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News Briefs

World Youth Day should be 'open to all'

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) — The Polish bishop overseeing preparations for World Youth Day 2016 has urged priests to ensure that no young people are excluded because of poverty.

Auxiliary Bishop Damian Muskus of Krakow, Poland, which is hosting the international celebration, said arranging for young people who might not be able to attend the event would be "our priestly gifts for youngsters in this Year of Mercy. We're well aware how much deprivation, unemployment and neglect there is, and this requires from us all sensitivity and solidarity with the poorest, so they won't feel left out," he said, as preparations continued for the July 26-31 event in the southern Polish city.

Any assistance to young people should, Bishop Muskus explained, reflect "a compromise between awareness of youth possibilities and organizational needs and costs," but also should adhere to the event's theme, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

Bishops stand against nuclear weapons

HIROSHIMA, Japan (CNS) — For a long minute on a sunny morning, silence fell over the memorial park that commemorates the Aug. 6, 1945, atomic bombing of the city.

A gong sounded repeatedly as local residents and visitors from around the world stopped to remember a similarly sunny morning 70 years ago when a fireball ripped apart the skies.

Among the visitors to Hiroshima was Bishop Oscar Cantu of Las Cruces, New Mexico. It was the bishop's first visit to Japan, and he said he was moved by what he saw and heard from Japanese Catholics, who have been adamant in demanding an end to nuclear weapons.

"It's important for an American delegation to be here with the Japanese in this moment, because we celebrate the efforts they have made for peace, and we stand in solidarity with them. They are part of a church that around the world has spoken against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, a message that here is directed particularly at the United States," Bishop Cantu said. "So although our countries were enemies 70 years ago, we have become allies in this effort. We do, however, recognize that there's movement in Japan toward building up their military capabilities again. We caution against that, and we stand with the bishops of Japan in opposing that."



Young women carry candles at an interfaith service in Nagasaki, Japan, to commemorate those who died as the result of the U.S. atomic bomb dropped on the city in 1945. (CNS photo/Paul Jeffrey)



Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton burns financial documents at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta. The papers that detailed a loan that had to be assumed by the parish were turned to ash, outside the basilica, after an Aug. 2 Mass. Msgr. John Michael Campbell, rector of the basilica, left, explained that prior to St. Mary Church being designated a basilica, a \$1.5 million renovation was planned. Money was raised and work begun, during which structural damage was discovered that added \$2.5 million to the price tag of the project. The \$2 million that was borrowed for the repairs has been paid back, symbolically portrayed as parishioners look on, along with Transitional Deacon Ryan Gray, second from left; Permanent Deacon Lee V. Weisend, second from right, and Joseph A. Schmidt, basilica pastoral associate, right. "The people saw what needed to be done and did it," Msgr. Campbell said. After the renovation, the church became the first basilica in the Diocese of Steubenville. People from throughout the diocese, and elsewhere, make pilgrimages to the basilica, which continues to be enhanced, Msgr. Campbell said. Statues of Sts. Peter and Paul will be placed. The approximate 5-foot 6-inches statues, made of fiberglass, will add to the front entrance of the basilica, Msgr. Campbell said. The donated statues will match the stone railings, where they will stand, he added. In addition, artwork will be added near the entrance of the basilica's chapel, named the Chapel of the English Martyrs. The images of Sts. Thomas More, Thomas Becket and John Fisher will be hung. Already, a picture hangs that depicts the first Mass in Marietta. Also, \$25,000 worth of repairs will be done to the stained-glass window in the basilica's choir loft. Some months after a severe storm two years ago, Msgr. Campbell said the window deterioration was visible. Now, the window is being cleaned, recemented, painted, strengthened, glazed and sealed. (Photo provided)

Pregnancy Resource Center visible in Athens

ATHENS — The Pregnancy Resource Center of Athens County looks like any other storefront in downtown Athens.

That fact adds up to a lot of pluses for the center, "committed to those in need who may be facing an untimely pregnancy."

Not far from the heart of the Ohio University Campus, the walk-up center is spread out artfully over the upper floor of a building and has a second-floor conference room that overlooks the street that is a main artery for the more than 22,000 students, whom they mostly serve.

Rachel Esselburn, executive director of the Pregnancy



The Pregnancy Resource Center of Athens County is visible among downtown Athens' storefronts. (Photo by DeFrancis)

Resource Center of Athens County, and Nadia Mitchell, director of client services for the 43A S. Court St. facility, sat and talked about the center's dedication "to strengthening men, women and families by serving those with pregnancy-related concerns and by promoting sexual health."

"We provide education on abortion and its alternatives, as well as assistance surrounding pregnancy," the pregnancy resource center mission statement continues.

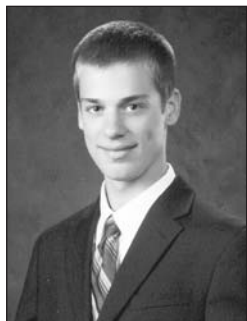
Initially, in 1985, the pregnancy resource center was opened in another location and

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Legacy from diocese's first bishop benefits nine high school graduates

STEUBENVILLE — When freshmen arrive at Franciscan University of Steubenville to begin the fall semester, nine of them will have scholarships from the Diocese of Steubenville.

John P. Bolster, Jacob R. Borden, Terren M. Huck, Kayla L. Inomata, Andrew M. Nese, Mary C. Pesta, Joseph C. Sebastian, Kateri B. Spencer and Christine J. Venditti are the 2015 recipients of the scholarship established by the diocese's first bishop, John King Mussio, in memory of his parents, John and Blanche Mussio.



John Bolster



Jacob Borden



Terren Huck

Recipient Bolster is a Steubenville resident. He is a graduate of Catholic Central High School, Steubenville, and attended Holy Rosary Central School, Steubenville. During school, Bolster participated in soccer, track and band, as well, he was a member of the Boy Scouts of America. He is one of eight children of Ronald and Andrea Bolster. The Bolsters are members of Holy Family Parish, Steubenville. Msgr. Gerald E. Calovini is their pastor. John Bolster is a parish altar server.

Borden, too, is a resident of Steubenville and graduate of Catholic Central High School, as well as an attendee of Holy Rosary Central School. While in high school, Borden was a member of the National Honor Society and played football. Borden is one of four children of George and Elizabeth Borden. The youth is an altar server at his and his family's parish, Holy Family.

Huck is a graduate of Fort Frye High School, Beverly, and St. John Central School, Churchtown. During high school, Huck was a member of the National Honor Society. He, too, played football and baseball. He is one of six children of

Terence and Yvonne Huck of Beverly. The Hucks are active members of St. Bernard Parish, Beverly. Msgr. Robert J. Kawa is pastor of the parish. Terren Huck has been an altar server, a participant in the St. Bernard Youth Group, a volunteer at the local soup kitchen and food pantry and for St. Bernard's vacation Bible school. As well, Terren Huck has attended Diocese of Steubenville youth rallies, Franciscan University of Steubenville youth conferences, World Youth Day and the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C.

Inomata, of Steubenville, attended Catholic Central High School and Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School, Steubenville. While at the high school, she participated in chorus and band, as well as the Drama Club. She is one of two daughters of Kenji and Charmaine Inomata. In Steubenville, the Inomatas are members of Triumph of the Cross Parish. Father Thomas R. Nau is pastor of Triumph of the Cross Parish, where Kayla Inomata is an altar server.

A resident of Steubenville, Nese is a graduate of Catholic Central High School and Holy Rosary Central School. In high school, Nese was an honor student, a member of the National Honor Society and Spanish Club, served the yearbook and played soccer. He is one of three children of Glenn and Ladonna Nese.

They are members of Triumph of the Cross Parish. Andrew Nese is an altar server there.

Pesta graduated from Carrollton High School, Carrollton, and Ressie Jeffries Elementary School, Front Royal, Virginia. During school, she participated in theatrical productions and served her class, as an officer. She is one of nine children of Daniel and Kathleen Pesta of Carrollton. They are members of Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Carrollton. Father Anthony R. Batt is their pastor.

A graduate of Gallia Academy High School, Gallipolis, and Rio Grande Elementary School, Rio Grande, Ohio, Sebastian is one of four children of Paul and Jadwiga Sebastian. They are residents of Bidwell, Ohio. During school, Joseph Sebastian was active in a number of activities, both

academically and in the community. He played basketball and tennis and was a member of the National Honor Society. He volunteered at the local soup kitchen and caroled in nursing homes at Christmas. The Sebastians are members of St. Louis Parish, Gallipolis. Father Thomas F. Hamm is their pastor. Joseph Sebastian is active in the parish youth group.

Spencer is a graduate of Catholic Central High School and Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School. In school, she was a soccer player, a member of the swim team and the Catholic Daughters. In addition, Spencer was in the Drama Club, the



Kateri Spencer

National Honor Society and chorus. During junior high, Spencer served as a teacher's aide. A Steubenville resident, she is one of five children of Robert and Elleen Spencer. They are members of Triumph of the Cross Parish. Kateri Spencer participates in music ministry at the parish.



Christine Venditti

(Photos provided)

Venditti was homeschooled. She has been a debater, youth group leader, church choir member and assisted during catechesis. She is one of five children of Thomas and Margaret Venditti of Steubenville. They are members of St. Peter Parish, Steubenville. Father Timothy J. Huffman is their pastor.



Kayla Inomata



Andrew Nese



Mary Pesta

Open house scheduled at St. Mary Central, St. Clairsville

ST. CLAIRSVILLE — Dates have been established for the beginning of the 2015-16 school year at St. Mary Central School, where an open house will be held Aug. 23.

The open house will be held, beginning at 6 p.m., at the 226 W. Main St. school, said Nannette Kennedy, principal.

A parents' meeting will be held at 6:45 p.m. that day.

Students in prekindergarten through

eighth grade will start the new school year Aug. 24, Kennedy announced.

Preschoolers at St. Mary Central will start the following day.

For more information on the school, telephone (740) 695-3189. Kennedy can be reached via email, also, at nannette.kennedy@omeres.net.

Father Thomas A. Chillog, St. Mary Parish pastor, is the school's pastoral administrator.

