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The Steubenville REGISTER

VOL. 72, NO. 11

SERVING 13 COUNTIES IN SOUTHEAST OHIO

JAN. 27, 2017

News Briefs

Consecrated Life celebrated Feb. 4-5

WASHINGTON — The World Day for Consecrated Life will be celebrated in the Catholic Church Feb. 2 and in Catholic parishes Feb. 4-5.

Pope, now saint, John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life, attached to the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, in 1997.

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, archbishop of Newark, New Jersey, and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations said: "Our Holy Father Francis has given the church this special opportunity to pray for all those women and men in consecrated life who have given their lives in love to God. This prayer may prompt each of us to ask, 'How is God calling me to give of myself this day, that I might know the deeper joy of service to God and others?'"

Boston cardinal tapped by Pope Francis

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis named Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, to be a member of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

The 72-year-old archbishop of Boston is one of the eight members of the Council of Cardinals who has been assisting Pope Francis with the reform of the administration of the Roman Curia, and now he joins 26 other cardinal and bishop members, and 28 consulting theologians, in advising the doctrinal congregation.

The congregation deals with doctrinal questions as well as the application of Catholic moral teaching. It is charged, also, with coordinating efforts to rid the church of sexual abuse and with monitoring or conducting cases against individual abusers.

While the congregation members offer their expertise on the many questions the office considers pressing, Cardinal O'Malley's experience leading three U.S. dioceses confronting the abuse of minors by clergy will be important, U.S. Msgr. Robert W. Oliver, secretary of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, said.



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 stands in the chapel at the Order of the Sacred and Immaculate Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Hopedale. (Photo by DeFrancis)



Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, third from right, meets with bishops, many from Belarus, during a conference in Poland, hosted by bishops of that country. Bishop Monforton is meeting with the European bishops, as a member of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Subcommittee on Aid to the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. This is Bishop Monforton's fourth consecutive annual trip to Belarus and Poland as a member of the USCCB subcommittee, which recently approved more than \$2.3 million in funding for 75 projects in 23 countries throughout Central and Eastern Europe. "A new generation of Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe needs our support as they continue to face the ongoing consequences of decades of communist rule," said Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of the Archdiocese of Chicago, chairman of the USCCB Subcommittee on Aid to the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. "These grants give the people living there, especially the younger generation, a place to encounter Christ and the courage and strength to rebuild their church communities." Bishop Monforton is blogging about his experiences in Europe, www.diosteub.org. (Photo provided)

2017 DPSC opens in February in Ironton

STEUBENVILLE — This year marks the third decade of the Diocesan/Parish Share Campaign.

Initiated by the diocese's second bishop — Albert H. Ottenweller — the DPSC establishes a goal for each parish and returns money pledged and collected above that target to the parish. The goal for the 2017 DPSC is \$1,340,000.

In a letter to diocesan parishioners, printed in the 2017 campaign brochure, Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton detailed where DPSC dollars are spent by the diocese. Among the expenditures are preparing seminarians for the priesthood, educating permanent deacons, providing charitable works, administering to youth, paying for health care for retired priests and a retired bishop and supporting a chancery that, in turn, assists parishes in a number of ways.

Bishop Monforton and Msgr. Kurt H. Kemo, diocesan vicar general and DPSC director, lauded supporters of the DPSC. As Bishop Monforton thanked participants in the annual campaign, he said their contributions have made a difference. At the same time, Msgr. Kemo said the continued success of the DPSC is a result of parishioners' generosity and commitment to the diocese and their parishes.

The 2017 DPSC major gift portion begins next month, Martin B. Thompson, associate director of the DPSC, said. Major gift dinners will be held Feb. 6 at the Knights of Columbus Bishop Watterson Council 1405 hall, Ironton; Feb. 7, Ohio University Inn, Athens; Feb. 8, Lafayette Hotel, Marietta; Feb. 9, Undo's Restaurant, St. Clairsville; and Feb. 13, Knights of Columbus Msgr. Joseph F. Dooley Council

4361 hall, Mingo Junction.

Registration for all major gift dinners opens at 6:30 p.m., and dinners begin a half hour later, Thompson said.

DPSC theme



"Do Whatever He Tells You," (Jn 2:5).

Dinners this year are being held during the Year of Reconsecration of the diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. "With our mother, Mary, we are active participants in bringing the kingdom of God among the human race, answering the invitation of Jesus in the Lord's Prayer," Bishop Monforton wrote. "Mary, the mother of God, is the first Christian and the model we imitate in our own Christian vocation. We mirror her selfless generosity in our own daily activities and charity."

With the theme "Do Whatever He Tells You," taken from John, Chapter 2, Verse 5, the annual campaign will progress throughout the diocese. A taped message from Bishop Monforton will be played in parishes in March, and parishioners in the pew will be asked to make pledges.

DPSC pledges or one-time gifts to the campaign should be made in parishes. Pledge cards will be mailed to parishioners, or will be available at parishes.

Pledges can be paid with cash; a personal check made payable to the Diocese of Steubenville, noting DPSC on the memo line of the check; or a credit/debit card by visiting diosteub.org/giveonline (contact the DPSC office in the downtown Steubenville chancery at (740) 282-3631, for assistance), Thompson said. Pledges can be paid in six monthly payments, beginning in May.

In addition, gifts of appreciated stock can be contributed to the DPSC.

'Ask the Bishop'

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

Q: Why do we go to purgatory and not straight to heaven or hell?

**Camden Daley
Mingo Junction**

A: This is a very good question, for many do not understand the meaning of purgatory or others believe that purgatory is strictly a term that was invented by the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages.

Purgatory is very real.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church instructs, purgatory is a state of higher purification after a person's death and before his or her entrance into heaven. When the person dies while in God's friendship, they may be only imperfectly purified, namely, a final cleansing of human imperfection is required before they can enter the joy of heaven.

We can refer to 2 Maccabees in the Old Testament for some scriptural foundation of purgatory.

Purgatory is distinct from hell or eternal punishment.

Before the final judgment there is purification for those who possess lesser faults but are not yet perfectly disposed to enter into heaven and the beatific vision.

