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## News Briefs

### Attacks won't stop pope's visit for peace

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Despite recent and repeated terrorist attacks against Egypt's minority Christian communities, Pope Francis will not cancel his visit to Egypt.

"The pope's trip to Egypt proceeds as scheduled," Greg Burke, Vatican spokesman, said.

The pope is scheduled to meet governmental and interfaith leaders during an April 28-29 visit to Cairo.

"Egyptians are looking forward to Pope Francis' visit, although the atmosphere at present is heavy," Father Rafic Grieche, spokesman for the Egyptian bishops, said. "The pope's mission is to be beside his brothers at the time of difficulty. Now is the real time that he can bring peace and hope to the Egyptian people as a whole and to the Christians of the East, in particular."

### 'Pope Francis Laundry' opens for poor

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The office charged with coordinating Pope Francis' acts of charity announced the opening of a laundromat for the poor and homeless of Rome.

The "Lavanderia di Papa Francesco" ("Pope Francis Laundry") is a free service "offered to the poorest people, particularly the homeless, who will be able to wash, dry and iron their clothes and blankets," read an announcement from the Papal Almoner's Office.

The laundry service, the office said, was inspired by the pope's call for "concrete signs of mercy" during the Year of Mercy in 2016.

### Official

**Father Matthew W. J. Gossett** has been assigned by Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton to studies for a licentiate in the new evangelization at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit.

The assignment is in addition to Father Gossett's serving as parochial vicar to Father David L. Huffman, who is the pastor of St. Lawrence O'Toole and St. Joseph parishes, Ironton, and administrator of St. Mary Mission, Pine Grove.



After the Immaculate Heart of Mary statue – in churches in the Diocese of Steubenville during the Year of Re-consecration of the diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary – leaves St. Matthias Mission, Freeport, where it will stand April 21-28, it will be situated in St. Mary of the Hills Church, Buchtel, May 5-12, and Holy Cross Church, Glouster, May 12-19. The Year of Re-consecration will close June 24, after a 10:30 a.m. procession and noon Mass in Marietta. (Photo by DeFrancis)



Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton breathes over the opening of the vessel of chrism – a gesture symbolizing the infusion of the Holy Spirit – at the April 10 Mass at St. Peter Church, Steubenville. He is flanked by Father Bradley W. Greer, master of ceremonies. During the chrism Mass, and one the following evening at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, oils of the sick and the catechumens were blessed and the chrism consecrated. Also, at the Masses, where the oils are blessed and chrism consecrated for use sacramentally throughout the diocese, priests renew their priestly promises. The oils, Bishop Monforton said, provide priests the opportunity to be healers of the body, mind and spirit. During his homily to the religious and laity, Bishop Monforton advised, "We must let go of ... preconceptions and allow the Lord into our lives." Jesus, he reminded, brings gladness, freedom and clear sight. ... To Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon and diocesan and religious priests, he said, "Jesus Christ is the precondition to eternal renewal. ... Our (configuration) to Christ is hope to the church, Christ's church, which we serve. ... We are stewards of God's ministry. ... As we priests transform hearts, we transform a world." Father Timothy J. Huffman is pastor of St. Peter Parish, and Msgr. John Michael Campbell, rector of the basilica. (Photo by DeFrancis)

*"Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained'" (Jn 20:21-23).*

Jesus' words to the apostles are of immense and eternal hope consequent of Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus imparts upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit entrusting them with the responsibility to share God's compassionate and merciful love. This commissioning follows Jesus' resurrection and the Church is given the task to love and to forgive as Jesus loves and forgives. As Christians, we are instruments of God's peace.

May you and your family have a blessed Easter time.

• Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton  
Easter message 2017

## 'Ask the Bishop'

STEUBENVILLE — Kindergarten through 12th-graders in the Diocese of Steubenville "Ask the Bishop," Jeffrey M. Monforton.

**Q:** Why do the cross and statues get covered before Good Friday and Holy Week?

**Theresa Kerker  
Bloomingdale**

**A:** This is a very good question, and it may be on the minds of many people after just having entered into the Easter season. The covering of the cross or *crucifix* and statues enjoys a centuries-old history in the Church. The coverings during the Lenten season are a common practice, but not required.

The prevailing mindset of this practice is to assist the faithful to focus their attention on the redemptive acts of Jesus in which Lent trains our attention. Just like our Lenten penances, the coverings help us focus on our Lord's passion.

The Church is blessed with a treasury of symbols and images, all of which are meant to enable us to grow in faith, hope and love. The particular season of Lent sharpens our senses to be attentive all the more to Jesus' suffering and death for our salvation.

**Q:** My religion teacher said that it is mentioned in the Bible that Jesus has cousins. If he had cousins, then why did he give Mary to John to take care of her?

**Abby Symington  
Steubenville**

**A:** It is true that in the time of Jesus' passion and resurrection family would welcome into the household a relative who is a widow, especially if there are no other children of hers alive. It, also, would seem that this would be the case with Mary, the

Mother of Jesus and the Mother of God. From the cross, though, Jesus provides the foundation of our relationship with Mary: Mary becomes our Mother (see, John, Chapter 19, Verses 26-27).

Jesus entrusts John to Mary for he entrusts the Church to Mary. As Mary cooperated in the saving action of God giving birth to our Savior Jesus, Mary, our Mother, continues to guide the Church with a mother's care. A mother's care is near, not distant.

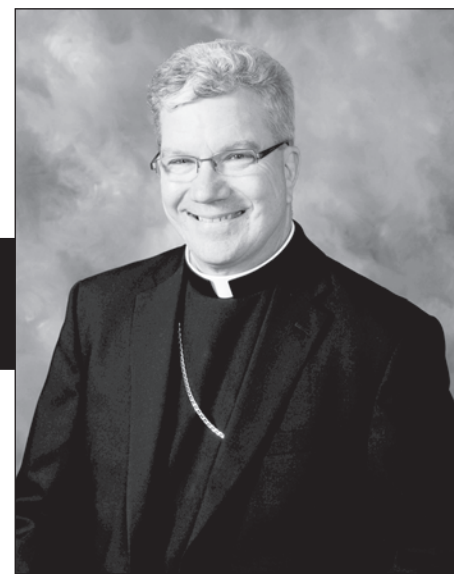
Moreover, from the cross, Jesus, also, indicates the "kind" of relationship the Church and all believers have with Mary: This is personal. Mary's personal relationship with all Christians should give us great comfort that Mary watches over us daily. Mary is made the mother of all disciples and to us all. The next time you pray the Hail Mary, the rosary or another Marian devotion, remember, Mary is right there for you.

**Q:** Why did the prodigal son's father welcome the foolish son with such warm and kind feelings, not throwing a party for the son who stayed and did work for his father?

**William Balgo  
St. Clairsville**

**A:** It appears the son who stayed at home shared the same question you do. The father's answer to that son indicated the father's great love for both sons. In no way does the father advocate the wayward actions of the other son. The father does not explain away or find a flimsy excuse for the prodigal son's actions, but uses the situation to show that his heart remains completely open to the both of them.

Here Jesus communicates to all of us the Father's love God has for us. His love is full of mercy and compassion, even when



**Bishop Monforton**

we find ourselves in the most unfortunate of circumstances.

The parable of *The Prodigal Son* is termed by many the greatest story ever told. I would like to go further in saying that it is a story about the greatest love there is – the love God has for us.

However, Jesus did not tell this story to his friends to entertain them. No, Jesus shows us the depth of his love for us and that we are commissioned to do the very same as fellow Christians. Our Christian lives are not static, but active and full of life. In forgiving others, especially family, we share the very love and compassion of the father in the parable.

As we continue our celebration of Easter and approach Divine Mercy Sunday, may you experience the immense love and mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**He is Risen!**

To "Ask the Bishop," contact Carolyn A. Crabtree, catechetical consultant, Diocese of Steubenville Office of Christian Formation and Schools, P.O. Box 969, Steubenville, OH 43952; telephone (740) 282-3631; email ccrabtree@diosteub.org.

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**St. Vincent of Barnesville volunteers – from the left, the Rev. Andy Woods, Virginia Waggle, Dick Bunting, William Hunkler, Judy Powell, Judy Carpenter, Denise Bunting, Kay Robb, Nancy Toohey, Roger Deal, John Rockwell and Msgr. Mark J. Froehlich – display a replica of the \$15,000 check received from Northwestern Mutual. Other St. Vincent of Barnesville volunteers include Viola Gibbons, David Bunting, Carol Snopel, Jean Higgins, Connie Hilton, Connie Willison, Linda McClain, Mary Jo Huntsman, Frances Burkhart, Rita Gallow, Charlie Robb, Keith Gloor, David Dillingham, Brian Starr and Howard Lee. (Photo by DeFrancis)**

## St. Vincent of Barnesville Northwestern Mutual beneficiary

BARNESVILLE — When 90-year-old Father Charles E. Mascolino was pastor of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, a prayer group wanted to do something for the poor, he remembered, and St. Vincent of Barnesville came into being.

Now, on a piece of property behind the church – which the parish bought when Father Mascolino was pastor – a St. Vincent of Barnesville Thrift Store/Pantry will be constructed, hopefully, by September.

A \$15,000 grant has been awarded to St. Vincent of Barnesville in behalf of Assumption parishioner William Hunkler, who has been involved with St. Vincent of Barnesville since its inception in the early 1980s and who is a financial representative of Northwestern Mutual – Barnesville. Hunkler – a Barnesville resident who has a wife Alice and three children – was a recipient of the Northwestern Mutual Community Service Award. Annually, the firm honors 16 of the company’s financial professionals for extraordinary volunteer work. A total of \$295,000 was donated through this year’s program, a Northwestern Mutual spokeswoman said. Since 1995, the company has donated more than \$5 million through its Community Service Award program.