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Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton celebrates Mass at Belmont Correctional Institution, St. Clairsville. During the Aug. 4 Mass, six men were confirmed. Father Thomas A. Chillog, partly visible in the front, at right, pastor of St. Mary Parish, St. Clairsville, or his parochial vicar, Father Edward A. Maxfield Jr., visit the prison weekly to celebrate Mass with an approximate 60 inmates. There are more than 2,600 men housed in the correctional institution, Father Chillog, who serves the diocese, also, as episcopal vicar for pastoral planning and personnel, estimated. Students from Franciscan University of Steubenville, under the direction of Franciscan Sister Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother Maria Teresa Tortorice, assist St. Mary's priests with the religious education of the men confirmed, Father Chillog said. (Photo provided)

Run/walk in support of AIM Women's Center

STEUBENVILLE — An annual run/walk to support AIM Women's Center will be held Sept. 5 at Jim Wood Park, Steubenville.

The 5K run begins at 8 a.m., while a 1K fun run for kids begins at 8:45 a.m. and a two-mile walk begins at 9 a.m.

Sharon Maedke, director of the AIM Women's Center — a pro-life pregnancy resource center, which serves the Ohio Valley, from its 248 N. Fifth St., Steubenville, location — announced the run/walk to raise funds and awareness for AIM Women's Center. "The mission at AIM Women's Center is simple. We help pregnant young women have the opportunity to choose life for their babies, become better parents and take a few first steps to self-sufficiency. In addition, we help women recovering from an abortion through our Rachel Vineyard's retreats," the AIM Mission statement reads, in part.

To help with that mission, Sept. 5 runners and walkers are asked to set a goal and raise money through sponsorships. "Ask family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, social media friends to sponsor you," Maedke suggested.

With a title of "AIM Hero 5K Run/Walk," runners and walkers are encouraged, also, to come to the event dressed as his or her favorite super hero.

Prizes will be given for top team and individual fundraisers, fastest times and best costume.

Registration for the run/walk opens at 7 a.m. Participants can register online at www.crowdrise.com/AIMHERO5K.

The 5K run for those 13 and under costs \$10 and for those 14 and older, \$15. A family fee for a family numbering up to 10 is \$50. The 1K run for children is free and the two-mile walk for all ages, also, is free.

Anyone collecting at least \$25 for the run/walk will be given a T-shirt.

Participants are asked to collect their cash, checks or have sponsors pay online (www.crowdrise.com/AIMHERO5K) or sign up to be billed and to turn in the sponsor sheet and funds collected at the event or the AIM office.

Questions on the run/walk can be raised by telephoning (740) 283-3636 or (740) 346-6006.

The run/walk will occur, rain or shine. If inclement weather is predicted, participants should bring an umbrella, Maedke advised.

Persons who want to run/walk but are unable to partici-

pate in the Sept. 5 event, should run/walk on their own and then mail or bring their form and funds to AIM.

Since it began operation in 1987, AIM Women's Center has helped more than 10,000 women. It offers "free services and compassionate support to women who are experiencing an unexpected or crisis pregnancy.

"Our goal is to erase the need for abortion by transforming a woman's fear and anxiety into confidence by offering options.

"Services include counseling, free pregnancy tests, free limited ultrasounds, a learn and earn program and a 24-hour help line.

"All services provided are strictly confidential and nonjudgmental," information on AIM reads.

Services at AIM are free, with no eligibility requirements.

Funded by private contributions and individual donations, the nonprofit, charitable organization is sustained by support staff and volunteers.

AIM's telephone number is (740) 283-3636 and website www.aimfriendsforlife.org.



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Joe Billante

Bishop Monforton's Schedule

August

- 16 Mass, St. Mary Church, Temperanceville, 9:30 a.m.
Mass, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Barnesville, 11 a.m.
Meet with parish and finance councils of St. Mary, Temperanceville, and Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Barnesville, concerning renovation, restoration and renewal of Holy Name Cathedral, Steubenville, at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, 12:30 p.m.
- 17 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 8:30 a.m.
- 18 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 7 a.m.
- 18-21 Region VI bishops' summer gathering, Plymouth, Michigan
- 22 Oath of Fidelity Mass, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Finnegan Field House, noon
- 23 Mass, St. Sylvester Church, Woodsfield, 8:30 a.m.
Mass, St. John the Baptist Church, Miltonsburg, 10:30 a.m.
Meet with parish and finance councils of St. Sylvester Parish, Woodsfield, and St. John the Baptist Parish, Miltonsburg, concerning renovation, restoration and renewal of Holy Name Cathedral, Steubenville, at Woodsfield, noon
Visit new religious order, Order of St. Paul of the Cross, Woodsfield, 1:30 p.m.
- 24 Mass, Sienna Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Home, Wintersville, 1:45 p.m.
Visit, Dixon Nursing and Rehabilitation Home, Wintersville, 3 p.m.
Infant Jesus of Prague novena, St. Mary Church, Martins Ferry, 7 p.m.
- 25 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 7 a.m.
Franciscan University of Steubenville, 6 p.m.
- 26 Mass, Gables Care Center, Hopedale, 3:30 p.m.
- 27 Chancery staff day of recollection, Toronto, 9 a.m.
- 28 Visit, Lancia Villa Royale Nursing Home, Steubenville, 1:30 p.m.
Mass, Lancia Villa Vista Royale Nursing Home, Steubenville, 2:15 p.m.

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Pregnancy Resource Center

From Page 1

with a different name, "A Better Way."

Two moves later and the "prc on Court" is in what Mitchell terms as a perfect location. "Students are walking to CVS to get a pregnancy test and see our sign."

Other students, pregnancy resource center volunteers, staff an information booth on the nearby Ohio University Campus. A young woman is linked with a local college sorority who has women teaching other women about their emotional, sexual and physical well-being. Adults from the Athens Catholic community are talking to parents. One-on-one counseling is occurring. Men are being mentored for fatherhood. New mothers are learning and earning.

During its first full year on Court in 2004, the pregnancy resource center had 81 contacts with clients. In 2014, more than 2,300 client and community contacts took place, data from the center states.

During a first year with ultrasounds, at least 30 women got one. Even that client, who comes in and describes pregnancy as being like a leech, is receptive to an ultrasound, Esselburn and Mitchell said. The two described the machine as "the

window to the womb." The ultrasound, too, can be used as an educational piece for the pregnancy, they added.

Mitchell said she knows firsthand about being a single mother. Being pregnant "was a hugely traumatic experience for me," but as she said the bumper sticker reads, "Abortion stops a beating heart."

Since dealing with her first client who had the same birth date as her own crisis pregnancy baby, Mitchell has been doing what she does at the pregnancy resource center because, "the Lord wants us to share love and truth. I want the client to feel love. ... I want them to know we are here for them. ... We are not here to judge. ... Sometimes we are the first people the client has told," about her pregnancy.

Esselburn has been involved with the pregnancy resource center for years, officially becoming its director in 2007. She, also, is a labor and delivery nurse, wife and mother of three children ages 5 to 15.

In 2015 and ongoing, the center – described as a locally organized and funded, faith-based, life-affirming nonprofit, staffed mainly by volunteers and supported by donations from individuals, churches and businesses – expects to continue to strengthen its current service and programming, add sexually transmitted infection testing and treatment, increase administrative facilities, expand staff and increase open hours.

During a morning the Register was at the pregnancy resource center, a young woman walked in.



Nadia Mitchell, left, and Rachel Esselburn stand in the ultrasound room at the Pregnancy Resource Center of Athens County. (Photos by DeFrancis)

Most clients do – no appointment is needed. Turns out, it seems, she thought she might be pregnant. She was told to return in the afternoon for a pregnancy test. In about three minutes, she would know the results.

Some of her peers have commented about the pregnan-

cy resource center: "I am so blessed to be welcomed here. I feel right at home. Thanks for the prayers"; "I'm glad I could speak my mind about everything I was thinking and feeling, and I felt understood"; "Thank you for this safe place where I could be accepted and work on my healing and forgiveness." Those women have come from more than a dozen different countries and one even utilized an interpreter for the deaf, Esselburn and Mitchell said.

The pregnancy resource center is open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and 3-7 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays. The telephone is (740) 592-4700. The 24-hour option line is (800) 712-HELP. The email is athensprc@yahoo.com.

The center's annual banquet will be held Sept. 24. Marc Newman, founder/president, Speaker for Life, will be the featured speaker. For reservations, which are required, telephone the center.



Nadia Mitchell, left, and Rachel Esselburn show off some of the items available to earn and learn mothers who frequent the Pregnancy Resource Center of Athens County.



Clothes, clothes, clothes – what to choose for baby in one of the brightly lit rooms at the Pregnancy Resource Center of Athens County.

She quoted the pregnancy resource center vision – "committed to reaching all segments of our community with the life-affirming message that abortion is unnecessary. This message enables individuals to make informed choices, and provides them with the knowledge and power to establish healthy lifestyle habits."

Eileen Sirois is the pregnancy resource center's nurse manager.

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Diocese of Steubenville priests join scoopers to benefit Faith in Action

ST. CLAIRSVILLE/MARTINS FERRY — Three priests from the Diocese of Steubenville are “celebrity” scoopers for the fifth annual Belmont County Clergy Celebrity Scooper Day, presented by Faith in Action Caregivers Inc. and Kirke’s Homemade Ice Cream.

Father Thomas A. Chillog, pastor of St. Mary Parish, St. Clairsville, and the Diocese of Steubenville episcopal vicar for pastoral planning and personnel; Father David J. Cornett, pastor of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Barnesville, and St. Mary Parish, Temperanceville, and Father Thomas Marut, pastor of St. Mary Parish, Martins Ferry, will scoop ice cream from noon to 1 p.m., Aug. 22, at Kirke’s, 50505 Rehm Road, St. Clairsville.

The celebrity scooping will continue until 4 p.m. that day with proceeds from the sale of ice cream cones and cups, as well as tips, donated to Faith in Action Caregivers Inc.