This takes me to an extremely important point: In your life, do not simply set purgatory as your goal. That is misplaced confidence. *Aim for heaven.* Jesus provides us with the opportunity to go directly to heaven in his teachings of the *Beatitudes*, as well as loving God and neighbor and entrusting the Church with his gifts of the seven sacraments

Q: What are some ways Catholics can talk to God even when it is hard to?

**Cayden Wilson
Bloomingdale**

A: Prayer is critical in our relationship with God. We should begin each day with a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of the day and a prayer of intercession that each one of us may do God's will.

Prayer is conversation with God.

Moreover, we have the sublime gifts of the seven sacraments.

Want to talk to God? Go to confession. That is, speak to the priest who is Jesus Christ in the confessional.

Also, every time we go to church we talk to God. Certainly, there are times when you and I may attend the Sacrifice of the Mass and be easily distracted. Yes, it can be difficult to train our attention on what is happening at Mass from beginning to end. Still, try.

Never give up on trying to talk to God, for God never gives up on us.

Q: Why is a cross carried down the aisle at the beginning of Mass?

**Aaron Burnworth
Marietta**

A: We maintain the theme of Mass here in our final question.

The cross of which you speak is called the *processional cross* or *processional crucifix*. Church history instructs that we have had the processional cross at least since the seventh century with St. Augustine of Canterbury.

A processional cross is a visual reminder that you and I follow Jesus Christ. Just as we may see in processions or parades, groups of people follow banners or flags announcing who comprises the group

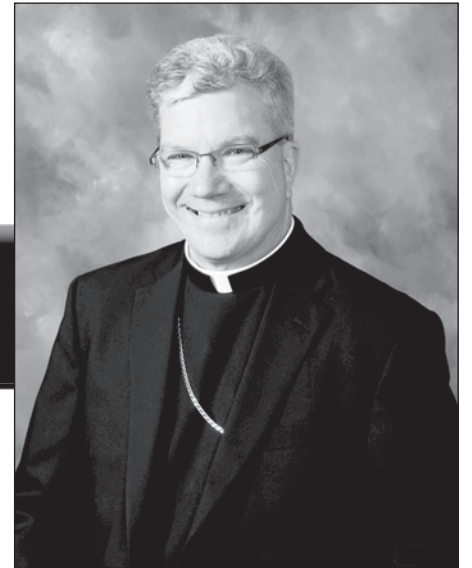
following the standard.

In our case, at Mass, we are provided catechetical instruction right at the beginning of Mass as well as at the recessional that you and I are here to follow Jesus.

In Jesus' presence, you and I find eternal hope, for while it is his will to bring us together in his name, he also wants us to be together again in eternal life in heaven.

March for Life: This day of distribution of our Steubenville Register also marks the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C.

We are grateful to all attending and marching in the day's events, especially the young reminding those of us who are not so young that the nobility of our Christian life rests directly on our ability and resolve to promote the dignity of all human life



Bishop Monforton

from conception to natural death. How we protect the most vulnerable in our society defines the goodness of such a society.

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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Regional information sessions planned for diaconate

STEUBENVILLE — Regional information sessions will be held during February in four locations in the Diocese of Steubenville on the permanent diaconate.

Permanent Deacon Mark A. Erste, director of diaconal ministries for the Diocese of Steubenville, announced that the sessions will be held at 7 p.m., Feb. 6, at St. Stephen

Church, 1036 Belford St., Caldwell; 4 p.m., Feb. 12, at St. Mary Church, 212 W. Main St., St. Clairsville; 3 p.m., Feb. 19, St. Louis Church, 85 State St., Gallipolis; and 4 p.m., Feb. 26, St. John Fisher Church, 7457 State Highway 152, Richmond.

Men who are interested in serving the church should attend one of the sessions, Deacon Erste said, to consider a vocation to the diaconate.

A deacon, “diakonia” in Greek, is one called to service and is taken from the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 6, where seven men are called to service, he said.

As outlined in a Diocese of Steubenville “Policies and Procedures Handbook for the Diaconate Ministry,” a permanent deacon is ordained to serve the Diocese of Steubenville, assigned by the bishop and carries out his ministry under the direction of a pastor/supervisor. He assists the bishop and priests during liturgical actions, can administer baptism, distribute the Eucharist, bless marriages, administer sacramental and officiate at funeral and burial services, read Scripture, preside at worship and prayer services when a priest is not present, direct the Liturgy of the Word, carry out the duties of charity and of administration, as well as work for social assistance.

A permanent deacon is a single or married man. If the man is married, he must be at least 35-years-old at the time of ordination and have permission from his wife to serve.

The Diocese of Steubenville, at the direction of Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, has begun a new class to form men as deacons. Bishop Monforton issued the call in October 2016. The call is the formal beginning of the discernment process, Deacon Erste explained. Beginning in January, application packets were available. The application for participation in the diaconate program is due by Oct. 1.

For additional information on the sessions, telephone diaconal ministries (740) 512-4135.



John Powell, grand Knight, Knights of Columbus Council 1641, Cambridge, presents a check to Father Paul E. Hrezo, pastor, Christ Our Light Parish, Cambridge. The Knights gave \$1,000 for the parish and another \$1,000 for the parish-supported parochial school, St. Benedict. The Knights donated \$1,000, also, to the local Habitat for Humanity. (Photo provided)

