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Fulda, Nov. 20.

Mary R. Weatherhead, 86, Our Lady of Lourdes, Wintersville, Nov. 24.

Utility assistance available in winter

GAHANNA, Ohio — The Ohio Neighbor to Neighbor Program will be accepting applications for utility assistance grants for the 2017-18 winter heating season. Through a partnership between AEP Ohio, a unit of American Electric Power and Dollar Energy Fund, eligible AEP Ohio customers who need help during the winter months can apply for assistance to maintain or restore their electric service.

Dollar Energy Fund's Hardship Program — one of the largest in the country — may provide assistance once per program year to families facing an immediate utility crisis. With help from the Neighbor to Neighbor Program, families in need can receive a grant that is applied directly to their AEP Ohio account that has been terminated or to prevent the termination of their electric service. The program will accept applications from households seeking heating assistance on a first-come, first-serve basis through April 30, 2018, while funds are available.

AEP Ohio and Dollar Energy Fund launched the Ohio Neighbor to Neighbor Program in May 2009 and have helped more than 50,000 Ohio families with more than \$12.4 million in utility assistance grants.

"We all know Ohio winters can be brutally cold, very unpredictable and extremely challenging for many people, especially the elderly and those with health problems," said Katie Grayem, director of customer experience and communications for AEP Ohio. "For many Ohio families, heating their homes during this time can also pose a difficult financial burden. Being a good community partner and neighbor is who we are and what we do, and we are committed to giving our neighbors, who may struggle to make

ends meet, a helping hand to ensure their electric service continues."

To apply, customers may contact one of the Neighbor to Neighbor Program networks of more than 120 Ohio community-based organizations. To qualify, an applicant's total gross household income must be at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines.

For example, a family of four earning up to \$49,200 per year is income-eligible for the program. Households must have made a sincere effort of payment on their electric bill in the last 90 days and have a minimum balance of \$50 on their AEP Ohio bill. Full eligibility guidelines and application instructions can be found at AEPOhio.com/helpneighbor.

"Neighbor to Neighbor has become a program that typically serves the families who find themselves in a temporary financial situation due to an unexpected expense or loss of income," said Chad Quinn, chief executive officer of Dollar Energy Fund. "The Neighbor to Neighbor Program is available to lend a helping hand to Ohioans who may be struggling to keep food on the table or cover all other household costs."

The Neighbor to Neighbor Program in Ohio is funded by public contributions that are matched dollar-for-dollar by AEP Ohio. Utility customers can make a contribution through their monthly AEP Ohio bill. Donations also can be made online at AEPOhio.com/helpneighbor or by sending a check directly to the Ohio Neighbor to Neighbor Program, P.O. Box 42329, Pittsburgh, PA 15203. Every donation to the Neighbor to Neighbor Program is used to assist eligible families residing in Ohio.

For additional information, visit www.dollarenergyfund.org.



Diocese of Steubenville Permanent Deacons, along with their wives, gather at Sts. Peter and Paul Oratory, Lore City, for a retreat. The retreat, themed "Holiness and Mission in the Life and Ministry of the Deacon," was presented by Ralph Martin. The president of Renewal Ministries and the host of weekly Catholic television and radio programs, Martin is an author and was named by Pope Benedict XVI as a consultant to the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization and was appointed a "peritus," an expert in theology or canon law, to the Synod on the New Evangelization in October, 2012. Breakfast and lunch were provided with the daily retreat sessions. (Photo provided).

Catholics are urged to fight world's indifference to persecuted Christians

NEW YORK (CNS) — Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York said Catholics should learn from their "Jewish elder brothers and sisters" how best to advocate with elected leaders to alleviate the plight of persecuted Christians in the Middle East.

"It took us a while to answer the alarm clock" on the issue, but Catholics have responded generously with aid, awareness and prayers, he told participants at a Dec. 5 conference on "Preserving Christian Communities in the Middle East and Curbing Anti-Semitism."

Cardinal Dolan and other speakers said indifference, secularism and a societal reluctance to call evil by its real name contribute to lack of large scale outrage and political action to protect Christians and help them live safely in their homelands.

"Indifference gave us the Holocaust and indifference gave us the genocide situation in the Middle East. Who will stand up for the Christians?" asked Ronald S. Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress.

"More than 1 million Christians have been killed in the Middle East and Africa since this started, but it is poorly covered in the media and there is no organization like the World Jewish Congress to stand up and fight," he said.