Other scoopers include from 1-2 p.m. – the Rev. Mark Zelewicz, Relevant Worship Center, St. Clairsville; the Rev. John Brandenburg, St. John’s Lutheran Church, Martins Ferry, and Trinity Episcopal Church, Bellaire; and the Rev. Wayne Ickes, retired, Friends Church, St. Clairsville; 2-3 p.m. – the Rev. David Stammerjohn, First Presbyterian Church, Martins Ferry; the Rev. Bill Webster, Grace Presbyterian Church, Martins Ferry, and the Rev. David Demarest, Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, Bridgeport, and Rock Hill Presbyterian Church, Bellaire; 3-4 p.m. – the Rev. Adam Davis, Thoburn United Methodist Church, St. Clairsville; the Rev. Erica Harley, Calvary Presbyterian Church, St. Clairsville, and Pastor Tim Seidler, the Experience Ministry, Bridgeport.

Jeanette I. Wojcik, executive director, Faith in Action Caregivers Inc., announced the event.

Faith in Action Caregivers has been in operation in the Ohio Valley since 1995, when Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran and Methodist bishops heard about it and initiated it. Hundreds of Faith in Action Caregivers are spread nationwide. The local one supports the independent living of older adults and people with disabilities in Ohio and Marshall counties in West Virginia and Belmont County in Ohio. The organization’s office is located at 38 N. Fourth St., Martins Ferry. Faith in Action in Huntington, West Virginia, serves Lawrence County, Ohio, residents, too.

“It is a ministry,” Wojcik said of Faith in Action Caregivers. Volunteers are their clients’ friends.

Most of the services provided evolve around transportation. People need transported to medical appointments or to the grocery store. It is a one-on-one service, Wojcik explained. The volunteer takes his or her own car and drives the person in need of a ride. Moreover, what sets Faith in Action apart is that the provider is there with the person. “Our volunteers are there to help. They are your friends,” Wojcik said.

Volunteers also provide respite care to caregivers, make telephone reassurance calls to shut-ins, do laundry, clean



The scoopers – from left, Father Thomas A. Chillog, pastor of St. Mary Parish, St. Clairsville, and Diocese of Steubenville episcopal vicar for pastoral planning and personnel; the Rev. Adam Davis, Thoburn United Methodist Church, St. Clairsville; the Rev. Wayne Ickes, retired, Friends Church, St. Clairsville; and Father David J. Cornett, pastor, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Barnesville, and St. Mary Parish, Temperanceville – are ready for the Faith in Action Caregivers Inc. and Kirke’s Homemade Ice Cream fifth annual Belmont County Clergy Celebrity Scooper Day. Scoopers will be scooping from noon to 4 p.m., Aug. 22, at Kirke’s Homemade Ice Cream, 50505 Rehm Road, St. Clairsville. Fathers Chillog, Cornett and Father Thomas Marut, pastor, St. Mary Parish, Martins Ferry, will scoop from noon to 1 p.m. Proceeds from the sale of ice cream cones and cups, as well as all tips, will be donated to Faith in Action Caregivers Inc. (Photo by DeFrancis)

and handle other services and chores that enable a person to remain living independently, Wojcik explained.

She tabulated that approximately 1,880 people were served in a recent year and 15,600 hours of free services volunteered.

Faith in Action “fills the gaps,” Wojcik noted. It assists those people who do not qualify for government services or provides services not available, elsewhere. For example, people need a ride to a doctor’s appointment in Pittsburgh or Morgantown, West Virginia. “Nobody drives outside the area for free,” she said. Faith in Action caregivers do.

Most Faith in Action volunteers are 55 and older. Most of those served are in their 70s, Wojcik estimated. Some are disabled. “The older you get the more help you are going to need to stay at home,” Wojcik predicted.

The organization also provides a great opportunity for families to do something together, Wojcik added. “We can

use all ages.” To volunteer or for assistance, telephone (304) 243- 5420.

Faith in Action Caregivers gets no government money. It is supported by individuals, businesses, clubs, organizations, congregations, local foundations and fundraisers, Wojcik said.

Catechetical Sunday focuses on ‘Safeguarding the Dignity of Every Human Person’

WASHINGTON — Catholics are called to uphold the dignity of all people, including migrants, the poor, victims of trafficking and people with illnesses and disabilities, says the theme for Catechetical Sunday 2015, “Safeguarding the Dignity of Every Human Person.”

“This year’s theme reminds us that the dignity of each human person rests in the biblical teaching (Gen 1: 26-27) that he or she is made in God’s image and likeness. It also

reminds us that we, the baptized, may need to actively support and protect others from all sorts of harm, cherishing human life from the moment of conception to a natural death,” said Archbishop Leonard P. Blair of Hartford, Connecticut, chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Observed on the third Sunday in September, Catechetical Sunday is a celebration of teachers of the Catholic faith.

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St. John Paul II Jesus in Church Councils

By Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon

St. John Paul II turns next to the councils of the church to examine what the church has said officially about Jesus. The first of these councils was that of Nicea (A.D. 325). Nicea was what we would call a suburb of the new capital of the Roman Empire. It was renamed from Byzantium to "Constantinople" by the Emperor Constantine. It was Constantine who, a scant 12 years earlier, had lifted the persecutions of Christians in the Roman Empire and declared Christianity its official religion.

The Council said as follows: "We believe ... in the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, that is of the Being of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not created, one in being with the Father; through

... we are professing our faith in the same words that were formulated in the early fourth century.

him all things were made, both in heaven and on earth. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, he became incarnate; he was made man; he suffered death and rose again on the third day; he ascended into heaven and will come to judge the living and the dead." As we see, its wording is slightly simplified in the creed that we recite in Masses of Sundays and solemnities. In effect, we are professing our faith in the same words that were formulated in the early fourth century. The church had only recently emerged from persecution, when it would have been impossible to hold such a meeting of the bishops of the entire church or their representatives. The statement expressed the belief that had been handed down from the time of the Apostles during the intervening 200 years. It can be compared with our present adherence (we hope!) to the Constitution of the United States that was formulated a little over 200 years ago in America. We believe that the truths expressed in the creed are those preserved with the help of the Holy Spirit in the intervening years.

The years of persecution began with that of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem almost immediately after the ascension of Jesus into heaven. Recall the imprisonment of Peter, the death of St. James, the Apostle who presided

over the Christians of Jerusalem, and that of St. Stephen in which St. Paul took part, all referred to in the Acts of the Apostles (see, Acts 7: 1-60 and Acts 12: 1-11). Persecutions were continued by the Romans, beginning with that of the emperor Nero during which Peter and Paul were executed (A.D. 64). They continued sporadically under succeeding emperors but came to an end with Constantine, 200 years later. Throughout this period, the Christians not only kept the faith, but they grew in numbers. Indeed, "The blood of martyrs was the seed of Christians." We have the names of many Christian martyrs from that era. John Paul calls our attention to two of them in particular, as making significant contributions to the preservation of the faith

of the Apostles: St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, and St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons (in present day France). They are among the "Fathers of the Church," the men who did

so much to preserve, articulate and defend the authentic teaching of Christ.

Persecution was not the only problem faced by the church in those early centuries. Another, and, perhaps more serious one, was *heresy*: the corruption of the authentic teaching of the church. Most of the early councils of the church were occasioned by controversies derived from distortions and misdirections of early heretics, most of whom were, themselves, bishops or priests. The Council of Nicea was called to deal with the false teaching of a popular preacher named Arius who taught that Jesus was not God, but only a human being, specially chosen and endowed by God. His teachings were successfully challenged by Ignatius and Irenaeus, as well as St. Athanasius and others, leading to the formulation that we have seen above. The denial of the divinity of Jesus would result in the collapse of the entire edifice of Christian faith. In Pope John Paul's words, "The integral logic of the faith and Christian life is nullified, because the keystone of the whole construction is eliminated." The Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381) reaffirmed the declarations of Nicea.

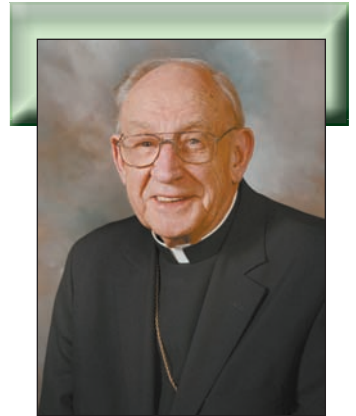
Correcting Arianism did not end the problem. Another heresy, "docetism," arose, which went to the opposite

extreme by denying in effect the *humanity* of Jesus. Docetists held that Jesus did not have a true body, but only the appearance of one, sort of a "hologram," in today's terms. Of course that implies, among other things, that Jesus was not truly man, that he was not born of Mary, that he did not really suffer and die, that the Word was not truly made

flesh. A kind of corollary to docetism was "apollinarianism," which held that Jesus did not have a human soul, but that his divine nature took its place. This theory had to be condemned as false by Pope Damasus I some 50 years after the Council of Nicea. St. Gregory of Nazianzen, another father and doctor of the church, pointed out that what Christ assumed in the incarnation, i.e., human nature, was redeemed, and, to the contrary, what was not assumed was not redeemed. Therefore, Jesus had to take on a true and complete human nature, including a soul as well as a body. The decision of Pope Damasus was confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon (another suburb of Constantinople) in A.D. 451.

Heresies did not end there. New questions and new errors had to be addressed by the church. In subsequent councils, related questions would surface, including the human will of Jesus, his relationship to the Blessed Trinity, the role and nature of the Holy Spirit, and the status of Mary. The answers that the early councils of the church would give form the basic truths (the "dogmas") of the church.

John Paul calls attention to the importance of these church councils in developing our knowledge of Jesus Christ: "He is the Word who became incarnate for our salvation, as it is made known to us by revelation, so that believing in him and loving him, we may be saved and have life" (see, Jn 20: 31).



Bishop Sheldon

We've Been Here Before: Marriage and the Room of Tears

By Father Robert Barron

(In mid June), I had the privilege of spending four hours in the Sistine Chapel with my Word on Fire team. Toward the end of our filming, the director of the Vatican Museums, who had accompanied us throughout the process, asked whether I wanted to see the "Room of Tears." This is the little antechamber, just off of the Sistine Chapel, where the newly elected pope repairs in order to change into his white cassock. Understandably, tears begin to flow in that room, once the poor man realizes the weight of his office.