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Bishop Monforton's Schedule

- Jan. 30 Mission Advancement Plan retreat day for diocesan department heads, Blessed Sacrament Church, Wintersville, 9 a.m.
Mission Advancement Plan Advisory Task Force meeting, Cambridge, 6:30 p.m.
- 31 Visit St. John Central High School, Bellaire, 9 a.m.
- Feb. 2 Mass, World Day for Consecrated Life, Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus, Steubenville, 5:30 p.m.
- 5 Mass, Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Wintersville, 9:30 a.m.
- 6 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 8:30 a.m.
Diocesan/Parish Share Campaign, major gift dinner, Knights of Columbus Bishop Watterson Council 1405 hall, Ironton, 7 p.m.
- 7 Mass, St. Joseph Church, Ironton, 8 a.m.
Visit Our Lady of Bellefonte Hospital, Ashland, Kentucky, 9:30 a.m.
Visit King's Daughters Medical Center, Ashland, Kentucky, 10:30 a.m.
Visit St. Mary's Medical Center, Huntington, West Virginia, 11:30 a.m.
Visit Cabell Huntington Hospital, Huntington, West Virginia, 12:30 p.m.
Visit Holzer Health System, Gallipolis, 2 p.m.
Visit Pleasant Valley Hospital, Point Pleasant, West Virginia, 2:45 p.m.
DPSC major gift dinner, Ohio University Inn, Athens, 7 p.m.
- 8 Mass, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, 7:45 a.m.
Visit Marietta Memorial Hospital, 11:30 a.m.
Visit Camden Clark Medical Center, Parkersburg, West Virginia, 1:30 p.m.
DPSC major gift dinner, Lafayette Hotel, Marietta, 7 p.m.
- 9 Mass, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, 7:45 a.m.
Visit Genesis HealthCare System, Zanesville, Ohio, 11 a.m.
Visit Southeastern Ohio Regional Medical Center, Cambridge, 1:30 p.m.
DPSC major gift dinner, Undo's, St. Clairsville, 7 p.m.
- 11 Anniversary Mass, death of founder of Communion and Liberation, Msgr. Luigi Giussani, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 8:30 a.m.

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Brother, sister in St. Mary, Marietta, PSR collect for poorest of poor

MARIETTA — The idea to collect money to help the poorest of the poor came from a brother and sister, enrolled in the Parish School of Religion at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Marietta, after they listened to a homily.

Andrew and Amanda Rauch were in the pew at the basilica, where they are members, along with their parents, when a Cross Catholic Outreach priest — Father Patrick W. Collins — visited and addressed the congregation.

Cross Catholic Outreach is a ministry that serves the poorest of the poor internationally by channeling aid through dioceses, parishes and Catholic missionaries, helping the poor break the cycle of poverty while advancing Catholic evangelization, its mission reads. “True change comes from within. Physical change is not complete without sharing the Gospel. In order to break the cycle of poverty, we must first start with the heart. This refers to the ac-

tive combination of word and deed; integral development.”

The brother and sister, sixth- and fourth-graders, heard that mission and with the

permission of their parents — Brett and Dawn Rauch of Marietta — approached Joseph A. Schmidt, pastoral associate/director of religious education, at the basilica (Msgr. John Michael Campbell is rector of the basilica; Father Thomas A. Nelson is parochial vicar to Msgr. Campbell).

Andrew and Amanda wanted to collect money for Cross Catholic Outreach among their peers. They wanted to ask the first- through eighth-graders in the PSR to bring a dollar, or two, to subsequent Sunday classes. Their idea was that if enough money could be collected, the students could provide life-saving medical care to some infants, Schmidt said. For \$15, 100 children could be fed said Cross Catholic Outreach; \$50, gives life-saving medical care for infants in impoverished communities; \$100, provides a self-help project to allow families to break the cycle of poverty; and \$500, supplies a water project, delivering safe drinking water to a poor village.

The brother and sister started small. They would collect \$50,

hopefully, they said, for medical care for infants.

Approximately 50 students are enrolled in PSR.

However, the collection grew. Some parents of PSR students had employers who matched donations, Schmidt said. Therefore, in the end, not only could medical care be supported by the PSR students, but also \$500 sent to Cross Catholic Outreach for a water project.

Schmidt had praise for the youth who heard the priest tell stories of how he had traveled and seen people come together to give money for Cross Catholic Outreach, and acted.

Cross Catholic Outreach reaches people suffering extreme poverty in countries throughout the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Projects include relief for earthquake, flood and tsunami victims, care and education for orphans and other vulnerable children, housing for the homeless, medicines and health care for the indigent, food for families suffering extreme malnutrition, and clean water for communities that have none, as well as micro-enterprise programs and other long-term development efforts to break the cycle of poverty.

Cross Catholic Outreach locates needy Catholic-based ministries serving the poor and distributes material aid through existing programs.



Amanda and Andrew Rauch display Cross Catholic Outreach items, as they stand with Joseph A. Schmidt in the undercroft of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta. (Photo provided)

Thousands expected at prayer vigil for life in advance of Jan. 27 march

WASHINGTON — The National Prayer Vigil for Life was to be held from the afternoon of Jan. 26 to the morning of Jan. 27, at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, and more than 20,000 people from around the nation were to pray there for an end to abortion before the annual March for Life.

Busloads and carloads of Diocese of Steubenville parishioners are expected to participate in the Jan. 27 march.

Father Paul E. Hrezo, pastor of Christ Our Light Parish, Cambridge, said that not only will parishioners be on buses for the march, but also that the parish will welcome dozens of youth from Missouri who plan to stop in Cambridge for Mass Jan. 28, as they journey home after the march.

The vigil marked the 44th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton decisions legalizing abortion nationwide. Since those decisions, more than 57 million abortions

have been performed legally in the United States.

The principal celebrant and homilist at the opening Mass was to be Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities. It was to be concelebrated by his fellow cardinals and many of the nation's bishops and priests in the Basilica's Great Upper Church.


The vigil was to continue overnight in the Crypt Church with confessions, a National Rosary for Life, Byzantine Rite Night Prayer and holy hours led by seminarians from across the country.

“Each year, the National Prayer Vigil for Life is a joyful, if sober, event, with thousands of young people from around the country. Led by our bishops, we are working to end abortion through prayer, education, advocacy and acts of mercy,” said Deirdre McQuade, assistant director for pro-life communications at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.


“This beautiful night of prayer also falls within the bishops' annual prayer and action campaign, 9 Days for Life, which covers a range of life issues,” McQuade continued. “Ours is an abortion-wounded nation, and so we pray, too, for healing for

mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings and others who are suffering in any way after abortion.”

Prior to the start of the March for Life, prayer was to be offered and then a Mass celebrated in the basilica.



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Catholic schools plant seeds for vocations by example, priests, religious say

By Carol Zimmermann

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Although priests and women religious say a variety of reasons led them to pursue their vocation, one thing many of them have in common is that they went to a Catholic school.

