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News Briefs

Bishops to monitor immigrants, refugees

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is establishing a working group charged with developing spiritual, pastoral and policy advocacy support for immigrants and refugees.

Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, USCCB president, has named members of the working group, with the mandate of closely following developments related to immigrants and refugees in the United States. Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB vice president, will chair the group. Members include the chairmen of USCCB committees and subcommittees involved in immigration concerns: Bishop Joe S. Vasquez of Austin, Texas, Committee on Migration; Auxiliary Bishop Nelson J. Perez of Rockville Centre, New York, Subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs; Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Florida, Committee on Domestic Social Development; Bishop Joseph J. Tyson of Yakima, Washington, Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants; and Bishop Oscar Cantu of Las Cruces, New Mexico, Committee on International Justice and Peace.

Homeless among pope's well-wishers

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — People from around the world, especially the poor and the homeless, had a chance to send their good wishes for Pope Francis' 80th birthday.

Eight homeless people — two women and six men — made their way to the pope's residence at Domus Sanctae Marthae for an early birthday breakfast, the Vatican said Dec. 17. The people, who hailed from Italy, Moldova, Romania and Peru, were accompanied by Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, papal almoner.



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 until Jan. 6 in St. John Vianney Church, Powhatan Point, and then be relocated to Christ Our Light parishes — St. Benedict Church, Cambridge, through Jan. 13, and Sts. Peter and Paul Oratory, Lore City, Jan. 13-20. (Photo by DeFrancis)



Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton blesses the Gate of Heaven Committal Chapel at St. Mary Cemetery, Lafferty. The chapel was constructed after fire destroyed St. Mary Church, Lafferty. (Photos by DeFrancis)



Bishop blesses committal chapel in Lafferty

LAFFERTY — A chapel has been dedicated in St. Mary Cemetery.

Gate of Heaven Committal Chapel, near the cemetery entrance, was constructed after fire destroyed nearby St. Mary Church.

Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton dedicated the chapel on a recent wintery afternoon.

Many of the people who gathered in the chapel Dec. 2 for its official opening had been members of St. Mary Church, destroyed by fire May 23, 2012. Father Frederick C. Kihm, pastor in the Harrison County Catholic community of St. Teresa of Avila, Cadiz, Sacred Heart, Hopedale, and St. Matthias Mission, Freeport, was pastor of St. Mary, Lafferty, at the time of the fire and when plans began to be drawn to construct the small chapel in St. Mary Cemetery.

The fire, which forced the later merging of the Lafferty parish with St. Mary Parish, St. Clairsville, started in the

bell tower of the burned church. A final Mass for St. Mary parishioners was celebrated May 27, 2012, in the Lafferty Volunteer Fire Department, located at the base of the hill, below the destroyed church.

Two years after the fire, Bishop Monforton decreed that the church would close and its territory attached to St. Paul Parish, Flushing, which has since closed. Therefore, parishioners were attached to St. Mary Parish, St. Clairsville, where Father Thomas A. Chillog is pastor. He assisted Bishop Monforton in the rite of blessing in the chapel, which will be used as a funeral chapel, only, Father Chillog said.

The Lafferty church predated the Diocese of Steubenville. A previous pastor, Father Chester J. Pabin, who was at the chapel blessing and is parochial vicar to Father Wayne E. Morris in the Noble County Catholic community, points to St. Mary parishioners attending Mass from 1915-21 in a

To Page 3

Christmas Message 2016



"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him 'Emmanuel,' which means, 'God is with us'" (Mt 1:23).

A light has shown for all to see at this humble and modest Nativity scene, for the Virgin Mary has given birth to Jesus Christ, Our Lord. How appropriate that in such simple beginnings in the eyes of the world that our Savior is born, one who will re-create the entire world.

May you and your family enjoy the birthday of the Christ Child. A blessed Christmas to all.

• Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton

'Ask the Bishop'

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

Q: Why do we worship God?

**Carson Chavez
Marietta**

A: The First Commandment in the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) is quite clear Who deserves all of our worship, and only He, namely, God. Furthermore, as we hear time and time again: God is love. Out of that very love, God created us in his own image, and when our first parents betrayed him and brought original sin into the world, Jesus Christ was God's loving response for our salvation. We worship God, not simply because he created us, no, it goes much deeper than that.

Jesus' very words in the Lord's Prayer instruct us that we worship God alone, and that, in fact, he listens to our prayers. God has given you and me each a role in His plan for our salvation. Remember how Jesus responded to a question about the most important commandment: that first we should love God, and then the second is to love neighbor as ourselves.

God is the source of all the good gifts in our lives, from family to anything with which we have been blessed. When we choose to worship God alone we freely accept the gifts of faith, hope and love. The Catechism of the Catholic Church instructs how we are called to place all of our faith in God, which means we acknowledge his divine authority. We place all of our hope in God for his limitless goodness and mercy. And, finally, we love God for all the treasures he has bestowed upon us, especially in the sacraments, as God's divine life is dispensed to us. God remains with us. We respond to his compassionate love and mercy in our daily worship.

Q: What is God doing while we are down here on earth?

**Owen Krason
Marietta**

A: This is a good question to follow the first one. God is with you and me at this very moment. He wants us to hear his voice and to recognize his loving presence. For instance, when you participate in the

sacraments, you encounter God. In the Eucharist, you receive the Body and Blood of Jesus. In the Sacrament of Penance, you speak directly to Jesus who is present in the person of the priest. Some may think that after God created the world he sat back, sort of like a clockmaker who builds a clock, sets the time, and sits back to watch it perform the measurement of time. Unlike the clockmaker, God is constantly involved in your life and mine. We just need to employ that keen eye of faith in order to recognize God's presence among us.

Jesus teaches us that we should recognize him in our neighbor, and we should treat others as we would treat Jesus. God has entrusted us with each other and has given each one of us a vocation in order to carry out his mission. The Church is the Body of Christ. Jesus has set us on a mission to share the Gospel, and we are to reach out to our neighbors in order that they may recognize God's presence among us. What God is doing is us. He leads us and remains with us in every situation and person we encounter.

We, also, are very aware that God does not watch us from a distance. He is very near to us, no matter where we find ourselves. Remember, Jesus tells us that he will never leave us. How greatly blessed we are to be deeply loved and treasured by God.

Q: How do we know God's will for us?

**Jessica Tysz
Steubenville**

A: Now that we have established God's enduring love for us and his constant presence with us, this question provides us with the answer to discerning his will for us. Jesus Christ provides us the perfect attitude in which to determine God's will: to be both humble and obedient in attitude. Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer, underscoring the fact you and I have a role in doing the Father's will. Jesus gave us the instruction in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." The right attitude removes distractions and gives us laser focus on God's will for us. Still, this entails much effort, for the distractions in this world are plenty and can be quite convincing if we do not exercise clarity of faith, critical thought and prudential judgment.

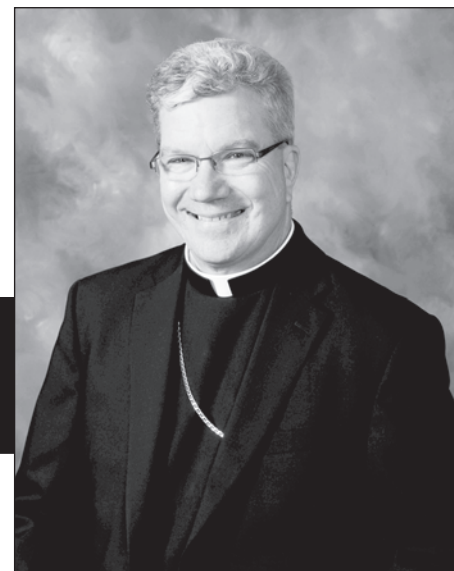
Prayer provides us the ability to discern

God's will for us, for prayer is conversation with God. While both personal and communal prayer is integral to our spiritual journey, the sacraments are critical to our discernment process. For instance, reception of the Holy Spirit at the Sacrament of Confirmation equips us for active participation in the Church.

Frequent reception of the Body and Blood of Christ strengthens our resolve to do God's work, and we should not forget that the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life. Frequent celebration of the Sacrament of Penance inclines one's heart to the will of God, creating space for Jesus.

For one who is considering a priestly or religious vocation in the Church, you may want to speak with a priest or a religious. They would have traveled a similar discernment path as you and should be able to assist you in asking the right questions.