Inside the small space, there were documents and other memorabilia, but what got my attention was a row of impressive albs, chasubles and copes worn by various popes across the years. I noticed the specially decorated cope of Pope Pius VI, who was one of the longest serving pontiffs in history, reigning from 1775 to 1799. Pius was an outspoken opponent of the French Revolution and its bloody aftermath – and his forthrightness cost him dearly. French troops invaded Italy and demanded that the pope renounce his claim to the Papal States. When he refused, he was arrested and imprisoned in a citadel in Valence, where he



Father Barron

died six weeks later. In the room of tears, there was also a stole worn by Pius VI's successor, Pius VII. This Pope Pius also ran afoul of the French, who, under Napoleon, invaded Italy in 1809 and took him prisoner. During his grim exile, he did manage to get off one of the greatest lines in papal history. Evidently, Napoleon himself announced to the pope that he was going to destroy the church, to which Pius VII responded, "Oh my little man, you think you're going to succeed in accomplishing what centuries of priests and bishops have tried and failed to do!"

Both popes find themselves, of course, in a long line of church people persecuted by the avatars of the regnant culture. In the earliest centuries of the church's life, thousands – including Peter, Paul, Agnes, Cecelia, Clement, Felicity, Perpetua, Sebastian, Lawrence and Cyprian – were brutally put to death by officials of the Roman Empire. In the fourth century, St. Ambrose was opposed by the emperor Theodosius; in the 11th century, Pope Gregory VII locked horns with the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV; in the 19th century, Bismarck waged a "Kulturkampf"

against the Catholic Church in Germany, and in the 20th century, more martyrs gave their lives for the faith than in all the previous centuries combined.

Now why am I rehearsing this rather sad history? In the wake of the United States Supreme Court decision regarding gay marriage, a not inconsiderable number of

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'Nothing in This World Can Diminish the Joy of the Gospel'

By Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12: 9).

No Room for Sterile Pessimism

You and I are acutely aware of the challenges which befall us in 2015. We need not provide inventory for we easily can access the difficulties through public media. This, however, is not the end of the story. As the words of God quoted above in St. Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians says, God's grace in your life and mine is sufficient.

In his 2013 apostolic exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel" ("Evangelii Gaudium"), Pope Francis sets the tone of our life here in this world. Nothing in this world can diminish the joy of the Gospel. Nothing in this world can compromise our Christian commitment or our fervor to serve Christ. As long as we view things through the eyes of faith we recognize all the more to trust God and to allow the Holy Spirit to radiate from our hearts to the people around us (see, "Evangelii Gaudium," Paragraph 84). The Holy Father poignantly instructs that in the Catholic faith there is no room for "sterile pessimism." Pessimism doesn't simply slow growth, it attempts to destroy growth. It can be poison to our evangelical work.

Instead, you and I are to be zealous in our service to God by being told when others are disillusioned by the limitations of people and this world of ours. God acknowledges our frailty which is quite clearly articulated from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation. However, instead of dismissing the human race as a "project gone terribly wrong," God saw fit to redeem us through the gift of his son, Jesus Christ. By Jesus' life among us, his ministry and ultimately his Passion,

namely, his suffering, death and resurrection, you and I have been returned back into the life of the Most Holy Trinity. Yes, in the name of Jesus there always is hope and the standard before us which indicates this truth is the cross itself.

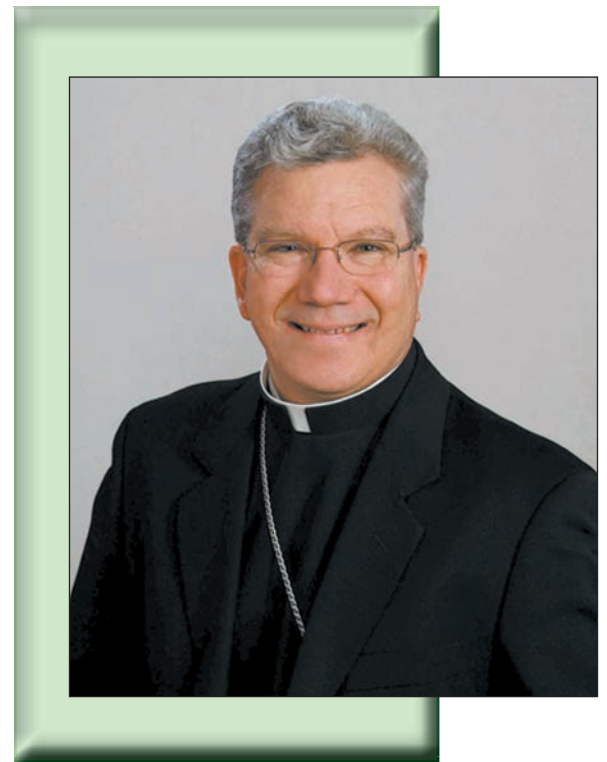
All roads lead to ... Steubenville?

Most of us are familiar with the imperial quote, "All roads lead to Rome." This ancient expression indicated the prominence of the city of Rome in ancient times and whether commerce or the military, all national and international endeavors had to pass through the city of Rome toward which numerous roads traveled.

On the other hand, for those of us who have had the opportunity to visit the Eternal City, namely, Rome, when one gets to the city itself it is difficult to ascertain where the roads go following one's arrival in the city. Directions can be hard to come by in a city full of winding one-way streets not necessarily easy to navigate.

While it is quite a stretch to employ this idiom of, "all roads" when discussing the Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral renovation, it seemed an apt expression at the time. While no three-dimensional work is being done on the outside of our cathedral, the diocese is working with the city manager on the streets of the South End of the city. In order for us to accomplish our restoration initiative, we must realign a couple of streets. For that, we are seeking formal approval. I am grateful to the city planners as we endeavor to literally prepare the foundation for the 3Rs project.

Anyone who has had to build a home or office realizes that it takes more than throwing bricks and sticks together to create a structure. The foundation in the area of said building must be properly prepared. In our case we also must be able to accommodate our neighbors and those who travel through the city so that the cathedral renovation will



Bishop Monforton

not encumber their transit but instead fortify it.

May you and I recognize that the true path is Jesus himself, who is the only Way, the only Truth, and the only Life. Our faith is void of pessimism, only optimism in the Cross of Jesus Christ. As we journey these August days in the year 2015 of Our Lord, may we keep each other in prayer with a spirit of gratitude that God has seen fit to offer you and I as gifts to one another in sharing the Good News.

A Pilgrimage to the Shroud of Turin

By Father James M. Dunfee

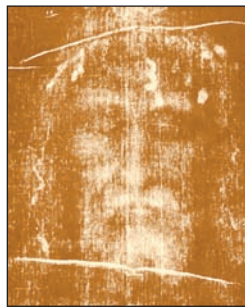
It is not easy to make a pilgrimage, even in today's hypersonic world, but maybe that's the point. Like life, a pilgrimage is not always easy. In early June, I was blessed to be a part of a pilgrimage to visit the Shroud of Turin, and the hardships of going to and coming from Italy, as well as travel within, were perhaps ways to connect with the crucified man of the shroud.

Our small group was ushered before the shroud, which was framed behind glass and gently illuminated. Two guards stood on either side of the shroud. Together we prayed the prayer that every group prayed before this sacred cloth, and then were permitted about five minutes of silence and adoration.

I was struck with how faint and muted the image was on the cloth. One cannot see the image up close. At 20 feet away, it was barely discernable. And yet, this is the cloth mentioned in John, Chapter 20, Verses 6-7. This is a matter of amazement to me: that I am now a witness to the same cloth that Peter and the Beloved Disciple saw that Easter Sunday morning when they entered the empty tomb. It is a connection to 2,000 years of faith and mystery.

John tells us that the Beloved Disciple "saw and believed." Was there already an image on the cloth? (Probably not, according to science!) Was the cloth – the shroud – somehow arranged in such a manner that the Beloved Disciple discerned that the body of our Lord was not stolen but rather raised from the dead? The Scriptures do not leave us many details, but it was enough for this young best friend of Jesus to come to a radical, life-changing belief.

I learned about the Shroud of Turin in my junior year of high school, at a retreat weekend. Two years later when I



was in the seminary, I read the book "A Doctor at Calvary" by Dr. Pierre Barbet. Years later, in my third year of theology, I happened upon an exposition of the shroud, this time, however, based upon the famous 1978 scientific studies of the shroud known as STURP (Shroud of Turin Research Project). News of the exposition once again set aflame my

interest in the shroud, and my interest has not waned in the last 30 plus years. At Easter when I discovered that the shroud was on exposition, I felt rather impelled spiritually to make this pilgrimage. Two things stand out for me from this time of pilgrimage.

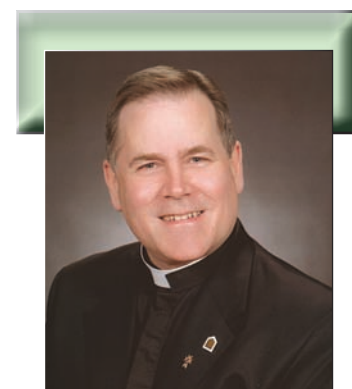
First, the reality of the Crucifixion and Resurrection seem to come to life in a single image. For some inexplicable reason (maybe it was a matter of grace), I received an overwhelming sense of the crucifixion of our Lord upon viewing the shroud. Maybe it was simply from the various studies I've read;

maybe it was the silence and holiness of the space. I don't know. But receiving this sense about the shroud, what also became remarkably real is God's abundant mercy, both as witnessed by the shroud and by so many of his faithful. My faith in the Resurrection does not depend on the shroud; but my faith finds its origins in lived, human witness. And living, faithful witnesses to the resurrection also manifest God's mercy and forgiveness. Think of the present martyrs under Muslim terrorism who immediately forgive their persecutors!