Attending Catholic school certainly isn't a magic bullet that leads to a vocation, but for some it proved that a religious vocation was not only a possibility but also looked appealing because of the example of priests and women religious they saw on a regular basis.

That was the experience of Dominican Sister John Mary Fleming, a member of the Dominicans' St. Cecilia Congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, who is the executive director of the Secretariat of Catholic Education of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Sister John Mary is convinced she wouldn't be a sister had it not been for the example of the women religious who taught at her school, Providence High School in New Lenox, Illinois, which was a Joliet diocesan school at the time and is now run by the Augustinian order.

The teachers there in the 1980s came from five to seven women's orders and men's congregations along with diocesan priests. Their example — of living their faith and being happy — “debunked the myth that living a faith-filled life was not a happy thing,” she told Catholic News Service.

Five graduates of the school entered the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia in Nashville and other graduates chose other religious orders and the priesthood.

Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio, chair of the USCCB Committee on Catholic Education and chair of the board of directors for the National Catholic Educational Association, similarly said the example of priests in the Diocese of Camden, New Jersey, who taught him were key to his vocation. The Catholic school experience also led him, as a Methodist, to join the Catholic Church as a fifth-grader.

The bishop, who was ordained a Jesuit priest in 1979, said he wanted to be like his parish priest and the priests who taught at his high school. “I saw them as happy

people — people we could put our trust in; day after day at the school or the parish, they were helping us and guiding us,” he said.

These experiences confirm a 2014 study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate based at Georgetown University that linked Catholic schools to vocations. The report: “Catholic Schools in the United States in the 21st Century: Importance in Church Life, Challenges and Opportunities,” points out that half or more of new priests and brothers attended Catholic primary schools as did 41 percent of new women religious and 45 percent of young lay ministers.

“If fewer and fewer Catholics enroll in Catholic schools, it will become ever more challenging for the Catholic Church to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life,” the report said.

Two members of the School Sisters of Christ the King, based in Lincoln, Nebraska, which is an order with a mission to teach in Catholic schools, said the religious sisters that taught them inspired their vocation and now they both hope to do the same for their students.

Sister Mary Maximilian, who teaches second-graders at St. Peter's School in Lincoln, said the teachers she had when she was in school “were normal and had a lot of joy — something my heart just longed for.”

“I, too, try to share the joy that was shared for me,” she told CNS in a phone interview at the end of the school day Jan. 12. She said she does that by building relationships with the students and answering all their questions about what it's like to be a sister.

Sister Regina Marie, who teaches second-grade religion at four different schools in Lincoln while also working as general treasurer for her community, similarly was impressed by both the “normalness and the prayerfulness” of the sisters who taught her.

She said she doesn't promote vocations with her young students, but she impresses on them that they need a foundation of prayer.

“I want them to know they need to pray — that God is real and he wants to talk to them. If there is a religious

vocation for them and they have a foundation of prayer, it will be that much easier to understand,” she said.

Sister Regina Marie said she hopes to counter the feeling a lot of people have about religious life “that it is a sacrifice,” full of things you can't do, and hopes to, instead, show “that it is so life-giving.”

She and the other sisters also urge the boys in their classes to love and respect the priesthood.

But even when Catholic schools aren't staffed by women religious or priests — as is often the case today, the vocation message is still getting out.

Father Mark Ivany, director of priestly vocations in the Washington Archdiocese, said a Catholic school in the Washington Archdiocese — St. Mary's Ryken High School in Leonardtown, Maryland — has had a high rate of men entering the priesthood in recent years. For example, of the 11 men who entered the minor seminary in the Archdiocese of Washington last year, five were from that school.

He said the school has “a handful of teachers that really love the Lord and the church and see their teaching as a vocation and ministry.”

He also noted that the school offers something unique for its students by providing spiritual directors to any student who wants one, which is 200 this year. Eleven priests serve as spiritual directors meeting with students once every two weeks.

Catholic schools also can foster vocations for teachers as proven by Holy Cross Father Louis DeFra, director of pastoral life for the Alliance for Catholic Education at the University of Notre Dame. He wrote in a blog post last year that he found his vocation, planted by his schoolteachers, when he was filling in as a substitute teacher at a Catholic school.

“Catholic schools teach us how to truly give ourselves to one another — as students and as teachers. In doing so, they plant the seeds for vocation in all of us,” he wrote.

He also noted that “at a time when the call to religious life can be difficult to discern, Catholic schools continue to provide an environment where this call can be heard, nurtured and followed.”

Catholic schools should promote selling points, says Youngstown bishop

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Catholic schools should face the challenge of enrollment decline by actively promoting what they do best: their high academic achievement and their role in forming leaders, said Bishop George V. Murry of Youngstown, Ohio.

“It's important to do very good public relations,” said the bishop, who is chair of the Committee on Catholic Education of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and chair of the board of directors of the National Catholic Educational Association.

He has stressed this urgency in meetings around the country with educators and was able to quickly rattle off Catholic school accomplishments in a Jan. 19 interview with Catholic News Service, pointing out that Catholic schools continue to score higher in national assessment tests and Catholic high schools have a 99 percent graduation rate. He also said there is plenty of data showing that Catholic schools outperform their public school counterparts on test scores and academics.

But the bishop also knows the sobering statistics on Catholic school closings and enrollment decline. Figures released by the NCEA show 1,648 Catholic school closings

or consolidations from 2005-15 with 336 school openings and during that time period the number of students declined by almost 20 percent.

The growing decrease in Catholic school enrollment — which Bishop Murry attributes to shifting demographics, tuition costs and changes in faith practice — is something he thinks should be faced head on.

Last fall, in a keynote address at the NCEA Catholic Leadership Summit in Indianapolis, he told diocesan leaders that the overall national enrollment decline of Catholic schools is a responsibility for everyone to take up: “the entire church and society at large.”

“Catholic schools are a gift to the nation and need us all to work together for their growth, both through local action in our particular schools and at the national level across the country. And there is much that we, as professional educators, teachers, principals, staff, superintendents, pastors and bishops, can do and indeed are doing to grow enrollment in our Catholic schools,” he added.

