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STEUBENVILLE — A survey, which will enable parishioners to weigh in on their parish and the Catholic Church, as part of “With Immense Hope” – a renewal of the Diocese of Steubenville, is **inserted** in this edition of **The Steubenville Register**.

Parishioners are asked to **complete** the anonymous survey and **mail** it to:

**Diocese of Steubenville, MAP Office,
PO Box 969, Steubenville, OH 43952.**

The brief survey is part of Mission Advancement Planning, as proposed by Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton. The four questions on the survey ask parishioners to rank their parish’s greatest strengths and greatest concerns, as well as determine the mission for the future church and their willingness to learn more about their faith.

In September, Bishop Monforton introduced “With Immense Hope,” through the assistance of Sister Mary Brigid Callan, a Family of Jacopa Association, Steubenville, novice and stewardship and development director for the Steubenville Diocese, and Thomas J. Sonni, president of Greater Mission Development Services, Elkridge, Maryland.

The four main components of the mission advancement planning are to create a mission advancement planning task force, which has been meeting; develop a mission advancement process to focus on the most important pastoral and financial needs throughout the diocese; establish a Catholic Community Foundation of Southeastern Ohio to serve as the development engine for the Diocese of Steubenville; and build a comprehensive development plan that creates funding needed for pastoral and financial challenges throughout the diocese.

Copies of the survey may be available from parish pastors, also.

In addition, the survey can be taken electronically at www.diosteub.org/MAP.



The Immaculate Heart of Mary statue in parishes in the Diocese of Steubenville during the Year of Reconsecration of the diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary at the initiation of diocesan Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton will stand in St. Anthony of Padua Church, Bridgeport, until Dec. 9. Then, the statue will be relocated to St. Agnes Church, Mingo Junction, where it will remain until Dec. 16. (Photo by DeFrancis)



Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton closes the Holy Door at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, Nov. 20, to conclude, officially, the Year of Mercy, declared by Pope Francis. Bishop Monforton opened the door Dec. 12, as he said, “This is the Lord’s gate: let us enter through it and obtain mercy and forgiveness.”

Bishop closes Holy Doors in diocese; Pope Francis extends Year of Mercy provisions on confession

STEUBENVILLE (the Register) and VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Acknowledging and sharing God’s mercy is a permanent part of the Christian life, so initiatives undertaken during the special Year of Mercy must continue, Pope Francis said.

As he closed Holy Doors in the Diocese of Steubenville, diocesan Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton challenged Catholics to “... be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful, because the name of God is mercy.”

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Educators singled out for years of service at parochial schools in diocese

MARIETTA — Every other year, Catholic educators in parochial schools in the Diocese of Steubenville gather for an in-service and to honor their own.

At the Oct. 28 biennial educator in-service at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, employees with 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years of service were singled out.

As well, Msgr. John Michael Campbell, rector of the basilica, challenged the teachers to cultivate a love for the Catholic faith in their students, as they provide examples by how they live their lives.

In addition, teachers traveled to nearby St. Mary School, to study curriculum mapping under the direction of Heidi Hayes Jacobs, an author and educator who is said to be known for developing 21st-century approaches to teaching and learning.

Paul D. Ward, director, Diocese of Steubenville Office of Christian Formation and Schools, honored the educators for their years of service. As he opened what he termed a day for prayer, renewal and recognition, he pointed to the lives that have been touched throughout the years by the teachers and principals.

Those acknowledged for their service were: for 35 years – teachers Barbara Denniston, St. Benedict School, Cambridge; Mariann McFarland, St. Mary School, Marietta; Kathleen Lally, Catholic Central High School, Steubenville, and Mary Ann Wilson, St. Benedict School; 30 years – teachers Kelley Arnold, St. John Central School, Churchtown, and Angelica Glitch, St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville; 25 years – teachers Jody Campbell, St. John Central Grade School, Bellaire; Ladonna Nese, Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School, Steubenville, and Christine DiMichele, Bishop John King Mussio Central Junior High School, Steubenville; 20 years – teachers Sandy Morelli, Bishop John King Mussio Central Junior High School; Karen Pottmeyer, St. John Central School, Churchtown;



During a biennial in-service, teachers with 35 years of service at parochial schools in the Diocese of Steubenville were honored by Paul D. Ward, director, Steubenville Diocese Office of Christian Formation and Schools, Msgr. John Michael Campbell, rector of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, and their peers. Receiving the certificates for their more than three decades of teaching are, from the left, Barbara Denniston, Mariann McFarland, Mary Ann Wilson and Kathleen Lally. (Photo by DeFrancis)

Anne Popp, St. Benedict School; Melissa Katsaris-Smith, Catholic Central High School, and Suzanne Weber, St. Mary School, Marietta; 15 years – teachers Lynda Chek, St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville; Stephen Daley, Catholic Central High School; Stephanie Duck, Catholic Central High School; Jennifer Filby, Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School; Victoria Hull, St. Lawrence Central School, Ironton; Kimberly Johnson, St. Joseph Central High School, Ironton; Pamela Kralovic, St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville; Cynthia Neal, St. Lawrence Central School; Paulette Tome, St. John Central School, Churchtown; Tonya Waller, St. Lawrence Central School, and Maria Whaley, St. Joseph Central High School; and principals Mary Carolyn Nichelson, St. Mary

Central School, Martins Ferry, and Rich Wilinski, Catholic Central High School; and 10 years – teachers Linda Bloomfield, St. Lawrence Central School; Ashley Chlon, St. Mary Central School, Martins Ferry; Billie Cogan, St. Joseph Central High School; Megan Gesualdo, St. Mary Central School, Martins Ferry; Kristen

Honecker, St. Mary Central School, Martins Ferry; Rena Koontz, St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville; Julie Tomlin, St. Mary Central School, Martins Ferry, and Michelle VanDorn, St. John Central Grade School, Bellaire; and vice principal Chris Monte, St. Lawrence Central School and St. Joseph Central High School.

At the Mass, which opened the in-service, Msgr. Campbell said to the educators: “Today we celebrate the feast of two of Our Lord’s apostles – Simon and Jude. They traveled together, preaching and spreading the faith in Judea, Syria, and to Egypt and Libya, where they preached the Gospel and planted the seed of the faith.

“Both of them went through many trials and difficulties, yet, they persevered and never gave up in the face of difficulties. These two, among the other 10 apostles, were the crucial and important pillars of the faith and salvation.

“These apostles are our models in life. They were not perfect, and they were sinners, and, yet, they were willing to allow the Lord to come into their lives and transform themselves that they would become the tools of the Lord in bringing the Gospel into the world.

“Along with them, we have been called by the Lord to emulate the examples of Simon and Jude. We are being called to become faithful disciples of Our Lord, building ever-stronger support and foundation for the salvific mission of our church.

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Thousands serve parishes as permanent deacons

STEUBENVILLE — It is estimated that there are as many as 18,558 permanent deacons in the United States and Dec. 3, five men will be added to the ranks when Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton ordains Scott Carson, Thomas E. Graham, Edward G. Kovach, Charles J. “Chuck” Schneider and Paul D. Ward.

The ordination will be celebrated during a 10 a.m. Mass at St. Mary Church, St. Clairsville.

Statistics prepared for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops during recent years show that in the U.S. the Archdiocese of Chicago has the largest number of permanent deacons — 773. In the state of Ohio, the Diocese of Cleveland has the most permanent deacons — 213; followed by the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 205.

The permanent diaconate was re-established in 1967 by Pope Paul VI. The following year, U.S. bishops petitioned the Holy See for permission to restore the diaconate in the United States. That request was accepted in August 1968.

In the Steubenville Diocese, former diocesan Bishop R. Daniel Conlon initiated the diaconate program in March 2009. Three years later, six men were ordained to the diaconate

for the Diocese of Steubenville. Those men — Permanent Deacons Richard G. Adams, Mark A. Erste, Thomas F. Maedke, Stephen F. Miletic, Daniel P. Murray and Lee V. Weisend — serve in diocesan parishes. As well, Permanent Deacons Adams and Erste will aid Father Thomas A. Chillo, diocesan episcopal vicar for pastoral planning and personnel, in the formation of deacons.

Beginning next year, the entire diocesan diaconate program will be held in the Steubenville Diocese, centered at Sts. Peter and Paul Oratory, Lore City.

Ward and his classmates have studied for the diaconate at the Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus, Ohio. They, too, have spent time in retreats and parishes, under the direction of Father Wayne E. Morris, pastor of Corpus Christi Parish, Belle Valley; St. Stephen, Caldwell; St. Michael, Carlisle; and St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Fulda.

St. Mary School, Marietta, prize winner

MARIETTA — For the second year in a row, St. Mary School students will receive \$5,000 worth of technology updates, because of shoppers at the Grand Central Mall, Parkersburg, West Virginia.

Back-to-school shoppers at the mall, near Marietta, turned in their receipts for tabulation, said Tammi Bradley, St. Mary marketer. When the total from Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, parishioners and parents and friends of St. Mary School were tallied, Susan T. Rauch, St. Mary principal, was informed the school was top “Earnings for Learning” school in the private school category.

A Steubenville resident and member of Triumph of the Cross Parish in the city, Ward said as he discerned the diaconate, though he heard deacons talk about the demands of formation, he never “fully appreciated how much of a demand formation would be, on me personally and on my family.” He has a wife Mary and six children — Andrew, Nicholas, Katherine, Hannah, Margaret and Emily — and a grandson, Peter Ward.