In other words, in order to know God's will for you, you should make room for Jesus in your daily life. Jesus is always with us. Jesus continues to knock on the door



Bishop Monforton

of your heart and mine. We find comfort that the Catholic Church has a treasury of ways, gifts from God himself, in which we can correctly respond to his invitation.

As we venture as faithful pilgrims discerning God's will for us, *may God bless you and your family this New Year of Our Lord 2017.*

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

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Bishop blesses

From Page 1

boxcar church, a little more than a mile west of the burned church.

Records are unclear as to whether the original name during the beginning years of the parish was St. Peter or St. Mary. When the parish was relocated to its hilltop Lafferty location in 1921, the name St. Mary was solidified. A school complemented the parish. On another hilltop, not far from the church, a cemetery was used to bury the dead of the parish, which recorded its largest membership in the 1920s, when deep shaft mines in the area were prevalent, along with company houses for miners and their large families.

By 1945, strip mining replaced the underground mines and businesses gradually closed in Lafferty, changing it to a residential and retirement town, church history records.

A man who moved to Lafferty in 1948 with his father, mother, sister and two brothers – Joe Heisler – was among those at the cemetery chapel blessing. He said he and his family moved to Lafferty to join St. Mary Parish and to enable the youth to attend the school attached to the parish.

“In fact our family purchased the parish rectory from the diocese for our home,” he wrote to Father Kihm. At the time the Heisler family bought the rectory, a new rectory was being built, just east of the first rectory, which was being used as a convent, Heisler wrote.

“While attending St. Mary School, I played the organ for the high Masses for several years,” Heisler said. “I was also the janitor. My major responsibilities were mowing the grass in the summer, lots of it. Clearing the sidewalks and steps of snow and ice in the winter, also, lots of it. But, the primary responsibility was to maintain the furnaces to heat the church, convent and school. The new rectory used a fuel oil furnace, so no coal to shovel. Many cold nights required the fire to be stoked all night. The heat loss of those buildings was incredible, so as soon as the fires cooled, so did the buildings. I remember those nights well.

“I am proud of what I did. ... It was for our parish. It was not a big thing, many did much more. That little parish kept us all together, kept us striving to reach a common goal. We all did our part in making the school, the parish and our little town a better place to live and to raise children.” Parishioners, Heisler said, among other things, built landscape walls to improve the appearance and reduce soil

erosion, built a cistern for the convent so the nuns would have water through the summer, constructed a playground and bathrooms at the school and built a fence around the cemetery to keep the cows from tipping over the grave markers and walking on the graves. “We did these things because we loved the parish, the people in it,” Heisler wrote. “We appreciated the tireless and determined effort of the clergy to make it all work.”

The parish continued to be meaningful to St. Mary parishioners, even to those who had moved away, Heisler wrote. “Every significant event that ever happened in Lafferty, St. Mary’s played a major role. ...”

Now, Heisler said the cemetery chapel will be a place where former St. Mary parishioners can gather to pray for friends and loved ones who have departed.

The men and women who milled about prior to the start of the rite of blessing expressed sentiments like Heisler’s – that St. Mary Church played an important role in their lives and that the chapel will be a place to say final goodbyes to those buried in plots, visible close-by.

The cemetery was purchased in 1924 from Thomas Jordan, said Chester “Bob” Burlenski, president of the Gate of Heaven cemetery committee. Cost of the eight acres was \$1,000.

There are 67 veterans buried in the cemetery, Burlenski tabulated, and a priest, he said. Father Paul D. Welton, who served St. Mary Parish, Lafferty, for 11 years in the 1980s and 1990s, was buried in Gate of Heaven Cemetery on his death in 2000. Other priests have plots, Burlenski added.

Greg Dutton, who grew up in the Lafferty area, was the architect on the chapel. Dutton is associated with Midland Architecture, Columbus, Ohio, and Pittsburgh.

Dutton said his inspiration for the structure, made of stone and wood, came from farms in the locale.

Withrow Contracting, Flushing, was contractor on the chapel, which, Father Kihm said, has artifacts from the burned church incorporated in the construction. Construction began in the fall of 2015.

Pews in the chapel are from St. Paul Church, Flushing.

Burlenski said the cemetery is maintained through grave sales (sites are available) and donations.

Others on the cemetery committee include Nancy Miller, vice president; Linda Burrough, treasurer; Jill Clift, secretary; and William Ujek.

Father Chillog oversees the operation.

Bishop Monforton’s Schedule

January

- 1 New Year’s Day Mass, Holy Family Church, Steubenville, 11 a.m.
- 2 Christmas dinner with seminarians, Steubenville, 5 p.m.
- 3 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 7 a.m.
- 4 Radio segment WDEO 990 AM, 10:15 a.m.
- 5 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 8:30 a.m.
- 6 Catholic Central High School Crusaders, boys’ basketball game, Catholic Central High School gymnasium, Steubenville, 7 p.m.
- 8 Mass of the Epiphany, Daughters of the Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus, Steubenville, 11 a.m.
- 9 Catholic Central High School Lady Crusaders, basketball game, Catholic Central High School, gymnasium, Steubenville, 7 p.m.
- 10 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 7 a.m. Dinner with priests, Steubenville, 5 p.m.
- 11 Dinner with priests, Marietta, 5 p.m.
- 12 Mass, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, 7:45 a.m.

Steubenville Diocese returned to mission status

STEUBENVILLE — The Diocese of Steubenville has been declared a Mission Diocese by Catholic Extension.

Sister Mary Brigid Callan, a Family of Jacopa, Steubenville, novice and diocesan stewardship and development director, announced that the diocese has been returned to mission status by Catholic Extension, which supports poor Catholic communities across the United States and invests in people, infrastructure and ministries, as a national fundraising organization.

Catholic Extension was founded in 1905 in Lapeer, Michigan, by Father Francis Kelly to bring the church to Catholics in geographically isolated areas. Relocated to Chicago in 1907, Catholic Extension was designated as a papal society in 1910 by Pope Pius X. The pope appoints Catholic Extension’s president. Catholic Extension has provided more than 12,000 grants to help build, repair or renovate churches and church facilities across the nation. Catholic Extension has provided more than \$550 million in total funding since 1906.

With the inclusion of the Steubenville Diocese, there are 90 mission dioceses across the U.S. With the goal to grow and strengthen the Catholic Church in America, Catholic Extension collaborates with mission dioceses to address needs: foundational support of missions, educating seminarians and lay leaders, construction/renovation of facilities, youth ministry and religious education and building the internal capacity of dioceses, information from Catholic Extension reads.

Catholic Extension funding to the Steubenville Diocese began as early as 1947 and has provided at least \$2,549,785

in funding through 2002. Some grants helped with the construction or renovation of churches and other church facilities, education of seminarians, support of campus ministry, ministry in Appalachian areas of Morgan, Athens, Meigs and Gallia counties, evangelization and pastoral ministry.

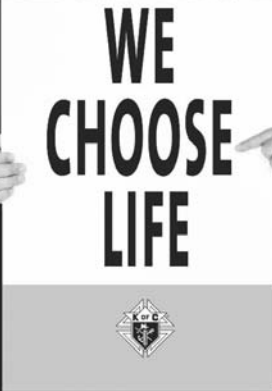
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At year's end, properties change hands in downtown Steubenville



Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton signs documents, prepared by Thomas S. Wilson, attorney, Steubenville Diocese, Office of Civil Law, center, that gives ownership of a building, owned by the diocese in downtown Steubenville, to Mark Nelson, seated right. The building, next door to the 422 Washington St. chancery, has been vacant for a number of years. It was last used for Samaritan House, a thrift store that provides food in an emergency, also. Samaritan House continues to operate from a Washington Street location. Nelson said he and his family have purchased the building, at one time home to a fraternal organization. The building, also, has housed The College of Steubenville, now Franciscan University of Steubenville. The buy by the Nelsons brings to four the number of buildings they own in downtown Steubenville, Mark Nelson said. "I love historical buildings and the history they contain." Mark Nelson dated the Washington Street building his family bought from the diocese to a 1922 construction date. The family expects to rehabilitate the building for an as yet undecided use, he said. (Photo by DeFrancis)



While the Rev. Jim Winkler, district superintendent, Ohio Valley District, East Ohio Conference, United Methodist Church, third from left, looks on with Franciscan Sister Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother Katherine Caldwell, Gary Cain, realtor, and Simpson United Methodist Church trustees John Taylor and David Smith, Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton signs documents that Attorney Thomas S. Wilson, Steubenville Diocese, Office of Civil Law, offers. The diocese bought the Slack Street, Steubenville, Simpson United Methodist Church for inclusion in "Cathedral Square," which includes Holy Name Cathedral. Forced to close because of dwindling membership, Simpson church – which will be renamed the Sacred Heart Center of Hope – will be used for a soup kitchen and trauma counseling center. (Photo by DeFrancis)

USCCB president urges Catholics to give gift of themselves in New Year

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In his message for Christmas, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, encouraged Catholics to visit the manger this Christmas and reflect on how to give of themselves in the New Year.