Hunkler said there is a goal to raise \$100,000 to construct the 115 foot by 50 foot building that will be used as the St. Vincent of Barnesville showroom and food pantry. Approximately half of the money needed for the construction of the 5,700 square foot building has been collected. Donations can be mailed to St. Vincent of Barnesville, 114 W. Main St., Barnesville, OH 43713. The memo on the check should be labeled “building fund.”

The pantry and thrift shop, which originally sold items for 25 cents and spent the money collected to buy food for those in need, has been located in at least a half dozen different places in Barnesville since its beginning, Hunkler said. This one-story, metal building at 116 S. Gardner St. that will be constructed by Swiss Valley Associates Inc. of Hannibal, Ohio, will be the first thrift store/pantry actually owned by the St. Vincent of Barnesville.

Today, St. Vincent of Barnesville provides more than 125 families monthly with food and/or utility assistance. Hunkler shared a thank you that he had received from a single dad who received financial help with an electric bill. “My personal passion for the organization comes from a heartfelt concern for those less fortunate,” Hunkler said. “The resources provided by St. Vincent’s make a difference in people’s lives, and I’m truly honored to work alongside an organization that does so much for local children and

families in need.”

St. Vincent of Barnesville is ecumenical. Father Mascolino, retired from active parish ministry and a resident of Steubenville, said the prayer group’s reaching out to other churches in Barnesville for St. Vincent membership made the organization unique. It is staffed totally by volunteers and relies on donations from individuals and businesses for support.

Father David J. Cornett, pastor of Assumption and St. Mary Parish, Temperanceville, said a long-term lease will be drawn to enable the St. Vincent of Barnesville to be constructed on the gravel lot behind Assumption Church.

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## Bishop Monforton’s Schedule

- April 22 Confirmation Mass for St. Francis Xavier, Malvern, and St. Gabriel, Minerva, parishes, at St. Francis Xavier Church, 4 p.m.
- 23 Confirmation Mass, St. Peter Church, Steubenville, 8 a.m.  
Confirmation Mass for Christ Our Light Parish, at St. Benedict Church, Cambridge, 2:30 p.m.
- 24 Visit St. Lawrence Central School, Ironton, 7:30 a.m.; celebrate Mass, St. Joseph Church, Ironton, 11 a.m.  
Visit St. Joseph Central High School, Ironton, 12:30 p.m.
- 25 Visit St. John Central School, Churchtown, 8:10 a.m.  
Celebrate Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, 12:05 p.m.  
Visit St. Mary School, Marietta, 12:45 p.m.
- 27 Rector’s dinner, Pontifical North American College, Rome, 6:30 p.m.
- May 3 WAOB radio segment, 7:40 a.m., 8:40 a.m. and 6:40 p.m.  
“Misa con Hermanas,” Mass with Spanish Sisters, Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus, Steubenville, 8 a.m.  
Dinner with clergy ordained 10 years or less, Steubenville, 5 p.m.
- 4 Lunch, with staff, in celebration of 54th birthday, chancery, noon  
Charismatic Mass, Holy Family Church, Steubenville, 7 p.m.
- 5 Confirmation Mass for St. Joseph, Amsterdam, and St. John Fisher, Richmond, parishes, at St. Joseph Church, 6 p.m.

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St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville, candidate winners in the 11th annual Tournament of Truth accept their trophy from Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton. They are, from left, Lizzie Viczian, Carson Hendershot, Avery Riesbeck, Tyler Harris, Brady Gallagher and Brayden Kralovic. The team's coach, Rena Koontz, is in back.



Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School, Steubenville, Tournament of Truth postulant winners are, from left, Michael McFarland, Daniel Bolster, Theresa Kerker, Jessica Rose Tysz and Emily Ward. Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton presented the trophy to the first-place fifth- and sixth-graders. (Photos by DeFrancis)



St. Benedict School, Cambridge, seventh- and eighth-graders, from left, Josh Merva, Anna Wright, Jacob Rush, Sam Rush and Kelly Goggin were handed the trophy in the novice category by Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton. The competition was held March 16 at Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School, Steubenville.

## Students from three schools are winners in annual Tournament of Truth

STEUBENVILLE — As their peers looked on, second- through eighth-graders in eight parochial schools in the Diocese of Steubenville answered questions in the 11th annual diocesan Tournament of Truth.

Students from St. John Central School, Bellaire; St. Benedict School, Cambridge; St. John Central School, Churchtown; St. Mary School, Marietta; St. Mary Central School, Martins Ferry; St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville, Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary and Junior High School, Steubenville, and St. Sylvester Central School, Woodfield, fielded the questions in the March 16 competition.

With the gymnasium at Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School filled and Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton asking the final questions, schools from Cambridge, St. Clairsville and Steubenville walked away with the biggest trophies.

The winners were for the candidate category or second through fourth grades — **St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville**; postulant category or fifth and sixth grades — **Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School**; and novice category or seventh and eighth grades — **St. Benedict School**.

Participants on the winning teams included St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville — Tyler Harris, Carson Hendershot, Brady Gallagher (alternate), Brayden Kralovic, Avery Riesbeck and Lizzie Viczian; Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School — Daniel Bolster, Theresa

Kerker, Michael McFarland, Jessica Rose Tysz and Emily Ward; and St. Benedict School — Joey Barnhouse (alternate), Kelly Goggin, Josh Merva, Jacob Rush, Sam Rush and Anna Wright (alternate).

The Diocese of Steubenville Office of Christian Formation and Schools, Permanent Deacon Paul D. Ward, director, conducts the Tournament of Truth.

This year's competition was coordinated by Alyson M. Radford, catechetical consultant and coordinator of youth ministry for the diocesan Office of Christian Formation and Schools.

Other participants in the Tournament of Truth were from **St. John Central School, Bellaire** — Rowdy Adams (alternate), Peyton Blue, William Hunt, Faith Moore, Cadence Watts and Marli Williams, second- through fourth-grades category; Abbey Barack, Gwyn Cable (alternate), Marly Doughty, Katelyn Hunt, Leahna Sparling and Alyssa Tomlinson, fifth- and sixth-grades category; and Jenna Barack (alternate), Mariah Doughty, Lauren Garan, Anthony Schuler, Sadie Watts and Danniele Yaegel, seventh- and eighth-grades category;

**St. Benedict School** — Tristan Arena, James Goggin, Kinslie McVicker, Owen Ryan (alternate), Annie Saling and Leslie Stevens (alternate), second through fourth grades; and Owen Buxton, Taylor Forbes, Jack Jones (alternate), Carol Ann Kranz, Tatiana Rochus (alternate) and Caleb Stanberry, fifth and sixth grades;

**St. John Central School, Churchtown**

— Kateri Brooker, Lilly Franchino, Jacob Huffman (alternate), Jude Huffman, Riley Schweikert and Tristan Suprano, seventh and eighth grades; and

**St. Mary School, Marietta** — Alayna Biehl, Carson Chavez, Jaqueline Cisar, Luci Collins and Will Tornes, second- through fourth grades; Tommy Kerenyi, Ezra Minard, Ben Pfeiffer, Henry Porter and Lilly Westbrook, fifth and sixth grades; and Megan Becker, Morgan Green, Marie Rauch, Carson Urban and John Barry Wharff, seventh and eighth grades.

Also competing were students from **St. Mary Central School, Martins Ferry** — Kendyl Brandon, Xander Bryniarski, Cassidy Costlow, Tucker Doty, Savannah Koller (alternate) and Liam Tomlin, second through fourth grades; Julia Buck, Caleb Bryniarski (alternate), Lucan Galbraith, Joseph Green, Morgan Lander and Allison Sauvageot, fifth and sixth grades; and Spencer Helms, Trey Helms, Caden Horvath, Jacob Richards, Abby Scott (alternate) and Zachary Vargo, seventh and eighth grades;

**St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville** — Jack Koontz, Sebastian Lewis, Lauren Moran, Ben Shields (alternate), Owen Schumacher and Brycen Vucelich, fifth and sixth grades; and Mikayla Hendershot, Andy Schmidt, Gavin Shields, Victoria Trouten, Lauren Wassermann and Kellen Widman (alternate), seventh and eighth grades;

**Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary and Junior High School**

— Elizabeth Greve, Noah Hough, Jack Leonard, Andrew Rohde and Elizabeth Schmiesing, second through fourth grades; and Jack Blake, Michael Boyle, Matthew Schmiesing, Luke Terry and Jacob Wright, seventh and eighth grades; and

**St. Sylvester Central School** — Carver Bolon, Kaitlin Brodegard, Avery Fortin, Allie Isaly and Blake Yontz, second through fourth grades; Lane Demchak, Carson Kuhn, Landen Lydick, Westin Swallow and Olivia Valkovic, fifth and sixth grades; and Isaac Knowlton, Carlie Lee, Elizabeth Schnegg, Eric Schnegg and Austin Yonak, seventh and eighth grades.

Principals at the schools competing in the Tournament of Truth are Kim Leonard, St. John Central School, Bellaire; Jane Rush, St. Benedict School; Larry Moegling, St. John Central School, Churchtown; Susan T. Rauch, St. Mary School, Marietta; Mary Carolyn Nichelson, St. Mary Central School, Martins Ferry; Nannette Kennedy, St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville; Theresa Danaher, Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary and Junior High School; and Robyn C. Guiler, St. Sylvester Central School.

Each year, in the tournament, students are asked a variety of questions concerning their faith. Time limits are placed on answering each question, tallied for a certain number of points. Competitors are pared. At the end of the daylong event, runners-up are singled out, along with top teams.

In recent years, tournaments have been held in schools in Cambridge and Marietta.



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# During multiple-parish tour, vocations is topic for Bishop Monforton

WOODSFIELD — St. Sylvester Church was the final stop on Vocations Tour 2017, during which Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, Father Michael W. Gossett, diocesan vocations director, and others urged youth to respond positively to God's plan.