Nonetheless, Ward said, that what helped him “is seeing my diaconal formation as God’s way of helping me to be his Son’s disciple, a way of ‘denying myself, taking up my cross and following him.’”

And, his family has been very supportive, he said. “My family has indeed made great sacrifices, this is especially so in regards to the weekends, when I have been away so much.”

As well, fellow parishioners offer words and prayers of encouragement.

The director of the Diocese of Steubenville Office of Christian Formation and Schools since 2009, Ward attended Elim Bible Institute, Lima, New York; Roberts Wesleyan College, Rochester,

New York, where he received a bachelor’s in religion and philosophy; Franciscan University of Steubenville, where he was awarded a master’s in theology and Christian ministry; and the University of Scranton (Pennsylvania), where he obtained a master’s in education administration in a Catholic school setting.

While still a teenager, Ward said he became “aware of God’s call on my life. ... Of course, my understanding of what that would actually look like changed with my conversion to Catholicism in 1992.”

While in formation to the diaconate, he said he has been able to “grow, not just in my knowledge and understanding of the faith,” but also spiritually. “The liturgical formation was for me, especially helpful, and I think fruitful ... spiritually speaking, not just academically.”

Throughout the formation, Ward said he has developed a habit of praying the Liturgy of the Hours. That, he added, has had a strong impact on his faith. He has been able to see “how the content of the faith is interwoven in the liturgy.”

Further, “seeing and understanding the deacon as a man ordained to serve, to become by the grace of the sacrament a ‘living icon of Christ the servant’ has had a very deep impact on me personally,” Ward said.



Paul D. Ward (Photo by George)

Bishop Monforton’s Schedule

December

- 3 Permanent diaconate ordinations, St. Mary Church, St. Clairsville, 10 a.m.
Founders’ Association Dinner, Franciscan University of Steubenville, 6 p.m.
- 4 Christmas party, Marietta fourth-degree assembly 840 Knights of Columbus, K of C hall, Churchtown, 2 p.m.
Mass, St. Mary Mission, Pine Grove, 7 p.m.
- 5 Confessions, St. Lawrence Central School, Ironton, 8:30 a.m.
School visit and St. Nicholas Day gift distribution, St. Lawrence Central School, Ironton, 10 a.m.
School Mass, St. Joseph Church, Ironton, 11 a.m.
School visit, St. Joseph Central High School, Ironton, 12:30 p.m.
- 6 Mass, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, 7:45 a.m.
Franciscan University of Steubenville, 6 p.m.
- 7 “Misa con Hermanas,” Mass with Spanish sisters, Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus, Steubenville, 9 a.m.
- 8 WAOB radio segment, 7:40 a.m., 8:40 a.m. and 6:40 p.m.
Mass, feast of the Immaculate Conception, Berkman Theater, Lanman Hall, Catholic Central High School, Steubenville, 9:30 a.m.
School visit, Catholic Central High School and Bishop John King Mussio Central Junior High School, Steubenville, 10:30 a.m.
Mass, evening prayer and dinner, Franciscan Sisters Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother, Toronto, 4 p.m.
Visit Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults class, Blessed Sacrament Church, Wintersville, 7 p.m.
- 10 Mass, St. Mary of the Hills Church, Buchtel, 4:30 p.m.
- 11 Mass, Holy Cross Church, Glouster, 9 a.m.
- 12 Mass, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, 11 a.m.
- 13 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 7 a.m.
Diocese of Steubenville Finance Council meeting, chancery, Steubenville, 9:30 a.m.
Franciscan University of Steubenville, 6 p.m.

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Cited for 20, 25 or 30 years of teaching are, in front, from left, Jody Campbell and Ladonna Nese, 25 years; Kelley Arnold and Angelica Glitch, 30 years; and, in back, from left, Anne Popp, Melissa Katsaris-Smith, Sandy Morelli, Suzanne Weber and Karen Pottmeyer, 20 years.



Receiving citations for 15 years of being an educator are, in front, from left, Paulette Tome, Kimberly Johnson, Maria Whaley, Cynthia Neal, Mary Carolyn Nichelson, Pamela Kralovic and Lynda Chek; and, in back, from left, Victoria Hull, Tonya Waller, Rich Wilinski, Stephen Daley, Jennifer Filby and Stephanie Duck.

Educators

From Page 2

“We, as Catholic school administrators and teachers, need to reaffirm our Catholic identity. In an address to participants in the Diocese of Rome’s annual pastoral convention, Pope Emeritus Benedict said: ‘All adults have a role to play in addressing the educational emergency in our world.’ He went on to say: ‘A growing difficulty is encountered in transmitting to new generations the basic values of existence and of correct behavior.’

“There is a moral revolution going on in America, and if we are not careful, we are going to lose the battle. We are being led more and more to think like everybody else – we can live as we please – with no moral standards or laws to abide by – just don’t get caught. We are being assimilated into the mainstream of immoral and amoral thinking. More and more of our children are losing their faith because it is not strong; nor is it lived by their parents.

“We cannot be like Nero who sat with his fiddle as Rome burned to the ground. Many so-called Catholics today have ‘hearing problems.’ They claim to hear the teachings of Jesus Christ and his church, but they ignore and abandon those teachings. Many so-called Catholics have ‘authority problems’: ‘No pope, no bishop, no priest will dictate to me what I will believe or reject! I will decide for myself what I will accept or reject.’

“The authentic teaching of Christ is turned on or off like a faucet in the kitchen or flushed away like garbage in the sewer.

“Our young people are permitted to go to this church or that one; to attend religious education classes or to abandon them. Once the requirements are fulfilled for the reception of a sacrament – why bother to do anything else until it’s time to get another one – so the sacraments of the church become like the earned merit badges of the Boy or Girl Scouts. The laws of the church on marriage and divorce are often ignored with the attitude: ‘If it doesn’t work out, we will end it.’ Catholic views on abortion are often as pagan as the rest of society as 1.5 million abortions are performed every year in our nation, which promotes ‘liberty and justice for all.’

“We, as pastors and educators, are to share responsibility with the hierarchy in proclaiming and bearing witness to Christ

in our world. The commission Jesus gave to the apostles before his ascension has been given to us as educators: ‘Go out in to the world and proclaim everything that I have commanded you.’

“Where do our children discover their ‘Catholic identity’ – their Catholic value system? Ordinarily not from their peers. Not from their local school where the name of God is not supposed to be mentioned. Not from the soap or TV series which mocks every moral teaching given by Jesus and the church.

“They must discover their Catholic identity from their parents, from their homes and from their Catholic schools. Pope St. John Paul II said so many times that we are living in a ‘culture of death and unbelief.’ The faith of our grade school students is being tested by children from other churches and, perhaps, by their parents asking questions about the Catholic Church. The faith of our high school students is being tested and challenged by their environment and their peers. They are facing moral and theological issues every day of their lives in their schools, in dating experiences and in the normal daily activities of life. The faith of our college students is shaken by a professor who makes sneering remarks about the ‘Good Book,’ the pope, bishops, priests, the Catholic Church in general or important moral issues of our generation

like abortion, cloning, in vitro fertilization, just to name a few. Their fellow Catholic students – Catholic in name only – may demonstrate by their behavior that they could care less about their Catholic faith.

“It is urgent that we as educators in the Catholic schools of the Diocese of Steubenville begin to turn the tide. It’s urgent that we teach the basics of our faith to the students entrusted to us. We need to get back to our roots – to the basic teachings of the church given to us by Jesus Christ and passed down through the ages, by the authority of St. Peter and his successors. Our mission – our ministry is to prepare our students to live the faith in a world that is not interested in God or faith or morality or even life itself but only money, material things and more money. This ‘American dream’ mesmerizes millions of our young people; yet, it leads to profound emptiness and self-centeredness. Unless our teaching and preaching shatters this cultural myth, we will raise a generation of young people with fat wallets, empty hearts and soap opera gutter values.

“Our students need to be fortified! They need to know and appreciate the commands of God, the moral teaching of Jesus Christ, the laws of his holy Catholic Church and the command by Jesus himself to participate actively in the worship of the church – the holy sacrifice of the Mass.



Given citations for 10 years of serving parochial schools in the Steubenville Diocese are, in front, from left, Billie Cogan, Linda Bloomfield, Julie Tomlin and Ashley Chlon and, in back, from left, Chris Monte, Megan Gesualdo, Kristen Honecker and Rena Koontz. (Photos by DeFrancis)

“Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation ‘Evangelii Gaudium,’ says: ‘We need to provide an education which teaches critical thinking and encourages the development of mature moral values.’

“We as Catholic school administrators and educators must begin to re-evangelize all those sitting in the pews on Sunday. We must convince all parents that their primary responsibility is the transmission of the faith. Unless our children see and experience the faith in their parents, our efforts as educators in a Catholic school will be in vain. We must be present to and make Christ present to our students, and make the faith accessible to them in every class we teach. We must give solid catechesis and strong witness to the faith by the way we live and the way we teach. Our students must see the faith lived in us. We must expose our students to a truly Catholic lifestyle – to prayer and liturgy; to a Catholic worldview; to see that they are loved by God. We must cultivate in our students a love for the faith – then they will re-embrace the faith!

“All life in our schools must flow from Jesus Christ. The faith must be lived! I believe that the answer to the education crisis in the church is each one of us – the teachers of our Catholic schools. In our hands lie the future of the parish and the future of the church. In our hands lie eternal destiny of the children we teach.

“As educators in our Catholic schools, be confident in the faith, love the faith, live the faith and have a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Only those who know and love Jesus Christ can introduce their brothers and sisters to a living relationship with him. That was the commission given to St. Simon and St. Jude. That is the commission given to each one of us – that is our mission – that is our call!”