"My brothers and sisters in Christ, like the Magi and the shepherds before us, we are making our Christmas journey to see the newborn Savior," he said Dec. 20. "Centuries ago, gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh greeted the infant Jesus. People in need of God's love rejoiced in the news of his birth and offered gifts of gratitude.

"This Christmas, let us also visit the manger and give the gift of ourselves. This gift arises from our desire and search for peace at this time and place," Cardinal DiNardo said.

Here is the full text of Cardinal DiNardo's Christmas message, The Gift of Ourselves:

My brothers and sisters in Christ, like the Magi and the shepherds before us, we are making our Christmas journey to see the newborn Savior. Centuries ago, gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh greeted the infant Jesus. People in need of God's love rejoiced in the news of his birth and offered

gifts of gratitude. This Christmas, let us also visit the manger and give the gift of ourselves. This gift arises from our desire and search for peace at this time and place.

We discover the fragile innocence of hope in the eyes of a newborn baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Mary and Joseph welcomed this young hope, for Jesus made known, in his very Person, the promise of "great joy that will be for all people." We can nurture that same hope today. We do this by greeting one another in love and charity, embracing civility and not letting our differences hide the dignity and beauty God has given each of us as his children.

Allow me to say a special word to our sisters and brothers who find themselves immigrants and refugees on Christmas Day. In you, we see the very struggles of the Holy Family. From the angel of the

Lord, Joseph heard the call to "rise and flee" in order to keep Mary and Jesus

safe from violence at home. The Catholic Church in the United States is praying for you and is working to welcome you as we would the Holy Family.

We remain a people in need of God's love this Christmas, especially the unborn or unemployed, the suffering and sick, the lonely and the grieving. Let us pray the Holy Spirit will come upon us as he overshadowed the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation so that filled with the love of her Son, we will "proclaim the greatness of the Lord." Merry Christmas!

(A video version of his message can be viewed on Facebook at <http://tinyurl.com/j839prc>.)



Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton joins youth and chaperones from Hearts of Fire, Community of God's Love, Steubenville, who stopped in the chancery to carol during a mission in downtown Steubenville. The group offered songs, prayer and canned goods to those in need. (Photo by DeFrancis)

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First parish networking sessions held under Thompson's leadership

STEUBENVILLE — The first of what is hoped to be biannual parish networking sessions has been conducted in four separate locations in the Diocese of Steubenville.

Martin B. Thompson, director of information and technology for the diocese and associate director of the annual Diocesan/Parish Share Campaign, came up with the idea for the sessions, which he said he hopes will grow into a group of parish staff and volunteers who gather to share knowledge and to learn from one another. "These networking sessions were created with the hope they will grow to be a successful and useful tool for parish staff and volunteers from across the diocese to better serve the people of their parish or parishes," Thompson said.

They are designed to build community, Thompson continued of his planned sessions, supported by Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton.

Paid staff, pastors, parochial vicars and volunteers who are involved in the day-to-day operations of a parish office are the invitees.

chael, Carlisle, and St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Fulda; Father Victor P. Cinson, pastor, St. Francis Xavier, Malvern, and St. Gabriel, Minerva; Father Daniel Heusel, pastor, St. John, Bellaire, and Sacred Heart, Neffs; Father Timothy J. Shannon, pastor, Our Lady of Mercy, Lowell, and St. Henry, Harriettsville; Father David L. Huffman, pastor, St. Joseph and St. Lawrence O'Toole, Ironton, and administrator, St. Mary Mission, Pine Grove; Father Thomas F. Hamm, pastor, St. Louis, Gallipolis; and Father John J. "Jack" McCoy, pastor,

St. Joseph, Amsterdam, and St. John Fisher, Richmond.

Other participants – secretaries, computer technicians and finance personnel – included Vickie Bland, Suzanne Runkle, Audrey Steed, Maureen Dimmerling, Michelle Fouts, Peggy Romine, Colleen Mackey, Karen Carlier, Kathy DiGregory, Fran Shufelt, Christine Bracone, Terri Schumacher, Mary Ann Stephens, Cindy Troy, Susan



Father David L. Huffman, back, and Father Thomas F. Hamm, right, were among the participants at the parish networking session. Others are Mary Jo Ackerman, Eileen Marchese, Nancy Rudmann and Mary Anne Bokovitz. (Photos by Thompson)



Participants at a parish networking session in St. Agnes Church, Mingo Junction, are its parish pastor, Father James M. Dunfee, front left, and Vickie Bland, Suzanne Runkle, Audrey Steed, Maureen Dimmerling, Michelle Fouts, Peggy Romine, Colleen Mackey, Karen Carlier, Kathy DiGregory and Fran Shufelt, as well as Father John J. "Jack" McCoy, back left, Father Wayne E. Morris and Father Victor P. Cinson, back right.

An estimated 40 people from the 57 parishes in the diocese came together at the first meetings, earlier this month, Thompson said. They were from St. Agnes Parish, Mingo Junction; St. Joseph, Bridgeport; St. Peter, Steubenville; St. Stephen, Caldwell; St. Joseph, Toronto; St. Gabriel, Minerva; Holy Family, Steubenville; St. John Fisher, Richmond; St. Frances Cabrini, Colerain; Blessed Sacrament, Wintersville; Our Lady of Mercy, Carrollton; Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Barnesville; St. John, Bellaire; St. Mary, Martins Ferry; St. Mary, St. Clairsville; St. Bernard, Beverly; St. Ambrose, Little Hocking; St. Mary of the Hills, Buchtel; Our Lady of Mercy, Lowell; St. Joseph, Ironton; St. Ann, Chesapeake; and St. Louis, Gallipolis. They included people who serve parishes – sometimes more than the one where they have their offices – as secretaries, office managers, finance staffers and managers and on computers.

Parishes that hosted the networking sessions included St. Agnes, Mingo Junction; St. Joseph, Bridgeport; St. Ambrose, Little Hocking; and St. Louis, Gallipolis.

Priest participants included Father James M. Dunfee, pastor, St. Agnes Parish, Mingo Junction; Father Wayne E. Morris, pastor, Noble County Catholic community of Corpus Christi, Belle Valley, St. Stephen, Caldwell, St. Mi-

Gibson, Karen Gress, Cathy Holubeck, Fran Nottingham, Debbie Heiss, Kim Jenkins, Dianna Halaj, Joan Jacobsen, Pamela Burns, Martha Fliehman, Thomas Fliehman, Mary Jo Ackerman, Nancy Rudmann, Eileen Marchese and Mary Anne Bokovitz.

During his 29 years of employment with the diocese, Thompson said that he has worked with the people in parish offices and built relationships with them, as together they have moved through challenges and figured out solutions. Therefore, he said, "I thought it may help the individuals if we gathered as a group to learn and share with each other. No matter what our job title is, we are all trying to accomplish the same mission of spreading the Gospel and building God's kingdom."

Topics of discussion and demonstrations given included ones on depositing Mass collections and crediting donations to individuals; recording contributions and generating a record for the contributor; naming companies available for creating envelopes and distributing the envelopes to parishioners; paying bills and filing the information;

generating a parish financial report; formatting a budget and receiving labels and statistics from diocesan census software.

As plans for future parish networking sessions were discussed, Thompson said the agreement came to move them to different parishes to enable attendees to view their fellow parishioners' churches. Attendees will be able to tour the church where the sessions are held. Though host churches may be a short distance from the attendees' home parish, many have never visited the neighboring churches, Thompson said. "I personally have visited parish offices throughout the diocese dozens of times, but may have never entered the church itself."

Future topics are expected to include sacramental records, archiving and financial charts.