Second, the shroud is first and foremost a religious object of veneration in faith. My temptation, with my scientific leanings, has been to look at the shroud as an object of scientific mystery. Science cannot explain how the image came to be on the shroud. Scientists have discovered that the flaxen fibrils that make up the linen cloth are in an

advanced state of oxidation where the image is in comparison to the rest of the cloth. But they don't know how this occurred. Photographs of the image when subjected to special equipment such as the VP-8 Analyzer produce a 3-D image, unlike any photograph you or I would take. This is unexplainable. Scientists know it is actual blood on the shroud, but they can't figure out how the blood stains seem to be free of any pulling away from the wounds. There is indeed a great deal of scientific mystery about this cloth! But as with all things, including the creation of the universe, I need to remind myself that in this instance science is in the service of the faith. It is my faith that is primary here, and so it is far better to view the shroud not from its "scientific mystery" perspective but from the perspective of faith: as both a sacred relic and a sacred icon, which conveys to the believer the profound sense of God's mercy and love given us in both the crucifixion and the resurrection.

Father Dunfee, a Diocese of Steubenville priest, is pastor of St. Agnes Parish, Mingo Junction.



Father Dunfee

Knights raising money, awareness of plight of Christians in Middle East

By Lou Baldwin

PHILADELPHIA (CNS)—Christianity may be thriving around the world, but it is under severe attack and threatened with extinction in the Middle East, the region of its birth.

This was a major theme at the 133rd Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus in Philadelphia Aug. 4-6.

It was stressed at an Aug. 4 news conference with Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson and two Catholic archbishops of Eastern Catholic Churches with direct experience of the situation. They were Melkite Archbishop Jean-Clement Jeanbart of Aleppo, Syria, and Chaldean Archbishop Bashir Matti Warda of Erbil, Iraq. The two archbishops also spoke at a general meeting of the convention.

Anderson quoted figures that said 80 percent of the religious persecution in the world is directed at Christians and a terrible microcosm of this is the persecutions in Syria and Iraq.

"In Iraq, an estimated 125,000 Christians have been driven from Mosul and its surrounding area," he said. "In Syria, an estimated 700,000 Christians have been

displaced." Because in many cases it is internal displacement within the country the people have not been designated as refugees and little has been done to help them.

Anderson called to mind another Knights of Columbus convention in 1926, also in Philadelphia, when then-Supreme Knight James Flaherty announced that the Knights would take up the cause of Catholics in Mexico who were being persecuted during the presidency of Plutarco Calles.

Of the 25 Mexican martyrs of that era who have since been officially canonized saints for their defense of the faith, six were members of the Knights of Columbus.

"Today we are compelled to speak up for our brothers and sisters in the Middle East," Anderson said. "Pope Francis has called the conditions under which Christian refugees live there intolerable. He has said the situation calls for our prayers and concrete actions to help."

The Middle East situation also was on the mind of Pope Francis as was evident in a message of good wishes and prayer sent to Anderson as the convention opened. It was written on behalf of the pope by the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro

Parolin. "His Holiness is profoundly grateful for the efforts of the Knights to raise public attention to this grave humanitarian tragedy," the message said.

"He is likewise grateful for the practical solidarity shown to suffering individuals and families through the Christian Refugee Relief Fund.

"He appeals once more to your order for constant prayer, in families, parishes and local councils for these, our beleaguered brothers and sisters, who strive only to be faithful to Christ."

To date, Anderson said, the Knights have given \$3 million toward humanitarian assistance for Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East and invites individual Knights and others to support the relief fund the pope cited.

The fraternal organization pledged an initial \$1 million to the fund. All costs for its operation will be covered by the Knights of Columbus with 100 percent of donations applied to relief. To assist those who wish to donate, the website www.christiansatrisk.com has been developed.

In his remarks, Archbishop Jeanbart placed the blame for the current persecution squarely on the wars in the region.

"There was no persecution before the war," he said. He suggested the backing of revolutionary regimes "is giving money and weapons to the people who are slaughtering us and raping our women."

For the Knights, he said, "Your concern has made a big difference for me," and urged them to "do what you can to help us communicate the reality."

Archbishop Warda, speaking of the situation in Iraq, where many Christians have fled, said, "You have given us help to stay there, to help the people living in tents, in schools and hospitals and churches. Today, thank God we are able to help these families."

He thanked Americans for their aid to the persecuted and said, "It is your responsibility to speak for them, not because they are Christians but because they are persecuted. This is part of being American."

The Knights also planned to launch a national TV campaign, with ads airing the weekend in August to raise more awareness of the plight of Christians and other minority religious groups in the Middle East.

• *Baldwin writes for CatholicPhilly.com, the news website of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.*

British composer's music chosen for official Year of Mercy hymn

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Paul Inwood and 89 other composers around the world had two months to submit their compositions of the music for the official hymn of Year of Mercy.

Inwood, a British composer whose work

is a staple of many parish liturgies across North America, said he learned in June that his music was chosen and that the Sistine Chapel Choir was about to record it. The only problem was, they wanted a little extra musical flair.

"I spent the next 24 hours writing a brass prelude and interludes and a choral coda" for the ending, he said Aug. 6 in a telephone interview with Catholic News Service.

The hymn's title and refrain, "Misericordes sicut Pater," is the official Latin theme of the Year of Mercy and translates to "Merciful Like the Father."

The Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, which is charged with coordinating the Year of Mercy events, released the hymn Aug. 6, posting the text and music on its website — www.im.va — and posting the Sistine Chapel Choir's recording of the hymn in Italian on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/-N0Dto5s9fg>.

The text of the hymn in Latin and Italian was written by Jesuit Father Eugenio Costa and was sent to the 90 composers March 31, just over two weeks after Pope Francis announced the Year of Mercy would open Dec. 8.

The verses feature lines from Scripture punctuated by the Latin phrase "in aeternum misericordia eius," which means "his mercy is forever."

The interspersed Latin, Inwood wrote in a press release, makes the verses "a kind of litany."

Like the text, he wrote, "my music is also a mixture, with elements in the style of a Taize response and a Gelineau tone," a modern homage to chant often used today when singing the Psalms at Mass and other liturgies.

Inwood said he wrote the English and French words of the song, and the Gelineau tone, which allows for a wide variety of syllables to be sung in every bar, should

make it easy to translate the song into other languages as well.

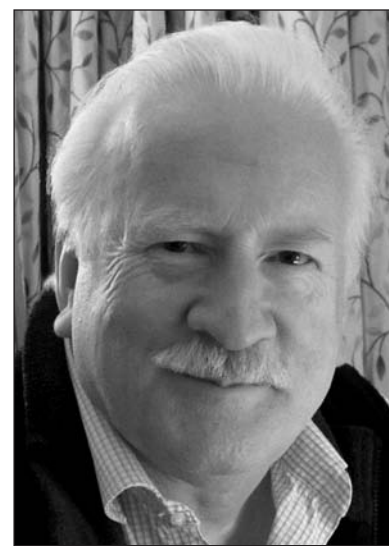
The composer said he will be present in St. Peter's Basilica Dec. 8 for the opening of the Holy Year when the song will make a very public debut under the direction of the Sistine Chapel Choir and accompanied by professional brass players.

"Hopefully it will work in more simple settings, too," he told CNS. "There are even guitar chords, so it should be doable even in the smallest groups."

As someone who has written and composed liturgical music for decades, Inwood said, "You get used to hearing your music slaughtered in parishes around the world. But you realize that if it helps them pray, that is what matters."

Father Costa, who wrote the original text, told Vatican Radio that Inwood "is very talented" and "understands what it means to compose with a precise intention — not 'for angels and archangels,' but for a real assembly, nonprofessionals, people who sing because they are gathered to pray and to sing."

At a small ceremony July 28 in the Vatican Secretariat of State, Inwood said, he and Father Costa formally signed over all rights to royalties from the song to the pontifical council so that it truly can be used around the world.



(CNS photo/courtesy Paul Inwood)

Paul Inwood

We've Been Here Before

From Page 6

Catholics feel beleaguered and more than a little afraid. Their fear comes from the manner in which the decision was framed and justified. Since same-sex marriage is now recognized as a fundamental human right guaranteed by the Constitution, those who oppose it can only be characterized as bigots animated by an irrational prejudice. To be sure, Justice Kennedy and his colleagues assure us that those who have religious objections to same-sex marriage will be respected, but one wonders how such respect is congruent with the logic of the decision. Would one respect the owners of a business who refuse to hire black people as a matter of principle? Would not the government, in point of fact, be compelled to act against those owners? The proponents of gay marriage have rather brilliantly adopted the rhetoric of the civil rights movement, precisely so as to force this conclusion. And this is why my mentor, the late Cardinal Francis George, so often warned against the incursions of an increasingly aggressive secular state, which, he argued, will first force us off the public stage into privacy and then seek to criminalize those practices of ours that it deems unacceptable.

One reason that this has been rather shocking to American Catholics is that we have had, at least for the last century or so, a fairly benign relationship with the enviro-

was, throughout the society and across religious boundaries, a broad moral consensus in our country, especially in regard to sexual and family matters. This is one reason why, in the 1950s, Archbishop Fulton Sheen could find such a wide and appreciative audience among Protestants and Jews, even as he laid out fundamentally Catholic perspectives on morality. But now that consensus has largely been shattered, and the church finds itself opposed, not so much by other religious denominations, as it was in the 19th century, but by the ideology of secularism and the self-defining individual — admirably expressed, by the way, in Justice Kennedy's articulation of the majority position in the case under consideration.

So what do we do? We continue to put forth our point of view winsomely, invitingly and nonviolently, loving our opponents and reaching out to those with whom we disagree. As St. John Paul II said, the church always proposes, never imposes. And we take a deep breath, preparing for what could be some aggression from the secular society, but we take courage from a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us. The church has faced this sort of thing before — and we're still standing.

Father Barron is the rector of Mundelein (Illinois) Seminary, founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and bishop-elect of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Divorced and remarried are not excommunicated, pope says at audience

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Catholics who have divorced and are civilly remarried “are not, in fact, excommunicated — they are not excommunicated — and they absolutely must not be treated as if they were,” Pope Francis said.