After Mass, when the approximately 200 teachers, principals and schools’ pastoral administrators reconvened in St. Mary School, educators sat at tables, turned on laptops and directed their attention to “Renewing Curriculum ... Planning for the Future.” Ward told them that in their roles as educators, they are not just there to serve the children, but to prepare them.

When he introduced the speaker, Hayes Jacobs, he noted that the first book he ever

Annual collection supports eldercare needs of religious communities

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be taken up at Masses Dec. 10-11 in parishes in the Diocese of Steubenville, and in most parishes nationwide, read an announcement from the National Religious Retirement Office, which coordinates the annual appeal.

The parish-based collections, now in their 29th year, benefit nearly 33,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests whose communities lack retirement savings. Of the 550 communities submitting data to the National Religious Retirement Office, recently, only 8 percent were adequately funded for retirement.

Religious communities are financially autonomous and thus are responsible for the care and support of all members.

The Diocese of Steubenville contributed \$18,482.40 to the last collection for religious. In the Diocese of Steubenville, in 2016, the Franciscan Sisters Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother, whose motherhouse is in Toronto, received financial assistance from the Retirement Fund for Religious. Women and men religious who serve or have served in the diocese but whose communities are based elsewhere may benefit, also, from the annual appeal, a spokeswoman from the National Religious Retirement Office said.

Catholic bishops of the United States initiated the collection in 1988 to address the significant lack of retirement



During a Mass celebrated by Father Robert D. Borer, in back, at St. Benedict Church, Christ Our Light Parish, Cambridge, where Father Paul E. Hrezo is pastor, Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity who have staffed St. Benedict School, Cambridge, for more than 100 years were honored, along with their patron saint, St. Francis of Assisi. To show their appreciation for the sisters, St. Benedict School students made cards for them, including, from left, Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity Carolee Vanness, Carol Juckem, Helen Marie Paul, Anna Maar and Sharon Paul. Jane Rush, principal of St. Benedict School, in acknowledging the religious sisters, pointed to their dedication and concern for the parish community, especially the children, which have enabled the parochial school to thrive and provide a strong academic and religious education for the students. (Photo provided)

funding among U.S. religious communities. Proceeds help underwrite retirement and health-care expenses.

Nearly 95 percent of donations directly support senior religious and their communities, the spokeswoman said.

The appeal raised \$30.7 million in 2015, the sixth highest total in its history. As a result, the National Religious Retirement Office distributed \$25 million to 401 religious congregations. These funds supplement the day-to-day care of elderly religious and help their congregations implement long-range retirement strategies. Throughout the year, additional funding is allocated for congregations with the greatest needs.

“We are humbled by the love and support that Catholics across the nation share with our senior religious,” said Sister Stephanie Still, a member of the Sisters of the Presentation and newly appointed National Religious Retirement Office executive director.

The retirement-funding deficit is rooted in low salaries and changing demographics. Traditionally, Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests – known collectively as women and men religious – worked for small stipends. As a result, many religious communities lack adequate retirement savings. At the same time, elderly religious are living longer and now outnumber younger, wage-earning religious. Among communities providing data to the National Religious Retirement Office, 68 percent have a median age of 70 or above. The income of those engaged in compensated ministry cannot keep pace with the growing cost of eldercare, the National Religious Retirement Office spokeswoman pointed out.

In addition to providing financial support for immediate needs, proceeds from the annual appeal underwrite educational initiatives in retirement planning and eldercare delivery. Workshops, webinars and print resources, for example, address topics ranging from property-planning to caring for members with dementia.

“Our mission is to help religious communities meet current eldercare needs while preparing for the ones to come,” said Sister Stephanie. “We remain grateful for all those who support these efforts.”

The National Religious Retirement Office, formerly the Tri-Conference Retirement Office, was established to coordinate the annual collection and to distribute the proceeds to religious communities in need.

Educators

From Page 4

read on curriculum development was written by her. Then, he said he found others, also authored by Hayes Jacobs. “She wrote the book on curriculum mapping,” Ward declared.

Educated in universities in New York, Utah and Massachusetts, Hayes Jacobs is president of Curriculum Designers Inc. and executive director of Curriculum Mapping Institute. Calling Salt Lake City her hometown, as an education consultant Hayes Jacobs works nationally and internationally with kindergarten through 12th-grade educators on curriculum reform, instructional strategies to encourage critical thinking and strategic planning. She said she had returned, recently, from Russia.

In Marietta, Hayes Jacobs spent the afternoon challenging the teachers and principals to make their educational decisions based on what is in the student’s best interest – what to cut, keep and create in a curriculum to prepare him or her for his or her future.

The purpose, she said, of curriculum mapping is to design a curriculum to support the contemporary student.

As education moves to new standards, it is inquiry based, she suggested.

Communication, Hayes Jacobs advised, is the key to the mapping, a procedure, which she had the teachers practice

at the in-service, as she served as their coach and editor.

Ward explained that Hayes Jacobs was invited to be the keynote speaker for the in-service for diocesan educators as part of a diocesan effort to not only renew the curriculum in the parochial schools in the diocese, but also to enable teachers to embrace a new, up-to-date approach for curriculum planning. “That is what curriculum mapping is all about,” Ward said.

All teachers, Ward explained, will be asked to somehow tie the faith into the unit of study. “This will eventually demonstrate itself in the curriculum map,” he added.

While curriculum mapping is not new to efforts in curriculum writing and renewal, it is new for the Catholic schools in the Steubenville Diocese, Ward said. “We are just beginning to unfold this new effort, which may take two or even three years before it is fully implemented.”

As he expressed excitement that faith would be a part of each subject studied in Catholic schools in the diocese, Ward said that initially the overall response on curriculum mapping from principals and teachers has been very positive.

“I am extremely grateful for the efforts that all our educators will be making and have, in many cases, already made, toward this new initiative for our diocesan schools,” Ward concluded.

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St. John Paul II The Spirit and Life

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon

St. John Paul II explains how the Passover celebration, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost are linked. The ancient Passover celebration, or "Pasch," commemorated the beginning of a life of freedom for the Israelites after virtual slavery under the Egyptian pharaohs. It, in turn, was a prefigure of far more important things to come: the freedom of the entire human race from the bonds of sin brought about by the death and resurrection of Jesus. This new freedom would actually be a new kind of life given to mankind through the work of the Holy Spirit. This new life to which Jesus in his human nature returned at his resurrection was not simply a return to the life he had before; it was a new life characterized by a "glorified" existence. We saw something of that glorified existence when we discussed the resurrection of Jesus earlier on. Jesus said of humanity: "I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly" (Jn 10:10).

We call this new life that of "grace," a word derived from the word for "gift"

(which is related to such other words as "gratitude," grateful," etc.). We read as far back as the prophet Ezekiel in the Old Testament: "I shall put my Spirit within you, and you shall live ..." (Ez 37:14). Ezekiel was thinking in terms of the natural, physical life that we know returning to the dry bones that he saw in a vision. He was thinking in terms of a resurrection of the body. He had no clue at the time that God was promising a participation in the life of his Son! Likewise, he had no concept of the existence of the Holy Spirit, whom we call in the creed, "the Lord and giver of life."

The (late) pope reminds us that present at the coming of the Holy Spirit on that Pentecost Day were Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and other disciples, including both men and women. All were to be recipients of this new life of the

Spirit, although, as we shall see, a life that included "specialized" gifts for the work of the church. Among these latter were the transformation of the apostles from cowering fugitives from justice to fearless spokesmen for Christ and this new life. The springboard of their preaching would be their witness of the resurrection of Jesus, both the proof of their message, as well as its "selling point," so to speak. St. Paul would put it this way: "(J)ust as through one transgression condemnation came upon all, so through one righteous act acquittal and life came to us all. For just as through the disobedience of one person the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one the many were made righteous" (Rom 5:18-19). In John Paul's words, "Pentecost is the beginning of the process of spiritual renewal, which realizes the economy of salvation in its historical and eschatological dimension, casting itself over all creation." He goes on to say, quoting again from his encyclical on the Holy Spirit: "It is a new beginning in relation to the first original beginning of God's self-giving which is identified with the

mystery creation itself." Genesis tells us that, in the

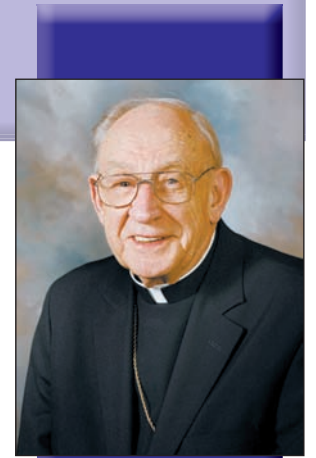
beginning, "The spirit of God ... moved over the waters" (Gn 1:1). He interprets this to mean the presence and action of the Holy Spirit in calling into existence of the very being of the cosmos. Pentecost can be truly considered, therefore, a new or "Second Creation."