As outlined by the diocese's Office of Vocations, the first ever Vocations Tour enabled parishioners to sit and listen to Bishop Monforton, priests, seminarians, religious sisters and permanent deacons talk about vocations discernment and how to pray in order to follow God's will, as well as ask questions.

First stop on the tour was St. Mary Church, St. Clairsville. Other visits were made to Blessed Sacrament, Wintersville; the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta; Christ the King University Parish, Athens; St. Teresa of Avila Church, Cadiz; Our Lady of Mercy Church, Carrollton; and St. Joseph Church, Ironton.

Approximately 200 people attended the vocation sessions, with the largest number of those gathered in Ironton and Woodsfield, Bishop Monforton said.

"Pray, pray, pray," Bishop Monforton advised the youth gathered in the undercroft of St. Sylvester Church April 5.

And, he quipped that he was not there to ask them to sign up for a convent or seminary, but, suggested they, "Be open. As you get older, you can make bigger decisions."

The bishop advised the youth to continue to be connected to their faith when they leave home and, perhaps, attend college.

He entered the seminary in his early 20s, he said, and stayed there for eight years, during which time he obtained bachelor's and two master's degrees.

"The prayer time I had was perfect," Bishop Monforton said of his years in the seminary. However, he informed the youth and adults, "There are different types of prayer. The hardest is to sit and be silent. But, you have got to spend time with the Lord. Look at the Bible. It is God speaking to you."

While the Eucharist is the center of his life, and daily Holy Hours are important, Bishop Monforton said he works in the chancery — where diocesan offices are located in downtown Steubenville — celebrates Mass every day, travels the diocese to visit parishes and schools, among other places, and relaxes by reading, biking and kayaking.

"We all have a vocations story to tell," Father Gossett said to the mainly high school students sitting in St. Sylvester's. The common denominator, he added, "Jesus invites; we respond."

Father Gossett said he "felt the calling for the priesthood" near the end of his time in college, as an undergraduate student. During those years, he said he was learning more about his faith, because his friends were asking about the faith.

In addition, Father Gossett said his brother, Father Matthew W. J. Gossett, was open to the priesthood. Father Matthew Gossett, ordained a priest last year, serves as a parochial vicar to Father David L. Huffman, pastor of St. Joseph and St. Lawrence O'Toole parishes, Ironton, and administrator, St. Mary Mission, Pine Grove.

"God has a plan. Our job is to try to say yes," Father Michael Gossett said, and added that the youth should start



**During the final stop on a Vocations Tour, Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton talks with St. Sylvester Parish youth, while Father Michael W. Gossett, diocesan vocations director, looks on. (Photo by DeFrancis)**

with a "little yes" — prayer and a visit to a seminary, or convent. "The seminary is where you discern. I felt like I was made to be a priest.

"Don't ever be afraid, and don't be afraid to talk to someone," he said.

Religious sisters were among those who spoke, also, to the youth, during the vocations tour. At St. Sylvester, Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles talked with the students. Founded in Mexico, the order's members are teachers, serve in health care and present retreats, the youth were informed. The Carmelite Sisters have a special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and a vocation to pray for priests, the students were told. "It is a beautiful life," one of the Carmelite Sisters said.

The Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles are in Steubenville to study at Franciscan University of Steubenville.


Also, accompanying a portion of the vocations tour were Franciscan Sisters Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother, Toronto. Founded in 1988 at Franciscan University of Steubenville, the TORs have a contemplative and active lifestyle, particularly dedicated to serving the poor, the sick and those in need of faith renewal, they say.

Some of the Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus, a religious congregation founded in 1998, also, were on the tour. The sisters, who have an oratory on Lovers Lane in Steubenville, are contemplative and missionaries.


**World Day of Prayer for Vocations  
May 7**

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During the tour, a sister from the Order of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Hopedale, too, offered a glimpse at that community. Established in 1997, the priests, sisters, brothers and lay members serve through contemplation, adoration and works of mercy.

In addition, some diocesan priests, seminarians, permanent deacons and lay staff attended vocations sessions. Father David L. Gaydosik, pastor of St. Sylvester Parish, not only attended the vocations discussion in Woodsfield, but also the concluding prayer in St. Sylvester Church.

May 7 is World Day of Prayer for Vocations.

In a message for the 54th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, Pope Francis reflected on "the missionary dimension of our Christian calling. Those drawn by

God's voice and determined to follow Jesus soon discover within themselves an irrepressible desire to bring the good news to their brothers and sisters through proclamation and the service of charity. All Christians are called to be missionaries of the Gospel. ... A relationship with the Lord entails being sent out into the world as prophets of his word and witnesses of his love."

The pope continued: "The people of God need to be guided by pastors whose lives are spent in service to the Gospel. I ask parish communities, associations and the many prayer groups present in the church, not to yield to discouragement but to continue praying that the Lord will send workers to his harvest. May he give us priests enamoured of the Gospel, close to all their brothers and sisters, living signs of God's merciful love."

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## St. John Paul II The Spirit in Action

By Diocese of Steubenville  
Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon

St. John Paul II continues his reflections on the notion of “spirit.” The word (“ruah” in Hebrew) “expresses a vital force at work from outside or within man and the world.” We can see this idea develop throughout the Old Testament. First, in the account of creation, we’re told that while the earth was still formless “a mighty wind was swept across the waters” and things began to take shape (Gn 1:2). The wind, of course, was nothing other than the breath or spirit of the Creator. The Old Testament prophets would use this figure again when speaking of the restoration of Israel after its conquest, likening it to a “new creation.” Returning again to Genesis, we find wind/breath/spirit used again to describe the creation of man: “The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gn 2:7). All living things “respirate” in some way, of course. In the Psalms we read: “When you take away your breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth” (Ps 104:27-29). The creation of mankind, however, is described as a special action of God for this creature made “in his own image and likeness” (Gn 1:26).

But the creative action of God’s Spirit did not end there. It is exercised again in the restoration of the life of the Israelite nation. The prophet Ezekiel describes that restoration in a famous passage about dead bones being raised to life when God says: “O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live ...” (Ez 37:1-5). Here, again, God’s action describes his breath/spirit acting upon what is otherwise inanimate. But such action is not limited to the Chosen People, as a nation. It is applied, also, to individuals. We move now to the New Testament and hear from St. Paul: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom 8:11). The allusion here is to the body, of course. Recall our previous discussions about the Hebrew mind, which made no distinction between material and immaterial where life was concerned. Life meant life in the body. They did

not conceive of a nonmaterial entity, later to be called the “soul,” as being involved in human life. That would come only after the early church became familiar with Greek thought and would give rise to our present sophisticated theology.

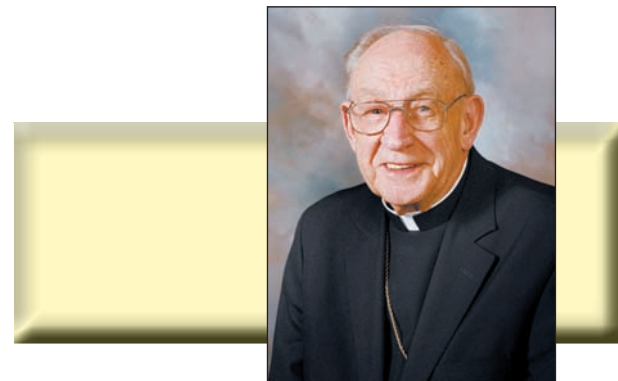
But the action of the Spirit does not end there, either. Scripture goes on to describe its part in *supernatural* life, a form of another “new creation.” “If anyone is in Christ,” St. Paul tells us, “he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). Note in this connection our Lord’s action with the apostles on the evening of the resurrection: “Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. And when he said this, he breathed upon them and said, receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven, and whose sins you retain are retained” (Jn 20:21-22).

But this is getting ahead of our discussion somewhat. Going back to the Old Testament, we find that those whom God chose as leaders of his people, or with special missions among them, also received the Spirit of God. This is true of the patriarchs of the Israelites: Joseph, who was sold as a slave by his brothers, came to the attention of the Egyptian pharaoh: He asked of him: “Could we find another like him, a man endowed with the spirit of God” (Gn 41:38)? Moses, when he complained of the burden of governing so many people by himself, was told by God to choose 70 assistants: “I will take some of the spirit that is in you and will bestow it upon them ...” (Nm 11:17). We see this again in the story of the Judges who led the Israelites in time of

*... the Spirit prompted Jesus to reject the use of arms and any human ambition and carry out a divine victory by means of unlimited generosity. ...*

national peril. Gideon: “The spirit of the Lord came upon him and he judged Israel” (Jgs 3:9-10); Samson: “The spirit of the Lord began to stir him, in this case to endow him with extraordinary strength” (Jgs 13:25).

Another dimension is added to the gift of the Spirit in Old Testament times: the symbolic anointing with oil. We see it in the selection of David as successor to the discredited Saul. Samuel, the prophet, assembles the sons of Jesse before him. When David is brought in, “Then the Lord said to (Samuel): ‘There – anoint him, for this is the one.’” Then Samuel, with the horn of oil, anointed him in



Bishop Sheldon

the midst of his brothers, and from that day on, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David” (1 Sam 16:12-13). David would become an outstanding leader of the Israelites in battle against their many enemies. As such he would be a symbol of his descendant, Christ, the Messiah, who would defend the entire human race from its enemy, the devil. The prophet Isaiah would say of the Messiah: “A shoot shall spring up from the stump of Jesse. ... The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and strength, a spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord ...” (Is 11:1-3). Pope John Paul points out: “The Holy Spirit of the Lord ... his ‘life breath’ (“ruah”) which runs throughout Bible history will thus be given to the Messiah in full. That same spirit which breathed upon chaos prior to creation ... the spirit that gives life to all ..., which raises up the judges ... and kings ... which gave Joseph wisdom ... and Moses and the prophets inspiration ... will fall upon the Messiah with the abundance of his gifts. ... It will enable him to accomplish his mission of justice and peace.”