"If a Palestinian kills a Jew and a Jew kills a Palestinian, it's front-page news, but tens of thousands of Christians are killed and there is nothing. We need to communicate better," Lauder said. "If someone even slightly attacks Christians, we have to stand up and say, 'You can't do that! Enough is enough!'"

Lauder said Catholics don't use their "political might to do what has to be done. He noted Catholics comprise 24 percent of the U.S. population and Jews make up only 2 percent, but they make their voices heard.

"You should say to your Congress people and senators, 'If you don't represent us and talk about these issues, we might not vote for you,'" he remarked.

Cardinal Dolan said the church should do a better job of advocating with nations who have consulates and U.N. representatives in New York City. "I need to make it my business to pester them when there's an example of persecution or negligence of vigilance over the protection of religious freedom."

Governments have a grave responsibility to protect the freedom that comes from the Creator and cannot use expulsion of religious minorities as a political methodology, he said.

If society's response to the persecution and displacement of Christians is empty and ineffective, it's because we've been trained not to take religion seriously and not let it affect our public actions, Cardinal Dolan said.

The persecution is real; it is the result of sin; it reflects the power of darkness and is best fought spiritually, he said.

Roger Kimball, editor and publisher of *The New Criterion*, said the "Islamic State takes Christian symbols more seriously than Christians do and the only real way we will solve the problem is if Christians reanimate the symbols" in their own lives.

Cardinal Dolan said the Catholic Church has made a successful effort to raise awareness about the plight of persecuted Christians. "It has become a 'kitchen table topic' in Catholic homes, has a consistent place in prayers at Catholic parishes," he said.

Cardinal Dolan lauded a decision by the Trump administration to channel a portion of government humanitarian aid to the Middle East through existing local Catholic and Christian organizations. "They don't have to parachute in. They are already on the front line and a part of the terrain."

Most U.S. aid has been distributed through U.N. refugee camps. Large numbers of Christians have avoided the camps because they are afraid they will be targeted by majority groups in the camps.



New officers installed for the Diocese of Steubenville Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, pictured from front left, are Carolyn Estadt, historian; Diana R. Vargo, vice president; and Pam Ambrose, immediate past president. Pictured in the back, from left, are DeDe Kidder, treasurer; Barbara Trytko, auditor; Father Timothy P. McGuire, pastor of St. Frances Cabrini Parish, Colerain, auditor; Christina Gibbons, secretary; and Joanne Kolanski, president. (Photo provided)

Pope Francis says God does not lead us into temptation, Satan does

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The Italian and English translations of the “Our Father” can give believers the wrong impression that God can and does lead people into temptation, Pope Francis said.

The Italian bishops’ television channel, TV2000, has been broadcasting a series of conversations between the pope and a Catholic prison chaplain looking at the

Lord’s Prayer line by line.

The episode broadcast 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?”

“This is 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 Dec. 3, the First Sunday of Advent, French Catholics would change the line to the equivalent of “do not let us enter into temptation.”

French-speaking Catholics in Benin and Belgium began using the new translation at Pentecost last June. The common Spanish translation already is “no nos dejes caer en la tentacion” or “do not let us fall into temptation.”

The Italian bishops’ conference in 2008 adopted a new translation of the Bible; for the Lord’s Prayer both in Matthew, Chapter 6 and Luke, Chapter 11, they chose “do not abandon us in temptation,” although they did not order the change in liturgical use. The New American Bible, revised edition, is the basis for the Lectionary used at English-language Masses in the United States; the petition from the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew and Luke is translated as: “do not subject us to the final test.”

Pope Francis told Father Pozza, “I’m the one who falls. But it’s not (God) who pushes me into temptation to see how I fall. No, a father does not do this. A father helps us up immediately.”

“The one who leads us into temptation is Satan,” the pope said. “That’s Satan’s job.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, in its discussion of the Lord’s Prayer, says, “our sins result from our consenting to temptation; we therefore ask our Father not to ‘lead’ us into temptation. It is difficult to translate the Greek verb used by a single English word: the Greek means both ‘do not allow us to enter into temptation’ and ‘do not let us yield to temptation.’”

Referring to James, Chapter 1, Verse 13, the catechism says, “‘God cannot 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 take the way that leads to sin.”



Worshippers recite the Lord’s Prayer during Mass at Corpus Christi Church in Mineola, New York. The Italian and English translations of the “Our Father” can give believers the wrong impression that God can and does lead people into temptation, Pope Francis said. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz, Long Island Catholic)

Pontiff says don’t wait to be perfect to answer vocational call, serving others

By Junno Arocho Esteves

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 a 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 window 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 today! The Christian mission is now!”