Pentecost is also the completion of God's self-communication that began with creation. He created mankind "in his own image and likeness" (Gn 1:27). That image and likeness is in the nonmaterial, the *spiritual* soul of man. God now completes his self-image by giving mankind a share – albeit a *created* share – in his own life! This is the work of the Holy Spirit. This created share is not man's by nature, of course. We use the word and concept of "adoption" to best describe it. Mankind became an "adopted" child of God by God's own choice – much as an adopted

son or daughter is such by the choice of the adopting parents, and not by natural generation. In the Letters of Peter we read: "Blessed be the God and Father of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, who, in his great mercy has given us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading ..." (1 Pt 1:3-4); and in the Second Letter: "... (H)e has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises, so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature ..." (2 Pt 1:4). In the First Letter of John, we read: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 Jn 3:10). St. Paul tells us: "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom 8:29). And, again: "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman ... so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). St. Paul adds: "And because we are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! – Father'" (Gal 4:6)!

By his incarnation as man, the second person of the blessed Trinity has become one with us as human, and at the same time incorporated our humanity into his own divinity! The natural Son of God presents his human brothers and sisters to the Father to have them accepted – adopted – as the Father's children as well. Such is the nature of *grace* – the inestimable gift of God to his human creatures!

John Paul comments: "Because of this gift, we truly share in the sonship proper to the Son of God, Jesus Christ. This is the supernatural truth of our relationship with Christ, a truth that can be known only by those who "have known the Father. Let us never tire of repeating and meditating on this marvelous truth of our faith."



Bishop Sheldon

grace – the inestimable gift of God to his human creatures!

A Pilgrim, a Bishop and His iPhone

By Bishop Robert Barron

I'm in the process of re-reading a spiritual classic from the Russian Orthodox tradition: "The Way of a Pilgrim." This little text, whose author is unknown to us, concerns a man from mid-19th century Russia who found himself deeply puzzled by St. Paul's comment in first Thessalonians that we should "pray unceasingly." How, he wondered, amidst all of the demands of life, is this even possible? How could the apostle command something so patently absurd?

His botheration led him, finally, to a monastery and a conversation with an elderly spiritual teacher who revealed the secret. He taught the man the simple prayer that stands at the heart of the Eastern Christian mystical tradition, the so-called "Jesus prayer." "As you breathe in," he told him, say, 'Lord Jesus Christ,' and as you breathe out, say, 'Have mercy on me.'" When the searcher looked at him with some puzzlement, the elder instructed him to go back to his room and pray these words a thousand times. When the younger man returned and announced his successful completion of the task, he was told, "Now go pray it 10,000 times!" This was the manner in which the spiritual master was placing this prayer on the student's lips so that it might enter his heart and into the rhythm of his breathing in and out, and finally become so second nature to him that he was, consciously or unconsciously, praying it all the time, indeed, praying just as St. Paul had instructed the Thessalonians.

In the power of the Spirit, the young man then set out to wander through the Russian forests and plains, the

Jesus prayer perpetually on his lips. The only object of value that he had in his rucksack was the Bible, and with the last two rubles in his possession, he purchased a beat-up copy of "The Philokalia," a collection of prayers and sayings from the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Sleeping outdoors, fending largely for himself, relying occasionally on the kindness of strangers, reading his books and praying his prayer, he made his way.

One day, two deserters from the Russian army accosted him on the road, beat him unconscious and stole his two treasures. When he came around and discovered his loss, the man was devastated and wept openly: How could he go on without food for his soul? Through a fortuitous set of circumstances, he managed to recover his lost possessions, and when he had them once again, he hugged them to his chest, gripping them so hard that his fingers practically locked in place around them.

I would invite you to stay with that image for a moment. We see a man with no wealth, no power, no influence in society, no fame to speak of, practically no physical possessions – but clinging with all of his might and with fierce protectiveness to two things whose sole purpose is to feed



Bishop Barron

his soul. Here's my question for you: What would you cling to in such a way? What precisely is it, the loss of which would produce in you a kind of panic? What would make you cry, once you realized that you no longer had it? And to make the questions more pointed, let's assume that you were on a desert island or that you, like the Russian pilgrim, had no resources to go out and buy a replacement. Would it be your car? Your home? Your golf clubs? Your computer? To be honest, I think for me it might be my iPhone. If suddenly I lost my ability to make a call, my contacts, my

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Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, publisher
Pat DeFrancis, editor
pdefrancis@diosteub.org
Janice M. Ward, circulation/advertising
jward@diosteub.org

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The 'Magnificat' Instructs You and Me

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton

*"My soul proclaims the greatness
of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior"*
(Lk 1:46-47).

Mary's Song of Praise

Mary's song of praise shares the very fact who is the source of everything that is good in our lives: God the Father, the father of the child Jesus in Mary's womb.

The "Magnificat," of which the words of Mary introduce, instructs you and me that we are not sovereign individuals.

Self-sufficiency can be myopic, even antisocial, if taken to an extreme. As individuals, we are neither indestructible nor problem free.

The Christian faith invites us to transcend ourselves, to reach out to our brothers and sisters, and to recognize God himself in everyday moments. We need God's tender love and care.

Mary declares her gratitude and her unshakable trust in the one God who has constantly helped and continues to assist his people Israel. Mary celebrates what has been learned through the spiritual pedagogy

of her people: to recognize and to rejoice in what God is doing for his people. In her humility, Mary rejoices at being given a place in God's saving purpose for all, from Abraham to his descendants. Mary has been given the joy to fully participate in the life story of God and his people, a story which transcends every generation of humankind.

Mary's very words communicate an interior poverty of one who does not rely on her self-sufficiency, but whose only resource is God himself. These are Christian words of complete reliance on a God who is near.

Mary's attentive listening and telling of what God is speaking and doing for his people is intended for future generations as well.

Mary's confidence in God runs so deep that her spiritual poverty has no peer, as her spirit exalts in God, our savior, with gratitude and unshakable fidelity.

There is a Latin expression: "lex orandi," "lex credendi," or, the law of prayer is the law of belief. In Mary's own words we also have "lex narrandi," or, the law of narration in which we, in the spirit of gratitude, share the blessings God has bestowed on us.

As we prepare to celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8), perhaps, we can take time in prayer and ask Mary's intercession to help us to be more attentive in our hearts and minds to Jesus Christ's presence.

We pray for the Mother of God's assistance as we pursue our own spiritual poverty, a poverty that will enable us to more clearly recognize the God who always is near.

Permanent Diaconate Ordinations

On Saturday, Dec. 3, I have the privilege to ordain to

the permanent diaconate five men from our diocese.

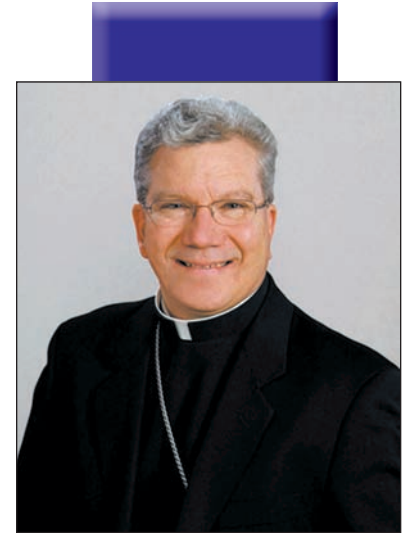
Please pray for each one of them and their families, as they embark on a ministry of service in their spiritual poverty.

These past four years have been ones of great blessing to the Diocese of Steubenville, for since the late autumn of 2012, until now, 11 men have been ordained to the permanent diaconate and four men have been ordained to the priesthood. In other words, our diocese has been enriched with 15 new members of the clergy in four years.

Please continue to pray for vocations.

As we continue our common Advent pilgrimage may God's blessings shower upon you and your family. Welcome Jesus into your heart.

Come Lord Jesus.



Bishop Monforton

Watching and Waiting: Advent Faith

By Father Paul J. Walker

Americans don't like to wait. We want what we want and we want it now. Look at our lives:

- Fast Food – Check out the "cafe court" in most shopping malls. You stand in line for fast-cooked food, paper plates and plastic utensils. If you're really in a hurry, there is always the "drive through" window at many restaurants.

- Cell Phones and Texts – What's the deal with all the cell phones, iPhones, smartphones, etc. I've seen people in checkout lines and in rest rooms, in schools and in the movies, and doctor's waiting rooms with the cell phone attached to their ear or texting. Am I so important that I need to be continuously available by phone or text?

- On the Road – There's the guy who tailgates for two or three miles and finally passes you, only to pull right in front of you because of the car you're following (at the legal speed limit).

- On Family Trips – The endless mantra of the kids – "are we there yet?" "Are we there?" "How much longer?"

- Highways – We build bigger highways and interstates; we want higher speed limits and faster cars.

- At Sunday Mass – The Roman Missal calls for pauses for silent prayer; what's wrong, did the priest forget something? Sing only enough verses of the hymn to get the priest to the chair; leave early after Communion. Yes – we do not wait well.

For what do we wait? The question puts us at the heart of Advent faith. Too often, our notion of the Christian faith is one-sided. We think of it only as a list of determined facts that must be held as true. They exist by themselves and we just *think* about them. However, these facts are more than mere statements appealing to our intellect; they are fundamentally an *event* that continues to endure, and we live right in the midst of this event, being caught up in it precisely through faith. As believers we do not merely have thoughts or opinions about something (thoughts separate from the event thought about). Faith, then, is God's grace

at work incorporating the reality of the event thought about.

Advent faith, then, does not merely point our gaze toward some future "second coming" or "second arrival." The event in which we wait is bringing to final completion God's own life *already* at work in the world by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is this event, not as something yet to come, but happening *right now* that is developing into a completion yet to be revealed.