Resuming his Wednesday general audiences Aug. 5 after a month’s break, Pope Francis returned to the series of talks he has been giving on the family. It was the 100th general audience of his papacy.

At his last audience, June 24, he talked about the damage caused especially to children when couples fight and hurt each other. “Today,” he said, “I want to draw our attention to another reality: how to care for those who, after the irreversible failure of the matrimonial bond, have undertaken a new union.”

Without an annulment of the sacramental marriage, “such a situation contradicts the Christian sacrament,” which is meant to be an indissoluble bond, the pope said.

According to church teaching, in most cases such couples are not permitted to receive Communion. But bishops at the

extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family last October and preparing for the general synod Oct. 4-25 have been studying and debating possibilities for allowing some couples in some situations to return to the sacraments.

The church, Pope Francis said at the audience, must have “the heart of a mother, a heart that, animated by the Holy Spirit, always seeks the good and the salvation of persons.”

The children of such couples suffer most and deserve particular care, the pope said.

“How can we tell these parents to do everything possible to raise their children in the Christian life, giving them the example of a convinced and lived faith, if we keep them at a distance from the life of the community as if they were excommunicated?” the pope asked.

Particularly over the past few decades, he said, “the church has not been insensitive or lazy” when it comes to providing pastoral care to the divorced and civilly remarried.

In his apostolic exhortation, “Familiaris Consortio,” St. John Paul II saw an “obligation, ‘for love of the truth,’ to exercise a ‘careful discernment of situations,’” noting for

example “the difference between one who has endured a separation and one who provoked it,” Pope Francis said.

Retired Pope Benedict XVI also studied the question, he said, “calling for an attentive discernment and wise pastoral accompaniment, knowing that no ‘simple recipes’ exist.”

As the studies and discernment continue, Pope Francis said, it is essential that Catholic pastors “openly and coherently demonstrate the willingness of the community to welcome and encourage” divorced and remarried couples and their families to participate in church life.

Prayer, listening to the word of God, attending Mass, educating their children in the faith, serving the poor and working for justice and peace should be part of their lives, he said.

Quoting his apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel,” Pope Francis told those gathered for the audience, “The church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. ... Everyone can share in some way in the life of the church; everyone can be part of the community.”

Promoting family means accompanying, not condemning, theologians say

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In being a minister of God’s mercy and a guide on the path to holiness, the Catholic Church must develop better ways to “accompany” people in their family life and not simply condemn those who fail, said a diverse group of theologians, including the former theologian of the papal household.

Cardinal Georges Cottier, who served as the papal theologian from 1989 to 2005, said, “In rigorism, there is an innate brutality that is contrary to the delicacy with which God guides each person.”

La Civiltà Cattolica, a Jesuit journal reviewed at the Vatican prior to publication, published an interview July 30 with Cardinal Cottier about mercy and the upcoming Synod of Bishops on the family.

The cardinal said he was certain that the Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis would influence the synod’s work, which has the task of proclaiming God’s plan for the human family and assisting all Catholics — including those in what the church would define as “irregular” situations — to grow in holiness.

“Some people have been scandalized by the church because of a negative judgment issued in an impersonal and soulless way,” Cardinal Cottier said. “They have felt driven away, rejected in a serious manner.”

While the church’s ministers must uphold church teaching, he said, “this must be presented and explained in a language that clearly transmits the maternal concern of the church.”

“Through the voice of its pastors,” Cardinal Cottier said, “the church always must demonstrate that it is guided by the requirements of divine mercy.”

Also in late July, the German bishops’ conference posted on its website translations of papers from a theological study day May 25, sponsored by the presidents of the

bishops’ conferences of Germany, France and Switzerland. In preparation for the synod Oct. 4-25, the bishops said they wanted to hear the reflections of theologians, biblical scholars and canon lawyers. Some writers, who were not invited to the meeting and were critical of the position of some of the participants, dubbed it a “shadow synod.”

Most of the speakers insisted that while the church’s doctrine and canon law must speak in general terms, the pastoral applications of its teaching on marriage and family life must take into account the history and situation of the individuals involved and offer them guidance and assistance in growing in holiness.

Anne-Marie Pelletier, a theologian from Paris, told the bishops that the Gospel makes clear that Jesus saw the indissolubility of marriage as what God wanted for man and woman; the first account of creation in the Book of Genesis, she said, even implies that the bond is “that which renders humanity in ‘the image of God.’”

However, she said, the church must find a way to offer healing and resurrection to those who, “after a failure or abandonment, make a commitment — for reasons inseparable from their personal stories, which are always unique — to a second union.”

Father Francois-Xavier Amherdt, a theologian in Fribourg, Switzerland, spoke to the bishops about sexuality as an expression of love. He insisted on the importance of “refusing every discrimination against people who recognize themselves as homosexual,” but he also said the church must make “an affirmation of nonequivalence” between heterosexuality and homosexuality.

In Genesis, Adam was able to say of Eve, “This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” because she was “not a copy, but what he was missing,” Father

Amherdt said. The male-female difference is important, he said.

In situations where couples are not living the ideal of Catholic marriage, he said, the church’s pastoral practice must reflect “a theology of grace,” which recognizes what good does exist in their love for another and tries to build on that.

Jesuit Father Alain Thomasset, who teaches in Paris, told the bishops that a church approach focused more on recognizing “intrinsically evil” acts, rather than on promoting spiritual growth, is bound to fail today. It begins by “condemning artificial contraception, the sexual acts of the divorced and (civilly) remarried and of homosexual couples, even those who are stable” in their commitment to one another.

Pastoral accompaniment, he said, is motivated by a belief that “the God of Jesus Christ is a God of love, who does not want death but life and happiness and who calls each person to progress on a journey of growth and holiness.”

Forgiveness and mercy are essential to the progress, he said, and could be extended in certain circumstances to some divorced and civilly remarried Catholics and to some Catholic homosexuals who are in faithful, stable relationships.

A summary of the discussions at the May meeting said reconciliation is “a fundamental dimension of the Christian message. In this context, it was said that a process of reconciliation for all men and women in every situation cannot be renounced.”

“The fact that for the divorced and remarried, who are sexually active in their second relationship, there is no possibility of reconciliation constitutes a dead end,” it said. “In religious practice there is no parallel for this refusal.”

Ambassador expects pope to challenge Americans to live nation’s ideals

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The U.S. ambassador to the Holy See believes Pope Francis is not traveling to the United States in September to scold anyone, but to challenge the country’s people to live up to their ideals.

“I don’t think he’s coming to the United States to antagonize, to criticize, to call out people,” Ken Hackett, the ambassador, told Catholic News Service. “I think he’s coming to shore up. But he won’t hesitate from speaking out about some of the issues he feels passionately about.”

Poverty, immigration, climate change, inclusion and respect for human dignity and human life are regularly on the pope’s agenda, he said, and they could be on the nation’s political agenda as it gears up for the 2016 presidential primaries, which begin five months after Pope Francis visits.

“There are those in the United States who would like our political candidates to address some issues that would be very close to Pope Francis: poverty in the United States,

poverty around the world, migration,” for example, Hackett said. By raising those issues, the pope will “kind of drop them into the political discussion,” the ambassador said. “You can’t ignore them any longer.”

The timing of the pope’s visit to the United States, Sept. 22-27, is “kind of serendipitous, but you use serendipity where you can,” Hackett said. “Pope Francis can raise issues that Americans would like raised with our political candidates.”

Asked what issues he thinks Pope Francis will challenge Americans on, the ambassador replied, “You can hope and you can speculate. I am a person of hope, but I’m paid to speculate. “So I believe that what he has already said in terms of changing our lifestyle so that we can live in different ways, in ways that are more harmonious with our environment, that we can engage in a deeper sense of solidarity and compassion with those who have less — I think he’ll challenge us to step up in that way,” he said.

“We’re a nation of great accomplishments, of people of imagination and compassion. I believe Pope Francis will call Americans to that greatness,” Hackett said. “He will push us to do even more.”

Both St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI spoke strongly against legalized abortion when they visited the United States. It is an issue of grave concern to the Catholic Church and one that became a topic of serious debate in late July and early August after the release of videos showing Planned Parenthood officials discussing the use and sale of fetal tissues from abortions.

While Pope Francis does not shy away from condemning abortion — “he doesn’t muddle over it at all” — the ambassador said he is not certain the pope will address abortion in the same way as his predecessors did while visiting the United States.

“Pope Francis walks the walk and talks the talk,” Hackett said. “He is everything that you would expect a pope to be. ...”

U P and D O W N the D I O C E S E

Adena/Dillonvale — Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults classes, for anyone interested in learning more about the Catholic faith, for St. Casimir Parish, Adena, and St. Adalbert Parish, Dillonvale, will be held at 6:30 p.m., beginning Aug. 27, at St. Mary Church parish offices, St. Clairsville. For additional information, telephone Msgr. John C. Kolesar, pastor of St. Casimir and St. Adalbert at (740) 546-3463.

Athens — The Catholic Ladies of Columbia will sponsor an ice cream social from 4-7 p.m., Aug. 22, at Holy Family Center, which is located at Christ the King University Parish. There will be games for children, a live auction, 50/50 raffle, dinner, dessert and ice cream. For \$5 per person, the dinner menu includes sandwiches, chips, beverage, dessert and ice cream. Ice cream only will cost \$2.50 per bowl.

Buchtel — St. Mary of the Hills CWC will be selling Sloppy Joe's, hot dogs, chips, beverages and baked good beginning at 2 p.m., Aug. 22, at the Nelsonville hall.

Caldwell — Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, for anyone who is interested in learning more about the Catholic faith, will be held at 7 p.m., beginning Aug. 26, in the annex at St. Stephen Church.

Cambridge — Books, which will be listed on the Amazon selling site to benefit St. Benedict School, are being accepted at St. Benedict Church Marian Room. For additional information, call Marigold Marsh at (740) 439-5035.