He told CNS that years ago, Catholic school leaders went through a period of anxiety that they were not putting enough emphasis on their Catholic identity. Although

that always deserves attention, he said, he thinks many schools should focus on emphasizing their successes and why parents should consider sending their children there.

Along that line, he said church leaders are working to promote efforts to make Catholic schools more affordable and he pointed out that 27 states and the District of Columbia have legislation providing financial assistance to parents who choose private or faith-based schools.

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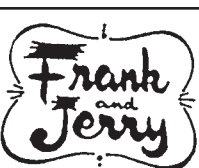
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St. John Paul II Pentecost and Church

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon

The Second Vatican Council "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity" ("Ad Gentes") states that the Holy Spirit: "On the day of Pentecost came down upon the disciples to remain with them forever. ... The church was publicly displayed to the multitude, the Gospel began to spread among the nations by means of preaching, and there was presage that union of all peoples in the catholicity of the faith by means of the church of the new covenant, a church that speaks all tongues ... (Paragraph 4).

Jesus had ascended to heaven, and the apostles, along with the mother of Jesus and a few others, were gathered in an upper room, somewhat in hiding for fear of their own arrests as disciples of Jesus. Jesus' promise was still ringing in their ears: "... (I)n a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1:5). "Suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a great driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim" (Acts 2:2-4).

The phenomena of sound and fire, as we saw, are reminiscent of the scene at Mount Sinai when Moses received a "covenant" from God that included the Ten Commandments. The biblical description seems to describe an active volcano erupting (see, Exodus, Chapter 19, Verses 16-18). This covenant was a "constitution," of sorts, for the Hebrew people as the Chosen People of God and spelled out what that relationship involved. The coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles constituted a new covenant, based on the Gospel for the new "People of God," the church. The Gospel is the teachings of Christ. It includes the truths he taught and the moral principles that he inculcated. The ability to retain those truths and principles by the apostles

*... we have no handle
on the work of the Holy Spirit.*

and their successors was one of the effects of the coming of the Spirit. We recall that Jesus promised the apostles that: "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you" (Jn 14:26); and, again: "But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth" (Jn 16:13). The apostles were guaranteed the assistance of the Holy Spirit in this. In so doing, they could carry out the "Great Commission" that Jesus gave them: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And, behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:18) (the many important implications of these promises will be explored as we move along). The "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity" elaborates on this point: "He (the Holy Spirit) will make the church one in communion and ministering. He equips her with various gifts of a hierarchical and charismatic nature" (Paragraph 4).

The miracle of speech that they were given on this occasion appears to be a one-time gift. Missionaries today would certainly love to have it, but do not. It was different than what some of the present-day charismatic communities call the "gift of tongues." Among these latter, the allegedly gifted person utters words and syllables unknown to self and to the onlookers. In the case of the apostles at Pentecost, they were heard in the native languages of the listeners: "Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At the sound (presumably the sound of wind that the disciples heard) they gathered in a large crowd, but were confused because each one heard the speaking in his own language. They were astounded and ... asked: 'Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language?'" (Acts 2:5-8). St. Paul in his discourse on spiritual gifts speaks of a gift of tongues that seems to be similar to that of the modern charismatics, and he also speaks of a gift of "the interpretation of tongues," as well (1Cor 12:4-10). We read also of new converts in the early church "speaking

in tongues" upon reception of baptism, e.g., some of Peter's converts (see, Acts 10:44-46). What can we say of all this? Only that we have no handle on the work of the Holy Spirit. We can judge only by the outcome of any of these events.

The fact that the audience of the apostles on the first Pentecost was an international audience resonates well with the commission of the apostles to go out to the whole world. The polyglot audience that heard St. Peter's inaugural sermon represented the world of the Roman Empire and a taste of what was to come when the church would face the entire world. In its "Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity," Vatican II addressed this fact by prescribing that the missionary effort adapt itself to local needs and cultures, including more than language alone. This is something that missionaries seemed to have overlooked in their efforts since the great surge of missionary activity following the Age of Discovery in the 16th century. The tendency was to establish the church as it existed in the Europe that they left. It is not surprising that an 18th-century French Gothic cathedral in Inchon, Korea, stands out like a sore thumb in a forest of pagodas. Pope John Paul observed: "... (T)here is a relationship of interhuman union which goes beyond the boundaries of languages and cultures, and this union is brought about in the world by the Holy Spirit."

The pope notes also the courage shown by the apostles and by Peter, in particular, in addressing the crowd. The man that cowered before a serving girl on the night before Jesus' crucifixion, now stands up to all comers, who certainly included among them friends and agents of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body that demanded the death of Jesus. This, too, was the work of the Holy Spirit, the giver of fortitude, the virtue that confers courage in the face of danger, opposition and suffering.



Bishop Sheldon

Scorsese's 'Silence' and the Seaside Martyrs

By Bishop Robert Barron

I have long been an ardent fan of Martin Scorsese's films. "Taxi Driver," "Raging Bull," "Goodfellas," "The Aviator," "Gangs of New York," "The Last Waltz," "Casino," etc., are among the defining movies of the last 40 years. And "The Departed," Scorsese's 2007 crime drama, was the subject matter of the first YouTube commentary that I ever did. It is certainly the case, furthermore, that the director's Catholicism, however mitigated and conflicted, comes through in most of his work. His most recent offering, the much-anticipated "Silence," based upon the Shusaku Endo novel of the same name, is a worthy addition to the Scorsese oeuvre. Like so many of his other films, it is marked by gorgeous cinematography, outstanding performances from both lead and supporting actors, a gripping narrative, and enough thematic complexity to keep you thinking for the foreseeable future.

The story is set in mid-17th century Japan, where a fierce persecution of the Catholic faith is underway. To this dangerous country come two young Jesuit priests (played by Adam Driver and Andrew Garfield), spiritual descendants of St. Francis Xavier, sent to find Father Ferreira, their mentor and seminary professor who, rumor has it, had apostatized under torture and actually gone over to the other side. Immediately upon arriving onshore, they are met by a small group of Japanese Christians who had been

maintaining their faith underground for many years. Due to the extreme danger, the young priests are forced into hiding during the day, but they are able to engage in clandestine ministry at night: baptizing, catechizing, confessing, celebrating the Mass. In rather short order, however, the authorities get wind of their presence, and suspected Christians are rounded up and tortured in the hopes of luring the priests out into the open. The single most memorable scene in the film, at least for me, was the seaside crucifixion of four of these courageous lay believers. Tied to crosses by the shore, they are, in the course of several days, buffeted by the incoming tide until they drown. Afterward, their bodies are placed on pyres of straw and they are burned to ashes, appearing for all the world like holocausts offered to the Lord.