Parish networking session participants include Father Timothy J. Shannon, pastor, and Debbie Heiss, Kim Jenkins, Dianna Halaj, Joan Jacobsen, Pamela Burns, Martha Fliehman and Thomas Fliehman.

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St. John Paul II The New People of God

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon

St. Pope John Paul II tells us: "... (T)he coming of the Holy Spirit, as the fulfillment of the 'new covenant in Christ's blood,' gives rise to the new people of God." He quotes: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pt 2:9). The quotation is based on the words of God to Moses that he was to convey to the Israelites who were camped near Mount Sinai: "You will be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). Peter applied it to the new converts to Christianity, beginning with those present with the apostles when they received the Holy Spirit 50 days after Our Lord's resurrection, as well as to all who were baptized that day and thereafter.

We know that the Chosen People of the old covenant did not live up to their exalted status. We might speculate about what history would have been like had they been faithful. Priesthood in both Old Testament and New applies to those who minister in the name of God to the people and in the name of the people to God. The priest is a mediator, therefore, one who stands between God and the people as a go-between, a conduit, so to speak, communicating the people's worship and needs to God and God's blessings to the people. The Israelite nation, if it had accepted Christ, would presumably have become God's chosen instrument for communicating his plan for the human race to the rest of mankind and implementing its fulfillment. The whole nation would, therefore, become the first apostles. Obviously, that was not to be, as God foresaw from all eternity. But Jesus would choose a new group, beginning with a tiny band of chosen disciples, instead of a whole nation. They, not that nation, would spread the good news of the kingdom of God to the world, as taught to them by the Son of God himself. Their converts, all baptized Christians, would be the new sharers of that priestly status as evangelizers by witness if not also by word. The Second Vatican Council has reaffirmed that status under the title of "priesthood of the faithful." The council pointed out the distinction between the priesthood of the faithful and the priesthood of the sacrament of orders, a

subject for an extended discussion later.

Why were *we* chosen by God for the gift of faith and baptism? It's a mystery and will remain so, at least in the present life. Of course, all grace of God is a gift (after all, that's what the word "grace" means). It's "gratuitous," to use a bit of tautology, as are all God's gifts. That was well understood in Old Testament times. God said through Moses, "It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it was because the Lord loves you ..." (Dt 7:7-8). In the New Testament we read, "The wind blows where it wills ... but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with anyone born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:8). John Paul tells us: "The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual and a holy priesthood, that through all those works, which are those of the Christian, they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of him who called them out of darkness into his marvelous light."

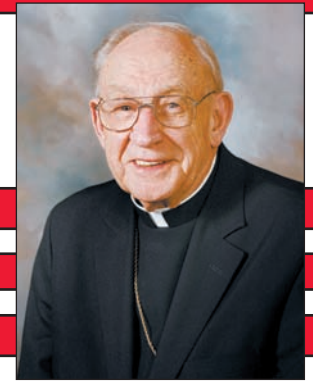
"The church, which originated in Christ's redemptive death, was manifested to the world on Pentecost Day by the work of the Holy Spirit." With this statement St. John Paul II introduces the relationship between Pentecost and the church. We use the name "Pentecost," in the sense that most Christians use it today, i.e., not to refer to the annual Israelite feast celebrated 50 days after that of Passover, but to that unique occasion when the apostles were recipients of the Holy Spirit as Jesus had promised them: "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses ... to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

On that occasion, we recall, there were present not only the 11 remaining apostles, but other disciples as well, including Mary, the mother of Jesus (see, Acts, Chapter 1, Verses 11-14). In effect, those present represented an assembly of the disciples of Jesus. An assembly is a group of persons called together for some purpose. The Latin word is "ecclesia" ("a calling together"). The English word "church"

"The church, which originated in Christ's redemptive death, was manifested to the world on Pentecost Day by the work of the Holy Spirit."

evolved from two Greek words: "Kyrie" ("lord" or "ruler") and "oikia" ("house" or "household"); hence: "the household of the Lord." We recall, also, that Jesus said to Peter after the latter's acknowledgement of Jesus's Messiahship, "You are rock ('petrus' in Latin), and upon this rock I will build my church" and the gates of the netherworld will not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). There are only two other times when the word "church" is found in the Gospels, both in Matthew, Chapter 18, Verse 17, where Jesus refers to the authority of the church to settle disputes: "If he refuses to listen to them (i.e., witnesses), tell the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as a gentile or tax collector." The word church, however, is found over 70 times in the rest of the New Testament, attesting to the fact that the early Christians were very much aware of the existence of the church as an institution founded by Christ himself. The often heard charge that Jesus did not found a church does not stand up to the facts.

John Paul says: "The era of the church began with the 'coming,' that is to say, with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem, together with Mary, the Lord's mother." The pope points out several analogies: One, to a "new creation," analogous to the first creation of the universe when the "Spirit of God moved upon the waters" (Gn 1:2). Another analogy is to the restoration of the kingdom of Israel by the Messiah, often foretold by the Old Testament prophets. What was no doubt unclear to the prophets at the time was that the restored kingdom would be that of the new Israel, the new people of God, the Christian church, open to all mankind: "That they may all be one, even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21).



Bishop Sheldon

Pope Francis' Christmas Message

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The song of the angels that heralded the birth of Christ urges men and women to seek peace in a world divided by war, terrorism and greed, Pope Francis said.

"Today this message goes out to the ends of the earth to reach all peoples, especially those scarred by war and harsh conflicts that seem stronger than the yearning for peace," the pope said Dec. 25.

Migrants, refugees, children suffering due to hunger and war, victims of human trafficking as well as social and economic unrest were also remembered by the pope.

"Peace to the peoples who suffer because of the economic ambitions of the few, because of the sheer greed and the idolatry of money, which leads to slavery," he said.

An estimated 40,000 people slowly made their way through security checkpoints into St. Peter's Square to attend the pope's solemn Christmas blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world).

Heightened security following the Dec. 19 terrorist attack in Berlin, Germany, was evident as police cordoned off streets and established multiple checkpoints throughout the area.

While police presence is standard for major events in St. Peter's, the added security was a sign of the times where

crowded areas have become a target for terrorists.

The pope prayed for "peace to those who have lost a person dear to them as a result of brutal acts of terrorism that has sown fear and death into the hearts of so many countries and cities."

Countries ravaged by the scourge of war were also in the pope's thoughts, particularly in "the war-torn land of Syria, where far too much blood has been spilled," especially in the city Aleppo. The pope called on the world to support the people of Syria with humanitarian assistance and to put an end to the conflict.

"It is time for weapons to be silenced forever and the international community to actively seek a negotiated solution so that civil coexistence can be restored in the country," he said.

The pope appealed for peace for the people of Ukraine, "who to this day suffer the consequences of the conflict."

The Vatican announced Dec. 23 that the first installment of 6 million euro (\$6.3 million) would be distributed on Christmas Day to assist in relief efforts in Ukraine. Earlier this year, the pope called for a collection across churches in Europe to help the people of the war-torn country.

Iraq, Libya and Yemen, "where their peoples suffer war and the brutality of terrorism," were in the pope's prayers so that they may "be able to once again find unity and harmony."

The pope also remembered Africa, especially Nigeria where fundamentalist terrorism "exploits children in order to perpetrate horror and death" as well as South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, calling on their leaders to choose the path of dialogue rather than "the mindset of conflict."

He also prayed for peace in the Holy Land and that

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Advent, Christmas, Epiphany: Moving On

By Father Paul J. Walker

Now that the chaos of shopping and gift lists, of broken toys and the return of unwanted or ill-fitting items to frustrated gift-return clerks is past, there is time to attend to a theological reflection on the themes that this first segment of the liturgical year offers. Maybe it is more accurate to think in terms of one great “event” that continues to offer any number of insights or pathways into the great mystery’s mysterious heart. The stories of Matthew and Luke and the visions and dreams of Isaiah are at the service of this event which is stirring out at the limits of our perception: the coming of God into human history.

This opening salvo of the liturgical year calls us out of the rut of our routine notions and ordinary thought patterns. We easily cover up the reality that we should be discovering. In the midst of all the Christmas hoopla and consumer frenzy (which began in October), we usually are not very receptive to the silent sway of God’s mystery in our midst – eternity moving in time. We could say that we suffer from a malady of forgetfulness – a deliberate effort to forget the coming of God into human history. This forgetting lies at the heart of so many horrors that continue to inflict themselves on the human race. This coming of God down among us human beings is forever inscribed in our consciousness. It is the promise of a future already set in irreversible motion by this God who comes and who is yet to come.