The Advent liturgy (prayers, hymns, readings) invites us to see that the incarnation of the word of God took place in history and still *continues* in the present. Christ's return in glory and judgment to complete this event, bringing it to fulfillment, is an event of the future, and, yet, he is *always* on the point of coming. The liturgy celebrates the expectation of his return and the memorial of his coming into the world. What we do in Advent unites the past (the Hebrew Scriptures' longing for the coming of salvation still hidden in God); the present (salvation now taking place but hidden in Christ); and the future (the salvation that will reveal itself in the transformation of the world at the end of time).

So Advent faith invites us to wait and watch. Not looking just ahead to the future, but looking within, to that future already come for and into us in a hidden way promising what we will be when the hidden is revealed.

Unfortunately, this waiting and watching runs alongside and mostly in the shadow of the commercialization of the season. The "voice in the wilderness" is drowned out by a crass consumer culture that raises its head long



Father Walker

before Thanksgiving! A second, less obvious temptation is historicization. Advent is *not* about getting ready for Jesus' birthday, but is rather about bracing ourselves for the full revelation of the mystery of the Incarnation! Advent, Christmas and Epiphany are feasts of the Lord, *not* historical commemorations! Unlike Lent (a time for repentance and mortification), Advent is a time to *refocus* our attention, a time to clear away whatever distracts us from our connection with God. The church goes so far as to set aside an entire liturgical season to the end of the world and the "second coming" of the Lord, so important a part of our faith does she consider these truths! As I noted before, we keep Advent by perceiving and accepting these indications of the end of the world in our daily life.

Opening ourselves to the Advent mystery in our midst, we can pray with longing and faithful expectation:

Above the clamor of violence, let your word of truth resound, O God of power.

Over nations shrouded in despair, may your justice dawn.

Grant us a discerning spirit and a watchful eye to perceive the hour in which we live.

Hasten the advent of that day when weapons of war shall be banished; deeds of darkness cast off, and all your scattered children will be gathered into one.

We ask this through him whose coming is certain, whose day draws near: Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, God for ever. Amen

(Adapted from the Roman Missal, Second Edition, 1973, International Committee on English in the Liturgy Inc.)

Father Walker is a Diocese of Steubenville priest, retired from active parish ministry, who was a former director of the diocesan Office of Worship. He continues to reside in his hometown, McConnellsville, and celebrate Masses in St. James Church there and write a regular column for The Steubenville Register.

Diversity dominates USCCB meeting with encuentro news, veep choice

BALTIMORE (CNS) — A study commissioned by the bishops that finds diversity abounds in the U.S. Catholic Church is a clarion call to Catholic institutions and ministries to adapt and prepare, said Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller of San Antonio.

On Nov. 15, the second day of the bishops' annual fall assembly in Baltimore, **(which was attended by Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton)** the archbishop shared results of a report by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University showing the church is one of the most culturally diverse institutions in the United States.

The study was commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, chaired by Archbishop Garcia-Siller, to help identify the size and distribution of ethnic communities in the country — Hispanic and Latino, African-American, Asian-American and Native American.

He asked his brother bishops to look at the data and see how it speaks to their regions to help dioceses plan, set priorities and allocate resources.

The study's finding that there are nearly 30 million Hispanics in the U.S. church resonated in the election earlier that day of Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles to a three-year term as USCCB vice president, bringing a Latino voice to the leadership role for the first time. Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston was elected to a three-year term as USCCB president, succeeding Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky, whose term ended with the close of the meeting.

The bishops also heard about the church's preparations for the fifth National

Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry from Auxiliary Bishop Nelson J. Perez of Rockville Centre, New York, chairman of the bishops' Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs. The V Encuentro, as it is being called, is to be held in September 2018 in Fort Worth, Texas. It will be the culmination of parish, diocesan and regional encuentros, in which the bishops anticipate more than 1 million Catholics participating over the next two years.

"It is a great opportunity for the church to reach out to our Hispanic brothers and sisters with Christ's message of hope and love," Bishop Perez said. "It is a time to listen, a time to develop meaningful relationships, a time to learn and bear abundant fruits, and a time to rejoice in God's love."

The effort got a personal endorsement from Pope Francis during a Nov. 15 video message to the U.S. bishops at their fall general assembly in Baltimore.

In other action Nov. 15, the bishops approved making permanent their Subcommittee on the Church in Africa and the hiring of two people to assist the subcommittee in carrying out its work.

They also approved another 10-year extension for the Retirement Fund for Religious national collection; before the vote, the collection had been authorized through 2017.

They approved a strategic plan that will govern the work of the conference and its committees from 2017 through 2020, incorporating the theme "Encountering the Mercy of Christ and Accompanying His People With Joy." It sets five priorities: evangelization, marriage and family life, human life and dignity, vocations and religious freedom.

Maronite Bishop Gregory J. Mansour gave a presentation on the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, urging U.S. bishops to bring wider attention to the situation to their parishes and political leaders.

A theme of outreach and inclusion ran through many sessions of the two days of public sessions of the bishops' meeting. Sessions on the last day of the assembly, Nov. 16, were held in executive session, except for a brief address by Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Bishops, that was live-streamed.

Echoing Pope Francis, he told the U.S. bishops that their ministry is to be "witnesses to the Risen One."

As the meeting opened Nov. 14, the bishops affirmed as a body a Nov. 11 letter from Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio L. Elizondo of Seattle, as outgoing chairman of the Committee on Migration, calling on President-elect Donald Trump "to continue to protect the inherent dignity of refugees and migrants." The bishops' group action followed by a day a TV interview in which Trump said one of his first actions would be to deport 2 million to 3 million people he described as "criminal and have criminal records" and entered the country without government permission.

In the letter, Bishop Elizondo offered "a special word to migrant and refugee families living in the United States: Be assured of our solidarity and continued accompaniment as you work for a better life."

That first day the bishops heard a plea from Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the new nuncio to the United States, that the U.S. bishops and the U.S. church as a whole reach out to young Catholics, meeting them where they are and engaging them in their faith.

In his last presidential address, Archbishop Kurtz discussed the need to move beyond the acrimony of the now-completed presidential elections, but the main focus of his speech were the encounters he had in his three-year term in which he found that small and often intimate gestures provide big lessons for bishops to learn as they exercise their ministry. The people he encountered in all his travels were concerned about something beyond themselves — the common good, he said Nov. 14.

In other business the first day, the bishops heard a report on the 2017 Convocation of Catholic Leaders to be held in Orlando, Florida, next July to explore the Gospel in American life. More than 3,000 people reflecting the diversity of the church are expected to participate. Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, who gave an update on the planning, urged bishops in each diocese to send a delegation to the event.

Cardinal Dolan also shared details of a celebration next year to mark the 100th

anniversary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, founded originally as the National Catholic War Council. Events will take place Nov. 12 as the bishops convene for their 2017 fall assembly. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, will be principal celebrant of an anniversary Mass at Baltimore's Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Cardinal Ouellet will deliver the homily.

In his report as chairman of the bishops' Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore said all U.S. bishops are required to speak out for religious freedom for all people of faith whose beliefs are compromised. Bishops must equip laypeople to speak in the public arena about the necessity to protect religious liberty when interventions by government officials at any level infringe on the free practice of religion, he stressed.

In a final afternoon session and later at a news conference that concluded the first meeting day, Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta returned to the tensions of the election year. He is chairman of the new Task Force to Promote Peace in Our Communities, created in July by Archbishop Kurtz in response to the wave of violence in a number of communities following shootings by and of police. Archbishop Gregory urged the bishops to issue, sooner rather than later, a document on racism.

Most questions during the news conference focused on the postelection climate. Archbishop Gregory stressed that the church should play a role in helping restore peace in the current climate.

On the issue of healing racial divides, he said the Catholic response should start at the parish level. "Words are cheap, actions stronger," he added.

The day ended with the bishops celebrating their annual fall assembly Mass at a West Baltimore church known as the "mother church" of black Catholics, rather than in their traditional venue of Baltimore's historic basilica. In his homily, Archbishop Kurtz said the bishops came to the church "to be present, to see with our own eyes, so that we might humbly take a step and lead others to do so."

A Pilgrim

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music, my GPS, my maps, my email, etc., I would panic — and I would probably cry for sheer joy once I had the phone back, and my fingers would close around it like a claw. What makes this confession more than a little troubling is that 10 years ago I didn't even own a cell phone. I lived my life perfectly well without it, and if you had told me then that I would never have one, it wouldn't have bothered me a bit.

What I particularly love about the pilgrim is that he was preoccupied, not about any of the passing, evanescent goods of the world, but rather about prayer, about a sustained contact with the eternal God. He didn't care about the things that obsess most of us most of the time: money, power, fame, success. And the only possessions that concerned him were those simple books that fed his relationship to God. Or to turn it around, he wasn't frightened by the loss of any finite good; but he was frightened to death at the prospect of losing his contact with the living God.

So what would you cling to like a desperate animal? What loss would you fear? What do you ultimately love?

Bishop Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.

Focus on Mary for upcoming WYD celebrations

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has chosen a focus on Mary for the next World Youth Day celebrations, which will be held in dioceses in 2017 and 2018 and with an international gathering in Panama in 2019.

The pope has highlighted the way the Mother of Jesus was always open to the Lord's will and has described her "as a role model to be imitated," said the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life in a press release Nov. 22.

The themes "are intended to give a clear Marian tone to the spiritual journey" of the next three World Youth

Days as well as to "give a picture of young people on a journey between the past (2017), present (2018) and future (2019), inspired by the three theological virtues of faith, charity and hope."

World Youth Day is celebrated annually on a local level, and every two or three years with an international gathering with the pope. At the end of the World Youth Day celebration in July in Krakow, Poland, Pope Francis announced the next international gathering would be held in Panama in 2019.