The papal message for the day of prayer, which will be observed April 22, was released Dec. 4 at the Vatican. The 2018 theme is “Listening, discerning and living 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 concerns that fill 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 usual way of doing things, in the apathy of those who fritter away their lives 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 pausing and enjoying the taste of contemplation” and discerning God’s plan, he said.

Often stifled 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’s calls them.

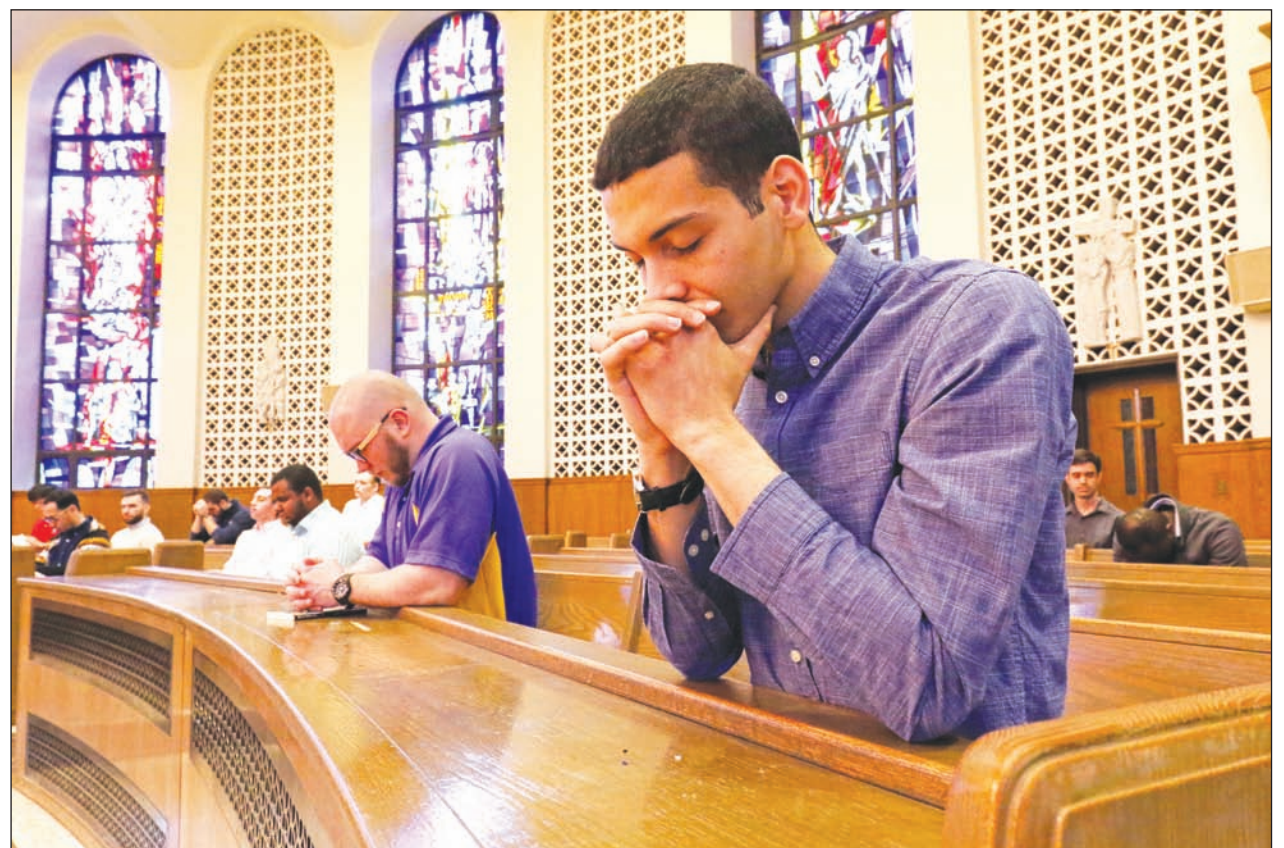
“Every Christian ought to grow in the ability to ‘read within’ his or her life and to understand where and to what he or she is being called by the Lord, in order to carry on his mission,” Pope Francis said.

He also urged men and women to live out their calling once it is discovered and “become a witness of the Lord

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.”



Seminarians pray during Mass at the Immaculate Conception Center in Douglaston, New York. 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. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)