The central teaching of our Christian faith is that God himself has entered the whole historical process of our human existence. The Christmas-Epiphany mystery will

require a leap of faith. It is like a shot in the dark, a journey into a future that is not entirely under our control. Traveling this way will mean it is necessary to accept change and undergo transformation. Unfortunately, such change is not painless. I am never comfortable with this “shot in the dark” approach to what my future holds. I too easily give in to my longing for security; I want to see what lies ahead and have some control over it. But the mystery and message of this past season remind me that God does not hide himself away in his awesome transcendence, having no tangible shape or form. He is, rather, Emmanuel, God *with* us. He has entered our time, become visible on our horizon, and is already part of our future. He is a God who is *forever* coming, *forever* weaving himself into the very fabric of our life in this world.

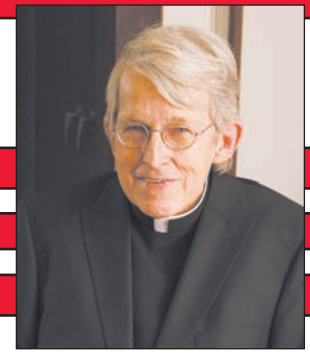
And, yet, my Christian faith, rooted in the church’s sacred books and ongoing tradition, tells me that in a real sense the “holy night” of Christ’s coming is still out there ahead of this world; the prophets’ “Day of the Lord” is still on the way. The New Testament does not simply record past events. Its final book closes the biblical revelation with an *amen* pronounced on what is yet to come: “Maranatha,” “Come, Lord Jesus!”

There is no escape from this God who comes. In a sense, he haunts us, especially when we try to escape or ignore that coming, when we fill up our life and our hope for tomorrow on what St. Paul is at pains to tell us, “is passing away”; then, we are simply forced to admit that there is no escaping this invasion; for when we try, we are only running from who we as humankind truly are: the locale, the very center of the advent of God.

I suppose the anxiety that often accompanies my journey is my failure to recognize and acknowledge this God who is, as T.S. Eliot remarked, “The still point of the turning world.” So here at the beginning of

the church year, and the calendar year I guess, I pray for patience – patience to cultivate in my life those things that require a slow, kind of silent blossoming: love, mutual understanding, poverty of spirit (and otherwise), fidelity, forgiveness, all those qualities that marked the life of the one who became Emmanuel. If we let into our life the Christ whom Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI once reminded us in his inaugural homily (2005) takes “nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great ... in his friendship are the doors of life opened wide ... when we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return ... we find true life.” Then we are truly free.

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, McConnelsville, and celebrate Masses in St. James Church there and write a regular column for The Steubenville Register.



Father Walker

Incarnation – God Is With Us

By Father Ron Rolheiser

For many of us, I suspect, it gets harder each year to capture the mood of Christmas. About the only thing that still warms our hearts are memories, memories of younger, more naive days when the lights and carols, Christmas trees

and gifts, still excited us. But, we’re adult now, and, so too, it seems, is our world. Much of our joy in anticipating Christmas is blunted by many things, not least by the commercialism that today is characterized by excess.

By late October, we already see Christ-

mas decorations, Santa is around in November, and December greets us with series of Christmas parties, which exhaust us long before Dec. 25th. So, how can we rally some spirit for Christmas Day?

It’s not easy, and commercialism and excess are not our only obstacles. More serious are the times. Can we, amid the many cruelties of this year, warm up to a season of tinsel and festivity? Can we continue to romanticize the pilgrimage of one poor couple searching for shelter 2,000 years ago amidst the plight of the millions of refugees today who are journeying without even a stable as a refuge? Does it mean anything to speak of peace after various elections this year polarized our nations and left millions unable to speak civilly to their neighbors? Where exactly is the peace and goodwill in our world today?

Closer to home, there are our own personal tragedies:

the death of loved ones, lost marriages, lost families, lost health, lost jobs, lost time, tiredness, frustration. How do we celebrate the birth of a redeemer in a world which looks shockingly unredeemed and with hearts that mostly feel heavy and fatigued? The Christmas story is not easily made credible. How do we maintain the belief that God came down from heaven, took on human flesh, conquered all suffering, and altered the course of human history?

This isn’t easy to believe amidst all the evidence that seems to contradict it, but its credibility is contingent upon it being properly understood. Christmas is not a magical event, a Cinderella story without midnight. Rather its very center speaks of humiliation, pain and forced fleeing which is not unlike that being experienced by millions of refugees and victims of injustice on our planet today. The Christmas story mirrors the struggle that’s being experienced within our own world and within our own tired hearts.

Incarnation is not yet the Resurrection. Flesh in Jesus, as in us, is human, vulnerable, weak, incomplete, needy, painfully full of limit, suffering. Christmas celebrates Christ’s birth into these things, not his removal of them. Christ redeems limit, evil, sin and pain. But, they are not abolished. Given that truth, we can celebrate at Christ’s birth without in any way denying or trivializing the real evil in our world and the real pain in our lives. Christmas is a challenge to celebrate while still in pain.

The incarnate God is called Emmanuel, a name which means *God-is-with-us*. That fact does not mean immediate festive joy. Our world remains wounded, and wars, strikes, selfishness and bitterness linger. Our hearts, too, remain wounded. Pain lingers. For a Christian, just as for everyone else, there will be incompleteness, illness, death, senseless hurt, broken dreams, cold, hungry, lonely days of bitterness and a lifetime of inconsummation. Reality can be harsh and Christmas does not ask us to make make-believe. The Incarnation does not promise heaven on earth. It promises

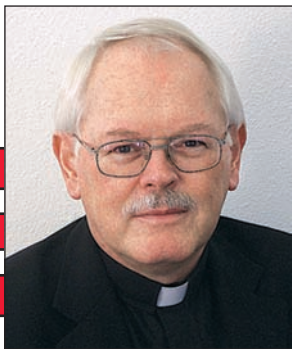
heaven in heaven. Here, on earth, it promises us something else – *God’s presence in our lives*. This presence redeems because knowing that God is with us is what ultimately empowers us to give up bitterness, to forgive, and to move beyond cynicism and bitterness. When God is with us then pain and happiness are not mutually exclusive and the agonies and riddles of life do not exclude deep meaning and deep joy.

In the words of Avery Dulles: “The Incarnation does not provide us with a ladder by which to escape from the ambiguities of life and scale the heights of heaven. Rather, it enables us to burrow deep into the heart of planet earth and find it shimmering with divinity.” George Orwell prophesied that our world would eventually be taken over by tyranny, torture, double-think and a broken human spirit. To some extent this is true. We’re a long ways from being whole and happy, still deeply in exile.

However, we need to celebrate Christmas 2016 heartily. Maybe we won’t feel the same excitement we once felt as children, when we were excited about tinsel, lights, Christmas carols, and special gifts and special food. Some of that excitement isn’t available to us anymore. But, something more important is still available, namely, the sense that God is with us in our lives, in our joys, as well as in our shortcomings.

The word was made flesh. That’s an incredible thing, something that should be celebrated with tinsel, lights and songs of joy. If we understand Christmas, the carols will still flow naturally from our lips.

Father Rolheiser is a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate priest, who is president of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio. He, too, is a lecturer and retreat master, an author and a widely circulated newspaper columnist. For more information on Father Rolheiser, visit www.ronrolheiser.com.