The annual Rome diocesan celebration with the pope is held on Palm Sunday each year; the date of the celebration in other dioceses varies.

The themes chosen by the pope, the dicastery said, were:

- For 2017: "The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Lk 1:49).
- For 2018: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God" (Lk 1:30).
- For 2019: "I am the servant of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

This journey the pope is proposing to young people coincides with the reflection the pope "has entrusted to the next Synod of Bishops: Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment," the press release said.

Church must know situation of couples it tries to help, Pope Francis says

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Discerning the best way to help a couple whose marriage has failed is not easy, Pope Francis told a group of bishops, but he said he was certain that with study and prayer they would find ways to help the people entrusted to their care.

As some very public debates swirled in mid-November about the pastoral possibilities Pope Francis opened to bishops and priests for helping divorced and civilly remarried Catholics, he visited the offices of the Roman Rota, a marriage tribunal, but did not issue clear, blanket instructions.

The pope made his visit Nov. 18 to speak with bishops who were at the Roman Rota

for a course on implementing the rules Pope Francis published in September 2015 to reform the process for verifying the validity of a marriage.

Pope Francis told the bishops that “any impediment of a mundane character” — specifically cost or staffing — that makes it difficult for couples to get a timely judgment on the validity of their marriage must be eliminated.

Canon law, the pope said, is at the service of the salvation of souls and fulfills that service by promoting a “healthy relationship between justice and charity.”

After all, he said, the entire Code of Canon Law ends with the words, “The salvation of souls, which must always be the supreme law in the church, is to be kept

before one’s eyes.”

To evangelize and help save a person, the pope said, the church must know what they are experiencing.

“The church of the Incarnate Word incarnates itself in the sad and painful events of the people, it bends down to the poor and those who are far from the church community or who think they are outside it” because their marriage has failed, he said.

The divorced — whether or not they remarry — “are and remain incorporated into Christ by virtue of their baptism,” the pope said. By their ordination, the bishops have been charged by Christ and the church with the responsibility of tending to those people.

“We are called not to exclude them

from our pastoral concern, but to dedicate ourselves to them and their irregular and difficult situation with all concern and charity,” he said.

The pope quoted from the First Letter of Peter, “Tend the flock of God in your midst, overseeing not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it, not for shameful profit but eagerly. Do not lord it over those assigned to you, but be examples to the flock.”

Questions about exactly how to help different couples in different situations are not easy to answer, the pope said. Bishops must “seek responses in the word of God and in the truth of the faith,” guided always by a recognition that the salvation of souls is always the “supreme good.”

Welcome to the club: Cardinal-elders talk about pope’s 80th birthday

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Three years ago Pope Francis described retired Pope Benedict XVI as being like a wise grandfather, although there is less than 10 years’ difference in their ages; today, Pope Francis tends to include himself in the category of grandfatherly figures.

“You, or better we — because I, too, am one of you — are called to work for the development of a culture of life, witnessing that every stage of existence is a gift from God and has its own beauty and importance, even if it is marked by fragility,” the pope told 7,000 Italian grandparents during a meeting in October.

Pope Francis is to celebrate his 80th birthday Dec. 17.

For the Catholic hierarchy, especially those working at the Vatican, 80 is a significant age. When cardinals turn 80, they no longer are members of the Vatican congregations and councils they served, even in retirement. Also, cardinals more than 80 are no longer eligible to enter a conclave to elect a new pope.

Yet, like Pope Francis, many of the over-80 cardinals have active ministry schedules and continue to travel the world on behalf of the church, their bishops’ conferences and Catholic agencies and organizations.

“It’s nothing special to turn 80 — it hap-

pens all the time,” said Portuguese Cardinal Jose Saraiva Martins, former prefect of the Congregation for Saints’ Causes. He turned 80 at the beginning of 2012. “We continue working,” he said, because “there’s always something to do.”

Pope Francis, the cardinal told Catholic News Service, “is a fantastic, stupendous example for all of us — cardinals, bishops, priests and laity — that we are called to serve the church and continue serving it at every age.”

Three retired cardinals who spoke to CNS about the pope’s impending birthday laughed when asked, “Is 80 the new 60?” But they all admitted to slowing down as the years pass and aching a little more. “Life goes on; you have to go on with it,” said Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, the 86-year-old former archbishop of Washington, who still travels the world on behalf of the church. The cardinal said he must keep going because he is “trying to use all these experiences I’ve had in the past and put it at the service of the Lord and the service of his people.” All the older cardinals “do that in one way or another. We’re here to serve. I wish I’d served better; I wish I’d worked harder.”

He said because “it touches me directly,” he should not comment on the appropriate-

ness of the Vatican rule that after the age of 80 cardinals are no longer members of Vatican congregations and no longer eligible to enter a conclave. But, he said, “you have to find other ways to be useful.”

“Some of the cardinals do it in very spiritual and wonderful ways and others who are not as spiritual — people like me — we try to find other ways to be helpful,” said the cardinal.

Official retirement brought more freedom, he said, “even though we are always bound by pastoral responsibility because we are still priests.” As one ages, he said, one’s prayer life “should deepen. You should be more and more conscience of God’s presence in your life, not just if you are a cardinal, but everybody. We should be more able to appreciate how good God is to us and how wonderful it is that he gave us these responsibilities to help us help other people. We are here to do the Lord’s work, to help our neighbor, to help those on the periphery, as the Holy Father likes to say,” Cardinal McCarrick said.

As for Pope Francis’ upcoming birthday, the cardinal said, “I certainly hope he will take care of himself. I think many of us worry about him — he never seems to tire, but I think that’s a gift he has from the Lord, not just the gift of energy, but of enthusiasm.”

Cardinal Jozef Tomko, who at the age of 92 still stands tall and straight, has no doubts Pope Francis “will know how to face this birthday.” For his part, the cardinal said he prays what he’s prayed for all seven popes during his lifetime — the traditional: “May the Lord preserve him, and give him life, and make him blessed upon the earth. ...”

“It is common experience that after the age of 80 one’s physical and mental capacities are less fresh and tend to decline, with some exceptions,” he said, which explains why cardinals are released from some responsibilities after they celebrate the big 8-0.

Cardinal Tomko said his own prayer life has changed over the years, but he did not connect the change to the idea of being closer to life’s end. Rather, he said, it is because of “the ‘provocations’ and needs” of people in the world and “the examples I have before my eyes. I hope to be able to grasp the signs of the times around me as well as inspiration from above and from within my heart.”

“I thank God, the Lord of history, for the popes I have known and for the gifts with which he has enriched them,” Cardinal Tomko said. “Without exaggerating, I am convinced that we have had a century of great popes.”

Pope asks scientists to be leaders, find solutions, declare rules to save planet

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Humanity does not own God’s gift of creation and has no right to pillage it, Pope Francis said.

“We are not custodians of a museum and its masterpieces that we have to dust off every morning, but rather collaborators in the conservation and development of the existence and biodiversity of the planet and human life,” he said Nov. 28.

The pope addressed experts attending a plenary session of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences Nov. 25-29 to discuss the impact of scientific knowledge and technology on people and the planet.

People in the modern world have grown up “thinking we are the owners and masters of nature, authorized to plunder it without any consideration for its secret potential and evolutionary laws, as if it were an inert substance at our disposal, causing, among other things, a very serious loss of biodiversity,” he said. An “ecological conversion” is needed in which people

recognize their responsibility for caring for creation and its resources, for trying to bring about social justice and for overcoming “an unfair system that produces misery, inequality and exclusion,” the pope said. In fact, with sustainable development, the tasks of taking care of both people and the planet are inseparable, he said.

The pope said there was a “weak response” in most international policies to promoting the common good. He lamented how easily well-founded scientific counsel is “disregarded” and how politics tends to obey technology and finance instead. The proof of that, he said, is the way countries are still “distracted” or delayed in applying international agreements on the environment as well as the “continuous wars of dominance masquerading as noble declarations that cause increasingly serious harm to the environment and the moral and cultural wealth of peoples.”

Pope Francis told the scientists that it

was up to them to “build a cultural model to tackle the crisis of climate change and its social consequences so that enormous productive capacities are not reserved

only to the few.” To do that, he said, the scientists would have to be free of political, economic and ideological interests, too.

The pope called on them to be leaders. ...

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Adena — A blessing of the “Bambinelli” (Baby Jesus), a tradition celebrated in Rome by the pope each year on the Third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, will take place at the celebration of the 4 p.m. Mass, Dec. 10, and at the 11 a.m. Mass, Dec. 11, at St. Casimir Church.

An Advent penance service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 15, at St. Casimir Church.

Adena/Dillonvale — St. Casimir Parish, Adena, and St. Adalbert Parish, Dillonvale, will collect hats, gloves/mittens and books for boys and girls ages 3 through 5, through Dec. 11. Unwrapped items can be taken to either church.

Athens — There will be a penance service at 7 p.m., Dec. 20, at Christ the King University Parish.

Beverly — A penance service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 13, at St. Bernard Church.

Buchtel — St. Mary of the Hills Parish will hold a bake sale Dec. 4, following the celebration of the 11 a.m. Mass.

Caldwell — An Advent penance service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 13, at St. Stephen Church.

Cambridge — An Advent penance service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 12, at St. Benedict Church.

Dillonvale — A blessing of the “Bambinelli” (Baby Jesus), celebrated in Rome by the pope each year on Gaudete Sunday, will take place at the celebration of the 9 a.m. Mass, Dec. 11, at St. Adalbert Church.