Celebrate St. Benedict School by "Rolling into the New Year" from 11 a.m.-1 p.m., Aug. 15, at Lind Arena Skate Center, 900 Linden Ave., Zanesville, Ohio. Cost is \$3 per person; a maximum charge of \$15 per family. Skate rentals are \$1, regular skates; \$2, speed skates; \$3, in-line skates. Concessions will be available. Anyone can attend.

The 12th annual St. Benedict School golf classic will be held Sept. 18, at Cambridge Country Club, 60755 Southgate Road, Byesville. Cost is \$80 per person and includes a round of golf, three-person best ball scramble, lunch, appetizers and a gift package. Early registration, prior to Aug. 21, costs \$75 per person. On the day of the event, registration will be held from 10:30 a.m.-noon; lunch, 11 a.m.-noon; putting contest and shotgun start, noon; and appetizers and awards, 5:30-6:30 p.m. For additional information, contact Melissa Wilson at melissa@fmclurelaw.com or telephone (740) 260-2519. Proceeds will benefit St. Benedict School.

Gallipolis — St. Louis Parish will begin a series of instructions titled "The Prophets: Messengers of God's Mercy" following the celebration of the 5:30 p.m. Mass, Sept. 23, in the C-J conference room. For additional information or to register, call the parish office (740) 446-0669.

Ironton/Pine Grove — Beginning Sept. 5, Saturday evening Mass will be celebrated at 5:15 p.m. during the months of January, March, May, July, September and November at St. Lawrence O'Toole Church, Ironton, and at 5:15 p.m. during the months of February, April, June, August, October and December at St. Joseph Church, Ironton. Sunday Masses will be celebrated at 9 a.m. at St. Joseph; noon, St. Lawrence; 7 p.m. St. Mary, Pine Grove.

Malvern — St. Francis Xavier parishioners will assist the Malvern Ministerial Association in helping provide back-to-school items to the less fortunate in the Malvern area. Items can be taken to the church by Aug. 18; cash donations will also be accepted.

Malvern/Minerva — To learn more about the Catholic faith and upcoming Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults classes, call Father Victor P. Cinson, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Malvern, and St. Gabriel Parish, Minerva, at (330) 868-4498.

Marietta — St. Mary School is participating in the annual "Earning for Learning" program, which is being held at the Grand Central Mall, Vienna, West Virginia. Shopping or dining receipts can be submitted to the guest services desk at the mall by Sept. 12. Each receipt gives St. Mary School a chance to win one of two \$5,000 grand prizes.



John Sowko, general program director, Knights of Columbus Our Lady of Carroll County Council 15401, presents a check to Susan DeChiara, director of development and communication, St. John's Villa, Carrollton. Daniel A. Hitchcock, grand Knight, Our Lady of Carroll County K of C Council 15401, explained that the \$1,922.81 check represented St. John's Villa portion of the proceeds from charity tickets sold by the Villa when it joined with the local Knights in the K of C's 2015 Super Cash Bonanza Charity Raffle. The annual campaign is operated statewide by the Ohio State Council of the Knights of Columbus. In 2014, Ohio Knights donated \$3.63 million to charity, including \$42,000 for scholarships, \$10,000 for electronic equipment for autistic youth and \$11,000 for the Ohio Special Olympics, Hitchcock said. With more than 1.8 million members, the K of C is the world's largest Catholic lay organization, he said. It provides members and families with volunteer opportunities in service to the Catholic Church, the community, families and young people. Last year, the organization, at all levels, raised and distributed \$174 million to charitable and benevolent causes and rendered 71.5 million hours of volunteer service, Hitchcock said. The Our Lady of Carroll County Knights has worked with St. John's Villa annually on benefits and will partner with it and other organizations in 2016, said Sowko. A representative of any organization that wants to partner with the local Knights in 2016 should telephone (330) 324-7635 or email charity@carrollknights.org. Council 15401 has 47 members and most recently raised and distributed \$3,758 to charitable causes and performed 2,687 hours of volunteer service, Hitchcock said. Bob White is the local council's charity campaign chairman. (Photo provided)

Martins Ferry — The Ladies of St. Mary's will hold a quarter auction Sept. 13, at St. Mary Central School auditorium, 24 N. Fourth St.; no one under the age of 18 can attend. Doors will open at 11 a.m.; the auction will begin at 1 p.m. Cost for one auction paddle is \$5; additional paddles cost \$1 each. There will be vendors, a Chinese auction and a 50/50 raffle at the event; refreshments will be sold. Proceeds will benefit St. Mary Parish.

New officers for the Ladies of St. Mary's have been named. They include Barbara Ann Edge and Kathy Kimble, co-presidents; Shirley Borkoski, treasurer; and Connie Crecion, secretary.

Steubenville — "Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Guadalupe" will be the topic of discussion at the Aug. 18 "Be Not Afraid Family Hour," which

will be held from 7-8 p.m., at Holy Rosary Church. The family hour is combined with devotion and catechism. For additional information, telephone (740) 266-7255, (740) 284-1539 or (502) 599-4482.

Wintersville — Blessed Sacrament Parish will be selling pierogi's, frozen only, for \$7 per dozen on Sept. 15. The supply is limited and will be sold from 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. in upper Sargus Hall. Advanced orders can be placed by calling Barbara Gegick at (740) 264-4207. Orders can also be placed the day of the sale by calling the church hall, (740) 264-0311.

The Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes Men's Club will sponsor a bus trip to Westerville, Ohio, Dec. 5, to see "The Living Christmas Tree." Cost is \$66. A \$33 deposit is due by Aug. 15, with the balance due Sept. 1; call (740) 264-0868.

Around and About

Athens — Pregnancy Resource Center will hold an annual fundraising banquet at Ohio University's Nelson Commons, 72 S. Green Drive, Sept. 24. For more information on the banquet, to learn more about event times, or to inquire about services offered at the center, call (740) 592-4700; email, athensprc@yahoo.com; or visit prefriendedonline.com.

Cadiz — St. James A.M.E. (African, Methodist, Episcopal) Church will present an afternoon gospel concert at 3 p.m., Aug. 16, at 300 E. Market St. Refreshments will be served following the concert.

Cambridge — Knights of Columbus Council 1641 is participating in the Ohio Knights of Columbus football sweepstakes fundraiser. Tickets cost \$10 each, with a chance to win 10 weekly \$1,000 prizes. To purchase a ticket, contact Ron Engott at engott@frontier.com or telephone (740) 685-5759.

Carrollton — The annual St. John's Villa golf outing will be held Sept. 18, at Edgewater Golf Course, 2401 Fox Ave., Minerva. The day will begin at 8 a.m. with registration, coffee and donuts; the



Vacation Bible school – titled “The Cool Kingdom of God” – at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, included 127 participants, 43 teen assistants and more than 35 adult volunteers. During the four-day school, a “Food Castle” was constructed with donations for the local food pantry. Msgr. John Michael Campbell, in back, at right, rector of the basilica; Father Thomas A. Nelson, in back, at left, parochial vicar to Msgr. Campbell; Transitional Deacon Ryan Gray, in back, at right; and Joseph A. Schmidt, standing, at right, director of religious education for St. Mary Parish, join the vacation Bible schoolers for a picture. (Photo provided)



“Playing for God’s Team” was the theme of the vacation Bible school for St. Joseph Parish, Tiltonsville, and St. Lucy Parish, Yorkville, where Father William D. Cross, standing center, is pastor. The one-day vacation Bible school accommodated 32 youth and was staffed by 20 adult volunteers. There was prayer, play, singing and refreshments. (Photo provided)



When vacation Bible schoolers from St. Francis Xavier Parish, Malvern, and St. Gabriel Parish, Minerva, gathered, the youth heard Bible stories, played games, learned songs and snacked. Theme for the four days was “Everest,” which focused on the power of God over the sun, moon and stars. Denise Laubacher coordinated the vacation Bible school. Father Victor P. Cinson is pastor of St. Francis Xavier and St. Gabriel parishes. (Photo provided)

Around and About

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shotgun scramble at 8:30 a.m. The event will conclude with a steak dinner and awarding of trophies. Call Susan DeChiara or Michelle Simpson at (330) 627-9789, to register for the event.

Massillon, Ohio — Right to Life of Stark County will hold a “Celebrate Life Dinner” Sept. 19, at St. Barbara Parish Life Center, 2813 Lincoln Way. Doors open at 5 p.m.; dinner will be served at 6 p.m. To order tickets online, visit www.starkrtl.com or phone (330) 837-4227.

Steubenville — Knights of Columbus St. John Neumann Council 11828 will sponsor a pancake breakfast buffet from 9 a.m.-2 p.m., Aug. 30, in St. Peter Church lower hall, 425 N. Fourth St. Cost for the buffet is \$7 for adults; \$4 for children under the age of 12; \$35 family maximum charge. Proceeds will benefit St. Peter Parish.

Steubenville — “Girl’s Night Out” will be held at 5:30 p.m., Aug. 21, at EM Media’s Bella Hall, 2728 Sunset Blvd. The \$35 ticket includes appetizers, desserts, wine, manicures, massages and make-up demonstrations. There will also be a purse auction and giveaways throughout the evening. All proceeds will benefit Alive Inc., a nonprofit that provides domestic

violence services. For reservations, call (740) 283-3444. Tickets will also be sold at the door the evening of the event.

Steubenville — A natural family planning class will be offered by Natural Family Planning International Aug. 29, at St. Peter Church, 425 N. Fourth St. For additional information or to register, telephone Steve or Ann Craig at (740) 457-9663.

Steubenville — The Knights of Columbus will hold a rosary vigil Mass for the feast of the Assumption of Mary Aug. 14, at 36 Villa Drive. The vigil will begin at dusk, approximately 8:20 p.m.

Waynesburg, Ohio — St. James School, 400 W. Lisbon St., will hold a 18th annual ribs cookout and casino night Aug. 22, at St. James Pavilion. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Tickets for dinner cost \$15. A reverse raffle drawing ticket costs \$150 and includes six dinners and a chance in the raffle. For additional information or to purchase a ticket, call Natalie Woodin, (330) 224-0888 or St. James Parish, (330) 866-9449.