How will he establish “justice and peace”? Not in the way that it was done by the Israelite leaders of old, such as Gideon, Samson, David, Judas Maccabeus, etc. “The answer will be revealed by the way in which the Holy Spirit led Jesus into his mission: from the Gospel, we know that the Spirit prompted Jesus to reject the use of arms and any human ambition and carry out a divine victory by means of unlimited generosity, shedding his own blood to free us from our sins.”

## ‘The Case for Christ’ and a Stubbornly Historical Religion

By Bishop Robert Barron

“The Case for Christ” is a film adaptation of Lee Strobel’s best-selling book of the same name, one that has made an enormous splash in evangelical circles and beyond. It is the story of a young, ambitious (and atheist) reporter for the Chicago Tribune, who fell into a psychological and spiritual crisis when his wife became a Christian. The scenes involving Lee and his spouse, which play out over many months of their married life, struck me as poignant and believable – and I say this with some authority, having worked with a number of couples in a similar situation.



Bishop Barron

In some cases, a nonbelieving spouse might look upon his partner’s faith as a harmless diversion, a bit like a hobby, but in other cases, the nonbeliever sees the dawning of faith in his beloved as something akin to a betrayal. This latter situation strongly obtained in the Strobel’s marriage.

In order to resolve the tension, Lee used his considerable analytical and investigative skills to debunk the faith that was so beguiling his wife. The focus of his inquiry was, at the suggestion of a Christian colleague at the Tribune, the resurrection of Jesus. If Jesus didn’t rise, his friend explained, Christianity crumbles like a house of cards. The narrative unfolds, then, as a kind of detective story, Strobel hunting down leads, interrogating experts, asking the hard questions.

I liked this for a couple of reasons. First, at its best, Christianity is not fideist, that is to say, reliant upon a pure and uncritical act of faith on the part of its adherents. Rather, it happily embraces reason and welcomes critical questions. Secondly, and relatedly, Christianity is a stubbornly *historical* religion. It is not a philosophy (though it can employ philosophical language), nor is it a spirituality (though a spirituality can be distilled from it); rather, it is a relationship to an historical figure about whom an extraordinary historical claim has been made, namely, that

he rose bodily from the dead.

Now especially in recent years, many attempts have been made to mitigate the scandal of this assertion. Jesus was a great moral exemplar, a powerful teacher of spiritual truth, an inspiring man of God – and it doesn’t particularly To Page 8

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## The Sunset Road That Turns to Dawn (Third Sunday of Easter)

By Father Paul J. Walker

The church is now awash in the glory of the Eastertide liturgies. We have witnessed baptisms, confirmations, professions of faith and reception of the Eucharist for thousands of neophyte Catholics throughout the worldwide church, which each year renews itself by welcoming new members. Note that these Sundays are titled Sundays of Easter (not *after* Easter). The church for seven weeks explores the mystery that calls out from the still point of the turning world: "Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!" Note, also, that the proclamation from the heart of all life does not announce that Jesus is restored to life again, but that he is "*risen from the dead.*" His apostles and followers were not rejoicing that they had him back again. If the Easter appearance stories agree on anything, it is the slow and hesitant way in which those followers recognized the risen Lord! Obviously, he did not simply show up again, glowing, outside the tomb.

We could say that Jesus made a quantum leap to a higher life, and, in so doing, took all of creation with him. Indeed, creation is an ongoing act, wherein God does not lift his hands from his work(s) – he is not yet finished. Divine love, grace and joy are not yet spent. The entire cosmos – animals, trees, rocks and seas, sun, moon and stars, vast-whirling galaxies, infinite gulfs of space and time – and all humanity have been lifted up. Jesus Christ is risen and taken the world with him. Jesuit Father Karl Rahner put it this way: "He won (the victory) not by shoving the world from himself and heaving it away, he forced his way into the innermost center whence its entire destiny springs forth, seized this center, and accepted it for eternity."

Our sense of this is sometimes murky and shadowed, but Luke's Gospel offers a story that can touch our experience. The Third Sunday of Easter (April 30) presents us with the 24th Chapter of his Gospel: Two of Jesus' disciples are walking away from Jerusalem (the source of their disappointments) to the nearby village of Emmaus. As they make their way, they discuss all the things that have so recently taken place. They are moving away from the promise and testimony of the Resurrection, because of the scandal of the cross. Jesus himself drew near, walking with them and asking them what they were talking about as they (now three) walked along. They did not recognize him, not because he was some kind of spooky phantom, but Luke tells us it is because "their eyes were prevented from recognizing him" (Lk 24:16). There is something different about the way the disciples experienced Jesus *after* the resurrection. They require a way of seeing that is so different from the way they are used to. So, we here today, some 2,000 years later, are not disadvantaged in comparison to these early disciples. Jesus does not tell the two disciples anything new

on that dusty road, but he helps them to see the Scriptures in a different way. He shows them how the Scriptures point to him. Their ability to recognize him is further extended by the time in their conversation when this "stranger" is making to depart, continuing his journey. They must now choose to continue on their own shaky road paved with their questions, doubts and disappointments, or to finally open up for the stranger their restless hearts that had been burning within them while they walked along the road more closely examining the Scriptures and the stranger's words. They extend to this stranger an invitation that comes from every human heart: "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." Evening has now arrived and with the lowering dusk and the waning of the earthly light comes the dawning of the much stronger light of faith. It seems what is happening here and in all our continuing journeys "on the road" is not that Jesus becomes more humanly recognizable, but that "their eyes were opened."

The meaning of all that has been told to them is finally dawning upon them (us), and they (we) "recognize" him for what he will be from now on in their (our) lives. There now is an unbreakable bond set up between the breaking of the bread of their lives and the ongoing eucharistic, sacramental life of the church. Luke's Gospel says: "He vanished from their sight" (Lk 24:32). The sign disappears when its inner meaning is disclosed. I would prefer to "cling" to the sign, as did Mary Magdalene in John's Gospel want to keep hold of the now risen Christ outside the tomb, only to hear Jesus tell her not to hold on to him as he had not yet ascended to the Father. Perhaps, this means, "Do not hold on to me the way you once did – a bodily presence in space and time ... now you must come by faith, not by sight."

It is interesting to note that we are given, at the outset, the name of only one disciple (Cleopas). Could it be that Luke is asking the reader-listener of this account to become the second traveler? It is clear that what we are given in this story is the paradigm for all encounters with the risen Lord who meets us along the many roads of life's journey, and through word and sacrament sets our hearts burning.

The final component of this encounter on the road and at the meal is missionary and not a private revelation. Luke says they "got up and returned to Jerusalem ... (and) told what had happened on the road and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. It was the mission Mary Magdalene was given outside the tomb: ... "go to my brothers and say. ..."

When we read Luke, Chapter 24, and other appearance stories, we see the followers of Jesus and ourselves enfolded in a great mystery. Even as we move away, Christ seeks us out in ways we do, at first, not recognize.

Finally, we can see a spiritual and a liturgical element to



Father Walker

the journey that these two disciples (as well as ourselves) make. Spiritually, they move away from the promise and testimony of Jesus' resurrection, because of the scandal of the cross; but Jesus finds them in spite of themselves, and they are drawn into a deeper understanding of the Scriptures. Thus, do they arrive at the celebration of the mystery of Jesus' company. Liturgically, they bring their quest as disciples to the eucharistic celebration, and they take from there a new sense of direction and a task in the world.

The imagination of the poet is best able to speak of this profound and joyous mystery:

*For always stones will move  
from our lives as that  
First Stone moved like a  
mountain on its way to the sea  
and, always, on the fresh wind of morning  
comes the Son of Man  
His shroud a wedding garment,  
His feet between earth and air in dance.  
Death and sin still poured rhetoric  
Into the stirring air around them  
But the silent Son of God  
Onlydan cedt om usicbe yondt heirw ords...  
Now there is only the morning  
And the dancing man of the broken tomb.  
The story says  
He dances still.*

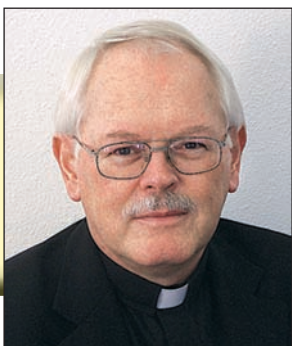
Adapted from "Stories of Faith," 1980, Page 217  
Father John Shea

Father Walker is a Diocese of Steubenville priest and a former director of the diocesan Office of Worship. Retired from active parish ministry, he resides in his hometown, McConnelsville, where he often celebrates Mass at St. James Church, there. Father Walker, too, writes a regular column for The Steubenville Register.

## The Empty Tomb

By Father Ron Rolheiser

Believers and nonbelievers alike have been arguing about the resurrection since the day Jesus rose. What really happened? How was he raised from the dead? Did an



Father Rolheiser

actual dead body really come back to life and step out of the grave, or was the resurrection a monumental life-changing event inside the consciousness of Jesus' followers? Or was the Resurrection both a real physical event and an event inside the consciousness of believers?

Obviously, nobody was there to see what actually happened. Those who claimed Jesus was alive again didn't see him rise and emerge from the tomb; they met him only after he had already risen, and, immediately, believers and sceptics began to divide from each other, persons who claimed to have touched him and persons who doubted that testimony.

There have been sceptics and believers ever since and no shortage of persons, professional theologians and non-scholarly Christians alike, who believe in the resurrection of Jesus as a faith event, but not as a physical event, where an actual body came out of a grave. The faith event is

what's important, they claim, and it is incidental whether or not Jesus' actual body came out of the grave.