There will be an Advent penance service at 7 p.m., Dec. 13, at St. Adalbert Church.

Ironton — The Ironton Catholic community gift shop, located at 615 Center St., is open every Sunday, following the celebration of the noon Mass at St. Lawrence O’Toole Church, until Christmas. A variety of religious articles will be on sale.

Lafferty — The Gate of Heaven Cemetery Chapel will be blessed by Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton at 3 p.m., Dec. 2.

Little Hocking — An Advent penance service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 15, at St. Ambrose Church.

Lowell — Our Lady of Mercy Parish will have a penance service at 7 p.m., Dec. 12.

Malvern — A communal penance service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 13, at St. Francis Xavier Church.

Marietta — There will be an Advent penance service at 7 p.m., Dec. 14, at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption.

A pre-Cana session is scheduled March 25 at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption. The session fulfills the diocesan marriage preparation requirement. For additional information, or to register for the day, call the basilica parish office at (740) 373-3643.

Martins Ferry — A penance service will be held at 2 p.m., Dec. 11, at St. Mary Church.

Mingo Junction — Confessions will be heard at 7 p.m., Dec. 20, at St. Agnes Church.

Shadyside — A penance service for Advent will be held at 6 p.m., Dec. 18, at St. Mary Church.

St. Clairsville — A reception for Charles J. “Chuck” Schneider, who will be ordained a permanent deacon for the Diocese of Steubenville, at 10 a.m., Dec. 3, at St. Mary Church, will be held following the celebration of the Dec. 3 and Dec. 4 Masses at St. Mary Church Marian Hall.

Confessions will be heard at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 12, at St. Mary Church.

Steubenville — Confessions will be heard at 1:30 p.m., Dec. 12, at Holy Family Church.

Steubenville — Triumph of the Cross Parish will have a blessing of the “Bambinelli” (Baby Jesus) Dec. 10-11, at Holy Rosary Church. All can bring the Christ child image from family mangers to have the infant blessed at the conclusion of Masses.

There will be an Advent penance service at 7 p.m., Dec. 22, at Holy Rosary Church.

Steubenville — Students from Catholic Central High School will present a Christmas concert “Carols and Cocoa” Dec. 7, at 7 p.m., at the high school, in Berkman Theater, Lanman Hall, 320 West View Ave.

Tiltonville — Confessions will be heard, beginning at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 14, at St. Joseph Church.



Michael Bozzelli, Prime Time Center volunteer, organized a canned food drive among bingo players at the center on Lovers Lane in Steubenville. The bingogoers at the center – directed by Judy Owings, Prime Time Office on Aging – brought nonperishable food items and exchanged them for bingo cards, Bozzelli said. On a recent day, Franciscan Sister Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother Rita Clare Yoches, who ministers in downtown Steubenville, picks up the items for distribution at the Samaritan House on Washington Street from Bozzelli, as well as Joyce Dulick, left; Mary Alice Wukelic, third from right, and Alice DeFrank, right. The women are Prime Time Center members and volunteer twice weekly during bingo. Bozzelli is a daily volunteer at the center and the bingo caller. Owings said the center has more than 1,000 members, ages 50 to 97. Housed in the former Temple Beth Israel, the center is owned by Tri-State Health Services Inc. The center program is operated by Prime Time Office on Aging, which has provided meals and transportation services for Jefferson County residents since 1988. Health and wellness programs, educational, social and community action opportunities, arts, crafts, meals and nutritional programs are offered at the center, supported by membership dues, fundraising and donations, Owings said. (Photo by DeFrancis)

Toronto — Mother of Hope Deanery Council of Catholic Women will meet at 2 p.m., Dec. 4, at St. Joseph Church.

Confessions will be heard at 7 p.m., Dec. 14; from 3-4 p.m., Dec. 16; and from 7-8 p.m., Dec. 21, at St. Joseph Church.

Nut, apricot and poppy seed rolls will be sold for \$10 each Dec. 3-4, Dec. 10-11 and Dec. 17-18, at St. Francis of Assisi and St. Joseph churches.

Mother of Hope Deanery Council of Catholic Women cookbooks are available at St. Francis of Assisi and St. Joseph churches or by telephoning DeDe Kidder at (740) 632-3018 or emailing

dkidder@brdband.com. Cost is \$10 each.

Wintersville — The Wintersville Catholic community CWC will sponsor a reception for Thomas E. Graham, following the celebration of the 11 a.m. Mass, Dec. 4, at Blessed Sacrament Church. He will be ordained a permanent deacon for the Diocese of Steubenville, at 10 a.m., Dec. 3, at St. Mary Church, St. Clairsville.

Confessions will be heard at 7 p.m., Dec. 19, at Blessed Sacrament Church.

Woodsfield — An Advent penance service will take place at 7 p.m., Dec. 12, at St. Sylvester Church.

Around and About

Cambridge — A cookie walk will be held from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m., Dec. 3, at the First Presbyterian Church, 725 Steubenville Ave. Cookies cost \$7 per pound. For additional information, telephone (740) 439-2667.

Martins Ferry — Knights of Columbus Mother of God Council 1421 will sponsor a fish fry from 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Dec. 2, at the council home, 25 N. Fourth St. Eat in or takeout will be available. To place an order, telephone (740) 633-0528.

Mingo Junction — Knights of Columbus Msgr. Joseph F. Dooley Council 4361 will sponsor a Christmas dinner Dec. 10 at the council hall, 117 Legion Drive. Doors open at 5:30 p.m.; the dinner begins at 6 p.m. Cost is \$15 per person. Reservations, by Dec. 5, can be made by texting Shawn Zarych at (740) 381-1385 or by emailing him at www.shawno1963@gmail.com.

Steubenville — “An evening of Advent and Christmas Music” concert, under the direction of Ronald W. DuBois Jr., will be presented by the Canticle Singers Catholic Youth Choir at 6 p.m., Dec. 11, at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1443 Belleview Blvd. The evening will feature Gregorian chant, choral anthems and Christmas carols. Admission is free and all can attend. A freewill offering will be taken during intermission. For additional information, telephone DuBois at (740) 282-6671 or (740) 457-6011.

Steubenville — The 67th annual Franciscan

University of Steubenville Founders’ Association Dinner will be held Dec. 3. To make a reservation, telephone the university’s community relations office at (740) 283-6406.

Schola Cantorum Franciscana and the Padre Pio Academy Schola will perform medieval and Renaissance music for Advent, followed by evening prayer, at 8 p.m., Dec. 4, at St. Peter Church.

The Schola Cantorum Franciscana and the Franciscan University Chorale will celebrate the birth of Christ with the “Service of Nine Lessons and Carols.” The annual Advent event will take place at 7 p.m., Dec. 6, in Christ the King Chapel, at Franciscan University of Steubenville.

Steubenville — The “Parenting the Second Time Around” support group, also known as Grandmothers Raising Grandchildren Support Group, will meet at 9 a.m., Mondays, at the YWCA, 320 N. Fourth St., for entertainment, food and fellowship.

Steubenville — Advent programs will be aired on God’s Love Catholic Radio, FM 97.9. A weekly series, recorded by Archbishop of New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan, will be broadcast at 7:30 p.m. Saturdays, and 11 a.m. Sundays. Talks recorded on location in Kingston, Jamaica, will air Sundays, at 1 p.m. and 11 p.m.

Steubenville — “Handel’s Messiah” will be performed at 7 p.m., Dec. 16, at the Covenant Presbyterian Church, 1443 Belleview Blvd. For additional information, telephone (740) 282-1320.

Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton's Advent Message

So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come" (Mk 24:44).

The Advent Season is a time for preparation and penance. Penance plays an integral role in our Advent preparation for we recognize that despite our unworthiness, God the merciful father has redeemed the world in the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. This penitential season trains our gaze on the Light of the world who burns brightly in the midst of a world "in darkness." This Advent season reminds us that we are a people of immense hope full of promise.

On call from Joseph DeGenova, left, Sister of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky, Luke Boiarski, third from right, leads some of the religious order's 365 volunteers – Adolph Williams, Ronnie Mattingly, Matthew Johnson and Jude Leake – from Kentucky to Ohio to assist St. John, Bellaire, parishioners whose house had been damaged by water. Charity Sister Ann Magruder accompanied the workers, members of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Raywick, Kentucky, who have traveled to various parts of the United States and outside the country as Charity Sisters' volunteers to provide their electrical, plumbing and construction skills for those in need. During the three days the men worked on the Bellaire house, they gutted and rebuilt the bathroom, Sister Luke said. The workers were housed in the rectory at Sacred Heart Church, Neffs, during their mission trip. Father Daniel Heusel, pastor of St. John and Sacred Heart parishes, and parishioners from the two parishes assisted in readying the housing and supplying meals for the workers, according to Sister Luke. A Bellaire native, Sister Luke has led other mission trips to the Ohio Valley to assist residents. Sisters Luke and Ann ministered in the Tiltonsville area, and St. Joseph Parish there, for a number of years. The two now minister from Nazareth, Kentucky, where they reside. (Photo by DeFrancis)



Reminder: complete parishioner survey inserted; mail to P.O. Box 969, Steubenville, OH 43952

Officers elected for advisory board

BELLE VALLEY — Yvette Nau has been re-elected chairwoman of the Diocese of Steubenville Catholic Charities Advisory Board.

Nau resides in Caldwell, with her husband Mike. They are the parents of four children. An active member of St. Stephen Parish, Caldwell, Nau has been a high school teacher and a volunteer with various Noble County organizations, especially those involving teens.