In time, the priests are captured and subjected to a unique and terrible form of psychological torture. The film focuses on the struggles of Father Rodrigues. As Japanese Christians, men and women who had risked their lives to protect him, are tortured in his presence, he is invited to renounce his faith and thereby put an end to their torment. If only



Bishop Barron

he would trample on a Christian image, even as a mere external sign, an empty formality, he would free his colleagues from their pain. A good warrior, he refuses. Even when a Japanese Christian is beheaded, he doesn't give in. Finally, and it is the most devastating scene in the movie, he is brought to Father Ferreira, the mentor whom he had been seeking since his arrival in Japan. All the rumors are true: this former master of the Christian life, this Jesuit hero, To Page 8

The Steubenville Register

Biweekly publication of the Diocese of Steubenville
P.O. Box 160, 422 Washington St.
Steubenville, OH 43952-5160
email: register@diosteub.org

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jward@diosteub.org

Telephone (740) 282-3631; FAX (740) 282-3238
Subscription rate \$15 per year in state of Ohio;
\$17 per year outside the state of Ohio;
\$24 per year to all foreign countries

Periodicals postage paid at Steubenville, OH 43952 SSN 0744-771X

Salt and Light (Fifth Ordinary Sunday)

By Father Paul J. Walker

The readings for this weekend (Fifth Ordinary Sunday, Feb. 5) from Isaiah and Matthew are uncompromisingly direct and unambiguous – they seem to require little comment or explanation. (So here I am commenting on them!)

Matthew is considering two things, light and salt, that are part of most people's experience. Salt, to be of any use at all, must retain the intensity of its saltiness. Light, to be of any use at all, must shine, must be expressed in genuine good deeds, redemptive deeds, compassionate works, deeds of practical justice and peace. That is the only way others can see the shining of the divine light in the world and in the church. Ritual alone does not impress outsiders, stirs no one's imagination, lights no one's path. People need to see the world changing for the better, moving toward peace, structuring our society more justly, expressing practical concern for those who are outcast and marginalized. It is within the nature of salt to savor, of light to shine. It is within God's nature, his essence, to give himself – he pours divine reality into creation through the stirrings of the Holy Spirit.

But a lingering question remains: Precisely how does our salt flavor and our light shine? The text from Isaiah, Chapter 58, Verses 7-10, in the first reading, offers insight planted within five verbs: share, shelter, clothe, remove, satisfy. Baptism and full membership in the church make us salt and light. Jesus does not say, "Would you like to be salt and light?" He says, "You are salt and light." So let us check with Isaiah in the first reading – how do we flavor, how do we shine?

- *Share* your bread with the hungry: for what are the people in our lives hungry? In my life, people at the rectory door or on the phone need financial help – food, utility bills, clothes, medicine, etc. It's easy to write out a

voucher, or pay a bill; but people also need to be listened to, walked with, loved, understood, comforted. Many times our own personal time or availability is "bread" for the hungry. Physical hunger on a national or global level is all too evident, and though I cannot relieve that hunger, perhaps I can better identify with those who endure it by getting along with less and altering my habits and patterns of consumption.

- *Shelter* the oppressed and the homeless: Who in my world are so burdened? To shelter can mean to "cover with protection." Who are those pushed out in the margins, shunned, needing to belong, to find a home in or from the church. We may not be able to *physically* help or stand up for the ones God loves unconditionally; but we can examine our attitudes and govern our speech; we can become better informed, less judgmental, more inclusive in act and attitude.

- *Clothe* the naked: To be naked is to be unprotected, exposed and vulnerable. This can include many, but certainly includes the unborn. We may never be in the situation facing that decision, but we can help those who are helping to provide viable alternatives to abortion, and by clothing with compassion those who struggle with this most critical of decisions. Many are left vulnerable because of their skin color, sexual orientation, ethnic origins or religious beliefs.

- *Remove* from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech: besides those already mentioned, in our worlds who are the oppressed, i.e., burdened or weighed down? Attitudes that create such environments for others are acquired, not innate.

- *Satisfy* the afflicted: To afflict is "to distress or cause continued suffering." It is possible that I bring affliction upon myself as well as upon others.

The church today cannot become captive to any political party or national agenda without diluting her response

to the call to be salt and light for the world. If we as Christ's church can carry such empathy and compassion; if we can, as Isaiah exhorts, share, shelter, clothe, remove, satisfy, then it will be true that we have become the shining of light of Jesus Christ, as Christ is the shining of the Father's light. Then people will see us as though we were mounted on a lamp stand, enlightening every corner and crevice of the world's darkness.

Father John Shea, theologian and storyteller, in the first of a four-volume set, "The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels," inspires meditation and spiritual reflection on the Fifth Sunday's readings:

When we realize our identities as salt and light, we begin to have faith in the world as a corollary of faith in God.

God's energies are directed to the betterment of the world. ...

The world for all its recalcitrance is in the process of becoming the good creation.

We are the flavor and fire of this development.

("On Earth As It Is in Heaven," Page 75)

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



Father Walker

Taking Our Wounds to the Eucharist



Father Rolheiser

By Father Ron Rolheiser

Recently a man came to me, asking for help. He carried some deep wounds, not physical wounds, but emotional wounds to his soul. What surprised me initially was that, while he was deeply wounded, he had not been severely traumatized

either in childhood or adulthood. He seemed to have just had to absorb the normal bumps and bruises that everyone has to absorb: some belittling, some bullying, never being the favorite, dissatisfaction with his own body, unfairness within his family and siblings, career frustration, unfairness in his workplace, the sense of being chronically ignored, the sense of never being understood and appreciated, and the self-pity and lack of self-confidence that results from this.