Was Jesus' resurrection a faith event or a physical event? It was both. For Christians, it is the most monumental event, faith and otherwise, in history. Two thousand subsequent years cannot be explained, except by the reality of the Resurrection. To understand the resurrection of Jesus only as a literal fact, that his body rose from the grave, is to cut the resurrection off from much of its meaning. However, that being admitted, for Christians, the Resurrection must also be a radically physical event. Why?

First, because the Gospels are pretty clear in emphasizing that the tomb was empty and that the resurrected Jesus was more than a spirit or ghost. We see, for instance, in Luke's Gospel where Jesus invites a doubting Thomas to verify his physicality: "Look at my hands and my feet. It's really

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## Pope Francis gives youths three missions before synod, World Youth Day

ROME (CNS) — On the eve of Palm Sunday, Pope Francis gave young people several missions: to ask their grandparents what their dreams were; to work to make those dreams reality; and to let their bishops and the pope himself know what they need from the church.

Officially launching the youths' preparation for the 2018 Synod of Bishops and for World Youth Day 2019 in Panama, Pope Francis gathered with youths and young adults for an evening prayer vigil April 8 at Rome's Basilica of St. Mary Major.

The 80-year-old pope surprised some people with two references to his own age, first pointing out that while they are preparing for the future, "at my age we are preparing to go." The young people present objected loudly. "No?" the pope responded, "Who can guarantee life? No one."

Later, returning to his appeal that they speak to their grandparents, the pope said, "I don't know if it will be me, but the pope will be in Panama and he will ask you, 'Did you speak with your elders?'"

Pope Francis arrived at the basilica with a prepared text, but as a Franciscan Sister and a young man who survived an earth-

quake shared their stories, the pope took notes, eventually setting aside the text.

The theme of the world Synod of Bishops, which will meet in October 2018, is: "Young people, faith and vocational discernment."

"But let's just call it, 'the synod of young people,'" the pope said. It should be "a synod from which no young person feels excluded."

The church could hold a synod involving Catholic youths active in parish life or Catholic organizations and lay movements. But Pope Francis said that is not what the church or young people need. "This is the synod of young people and we all want to hear them," including young people who have moved away from the church or are questioning the existence of God, he said. "Every young person has something to say to others, something to say to the adults, to the priests, sisters, bishops and the pope. We all need to hear you."

Young people must harness their energy and ideals and set out, "one alongside another, but looking to the future," he said. "The world today needs young people who go in haste," like Mary went to her

pregnant cousin Elizabeth.

Franciscan Sister Marialisa, 30, who shared her vocation story, is an example, the pope said. Not every path she took was the right one, but eventually she discovered God's purpose for her life and the way she was called to serve others.

The Italian nun told the young people she decided church wasn't for her after she was confirmed at the age of 13. A couple of years later, a friend asked her to join a project the parish youth group was doing, "and I accepted only because there were a bunch of boys who went, too."

Sister Marialisa said her involvement grew and she discovered a group of people who didn't care what she looked like or what she wore, but cared about her. They helped her discover Jesus and his love.

Convinced she wanted to be an actress, she went to school in Rome, but she still had a nagging feeling something was missing from her life. She met the Franciscans and decided she needed to find out if being a consecrated woman was the way she was to live "the vocation to love." Now she works with children in an area of southern Italy where the Mafia is strong. She said

she tries to help them discover they are loved and have a right "to dream and dream big."

Pope Francis said too often the world treats young people as "disposable" by not providing an adequate education or job opportunities. And, he said, "many young people must flee, immigrate to other lands. It's harsh to say, but often young people are disposable material and we cannot tolerate this."

Life will be challenging and involve taking risks, the pope told the young people, but they must have the courage to change the world and to start over when they fail.

"And try to find the beauty in little things," the pope said, pointing as an example to Pompeo Barbieri, who also shared his story with the young people. The 23-year-old Barbieri recounted how, at the age of 8, firefighters pulled him from the rubble of his school in San Giuliano di Puglia after an earthquake in 2002. His teacher and all 27 of his classmates died when the school collapsed. Injured and needing a wheelchair, Barbieri's parents were told swimming would help and now he's a top Paralympian, he said.

## 'The Case for Christ'

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matter whether the reports of resurrection are factually accurate. Indeed, it is probably best to read them as mythic or symbolic. To all of that, classical Christianity says no. It agrees with Lee Strobel's colleague: if the resurrection didn't happen, Christianity should be allowed to fall onto the ash heap of history. Therefore, watching our intrepid investigator go about his work is, for a true Christian, thrilling, precisely because the questions are legitimate and something is very really at stake.

So, what were his inquiries? First, he wondered whether the Resurrection stories were just fairy tales, pious inventions meant to take away our fear of death. But, he learned that, in point of fact, many people claimed to have seen Jesus after his crucifixion, including 500 at once. Moreover, most of the leaders of the early church went to their deaths defending the legitimacy of what they taught. Would anyone do that for a myth or a legend of

his own invention?

But, another question came to his mind: might they all have been victims of a mass hallucination? A psychologist patiently explained that waking dreams are not shared by hundreds of people at different times and different places. "If hundreds of individuals had the same hallucination, that would be a greater miracle than the Resurrection," she informed him with a smile.

But, what about the reliability of the Christian texts themselves? Weren't they written long after the events described? A Catholic priest, who is also an archeologist and specialist in ancient manuscripts, told him that the number of early copies of the Christian Gospels far surpasses that of any other ancient text, including the "Iliad" of Homer and the "Dialogues of Plato."

What about the "swoon theory," according to which Jesus did not really die on the cross but only lost consciousness, only to be revived sometime later? A Los Angeles based physician detailed for him the bru-

tal process of a Roman execution, which resulted in the victim slowly bleeding to death and asphyxiating. The swoon theory, the doctor concluded, "is rubbish."

At each stage of the process, Strobel continued to wonder, question, balk and argue, all the time maintaining the default position that Christianity is bunk. Nevertheless, it was becoming clear that the relentlessness of the counterarguments and their stubborn congruence with one another was wearing him down. This made me think of John Henry Newman's famous account of how we come to religious assent. It is very rarely by virtue of one clinching argument, Newman said, but rather through the slow, steady confluence of inference, hunch, intuition, experience, the witness of others, etc. This convergence of probabilities, under the aegis of what Newman called the "illative sense," customarily leads the mind to assent.

In the course of their conversation, Strobel's priest-archeologist interlocutor

showed the skeptical journalist a reproduction of the Shroud of Turin, purported to be the burial cloth of Jesus. Gazing into the eyes of the image, Strobel asked, "What would have made him go through all of this?" The priest responded, "That's easy: love." As the arguments were jostling in his head, Strobel remembered that image and that explanation — and the filmmakers insinuate that this is what finally pushed him over into belief.

"The Case for Christ" is interesting for any number of reasons, but I think it is particularly compelling for its subtle portrayal of the psychological, spiritual and intellectual dynamics of evangelization.

**Bishop Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, an author, speaker and theologian. He, too, is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, Des Plaines, Illinois, a non-profit global media apostolate.**

## The Empty Tomb

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me. Touch me. You can see that I have a living body; a ghost does not have a body like this."

As well, and very importantly, to cut the Resurrection off from the literal fact that there was real physical transformation of a once dead corpse is to rob it of some of its important meanings and perhaps of the deepest root of its credibility. For the resurrection of Christ to have full meaning it must, among other things, have been a brute physical fact. There needs to be an empty tomb and a dead body returned to life. Why?

Not as some kind of miracle proof, but because of the Incarnation. To believe in the Incarnation and not to believe in the radical physical character of the Resurrection is a contradiction. We believe that in

the Incarnation the Word was made flesh. This takes the mystery of Christ and the reality of the resurrection out of the realm of pure spirit. The Incarnation always connotes a reality that's radically physical, tangible and touchable, like the old dictionary definition of matter as "something extended in space and having weight."

To believe in the incarnation is to believe that God was born into real physical flesh, lived in real physical flesh, died in real physical flesh and rose in real physical flesh. To believe that the Resurrection was only an event in the faith consciousness of the disciples, however real, rich and radical that might be imagined, is to rob the Incarnation of its radical physical character and to fall into the kind of dualism that values spirit and denigrates the physical. Such a dualism devalues the Incarnation,

and this impoverishes the meaning of the Resurrection. If the Resurrection is only a spiritual event, then it is, also, only an anthropological one and not, also, a cosmic one. That's a way of saying that it's then an event only about human consciousness and not, also, about the cosmos.

But, Jesus' resurrection isn't just something radically new in terms of human consciousness; it's also something that's radically new in terms of atoms and molecules. The Resurrection rearranged hearts and minds, but it also rearranged atoms. Until Jesus' resurrection, dead bodies did not come back to life; they stayed dead, so when his came back to life there was something radically new both at the level of faith and at the level of the atoms and molecules. Precisely because of its brute physicality, Jesus' resurrection offers new

hope to atoms as well as to people.

I believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, literally. I believe, too, that this event was, as the rich insights within contemporary theology point out, highly spiritual: an event of faith, of changed consciousness, of new hope empowering a new charity and a new forgiveness. But, it was, also, an event of changed atoms and of a changed dead body. It was radically physical, just as are all events that are part of the Incarnation wherein God takes on real flesh.

**Father Rolheiser, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate priest, is president of the Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, an author, a retreat master and a newspaper columnist. Additional information on Father Rolheiser is available at [www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com).**



## Pope Benedict celebrates birthday with Bavarian guests

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A bit of Bavaria, including German beer and pretzels, came to the Vatican to help celebrate retired Pope Benedict XVI's 90th birthday.

"Thank you for bringing Bavaria here," he told his guests, commenting on the beauty of gathering together under a blue Roman sky with white clouds — colors that "recall the white and blue flag of Bavaria" and how "it's always the same sky" no matter where one finds oneself in the world.