The current leadership term on the Catholic Charities Advisory Board will continue until 2018. Nau was elected a first time as chairwoman of the board in 2014.

Also re-elected to a leadership role on the advisory board is George Bain. He is the vice chairman. A member of the Athens Catholic community, Bain has a long involvement in social justice issues.

Elected secretary of the advisory board

is DeDe Kidder. A member of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Toronto, Kidder has a lifetime of serving the Catholic Church, especially in leadership roles in the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, and presently serves as a volunteer in the chancery.

The elections were held during the advisory board's Nov. 2 meeting at Corpus Christi Church, Belle Valley, after a review of by-laws, a mission statement and membership terms. The board's mission statement reads, "Catholic Charities is to serve God's people in need, to advocate for justice in social structures, and to call all people of good will in our communities to do the same."

Current board members have been asked to submit names of potential board members, including a consumer of Catholic Charities services, by January. The

next board meeting will be held at 11:30 a.m., April 26, at Corpus Christi Church.

Michele A. Santin is director of the Steubenville Diocese Office of Family and Social Concerns (Catholic Charities).



Yvette Nau, left, has been re-elected chairwoman of the Diocese of Steubenville Catholic Charities Advisory Board, which DeDe Kidder, right, will serve as secretary. (Photo by DeFrancis)



Veronica Way has been appointed and installed as Ohio Province Director for the National Council of Catholic Women. During the next two years, she will represent all six dioceses in Ohio as a liaison to the NCCW. Way said the NCCW acts to support, empower and educate Catholic women in spirituality, leadership and service. A member of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, Way is a wife, mother and grandmother. She has a long record of service in the community and church. (Photo provided)

Obituaries

Rebecca M. "Becky" Whiteside – sister of Diocese of Steubenville Comptroller David A. Franklin – has died.

The 59-year-old Whiteside, a resident of Wintersville, died Nov. 19.

She was born March 8, 1957, in Steubenville, a daughter of Charles "Fred" and Pauline Babicz Franklin.

Whiteside was the owner and operator of Whiteside Bookkeeping and Accounting and a member of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Wintersville.

In addition to her brother David Franklin, Whiteside is survived by her husband Regis, two sons, a daughter, a grandson, two other brothers, a sister and several nieces and nephews.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Nov. 23 in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, and burial followed in Mount Calvary Cemetery, Steubenville.

Rich Bolock, 70, Adena, St. Casimir, Nov. 14.

Virginia DeFilippo, 88, St. Lucy, Yorkville, Sept. 16.

Sylvia Gaudio, 76, St. Lucy, Yorkville, Sept. 19.

Bruce Grywalski, 58, Dillonvale, St. Casimir, Adena, Nov. 19.

Irene Kroskey, 78, Blessed Sacrament, Wintersville, Nov. 14.

Robert M. Krupa Sr., 70, 56950 Cash Ridge Road, Shadyside, St. Mary, Nov. 18.

Anna Latacz, 92, St. Lucy, Yorkville, Nov. 19.

Jerry G. Nolan, 82, Bridgeport, St. Anthony of Padua, Nov. 20.

Elaine Osso, 82, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, Nov. 16.

Kimberly K. Strager-Smith, 64, St. Clairsville, St. Mary, Nov. 5.

Bishop closes Holy Doors in diocese

From Page 1

Bishop Monforton closed the Holy Door in Christ the King Chapel at Franciscan University of Steubenville Nov. 19.

A day later, at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption in Marietta, before he shuttered the Holy Door there, Bishop Monforton said, "Now is the next step. Mercy is in our Christian DNA."

At baptism, he continued during his homily at the basilica, he reminded that each baptized received the mercy of God.

"Every moment of every day is a time of mercy," Bishop Monforton declared.

"Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the church," Pope Francis wrote in an apostolic letter, "Misericordia et Misera," ("Mercy and Misery"), which he signed Nov. 20 at the end of the Year of Mercy. The Vatican released the text the next day.

The Catholic Church's focus on God's mercy must continue with individual acts of kindness, assistance to the poor and, particularly, with encouraging Catholics to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation and making it easier for them to do so, the pope wrote.

In his letter, Pope Francis said he formally was giving all priests permanent permission to grant absolution to those who confess to having procured an abortion. While many bishops around the world, and almost all bishops in the United States, routinely grant that faculty to all their priests, Pope Francis had made it universal during the Holy Year.

According to canon law, procuring an abortion brings automatic excommunication to those who know of the penalty, but procure the abortion anyway. Without formal permission, priests had been required to refer the case to their bishops before the excommunication could be lifted and sacramental absolution could be granted to a woman who had an abortion or those directly involved in the procedure.

"I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life," the pope wrote. "In the same way, however, I can and must state that there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father."

Speaking to reporters during a Vatican news conference Nov. 21, Archbishop Rino Fisichella said procuring an abortion still results in automatic excommunication the

very moment the procedure is carried out.

Sacramental absolution, therefore, is not just forgiving the sin of abortion, but also means "the excommunication is removed," he said.

Now that all priests have been given the faculty to lift the excommunication and grant absolution, the Code of Canon Law will have to be updated, said the archbishop, who is president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, the office that organized events for the Year of Mercy.

The pope also formally extended the provision he made during the Year of Mercy of recognizing as valid the sacramental absolution received by "those faithful who, for various reasons, attend churches officiated by the priests of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Pius X," the traditionalist society founded by the late Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre.

Although the Vatican and the society continue talks aimed at formally restoring the society's full communion with the church, Pope Francis said he was extending the pastoral provision "lest anyone ever be deprived of the sacramental sign of reconciliation through the church's pardon."

The title of the document is taken from a sermon by St. Augustine about Jesus' encounter with the woman caught in adultery. After those who wanted to stone her slinked away, only Jesus and the woman — mercy and misery — remained.

In the Gospel story, the pope wrote, and in the sacraments of the church, particularly confession and the anointing of the

sick, "references to mercy, far from being merely exhortative, are highly performative, which is to say that as we invoke

mercy with faith, it is granted to us, and as we confess it to be vital and real, it transforms us," as it did with the woman caught in adultery. "This is a fundamental element of our faith," Pope Francis wrote. "Even before the revelation of sin, there is the revelation of the love by which God created the world and human beings," he wrote. "His love always precedes us, accompanies us and remains with us, despite our sin."

In celebrating and welcoming God's love and mercy, he said, a special place in the church must be given to families, especially at a time when the very meaning of family is in crisis. "The beauty of the family endures unchanged, despite so many problems and alternative proposals," he said. "The grace of the sacrament of marriage not only strengthens the family to be a privileged place for

practicing mercy, but also commits the Christian community and all its pastoral activity to uphold the great positive value of the family."

Still, he wrote, "the experience of mercy enables us to regard all human problems from the standpoint of God's love, which never tires of welcoming and accompanying," even in situations marked by failure or sin. "Our life, with its joys and sorrows, is something unique and unrepeatable that takes place under the merciful gaze

of God," he said. In counseling couples priests must use "a careful, profound and far-sighted spiritual discernment, so that everyone, none excluded, can feel accepted by God, participate actively in the life of the community and be part of that people of God which journeys tirelessly toward the fullness of his kingdom of justice, love, forgiveness and mercy."

"Nothing of what a repentant sinner places before God's mercy can be excluded from the embrace of his forgiveness," the pope wrote. "For this reason, none of us has the right to make forgiveness conditional."

In the letter, Pope Francis also asked dioceses that have not yet done so to consider joining the "24 Hours for the Lord" initiative. Near the fourth Sunday of Lent, dioceses choose a church or churches to stay open for 24 hours to offer the sacrament of reconciliation and eucharistic adoration. The pope opens the Rome celebration with a penance service in St. Peter's Basilica.

After his Year of Mercy celebration Nov. 13 with the homeless and other people who are "socially excluded," the pope wrote that he would like a similar celebration to be held annually in every diocese. "The entire church might celebrate, on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, the World Day of the Poor," he said. The celebration, a week before the feast of Christ the King, would be "the worthiest way to prepare" to acknowledge the kingship of Christ, "who identified with the little ones and the poor and who will judge us on our works of mercy." "It would be a day to help communities and each of the baptized to reflect on how poverty is at the very heart of the Gospel and that, as long as Lazarus lies at the door of our homes, there can be no justice or social peace," he said.

Calling the Bible "the great story of the marvels of God's mercy," Pope Francis also asked every Catholic parish in the world to set aside at least one Sunday a year to promote reading, studying and praying with the Scriptures. Teaching people "lectio divina," the prayerful reading of the Bible, especially when focused on texts that speak of God's mercy and love, will help "give rise to concrete gestures and works of charity," he wrote.

In another continuation from the Year of Mercy, the pope asked the more than 1,100 priests he commissioned as "missionaries of mercy" to continue leading retreats, missions, prayer services and offering confession in dioceses around the world.



During the Nov. 20 Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton acknowledged diocesan couples enduring marriages. Bishop Monforton talks with Shawn and Joan Scott of Steubenville, members of Triumph of the Cross Parish in the city, who received a 25-year certificate. Permanent Deacon Lee V. Weisend looks on and aided Bishop Monforton with distribution of the certificates, whose recipients were called by Msgr. John Michael Campbell, at lectern, rector of the basilica, Marietta. The bishop also cited couples married for 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 55, 60 and every year after 60 at Masses at St. Lawrence O'Toole Church, Ironton, Nov. 19, and Holy Family Church, Steubenville, Nov. 20. (Photo by DeFrancis)



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