But he was a sensitive man and the combination of all these seemingly little things left him, now in late mid-life, unable to be the gracious, happy elder he wanted to be. Instead, by his own admission, he was chronically caught-up in a certain wounded self-absorption, namely, in a self-centered anxiety that brought with it the sense that life had not been fair to him. Consequently, he was forever somewhat focused on self-protection and was resentful of those who could step forward openly in self-confidence and love. "I hate it," he shared, "when I see persons like Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul speak so with such easy self-confidence about how big their hearts are. I always fill with resentment and think: 'Lucky you!' You haven't had

to put up with what I've had to put up with in life!"

This man had been through some professional therapy which had helped bring him to a deeper self-understanding, but still left him paralyzed in terms of moving beyond his wounds. "What can I do with these wounds?" he asked.

My answer to him, as for all of us who are wounded, is: *Take those wounds to the Eucharist.* Every time you go to a Eucharist, stand by an altar, and receive Communion, bring your helplessness and paralysis to God, ask him to touch your body, your heart, your memory, your bitterness, your lack of self-confidence, your self-absorption, your weaknesses, your impotence. Bring your aching body and heart to God. Express your helplessness in simple, humble words: *Touch me. Take my wounds. Take my paranoia. Make me whole. Give me forgiveness. Warm my heart. Give me the strength that I cannot give myself.*

Pray this prayer, not just when you are receiving Communion and being physically touched by the body of Christ, but especially during the eucharistic prayer, because it is there that we are not just being touched and healed by a person, Jesus, but we are also being touched and healed by a sacred event. This is the part of the Eucharist we generally do not understand, but it is the part of the Eucharist that celebrates transformation and healing from wound and sin. In the Eucharist prayer we commemorate the "sacrifice" of Jesus, that is, that event where, as Christian tradition so enigmatically puts it, *Jesus was made sin for us.* There is a lot in that cryptic phrase. In essence, in his suffering and death, Jesus took on our wounds, our weaknesses, our infidelities, and our sins, died in them, and then through love and trust brought them to wholeness.

Every time we go to Eucharist we are meant to let that transforming event touch us, touch our wounds, our weak-

nesses, our infidelities, our sin and our emotional paralysis and bring us to a transformation in wholeness, energy, joy and love.

The Eucharist is the ultimate healer. There is, I believe, a lot of value in various kinds of physical and emotional therapies, just as there is immeasurable value in 12-step programs and in simply, honestly sharing our wounded selves with people we trust. There is too, I believe, value in a certain willful self-effort, in the challenge contained in Jesus' admonition to a paralyzed man: *Take up your couch and walk!* We should not allow ourselves to be paralyzed by hypersensitivity and self-pity. God has given us skin to cover our rawest nerves.

But, with that being admitted, we still cannot heal ourselves. Therapy, self-understanding, loving friends and disciplined self-effort can take us only so far, and it is not into full healing. Full healing comes from touching and being touched by the sacred. More particularly, as Christians, we believe that this touching involves a touching of the sacred at that place where it has most particularly touched our own wounds, helplessness, weaknesses and sin, that place, where God "was made sin for us." That place is the event of the death and rising of Jesus and that event is made available to us, to touch and enter into, in the eucharistic prayer and in receiving the body of Christ in Communion.

We need to bring our wounds to the Eucharist, because it is there that the sacred love and energy that lie at the ground of all that breathes can cauterize and heal all that is not whole within us.

Father Rolheiser, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate priest (www.ronrolheiser.com), is president of the Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio.

Reject prejudice, leave space for hope in communications, pope says

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — At a time when the media seem to feed a “vicious cycle of anxiety” and a “spiral of fear,” Christians should respond with honest stories that identify problems and evil, but also inspire real solutions, Pope Francis said.

“Every new tragedy that occurs in the world’s history can also become a setting for good news, inasmuch as love can find a way to draw near and to raise up sympathetic hearts, resolute faces and hands ready to build anew,” the pope wrote in his message for World Communications Day 2017.

Following a long tradition, the pope’s message was released Jan. 24, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists. The Vatican and most dioceses will mark World Communications Day May 28, the Sunday before Pentecost.

The pope chose: “‘Fear not, for I am with you.’ Communicating Hope and Trust in Our Time,” as the theme for the 2017 commemoration.

In a letter to directors and editors in chief of a variety of media outlets, Msgr. Dario Viganò, prefect of the Vatican Secretariat

for Communications, called for a discussion and debate on the pope’s message and particularly the pope’s call for “constructive forms of communication that reject prejudice toward others and foster a culture of encounter, helping all of us to view the world around us with realism and trust.”

Presenting the letter in the Vatican press office, Msgr. Viganò was joined by Delia Gallagher of CNN for a discussion about the text and about the rapidly changing news media.

“The pope is not calling us to recount the world of Heidi” or any other fairy tale, Msgr. Viganò said. Trials and suffering are part of real people’s lives, but the stories of those struggles also should “open spaces of hope.”

For example, he said, the real story in late January about a hotel in

central Italy buried by an avalanche after a series of earthquakes includes not only the recovery of the bodies of victims, but stories of the courage of the rescuers and the generosity and solidarity of people in nearby towns.

Gallagher said the pope’s message is especially important at a time when the truth of news reports is constantly questioned and when the “Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2016” was “post-truth.”

In his letter, Pope Francis said promoting hope and confidence is not to pretend evil does not exist or to spread misinformation, rather it means identifying and reporting ills in a way that does not “generate apathy, fear or the idea that evil has no limits.”

A particular problem today, he said, is reporting about tragedies and

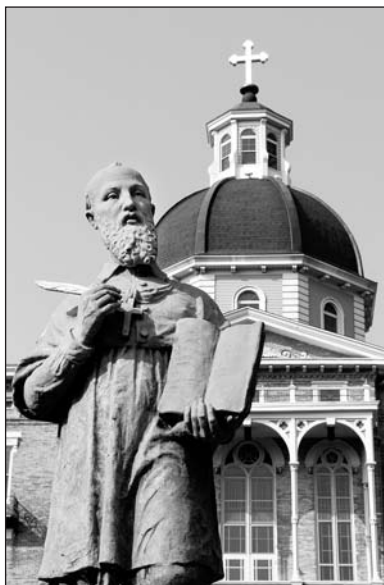
human suffering in a way that almost turns the story into entertainment.