The Bavarian-born pope's birthday fell on Easter Sunday, April 16, so a small informal party was held April 17 outside his residence, the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in the Vatican gardens.

Pope Francis visited his predecessor April 12, before the start of the Easter Triduum, to offer him birthday greetings.

Special guests at the Bavarian party included: Msgr. Georg Ratzinger, the retired pope's 93-year-old brother; Archbishop Georg Ganswein, the retired pope's personal secretary; Birgit Wansing, a longtime administrative assistant; and the consecrated laywomen from Memores Domini, who assist him.

A German delegation was present, led by the minister president of Bavaria, Horst Seehofer, and including a group of men dressed in the traditional uniforms of the "Schutzen" with their dark green wool hats decorated with feathers, pins and springs of greenery.

Pope Benedict said his heart was filled with gratitude "for the 90 years the good Lord has given me.

"There have been trying and difficult times, but he always guided me and pulled me through."

He thanked God for his beautiful homeland "that you now bring to me," and which is "open to the world, lively and happy," because it is rooted so deeply in the Christian faith.



Retired Pope Benedict XVI raises a glass with Bavarian Prime Minister Horst Seehofer during the pontiff's birthday celebration. (CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano)

### Catholics top 1.28 billion

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Taken together, the 10 countries with the most Catholics account for almost 56 percent of the world's Catholic population, the Vatican reported.

The 2017 "Anuario Pontificio," or Vatican yearbook, and a new edition of the Vatican Statistical Yearbook report that the countries with the most Catholics are, in order: Brazil, Mexico, Philippines, United States, Italy, France, Colombia, Spain, Congo and Argentina.

The number of baptized Catholics grew 1 percent in a year to reach 1.285 billion as of Dec. 31, 2015, the date to which the statistics in both books refer.

Looking at the period 2010-2015, the global Catholic population increased by 7.4 percent, the Vatican said. Africa continued to be the continent with the largest percentage growth, increasing by 19.4 percent over the same five-year period. The increase in Africa outpaced the growth of the general population.

Looking at 2010-2015, the number of diocesan priests globally rose.

## Not just another 'trade meeting,' convocation seeks to unify US church

By Dennis Sadowski

WASHINGTON (CNS) — This summer's Convocation of Catholic Leaders comes at a time when the U.S. Catholic Church is seeking how best to respond to a changing social landscape while bringing Pope Francis' vision for a church that offers mercy and joy to the world.

Called by the bishops, the historic convocation will find more than 3,000 Catholic leaders — bishops, clergy, religious and laypeople — meeting July 1-4 in Orlando, Florida, to focus on how the pope's 2013 apostolic exhortation, "Evangelii Gaudium" ("The Joy of the Gospel"), applies in the United States. The pope's document lays out a vision of the church dedicated to evangelization — missionary discipleship — in a positive way, with a focus on society's poorest and most vulnerable, including the aged and unborn.

Jonathan Reyes, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development and a convocation planner, sees the gathering as a way for Catholics across the diverse spectrum of the church to unify in Christ.

"The beauty of it for us as Catholics is it's not just another trade meeting," Reyes said. "This is centered, as Pope Francis said again and again, in the encounter with Jesus Christ. That's what holds us together.

Even Catholics need a moment of unity these days. Not just our country, but we as Catholics need a moment of unity around Christ."

The idea of missionary discipleship expressed by the pope has taken root in the work of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. It's the pre-eminent theme in the 2017-2020 strategic plan the bishops adopted during their annual fall general assembly in November.

Planning for the gathering, titled "Convocation of Catholic Leaders: The Joy of the Gospel in America," has been underway for a few years. It is being called to examine today's concerns, challenges and opportunities for action in light of the church's evangelization mission, Reyes explained. "So we're going to encounter Christ together, converse together, pray together, encounter one another and talk very practically about what are the challenges, what's it mean to be missionary disciples at this moment and how do we go out and do it," Reyes said.

Planners want people to mix and mingle and learn from each other during the invitation-only event. "This group of people would never be in the same strategic conversations together if it weren't for the bishops calling them together. They are in all kinds of ministries throughout the church. They are professionals in all

the different fields, education, business, teachers. We have people from all socioeconomic groups," Reyes said.

"So we're going to have a conversation that could only be had by the bishops. That's needed in this moment. I think everybody agrees we need this conversation. It's not about the things that divide us. And the beauty is we have this document from Pope Francis, 'Evangelii Gaudium.' There was unity around that document when it came out, a document that opens with 'I invited all of you to a personal encounter with Christ,' which is right where we want to start," he said.

Such a gathering of bishops and key church leaders has occurred just once before within the U.S. church. In 1917, in response to the country's entry into World War I, the bishops met with a select group of leaders to determine how to respond to social needs emerging from the war. That meeting at The Catholic University of America in Washington led to the formation of the National Catholic War Council "to study, coordinate, unify and put in operation all Catholic activities incidental to the war." After the war, the bishops met to make the council permanent and established the National Catholic Welfare Council, the forerunner to today's USCCB.

"They were responding to a very different crisis, World War I. But there was a sense of the importance of the moment that the church of the United States had to come together under the bishops to find a way of going forward, a vision of hope for the country and to serve," Reyes said.

Today, like the wider society, the U.S. church is grappling with how best to respond to rapid sociological changes: demographics including a rising Latino population and people leaving organized religion, an economy that has led to a smaller middle class, a broadening of the legal definition of marriage, polarization along ideological lines and technological advances that have changed how people relate with each other.

How to respond under the guidance of Pope Francis will begin to be discussed during the convocation. Each day has its own theme for participants to consider in light of the changing church and social structures: July 1: National Unity, July 2: Landscape and Renewal, July 3: Work and Witness and July 4: A Spirit of Mission.

On days 2 and 3, plenary sessions will feature panel discussions pertaining to an aspect of the respective themes with nearly two dozen breakout sessions afterward exploring wide-ranging topics.

### Treasurer/Bookkeeper

**St. John Central School** is seeking a flexible schedule treasurer/accounting person for 25-30 hours a week at the school in **Bellaire, Ohio**.

The treasurer is responsible for maintaining the financial records of the school, managing accounts payable and accounts receivable, preparing check payments and bank deposits, reconciling bank accounts, preparing budgets and generating and reviewing financial statements and reports.

The person should have knowledge of bookkeeping/accounting practices, experience using Quickbooks and Excel and the ability to perform payroll processing and monthly/annual payroll tax filings. Comparable work experience is required for this position and a degree in bookkeeping, accounting or finance is a plus.

Contact the **St. John Central School office (740) 676-4932** or email [karen.gress@omeresanet.net](mailto:karen.gress@omeresanet.net).



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**Adena** — A pancake breakfast will be held from 8-11:30 a.m., April 22, at the Mount Pleasant Presbyterian Church, 123 Union St. Tickets cost \$6 for adults and \$4 for children 10 years of age and under. Breakfast will include pancakes, sausage, eggs, coffee and juice. All proceeds will help purchase three flag poles, which will fly an American flag, a Christian flag and a flag of the state of Ohio, at Brightway Center, Smithfield. This is part of an ongoing project of Lukas Dickerson, parishioner of St. Casimir Parish, as he works toward his Eagle Scout award.

**Bellaire** — Divine Mercy devotions will begin at 2 p.m. and conclude at 4 p.m., April 23, at St. John Church. There will be eucharistic adoration, confessions, Divine Mercy Chaplet, litany of Divine Mercy and Benediction.

**Beverly** — A quiz team competition will begin at 12:30 p.m., April 23, at St. Bernard Church hall; an ice cream social will follow. For additional information, telephone the church office at (740) 984-2555.

**Bridgeport** — St. Anthony of Padua Parish will sponsor an annual roast beef dinner from 11:30 a.m. until 3 p.m., April 30, in the church hall. Cost for the meal is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children 12 years of age and younger. Raffles will also be held at the event.

**Buchtel** — A Mass for the anointing of the sick will be celebrated at St. Mary of the Hills Church at 11 a.m., May 4. A luncheon will follow. All who have experienced impairment due to age or chronic illness can attend. Transportation will be available. Telephone (740) 753-2337, for arrangements.

St. Mary of the Hills CWC will sponsor a rummage sale June 3 at the Nelsonville hall. Items for the upcoming sale can be taken to the hall, prior to the sale.

**Buchtel/Glouster** — Holy Land Carvers will be at St. Mary of the Hills Church, Buchtel, and Holy Cross Church, Glouster, April 29 and April 30. Hand-carved statues, ornaments, crosses, crucifixes and other religious items will be on sale.

**Carrollton** — Divine Mercy Sunday will be celebrated April 23 at Our Lady of Mercy Church. Adoration and confessions will be from 2-3 p.m.; recitation of the Divine Mercy Chaplet will take place at 3 p.m. The closing will be at 4 p.m., with a novena being prayed for the June 24 reconsecration of the Diocese of Steubenville to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

**Fulda** — St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish will sponsor a spring fling chicken dinner from 10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., April 30, at the church hall. Bingo will be played at 1 p.m.

**Glouster** — A "Divine Mercy Holy Hour," with eucharistic adoration, will be prayed at Holy Cross Church, April 23, at 3 p.m. The sacrament of reconciliation will also be available.

**Harriettsville** — St. Henry Parish cookbooks are being sold at the church for \$15 each. For additional information, telephone the church office at (740) 896-2207.

A Mother's Day dinner will be served from 11 a.m.-2 p.m., May 14, at St. Henry Church hall. Cost to eat will be \$9 for adults and \$5 for children. The menu will include chicken and ham, mashed potatoes and gravy, green beans, homemade noodles, coleslaw, rolls, dessert and beverages. Takeouts will be available. For additional information, telephone Debbie Biehl at (740) 373-2882.