Father Rolheiser

During October, people in the pews in diocesan churches counted

Parishes	Persons	Families	**Seating Capacity	1st Mass	2nd Mass	3rd Mass	4th Mass	5th Mass	6th Mass	7th Mass	2015	2016
	(from IT Census)										Average Attendance	
Adena, St. Casimir	304	150	313	53	76						122	129
Amsterdam, St. Joseph	198	103	120	58	79						122	137
Athens, Christ the King	910	371	320	129	243	161					553	534
Athens, St. Paul	608	244	236	147	115						305	262
Barnesville, Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary	485	213	260	91.6	81.2	86					247	258
Bellaire, St. John the Evangelist	1,140	509	548	141	142						256	283
Belle Valley, Corpus Christi	127	65	106	94							100	94
Beverly, St. Bernard	871	295	252	72	98	159					385	329
Bridgeport, St. Anthony	198	113	200	78							81	78
Bridgeport, St. Joseph	582	301	246	117	83.4	103					298	303
Cadiz, St. Teresa of Avila	240	108	162	72	80						138	152
Caldwell, St. Stephen	617	290	348	103	217.8						312	321
Cambridge, Christ Our Light	1,982	848		135	137	245.8	90				594	608
Cambridge, St. Benedict	see above	see above	361									
Lore City, Sts. Peter & Paul Oratory	see above	see above	220									
Carlisle, St. Michael	142	60	152	83							85	83
Carrollton, Our Lady of Mercy	337	135	136	61	136						167	197
Chesapeake, St. Ann	317	130	133	47	55	62					177	164
Churchtown, St. John the Baptist	826	297	222	210.6	150	288					667	649
Colerain, St. Frances Cabrini	646	309	330	105	156						262	261
Dillonvale, St. Adalbert	391	211	244	108							129	108
Fulda, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception	259	122	412	99	110						228	210
Gallipolis, St. Louis	530	202	136	60	69	117					260	247
Glouster, Holy Cross	230	118	222	23	95.6						135	118
Harriettsville, St. Henry	118	42	168	77							86	77
Hopedale, Sacred Heart	161	55	126	57							78	57
Ironton, Catholic Community:			837									
St. Joseph	937	406		171.4	222.6						430	394
St. Lawrence O'Toole	814	331				237					222	237
Little Hocking, St. Ambrose	566	255	394	87	90	140					303	317
Lowell, Our Lady of Mercy	382	154	200	93	123						235	216
Malvern, St. Francis Xavier	480	212	248	88	143						209	231
Marietta, Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption	2,203	942	568	298	213	365	305	84.2			1,312	1,265
Spanish Mass								5.2			7	5
Martins Ferry, St. Mary	519	280	274	93	94						196	187
McConnelsville, St. James	129	71	100	33	46						53	79
Miltonsburg, St. John the Baptist	232	103	182	86							92	86
Minerva, St. Gabriel	825	307	292	77	152						231	229
Mingo Junction, St. Agnes	972	485	356	94	178						289	272
Morges, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception	120	61	132	27	49						80	75
Neffs, Sacred Heart	345	160	176	27	73						91	100
Nelsonville, St. Mary of the Hills	125	56	130	33	46						69	79
Pomeroy, Sacred Heart	304	137	332	41	121						140	162
Powhatan Point, St. John Vianney	105	52	166	42.8							43	43
Richmond, St. John Fisher	296	119	165	59	119						162	178
St. Clairsville, St. Mary	2,641	1104	424	222	327	252					877	801
Shadyside, St. Mary	587	257	266	82.4	110						207	192
Steubenville, Holy Family	1,906	677	305	202	376	528					1,063	1,106
Steubenville, St. Peter	1,204	503	552	226	252	397	159				1,120	1,034
Steubenville, Triumph of the Cross:	2,624	1,249		176	188	234	224	246			1,096	1,068
Holy Name Cathedral	see above	see above	504									
Holy Rosary	see above	see above	337									

During October, people in the pews

From Page 8

Parishes	Persons	Families	**Seating Capacity	1st Mass	2nd Mass	3rd Mass	4th Mass	5th Mass	6th Mass	7th Mass	2015 Average	2016 Attendance
	(from IT Census)											
Temperanceville, St. Mary	97	47	154	46							60	46
Tiltonsville, St. Joseph	443	221	400	119							128	119
Toronto, St. Francis of Assisi	557	293	360	85	136						230	221
Toronto, St. Joseph	288	145	287	117							114	117
Wintersville, Blessed Sacrament	1,845	801	450	174	141		205				527	521
Wintersville, Our Lady of Lourdes	675	292	350			125.4					120	125
Woodsfield, St. Sylvester	419	202	272	74	112						212	186
Yorkville, St. Lucy	189	99	287	93							90	93
Missions:												
Freeport, St. Matthias	48	29	92	38							28	38
Pine Grove, St. Mary	102	61	150	89							84	89
Sardis, St. John Bosco	34	20	75	30							31	30
Other:												
Apostolate for Family Consecration				19	12						33	31
Youth Rally, Marietta				279							0	279
Youth Rally, Little Hocking											270	0
Christ the King Chapel, Franciscan University				200.5	834.25	206	162.75				1,270	1,404
2016 Totals	35232	15422		5,843	6,284	3,706	1,146	335	-	-	17,505	17,314

Previous Year	Persons	Families		1st Mass	2nd Mass	3rd Mass	4th Mass	5th Mass	6th Mass	7th Mass	Previous Years Totals	
2015 Totals:	33,769	15,519		6,020	5,992	3,810	1,227	216	240			17,505
2014 Totals:	34,847	16,006		6,097	6,285	3,888	1,139	443	252	-		18,286
2013 Totals:	35,603	16,412		6,303	6,268	3,676	1,360	570	222	220		18,619
2012 Totals:	36,030	16,722		7,418	6,347	3,776	1,029	260				18,823
2011 Totals	36,738	17,134		7,499	6,547	3,888	866	225				19,023
2010 Totals:	37,793	17,590		7,723	6,801	4,273	979	231				19,931
2009 Totals:	38,593	17,888		7,431	7,901	4,757	1,088	287				20,708
2008 Totals:	39,385	18,311		7,527	7,528	4,978	1,109	287				21,432
2007 Totals:	39,103	18,388		8,100	8,101	5,614	1,320	269				27,065
2006 Totals:	39,145	18,628		8,640	8,081	5,823	1,124	283	-			22,161
2005 Totals:	39,543	19,032		9,053	8,279	6,098	1,927	320	-			24,509
2004 Totals:	40,117	19,453		8,059	7,281	5,986	2,013	300	-			23,639
2003 Totals:	40,001	19,139		9,146	7,496	6,140	2,113	300	-			24,718
2002 Totals:	40,066	19,274		10,062	9,150	7,690	3,282	313	-			25,837
2001 Totals:	40,562	19,650		8,476	8,384	6,545	1,445	552	-			25,474
2000 Totals:	40,340	20,091		8,510	8,577	6,495	1,647	378	-			25,690
1999 Totals:	41,229	20,755		8,572	8,931	6,638	1,684	672	138			26,315
1998 Totals:	41,460	20,882		8,883	8,800	6,739	1,508	908	143			26,867
1997 Totals:	42,080	21,301		8,806	8,867	6,966	1,679	1,301	428			27,953
1996 Totals:	40,334	21,137		8,877	9,202	6,525	1,721	1,235	195			28,230
1995 Totals:	38,708	21,779		8,746	8,731	7,641	2,730	1,639	203			28,276
1994 Totals:	38,548	21,432		8,456	8,171	7,551	2,688	1,489	208			28,500
1993 Totals:	37,789	21,252		8,435	7,360	7,832	2,835	1,777	457			28,695
1992 Totals:	38,676	21,692		9,048	7,583	8,254	3,044	1,268	159			29,318

St. Mary Central, St. Clairsville, students – including Grace Miller, Elizabeth Steele, Ben Shields, Maddie Arbenz, Brenna Planey, Gavin Shields, Kellen Weidman, Laina Anderson, Brady Gallagher, Leah Butts, Jackson Dutton, Michael Gallagher, Victoria Trouten, Mikayla Hendershot, Marie Copeland and Emma Wright – display some of the coats and shoes that were purchased as part of the school’s annual “St. Nick service project,” said Principal Nannette Kennedy. During the past seven years, St. Mary Central students have raised money to purchase more than 300 coats, 100 pairs of shoes, 100 pairs of socks, along with underwear, gloves, mittens, scarves and hats. The clothing, useful especially during cold weather, is donated to St. Clairsville area organizations for distribution to children who need it, Kennedy said. St. Mary Central School Student Council plans dress-down and change-collection days to help fund the purchases, Kennedy explained. In addition, she said that to contribute to community service projects, St. Mary Central students often opt out of gift exchanges with classmates to instead assist the less fortunate. (Photo provided)



Pope

From Page 6

Israelis and Palestinians turn away from hate and revenge while having “the courage and determination to write a new page of history.”

Praying for an end to current tensions, the pope also called for peace in Venezuela, Colombia, Myanmar and the Korean peninsula

Christ’s birth, he said, is a sign of joy and a call for the world to contemplate “the child Jesus who gives hope once again to every person on the face of the earth.”

“‘For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.’ He is the ‘prince of peace’; let us welcome him.”