Woodsfield — One pair of jeans per person, available in men’s, women’s and children’s sizes, will be given away on a first-come, first-serve basis from 9 a.m.-noon, Aug. 22, at the First Baptist Church, 114 N. Paul St.

St. Sylvester Central doors open to students Aug. 31

WOODSFIELD — St. Sylvester Central School will open its doors to students for the 2015-16 school year Aug. 31.

Principal Robyn C. Guiler announced the start date for the kindergarten through eighth grade.

Preschool will start Sept. 8.

New parent orientation and an open house for all kindergartners through eighth-graders will be held Aug. 21. The new parent orientation begins at 6 p.m. It

will be followed by an open house, which continues until 7:30 p.m. Students and parents can meet teachers and drop off their school supplies, Guiler said. All teaching positions have been filled at St. Sylvester Central for the new school year, she added.

An open house for preschool will be held Aug. 31. It will begin at 5 p.m. and continue until 7 p.m. that day.

Father David L. Gaydosik is pastoral administrator of St. Sylvester Central.

Obituaries

Phyllis Alessi, 102, St. Lucy, Yorkville, June 20.

Jack Blizzard, 86, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, July 29.

Virginia Cosentino, 82, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, May 28.

Patricia J. Egan, 73, Wintersville, St. Peter, Steubenville, July 30.

Dorothy Ellis, 73, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, March 28.

Betty Fleahman, 95, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, July 28.

Robert Gloeckner, 58, Christ the King University Parish, Athens, July 28.

Hilda Gularek, 92, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, July 28.

Dr. Felipe V. Lavapies, 87, 1220

Hughes Ave., Martins Ferry, St. Mary, July 23.

Richard F. Malisher, 89, McConnelsville, St. James, Aug. 3.

Helen Morelli, 86, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Aug. 3.

Salvatore Signorini, 99, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, July 22.

Stella N. Spiewak, 87, Steubenville, Holy Family, Aug. 4.

Marian Szeliga, 95, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, May 5.

James A. “Jack” Timko, 86, 52104 Church St., Barton, St. Frances Cabrini, Colerain, July 28.

Beverly Zeidrich, 65, St. Gabriel, Minerva, July 26.

Pieces of the whole: One thick volume recounts life inside Vatican walls

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In one thick volume, Vatican offices and departments tell their own stories.

The 2014 edition of the “Activity of the Holy See,” released in July, runs more than 1,600 pages. Some offices submitted exhaustive reports, including every guest they hosted and every meeting their staff attended. Others provided more of a generic overview of their main tasks.

Some indications of life inside the minstate, which is also the headquarters of the worldwide Catholic Church, include facts such as:

- The Vatican pharmacy employed seven religious and 53 laypeople in 2014.

- During the year, one or more steps were completed in studying possible miracles for 58 separate sainthood causes. The steps are: validation by the local diocese; study by a board of Vatican physicians; study by a board of theologians; and a vote by cardinals and bishops who are members of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes. The last step is a decree signed by the pope – that happened only in 17 cases.

- During the 2013-14 academic year, 1,086 scholars from 54 countries received permission to do research in the Vatican Secret Archives. An average of 76.2 scholars a day accessed the Vatican Library.

- The Vatican gendarmes and other employees of the Vatican Security and Civil Protection Services numbered 194 – all laypeople.

- 611 people had Vatican citizenship, of whom 78 were “most eminent cardinals” and 108 were members of the Pontifical Swiss Guard.

- The Philatelic and Numismatic Office issued 20

series of stamps, focusing on everything from the canonizations of St. John XXIII and St. John Paul II to musical instruments (two stamps featuring organs). The office also published a special commemorative stamp celebrating the 125th anniversary of Charlie Chaplin’s birth.

- Close to 500 journalists were permanently accredited at the Vatican and another 4,126 temporary passes were issued by the Vatican press office to other media people – particularly for the canonizations of the two popes.

- For approximately 3,000 church workers assigned new positions around the world, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2013-14 was asked to issue a “nulla osta,” signifying there is no obstacle based on their positions on matters of church doctrine. “In 40 cases, the ‘nulla osta’ was denied, offering ample motivations. In 19 cases, there was a dialogue that resolved the existing problems.”

- The doctrinal congregation also dismissed 38 priests and bishops from the clerical state in 2014, most in relations to the sexual abuse of minors.

- Each day personnel are assigned to ensure all the roads, paths, gardens and woods within the Vatican walls are clean, “paying particular attention to the path used for the Holy Father’s afternoon walk.”

- Vatican gendarmes wrote 93 tickets for parking or moving violations.

- Through the Pontifical Council “Cor Unum,” the Vatican’s charity promotion and coordination office, Pope Francis gave more than \$612,000 to emergency disaster relief efforts around the world and more than \$1.6 million

to human promotion and development projects.

- For the church’s missionary territories, Pope Francis created two new dioceses and 48 new bishops. Elsewhere in the world, the pope established two new Latin-rite dioceses and created 116 new Latin-rite bishops. He transferred more than 140 Latin-rite bishops to new dioceses and accepted the resignations of 124 other Latin-rite bishops, the vast majority of whom reached or surpassed the retirement age of 75.

- The number of Catholic schools in the world increased, as did the number of students. From primary school to university, the Catholic Church and its organizations run more than 210,000 educational institutions with a total of close to 58 million students.

- For the 2014-15 academic year, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity gave 45 Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox students full scholarships and another 20 students partial scholarships to finish their studies. In addition, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue provided scholarships to a Muslim student from Nigeria, a Muslim student from Kazakhstan and a Buddhist student from Myanmar.

- In July 2014, each of Pope Francis’ daily tweets in Spanish were retweeted an average of 11,000 times; in the same month, the minimessages sent out on his English Twitter account were retweeted an average of 8,200 times. A study called “Twiplomacy” has defined Pope Francis as the most influential world leader on the social network based on how many of his “followers” retweet his messages.

- The Vatican fire department responded to 466 emergency calls: Five were for small fires, 96 were in response to alarms going off and 82 were for stuck elevators.

- The Vatican Mosaic Studio, which creates mosaic reproductions of famous paintings or classical mosaics – mostly with religious themes – added to its repertoire Mary Cassatt’s “Children Playing on the Beach.”

- In St. Peter’s Basilica 282 babies were baptized during the year; 183 others were baptized in the smaller St. Anne’s Church.

- The worker’s health office of Vatican City State reported Vatican employees suffered 162 injuries on the job.



The Vatican’s Philatelic and Numismatic Office celebrated the 125th anniversary of Charlie Chaplin’s birth in 2014 with the release of special stamps. (CNS photo/courtesy Vatican Philatelic and Numismatic Office)

Pope designates Sept. 1 as World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Like their Orthodox brothers and sisters, Catholics formally will mark Sept. 1 as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Pope Francis has decided.

The day of prayer, the pope said, will give individuals and communities an opportunity to implore God’s help in protecting creation and an opportunity to ask God’s forgiveness “for sins committed against the world in which we live.”

Pope Francis announced his decision to add the annual prayer day to the Catholic calendar in a letter to Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and to Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

The text of the letter, dated Aug. 6, was released by the Vatican Aug. 10.

Pope Francis said he was instituting the prayer day for Catholics because he shares the concern of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who initiated a similar prayer day for the Orthodox Church in 1989.

Metropolitan John of Pergamon, who represented the patriarch at the public presentation June 18 of Pope Francis’ encyclical, “Laudato Si’,” had suggested there that all Christians join in prayer Sept. 1.

“This would mark a step toward further closeness among them,” he had said.

Pope Francis said Christians want to make their special contribution to safeguarding creation, but to do that they must rediscover the spiritual foundations of their approach to earthly realities, beginning with an acknowledgment that “the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature,” but lived in communion with all worldly realities.

The ecological crisis, he said, is a summons “to a profound spiritual conversion” and to a way of life that clearly shows they are believers.

Quoting his encyclical, he said, “living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience.”

The annual World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Pope Francis said, will be a time for individuals and communities to “reaffirm their personal vocation to be stewards of creation, to thank God for the wonderful handiwork which he has entrusted to our care, and to implore his help for the protection of creation as well as his pardon for the sins committed against the world in which we live.”

The pope asked Cardinal Koch to consult with and work with the Catholic Church’s ecumenical partners and the World Council of Churches to make sure the prayer day becomes a sign of Christians’ commitment to work together to safeguard creation “in order to be more credible and effective.”

He entrusted to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace the task of working with Catholic bishops’ conferences and environmental organizations to publicize and coordinate the specifics of the celebration.

“I invoke upon this initiative the intercession of Mary, mother of God, and of St. Francis of Assisi, whose Canticle of the Creatures inspires so many men and women of goodwill to live in praise of the Creator and with respect for creation,” he said.

And, at almost the same time, a statement was released from the Vatican’s justice and peace office that said, selfishness and fear keep too many people ignorant of the suffering of others and prevent them from finding creative

ways to express solidarity and to promote peace.

To promote a reflection on the need for a “conversion of mind and heart” open to the needs of others, Pope Francis has chosen “Overcome indifference and win peace” as the theme for the church’s celebration of the World Day of Peace 2016.

Announcing the theme for the Jan. 1 celebration, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace said that peace is difficult to achieve when people are indifferent “to the scourges of our time.”

The problems everyone must be aware of, the council said in an Aug. 11 statement, include “fundamentalism, intolerance and massacres, persecutions on account of faith and ethnicity,” disregard for human rights, human trafficking and forced labor, corruption, organized crime and forced migration.

Simply increasing the amount of information about the problems is not enough, the council said: People must open their hearts and minds to the suffering of others.

“Today, indifference is often linked to various forms of individualism which cause isolation, ignorance, selfishness and, therefore, lack of interest and commitment,” the statement said.

World Peace Day 2016 will be celebrated within the Year of Mercy, which Pope Francis will open formally Dec. 8.

The peace day theme and a papal message about it – expected to be released in mid-December – aim to help people reflect on how they can “build together a more conscious and merciful and, therefore, more free and fair world,” the council said.

“The creation of a culture of law, education in dialogue and cooperation are, in this context, the fundamental forms of a constructive response,” the statement said.