**Ironton** — Kindergarten registration for the 2017-18 school year at St. Lawrence Central School will be held April 25 through April 27, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., in the school office, 315 S. Sixth St. Parents must bring the child's birth certificate, immunization records, baptismal record, Social Security number and any custody papers. For additional information, telephone the school office at (740) 532-5052.

Registration for prekindergarten at St. Lawrence Central School for the 2017-18 school year will take place May 2, from 6-7:30 p.m., at the school,



**Scott M. Anthony prepares to speak to sixth- to eighth-graders at the March 22 Diocese of Steubenville Junior High Rally. Under the auspices of the diocesan Office of Christian Formation and Schools, Alyson M. Radford, diocesan catechetical consultant and youth ministry coordinator, the youth gathered in the gymnasium of Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School, Steubenville. Anthony, who ministers at parishes in York, Pennsylvania, has been involved in Catholic youth and family ministry for more than 23 years. Before Anthony's presentation, the youth from the northern portion of the diocese played games and ate pizza. The youth rally was the second one in as many years for catechesis and fellowship, as well as to boost youth ministry programs in parishes, Radford said. (Photo by DeFrancis)**

315 S. Sixth St. Children must be 3 years of age prior to Sept. 1 and be potty trained. For additional information, telephone the school office at (740) 532-5052.

**Ironton** — Divine Mercy Sunday will be celebrated April 23, from 3-4 p.m., at St. Joseph Church.

**Malvern** — St. Francis Xavier CWC will host a quarter auction April 30 at the church hall. Doors will open at 12:30 p.m.; the auction will begin at 2 p.m. Admission is \$5 per person. Tickets are available by telephoning Jan Prevot at (330) 863-0789.

**Marietta** — The annual Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish dinner and raffle will be held from 4-7 p.m., April 28, in the basilica social hall. The CWC will prepare an all-you-can-eat spaghetti dinner, which will include salad, bread, dessert and beverage. Cost is \$9 for adults and \$5 for children 12 years of age and under. The cash raffle drawing will take place at 7 p.m.; a 50/50 drawing and pie auction will also be held. Proceeds from the event will be go toward an air-conditioning unit for the basilica.

**McConnelville** — Zach Hettinger was recently welcomed to the St. James Parish Council.

**Steubenville** — A Divine Mercy celebration will

take place from 2-4 p.m., April 23, at Holy Family Church; confessions will be heard.

A charismatic Mass will be celebrated by Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton May 4, at 7 p.m., at Holy Family Church. Prayer ministry for healing or other needs will be offered following Mass. At the conclusion of the evening, refreshments will be served.

**Steubenville** — A pancake breakfast fundraiser for the Catholic Central High School band will be held from 8-11 a.m., April 22, at Zalenski Family Eatery & Pub, 547 Cadiz Road, Wintersville. Cost of \$7 includes pancakes, choice of meat and assorted beverages. Tickets can be purchased at the door of the restaurant the morning of the event.

**Wintersville** — There will be a Life Line Screening May 2, at Blessed Sacrament Church, in Sargus Hall, 852 Main St. Screenings can check for the level of plaque buildup in arteries, which is related to risk for heart disease, stroke and vascular health; HDL and LDL cholesterol levels; diabetes risk; bone density; kidney and thyroid function and more. Packages start at \$149. Telephone (877) 237-1287, or visit [www.lifelinescreening.com](http://www.lifelinescreening.com), for additional information. Preregistration is required.

## Around and About

**Marietta** — Knights of Columbus Council 478 will assist Washington County Right to Life with a "virtual baby shower" for the Women's Care Center, Parkersburg, West Virginia, at the April 22 and April 23 Masses at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption. Knights will be collecting new and gently used baby items. For additional information, contact Jim Humphrey at (740) 629-4867 or email [super7@suddenling.net](mailto:super7@suddenling.net).

**Mingo Junction** — Knights of Columbus Msgr. Joseph F. Dooley Council 4361 will sponsor a spring fling dance from 7-10 p.m., May 6, at the K of C hall, 117 Legion Drive. Music will be provided by Light Touch. Cost to attend is \$10 per person; free hors d'oeuvres will be included.

**North Canton, Ohio** — Walsh University's

Lifelong Learning Academy will present "Civil Conversations About Civic Matters: A Roundtable Dialogue on Religion and the State," May 3, at 7:30 p.m., in the university's Barrette Business and Community Center, 2020 E. Maple St.

**NW Canton, Ohio** — Christian recording artist Ben Walther will present a "Family Worship Concert" at 7 p.m., May 5, at St. Michael the Archangel Church, 3430 St. Michael Blvd. There is a \$5, cash only, charge at the door the evening of the concert; children 10 years of age and under can attend for free.

**Pittsburgh** — The 17th annual Ss. Cyril and Methodius Lecture, sponsored by the Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius,

To Page 11

St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville, students honored the church season of Lent with weekly service projects named by Student Council – whose representatives, along with Faith in Action students, include, from the left – Mylie Gardner, Joey Balgo, Lanie Gardner, Marie Copeland, Victoria Trouten, Michaela Hendershot, Gavin Shields, Kellen Weidman, Brenna Planey, Laina Anderson, Jarod Holstein and Mattison Arbenz. Each week, during Lent, the students in kindergarten through eighth grade attended the Stations of the Cross at nearby St. Mary Church. As part of their recognition of the sacrifice of Christ, the students brought to the Stations, food items and money for five local charities, which included Tri-County Help Center, St. Clairsville, the St. Clairsville Food Bank, Belmont County Animal Shelter, Miracle of Life Support Group Inc., St. Clairsville, and area Catholic Charities, said St. Mary Central Principal Nannette Kennedy. Also, the school received a \$500 donation to be used for children, especially those in need. As part of the Faith in Action class – an elective offered in grades six through eight – students put together “comfort bags” that included toiletries, socks, underwear, blankets and stuffed animals, among other items, for children serviced by the Tri-County Help Center. (Photo provided)



## Around the About

From Page 10

will be held May 11, at 7 p.m., at St. John Cathedral Center, 210 Greentree Road, Munhall, Pennsylvania. There is no charge to attend the event, but reservations are required prior to April 28. Register online at [www.bcs.edu](http://www.bcs.edu), email [office@bcs.edu](mailto:office@bcs.edu), or telephone (412) 321-8383. Father Peter Galadza, speaker and teacher, will present “Vatican Guidelines for Church Music: Eastern Christian Prospects and Problems.”

**Russell’s Point, Ohio** — The American Society of Ephesus Inc. will have a Marian procession to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fatima, Portugal. The May 13 procession will begin following the celebration of the 6 p.m. Mass at St. Mary’s of the Woods Church, 464 Madison Ave., and process to the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, 261 Chase Ave. According to a news release, the American Society of Ephesus Inc. is a nonprofit private foundation formed in 1955, based in Lima, Ohio, whose mission is to promote

a greater realization and appreciation of the teachings of God; to preserve and erect religious shrines; and to restore and preserve the burial grounds of outstanding religious leaders.

**Steubenville** — A high Mass, for the second Sunday following Easter, will be sung at 4 p.m., April 30, by Schola Cantorum Franciscana in Franciscan University of Steubenville’s Christ the King Chapel.

**Steubenville** — The second annual Hilltop Communities Block Party will be held from noon until 3 p.m., April 29. Volunteers will meet at the Tower of Power Church parking lot, 1310 Maryland Ave. The day will feature face painting, a cookout, music and other activities.

**Steubenville** — Trinity Sports Medicine will team with Edison Central League to provide a spring sports skills program at Hammondsville Baseball Complex, Ohio 213, April 22, from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. Participants in the league have the opportunity to improve their skills with dynamic warm-up, throwing accuracy,

throwing speed and a laser-timed throwing competition. Other activities will include injury prevention, pitch counts, nutrition and hydration, and concussion management. For additional information, telephone (740) 266-3866.

**Steubenville** — Knights of Columbus Immaculate Heart of Mary Council 472 will hold a 117th anniversary dinner May 7 at the council hall, 146 Woodvue Lane, Two Ridge Road, Wintersville. The main speaker will be Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton. Doors open at 5 p.m.; dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. Cost is \$15 per person. Those requesting a table of eight or more can telephone Bill DiMarzio at (740) 264-4773.

**Toronto** — There will be an “Open House and May Crowning” May 20, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m., at the Franciscan Sisters Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother Monastery, 369 Little Church Road. Family activities, which will include a hayride, petting zoo, face painting, indoor and outdoor games and a vocation talk will begin at 11 a.m.; lunch

will be served from 11:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. An outdoor May crowning will take place at 1:30 p.m.; a vigil Mass and indoor crowning will conclude the day at 3:45 p.m. For additional information and directions, visit [www.FranciscanSistersTOR.org](http://www.FranciscanSistersTOR.org), or telephone (740) 544-5542.

**Weirton, W.Va.** — The Weirton Nazarene Church, 475 Colliers Way, will host a “Real Women, Real Faith” women’s conference May 6, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Tickets cost \$20 and include a continental breakfast and lunch. Presenter for the event will be Marlene Lawson, biblical counselor, inspirational speaker and author. For tickets or registrations, visit [www.weirtonnaz.com](http://www.weirtonnaz.com), [www.buytickets.at/weirtonnazarenechurch](http://www.buytickets.at/weirtonnazarenechurch), or telephone (304) 723-2006.

**Weirton, W.Va.** — St. Joseph the Worker Christian Mothers will sponsor a card party April 23, at 2 p.m., in Madonna High School gymnasium, 150 Michael Way. Contact Dolores Bengier at (304) 723-0668, for additional information or tickets.

## Obituaries

**Betty Jean Hamm** – mother of Diocese of Steubenville priest Father Thomas F. Hamm – has died.

Born Sept. 9, 1924, in Martins Ferry, she was the daughter of Michael W. and Anna Augusta Hicks Letzelter.