After his address, the bells of St. Peter’s rang loudly, pealing throughout the square as they did in the evening Dec. 24 following the proclamation of Jesus’ birth during Christmas Mass.

The darkness of the night sky over St. Peter’s Basilica was broken by the bright lights emanating from the colonnade and the Christmas tree from the square.

Temperatures just above 40 degrees didn’t stop thousands of people unable to enter the packed basilica from participating

in the Mass, sitting outside and watching the Mass on giant screens in St. Peter’s Square.

In his homily, the pope said the love of God is made visible at Christ’s birth on a night of glory, joy and light “which ... illuminates those who walk in darkness.”

The shepherds are a witness to “the enduring sign” of finding Jesus when they discover him wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger; a sign that is given to all Christians today, the pope said.

“If we want to celebrate Christmas authentically, we need to contemplate this sign: the fragile simplicity of a small newborn, the meekness of where he lies, the tender affection of the swaddling clothes. God is there,” he said.

This sign of humility, he added, also reveals a paradox: God who chose not to reveal himself through power, but rather through the “poverty of a stable” and “in the simplicity of life.”

“In order to discover him, we need to go there, where he is: we need to bow down, humble ourselves, make ourselves small,” the pope said.

The image of the child in the manger, he

continued, is a challenge for all Christians to “leave behind fleeting illusions” and “renounce insatiable claims.”

It is also a calling for the world to respond to the sufferings of children in this age who “suffer the squalid mangers that devour dignity: hiding underground to escape bombardment, on the pavements of a large city, at the bottom of a boat overlaid with immigrants,” the pope said.

“Let us allow ourselves to be challenged by the children who are not allowed to be born, by those who cry because no one satiates their hunger, by those who do not have toys in their hands, but rather weapons,” he said.

Christmas is not only a mystery of hope but also of sadness where “love is not received and life discarded” as seen by the indifference felt by Mary and Joseph “who found the doors closed and placed Jesus in a manger.”

That same indifference, he said, exists today when commercialism overshadows the light of God and “when we are concerned for gifts but cold toward those who are marginalized.”

“This worldliness has taken Christmas

hostage. It needs to be freed!” the pope said departing from his prepared remarks.

However, the hope of Christmas is the light that outshines this darkness and “draws us to himself” through his humble birth in Bethlehem,” he said.

Noting that Bethlehem means “house of bread,” the pope said that Jesus was born to nourish us, creating a “direct thread joining the manger and the cross.”

“In this way, he seems to tell us that he is born as bread for us; he enters life to give us his life; he comes into our world to give us his love. He does not come to devour or to command but to nourish and to serve,” the pope said.

Pope Francis said that like the shepherds, who although marginalized are chosen to witness the birth of Christ, Christians are reminded of God’s closeness and can enjoy the true spirit of Christmas: “the beauty of being loved by God.”

“Contemplating his humble and infinite love, let us say to him: thank you, thank you because you have done all this for me,” the pope said.

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Christmas reminds us of hope for the future, Pope Francis says

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The birth of Christ is a reminder for Christians to take a moment and reflect on the hope of salvation given by God to the world, Pope Francis said.

Those who are humble and poor like the shepherds come to realize the promise of hope that comes from trusting God and not from “their own securities, especially material goods,” the pope said Dec. 21 during his weekly general audience.

“Remember this: Our own securities will not save us.

“The only security that saves us is the hope in God which saves us, which is strong. It makes us walk through life with joy, with a desire to do good, with a desire to become happy for all

eternity,” the pope said.

Upon entering the Paul VI audience hall, the pope greeted people and received gifts and letters from well-wishers.

Approaching a crying child, the pope wiped her tears and did his best to calm her. After succeeding in consoling her, he then pointed to his cheek, which the toddler leaned toward and kissed.

Continuing his series of talks on Christian hope, the pope reflected on the birth of Jesus as the “source of hope” for the world.

God, he said, “does not abandon his people, he is near to them to the point of stripping himself of his divinity.”

“(God) entered into the world and gives us the strength to walk with him.

“God walks with us through Jesus and

walking with him toward the fullness of life gives us the strength to be in the present in a new way,” the pope said.

Hope, the pope continued, is never stagnant and the simplicity of the Nativity creche found in Christian households “transmits hope. Each character is immersed in this atmosphere of hope.”

The pope explained that each image found in the Nativity scene represents an aspect of this hope, such as the city of Bethlehem which, despite it not being a capital city, was the place chosen by divine providence, which “loves to act through the small and the humble.”

The figures of Joseph and Mary, who both believed in the words of the angel, can be seen gazing at the child they were told by God to name Jesus, the pope said.

“In that name there is hope for every man and woman because through that son of a woman, God will save humanity from sin and death,” he said.

The image of the shepherds, he continued, represents the humble and the poor who witness the long-awaited promise of hope and salvation while the angels singing at the birth of Christ represent the “praise and thanksgiving to God” expressed in Christian life.

“In these days, by contemplating the creche, we prepare ourselves for the Nativity of the Lord. It will truly be a feast if we receive Jesus, the seed of hope that God sows within the furrows of our personal history,” Pope Francis said.



St. Mary School eighth-grade Student Council members – from left, Trey Brown, Gabrielle Bradley, Cecelia Minard, Marie Rauch and Megan Becker – display some of the more than 800 items of food and 1,020 books they collected for the St. Vincent de Paul Society of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta. As is tradition, the Marietta school students offer service to others, said Principal Susan T. Rauch. Julia Brown and Molly Frye are advisers to the St. Mary School Student Council. (Photo provided)



St. John Central, Churchtown, students pose with food and personal items they and school staff collected during Advent, said Principal Larry Moegling. Virginia Dyar, St. John Central kindergarten teacher, chaired the collection, which will benefit EVE Inc. Begun in 1979, EVE aids victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. It provides emergency services to survivors and their families, advocacy, transitional housing, counseling, children’s programming, support groups, educational programs, legal advocacy and 24-hour hotline service, an EVE brochure reads. (Photo provided)

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

Athens — A “Decree on Child Protection” and safe environment workshop is scheduled for 10:30 a.m., Jan. 14, at Holy Family Center, which is located at Christ the King University Parish. To register or for additional information, telephone (740) 592-2711.

Fulda — Lisa Ruppel Saling was recently appointed president of the St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception CWC. Other officers include Karen Baker, vice president; JoAnn Steed, treasurer; Megan Saling, historian; and Angie Noll, auditor.

Marietta — Recently elected to serve a four-year term on the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish Advisory Council were Dennis Blatt, Tonya Booth and Jeanette Flowers.

Franciscan Sister celebrates

TORONTO — Franciscan Sister Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother Mary Ann Kessler is celebrating her 25th anniversary as a member of the religious community for which she now serves as reverend mother.



(Photo provided)

Sister Mary Ann

A native of rural Pennsylvania, Sister Mary Ann graduated from Franciscan University of Steubenville in 1988 with a degree in nursing. A year later, she joined the TOR Sisters, whose motherhouse is located in Toronto. She professed her vows in 1991.

Until 2003, when she was elected to general leadership for her religious community, Sister Mary Ann served as a nurse in active ministry.

During her years as a religious, Sister Mary Ann has ministered in downtown Steubenville, and evangelized through retreats, Holy Hours, parish missions and Franciscan University student mission trips.

Obituaries

Paula Anderson, 73, 275 N. Third St., Ironton, St. Lawrence O'Toole, Nov. 14.

Marlene Costello Battilochi, 87, Dillonvale, St. Adalbert, Dec. 13.

Ila Carpenter, 82, St. Stephen, Caldwell, Dec. 7.

Helen P. Chase, 76, Athens, St. Paul, Dec. 17.

Catherine L. Checkler, 65, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Dec. 17.

Emily M. Chicwak, 97, St. Stephen, Caldwell, Dec. 16.

Vera M. Cortez, 95, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Dec. 15.

Sarah E. Horn, 71, 720 Washington St., Ironton, St. Lawrence O'Toole, Nov. 27.

Celia Pietrzak Horton, 96, 420 N. Seventh St., Martins Ferry, St. Mary, Dec. 10.

Charles S. Howard, 63, 1014 Mastin Ave., Ironton, St. Joseph, Nov. 20.

Denise A. Manini, 62, Blessed Sacrament, Wintersville, Dec. 9.

Alice M. “Elsie” Parisi, 79, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Dec. 9.