The 92 year old retired as a human resources manager at Swisher International, Wheeling, West Virginia.

The deceased was a lifelong member of St. Mary Church, Martins Ferry, where a funeral Mass was celebrated April 10, after her April 5 death. Burial followed in Mount Calvary Cemetery, Wheeling.

Preceded in death by her husband Thomas F. Hamm Sr., she is not only survived by her son, who is pastor of St. Louis Parish, Gallipolis, but also by a nephew, nieces and a cousin.

**Frances M. Bawn**, 86, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, April 7.  
**Kenneth L. Burkhart**, 87, Bridgeport,

St. Joseph, April 4.

**JoAnn M. DeMayo**, 51, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, April 2.

**Louise Mostia Dulkoski**, 85, Adena, St. Casimir, March 23.

**Anne C. Gutzman**, 75, St. Matthias, Freeport, March 17.

**Ray Hart**, 98, Christ the King University Parish, Athens, April 4.

**Richard Hughes**, 89, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, April 2.

**Eleanor “Ellie” Knight**, 89, St. Clairsville, St. Mary, March 31.

**Barbara J. Shawhan**, 76, Sacred Heart, Hopedale, March 29.

**George M. Stokes**, 84, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, April 1.

**Carl H. Thieman Sr.**, 87, Waterford, St. Bernard, Beverly, March 27.

**Dean P. Thurnes**, 52, Butler, Pennsylvania, St. Mary, St. Clairsville, March 31.

**Michael E. Zwick**, 57, East Rochester, St. Gabriel, Minerva, April 1.



St. John’s Villa, Carrollton, is the recipient of a \$500 check from the Knights of Columbus, Ohio State Council, Measure Up fund, says K of C Our Lady of Carroll County Council 15401 grand Knight Daniel Hitchcock, right. Measure Up is an annual Knights fundraising campaign to support people with developmental disabilities, the K of C’s flagship charity. All funds collected in Ohio, remain in the state. Thomas Meagher, Council 15401 Special Olympics cochairman and a Villa resident and worker, presents the check to Timothy Everline, St. John’s Villa president, second from left, as Susan DeChiara, the Villa’s director of communication and development, looks on. (Photo provided)

# Risen Christ calls all to follow him on path to life, Pope Francis says

By Cindy Wooden and Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Jesus is the risen shepherd who takes upon his shoulders “our brothers and sisters crushed by evil in all its varied forms,” Pope Francis said before giving his solemn Easter blessing.

With tens of thousands of people gathered in St. Peter’s Square April 16, the pope called on Christians to be instruments of Christ’s outreach to refugees and migrants, victims of war and exploitation, famine and loneliness.

For the 30th year in a row, Dutch farmers and florists blanketed the area around the altar with grass and 35,000 flowers and plants: lilies, roses, tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, birch and linden.

Preaching without a prepared text, Pope Francis began — as he did the night before at the Easter Vigil — imagining the disciples desolate because “the one they loved so much was executed. He died.”

While they are huddling in fear, the angel tells them, “He is risen.” And, the pope said, the church continues to proclaim that message always and everywhere, including to those whose lives are truly, unfairly difficult.

“It is the mystery of the cornerstone that was discarded, but has become the foundation of our existence,” he said. And those who follow Jesus, “we pebbles,” find meaning even in the midst of suffering because of sure hope in the resurrection.

Pope Francis suggested everyone find a quiet place on Easter to reflect on their problems and the problems of the world and then tell God, “I don’t know how this will end, but I know Christ has risen.”

Almost immediately after the homily, a brief but intense rain began to fall on the crowd, leading people to scramble to find umbrellas, jackets or plastic bags to keep themselves dry.

After celebrating the morning Easter Mass, Pope Francis gave his blessing “urbi et orbi,” to the city of Rome and the world.

Before reciting the blessing, he told the crowd that “in every age the risen shepherd tirelessly seeks us, his brothers and sisters, wandering in the deserts of this world. With the marks of the passion — the wounds of his merciful love — he draws us to follow him on his way, the way of life.”

Christ seeks out all those in need, he said. “He comes to meet them through our brothers and sisters who treat them with respect and kindness and help them to hear his voice, an unforgettable voice, a voice calling them back to friendship with God.”

Pope Francis mentioned a long list of those for whom the Lord gives special attention, including victims of human trafficking, abused children, victims of terrorism and



**Pope Francis delivers his Easter message and blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican April 16. (CNS photo/L’Osservatore Romano)**

people forced to flee their homes because of war, famine and poverty.

“In the complex and often dramatic situations of today’s world, may the risen Lord guide the steps of all those who work for justice and peace,” Pope Francis said. “May he grant the leaders of nations the courage they need to prevent the spread of conflicts and to put a halt to the arms trade.”

The pope also offered special prayers for peace in Syria, South Sudan, Somalia, Congo and Ukraine, and for a peaceful resolution of political tensions in Latin America.

The pope’s celebration of Easter got underway the night before in a packed St. Peter’s Basilica.

The Easter Vigil began with the lighting of the fire and Easter candle in the atrium of the basilica. Walking behind the Easter candle and carrying a candle of his own, Pope Francis entered the basilica in darkness.

The basilica was gently illuminated only by candlelight and the low light emanating from cellphones capturing the solemn procession.

The bells of St. Peter’s pealed in the night, the sound echoing through nearby Roman streets, announcing the joy of the Resurrection.

During the vigil, Pope Francis baptized 11 people: five women and six men from Spain, Czech Republic, Italy, the United States, Albania, Malta, Malaysia and China.

One by one, the catechumens approached the pope who asked them if they wished to receive baptism. After responding, “Yes, I do,” they lowered their heads as the pope poured water over their foreheads.

Among them was Ali Acacius Damavandy from the United States who smiled brightly as the baptismal waters streamed down his head.

In his homily, reflecting on the Easter account from the Gospel of St. Matthew, the pope recalled the women

who went “with uncertain and weary steps” to Christ’s tomb.

The pope said the faces of those women, full of sorrow and despair, reflect the faces of mothers, grandmothers, children and young people who carry the “burden of injustice and brutality.”

The poor and the exploited, the lonely and the abandoned, and “immigrants deprived of country, house and family” suffer the heartbreak reflected on the faces of the women at the tomb who have seen “human dignity crucified,” he said.

However, the pope added, in the silence of death, Jesus’ heartbeat resounds and his resurrection comes as a gift and as “a transforming force” to a humanity broken by greed and war.

“In the resurrection, Christ rolled back the stone of the tomb, but he wants also to break down all the walls that keep us locked in our sterile pessimism, in our carefully constructed ivory towers that isolate us from life, in our compulsive need

for security and in boundless ambition that can make us compromise the dignity of others,” he said.

Pope Francis called on Christians to follow the example of the woman who, upon learning of Christ’s victory over death, ran to the city and proclaimed the good news in those places “where death seems the only way out.”

Presiding over the Stations of the Cross Good Friday, April 14, at Rome’s Colosseum, Pope Francis offered a prayer expressing both shame for the sins of humanity and hope in God’s mercy.

A crowd of about 20,000 people joined the pope at the Rome landmark. They had passed through two security checks and were watched over by a heavy police presence given recent terrorist attacks in Europe.

At the end of the service, Pope Francis recited a prayer to Jesus that he had composed. “Oh Christ, our only savior, we turn to you again this year with eyes lowered in shame and with hearts full of hope.” The shame comes from all the “devastation, destruction and shipwrecks that have become normal in our lives,” he said, hours after some 2,000 migrants were rescued in the Mediterranean Sea. The shame comes from wars, discrimination and the failure to denounce injustice.

Turning to the sexual abuse crisis, Pope Francis expressed “shame for all the times we bishops, priests, consecrated men and women have scandalized and injured your body, the church.”

But the pope also prayed that Christians would be filled with the hope that comes from knowing that “you do not treat us according to our merits, but only according to the abundance of your mercy.” Christian hope, he said, means trusting that Jesus’ cross can “transform our hardened hearts into hearts of flesh capable of dreaming, forgiving and loving.”

## US Catholics urged to use Passion as motivation to ‘change the world’

WASHINGTON (CNS) — As U.S. Catholics prepared for Easter, the hierarchy of the church used the symbol of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ as a path to bring peace to society’s troubled spots.

In cities across the country, the Good Friday Way of the Cross has become a modern-day portrayal of the 14 Stations of the Cross in the passion of Jesus and a way of drawing attention to social justice issues of the day.

Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago led a Good Friday “Walk for Peace” April 14 through the Englewood neighborhood of his city that has been a hot spot for violent crime. The walk was organized by the archdiocese, its parishes and a host of other Catholic groups and Chicago organizations.

In addition to pausing as participants traced the Stations of the Cross, there were testimonies from people who have lost loved ones to violence in Chicago during the past year. During his Palm Sunday homily at Chicago’s Holy Name Cathedral, Cardinal Cupich said this neighborhood was chosen for the Good Friday walk to let the local citizens overwhelmed by violence know they have not been forgotten.

Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington washed the feet of 12 people Holy Thursday, just as Christ washed the feet of the 12 apostles at the Last Supper. The foot washing also was in solidarity with Pope Francis, who washed the feet of 12 inmates at a maximum security prison outside of Rome on Holy Thursday, a sign of service to people on the margins of society.

Bishop Nicholas A. DiMarzio of Brooklyn, New York, was scheduled to lead thousands of Italian-Americans through the streets of Brooklyn’s Bensonhurst neighborhood praying the Way of the Cross during the evening hours of Good Friday, to honor the influx of immigrants from southern Italy who populated the area and brought the tradition from their homeland.

Holy Week is meant to remind Catholics what it means to be a Christian in today’s world and how they can bring hope and possibility to an uncertain society, Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez said in an April 13 column for Angelus, the magazine and online news site of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. “When we know Jesus, we feel his desire to change the world,” he said.