Mark E. Stambaugh, 50, 1215 S. Fifth St., Ironton, St. Joseph, Nov. 17.

George Tokos, 82, Malvern, St. Francis Xavier, Dec. 17.

Edward A. Treglia, 85, Chandler, Arizona, St. Agnes, Mingo Junction, Dec. 9.

James R. Unger, 64, 38 Private Drive 239, South Point, St. Joseph, Ironton, Nov. 25.

Tina M. Webb, 32, 2013 N. First St., Ironton, St. Joseph, Nov. 20.

Marie L. Whaley, 92, 2824 S. Tenth St., Ironton, St. Lawrence O'Toole, Nov. 29.



Children whose families are served by the Diocese of Steubenville Office of Family and Social Concerns (Catholic Charities) received gifts at Christmas, thanks to the Catholic Daughters Club at Catholic Central High School, Steubenville; the Toronto Catholic community and the Amsterdam and Richmond Catholic communities. Catholic Daughters' officers, at top, from left, Shayna Mirabella, Natalie Mastroianni, Hannah Spiess and Stephanie Cuevo collect gifts for 15 children. Thirty-five children were given a variety of toys and clothes from St. Francis of Assisi and St. Joseph parishes, Toronto, say, center, from left, Mary Lou Deku, Bob Deku, Janet Olesky and Judy Sabol. At right, Cory Maloney and his son Luke deliver presents for 23 recipients from parishioners at St. Joseph Parish, Amsterdam, and St. John Fisher, Richmond. Michele A. Santin is director of the diocesan office and Ruth Ann Turner is the office's social service coordinator. (Photos provided and by DeFrancis)





Angel Uriel Reyes processes with flowers as the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe opens at the Dec. 12 Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta. Angel represents Juan Diego who, in the 1500s, brought flowers from Mary to the bishop of Mexico with the request that a church be built on the Hill of Tepeyac in her name. It is said that when Juan Diego opened his tilma to present the sign that the bishop requested, flowers fell down and the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was on the tilma.



Dancers – depicting ones who danced Dec. 26, 1533, when a Mexico bishop led a procession of Spaniards and Indians to consecrate the chapel he built in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe – perform at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, while Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton and Msgr. John Michael Campbell, basilica rector, seated right, look on. Also visible, seated left, is Permanent Deacon Lee V. Weisend. At the celebration, Bishop Monforton delivered his homily in Spanish, initially, as he referenced the day's Gospel, the meeting of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, and Mary. "This moment reveals not only God's plan, but the purpose of God's plan," Bishop Monforton said. Fathers Thomas A. Nelson, parochial vicar to Msgr. Campbell, and H. Christopher Foxhoven, pastor of Buchtel and Glouster parishes, concelebrated.



After the Mass at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, traditional Mexican food is served in the undercroft. The basilica's Hispanic community, with the support of Msgr. John Michael Campbell, rector of the basilica, hosts the celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Students of St. Mary School, supported by the basilica, are the special guests. Parishioners from throughout the diocese attend. The venerated image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is enshrined within the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The basilica is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the world, and the third most visited sacred site. (Photos by DeFrancis)

Back to bishops: Pope's 2017 calendar filled with 'ad limina' visits, little travel

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — For Pope Francis, the Year of Mercy will be followed by the Year of the "Ad Limina" Visits.

Like St. John Paul II did during the Jubilee Year 2000, Pope Francis suspended for the Year of Mercy the formal visits bishops from around the world make "ad limina apostolorum" – to the threshold of the Apostles, meaning Peter and Paul, who were martyred in Rome.

And, the pope told reporters, skipping a year of meetings means that he will travel less in 2017 and spend more time at the Vatican welcoming his brother bishops and discussing with them the life of their local churches.

The Vatican has announced that Pope Francis will travel to Portugal May 12-13 for the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima. Plus, the pope said, he hopes to travel to Asia – specifically to India and Bangla-

desh – during the year and to Africa, although the countries have not been identified. The dates have not been set.

Before 2016 ended, though, more than 300 bishops from more than 20 countries already had dates set for their "ad limina" meetings with Pope Francis in 2017. The Irish bishops will kick off the series in January, followed by bishops from Serbia and other Balkan countries and then Canadian bishops.

Reform is more than just a face-lift, Pope Francis tells Roman Curia

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The reform of the Roman Curia is not a mere face-lift to rejuvenate an aging body but a process of deep, personal conversion, Pope Francis said.

Meeting with cardinals and the heads of Vatican offices for his annual Christmas greeting, the pope warned that "it is not wrinkles the church should fear," but rather, the stains that impede its growth and relevance in the world.

"The reform does not have an aesthetical end to make the Curia more beautiful; it cannot be understood as a sort of face-lift or applying makeup to beautify the elderly curial body, nor plastic surgery to remove wrinkles," the pope said Dec. 22.

While his addresses in previous years focused on curial ills and medicinal virtues, this year's speech laid out a 12-step program of guiding principles geared toward an appropriate and long-lasting recovery.

"It was necessary to speak of illnesses and cures so that every operation – to achieve success – be preceded by an in-depth diagnosis, by accurate analyses and must be accompanied and followed through with precise prescriptions," the pope said.

Although certain forms of resistance to reform may come from a sense of goodwill or fear, there are others that are based on malevolent intentions dressed like a wolf in sheep's clothing, he said.

"This last type of resistance hides behind justifying words and, in many cases, accusatory; finding refuge in traditions, in appearances, in formality, in what is known, or in wanting to bring everything on a personal level without distinguishing between the act, the actor and the action," the pope said.

However, no matter whether the intentions are good or bad, resistance is necessary and they "deserve to be heard, received and encouraged because it is a sign that

the body is alive."

"The absence of reaction is a sign of death!" he exclaimed.

Curial reform, however, must be viewed as a slow and delicate process that must be followed through with continuous discernment, wisdom and action but above all, "with many prayers."

Listing 12 criteria, the pope explained that the reform is at its heart a sign of the church's liveliness and a "process of growth and above all, conversion."

The guiding principles of the reform of the Roman Curia are:

- individuality (personal conversion): A person's spiritual well-being can either strengthen the body of the Curia or damage it and make it sick;
- pastoral conversion: The workplace must have a pastoral spirit where "no one feels neglected and mistreated" and everyone can experience the care of the Good Shepherd;
- missionary spirit (Christ-centric): Without an authentic evangelical spirit and faithfulness of the church to its own vocation, "any new structure will corrupt in short time";
- rationality: No Vatican office is greater than another and the responsibilities of each office must be clearly distinguished;
- functionality: The merging of offices, demotions and promotions must always be done to streamline and hone in a dicastery's specific mission;
- up-to-date ("aggiornamento"): Vatican offices must read "the signs of times" and adapt to the needs of the universal church;
- sobriety: The Roman Curia must be willing to simplify and slim down, especially when it comes to "offices that are no longer responsive to contingent needs";

• subsidiarity: reorganize priorities within the offices and, if necessary, shifting responsibilities to another dicastery while working in sync with the Secretariat of State;

• synodality: Reducing or merging Vatican offices avoids fragmentation and allows for more frequent meetings between the pope and the heads of those offices;

• catholicity: The Curia should mirror the universality and multicultural nature of the church and hire personnel from around the world while emphasizing the important role of permanent deacons and the laity – especially women – in the life and mission of the church;

• professionalism: Every office must adopt a policy of personal formation to avoid the "rust" and routine of functionalism, as well as putting a definitive end to the practice of "promoveatur ut amoveatur" ("removal by promotion"); ("This is a cancer!" the pope exclaimed.)

• graduality (discernment): taking time by verifying, correcting and discerning methods and policies that can "allow the necessary flexibility to achieve a true reform."

He also highlighted the various steps, structural changes and continuing processes of the reform throughout his pontificate, all of which are meant to stress that "the heart and center of the reform is Christ."

Reciting a Christmas prayer written by the late Coptic Orthodox monk, Father Matta El Meskeen, the pope said the birth of Christ is a "celebration of the loving humility of God," which stands in stark contrast to the logic of ambitions, power, phariseism, and domination.

Before greeting those present individually, Pope Francis said he had a gift for each one of them: a copy of Jesuit Father Claudio Acquaviva's 14th-century book, "Curing the Illnesses of the Soul," a guide for spiritual directors that emphasized expressing views gently without compromising in substance. "It's a beautiful translation, it's well-made and I think it can help," the pope said.