What is needed, he said, is “an open and creative style of communication that never seeks to glamorize evil but instead to concentrate on solutions and to inspire a positive and responsible approach on the part of its recipients.”

The story of Jesus is a clear example, the pope wrote. “This good news — Jesus himself — is not good because it has nothing to do with suffering, but rather because suffering itself becomes part of a bigger picture. It is seen as an integral part of Jesus’ love for the father and for all mankind.”

For Jesus and for all who believe in him, “hardship and the cross do not obstruct, but bring about God’s salvation,” he said. “Weakness proves stronger than any human power and failure can be the prelude to the fulfillment of all things in love.”

Faith tells Christians that God is at work at every moment in an individual’s life and at every moment of human history, he said. That confidence always has given Christians hope, which is “the humblest of virtues for it remains hidden in the recesses of life, yet it is like the yeast that leavens all the dough.”



A statue of St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists, stands outside of St. Francis de Sales Seminary in St. Francis, Wisconsin. (CNS photo/Sam Lucero, The Compass)

Pope: Catholics, Lutherans must continue to seek common ground

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Although great strides have been made through 50 years of ecumenical dialogue, Catholics and Lutherans must continue to work toward becoming a full and visible sign of unity for the world, Pope Francis said.

A continued “communion of harmony” will allow Catholics and Lutherans to “find further convergence on points of doctrine and the moral teaching of the church,” the pope told members of a pilgrimage from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland Jan. 19.

“I pray to the Lord that he may bestow his blessing on the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue Commission in Finland, which is working diligently toward a common sacramental understanding of the church, the Eucharist and ecclesial ministry.”

The pope met the Finnish delegation during the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The theme chosen for the 2017 observance was: “Reconciliation: The love of Christ compels us.”

The week of prayer, Pope Francis said, urges Catholics and Lutherans to reconcile and “draw closer to one another anew through conversion.”

“True ecumenism is based on a shared conversion to Jesus Christ as our Lord and redeemer. If we draw close to him, we draw close also to one another,” the pope said.

Recalling his visit to Sweden last October to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s efforts to reform the church, the pope said Luther’s intention “was to renew the church, not divide her” and that the joint commemoration “was important on both the human and theological-spiritual levels.”

“The gathering there gave us the courage and strength in our Lord Jesus Christ to look ahead to the ecumenical journey that

we are called to walk together,” he said.

Helping those who suffer persecution and violence, he added, can further unite Christians “on the journey toward full communion.”

In doing so, the pope said, Catholics and Lutherans can put their witness of faith into practice “through concrete acts of service, fraternity and sharing.”

Speaking off-the-cuff, Pope Francis thanked Lutheran Archbishop Kari Mäkinen of Turku for bringing his grandchildren to the meeting. “We need the simplicity of children; they teach us the way to Jesus Christ,” the pope said.

Scorsese’s ‘Silence’

From Page 6

has renounced his faith, taken a Japanese wife, and is living as a sort of philosopher under the protection of the state. Using a variety of arguments, the disgraced priest tries to convince his former student to give up the quest to evangelize Japan, which he characterized as a “swamp,” where the seed of Christianity can never take root.

The next day, in the presence of Christians being horrifically tortured, hung upside down inside a pit filled with excrement, he is given the opportunity, once more, to step on a depiction of the face of Christ. At the height of his anguish, resisting from the depth of his heart, Rodrigues hears what he takes to be the voice of Jesus himself, finally breaking the divine silence, telling him to trample on the image. When he does so, a cock crows in the distance. In the wake of his apostasy, he follows in the footsteps of Ferreira, becoming a ward of the state, a well-fed, well-provided-for philosopher, regularly called upon to step on a Christian image and formally renounce his Christian faith. He takes a Japanese name and a Japanese wife and

lives out many long years in Japan before his death at the age of 64 and his burial in a Buddhist ceremony.

What in the world do we make of this strange and disturbing story? Like any great film or novel, “Silence,” obviously, resists a univocal or one-sided interpretation. In fact, almost all of the commentaries that I have read, especially from religious people, emphasize how “Silence” beautifully brings forward the complex, layered, ambiguous nature of faith. Fully acknowledging the profound psychological and spiritual truth of that claim, I wonder whether I might add a somewhat dissenting voice to the conversation? I would like to propose a comparison, altogether warranted by the instincts of a one-time soldier named Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the Jesuit order to which all the “Silence” missionaries belonged. Suppose a small team of highly-trained American special ops was smuggled behind enemy lines for a dangerous mission. Suppose furthermore that they were aided by loyal civilians on the ground, who were eventually captured and proved willing to die rather than betray

the mission. Suppose finally that the troops themselves were eventually detained and, under torture, renounced their loyalty to the United States, joined their opponents and lived comfortable lives under the aegis of their former enemies. Would anyone be eager to celebrate the layered complexity and rich ambiguity of their patriotism? Wouldn’t we see them rather straightforwardly as cowards and traitors?

My worry is that all of the stress on complexity and multivalence and ambiguity is in service of the cultural elite today, which is not that different from the Japanese cultural elite depicted in the film. What I mean is that the secular establishment always prefers Christians who are vacillating, unsure, divided, and altogether eager to privatize their religion. And it is all too willing to dismiss passionately religious people as dangerous, violent, and let’s face it, not that bright. Revisit Ferreira’s speech to Rodrigues about the supposedly simplistic Christianity of the Japanese laity if you doubt me on this score. I wonder whether Endo (and perhaps Scorsese) was actually inviting us to look away from the priests

and toward that wonderful group of courageous, pious, dedicated, long-suffering laypeople who kept the Christian faith alive under the most inhospitable conditions imaginable and who, at the decisive moment, witnessed to Christ with their lives. Whereas the specially trained Ferreira and Rodrigues became paid lackeys of a tyrannical government, those simple folk remained a thorn in the side of the tyranny.

I know, I know, Scorsese shows the corpse of Rodrigues inside his coffin clutching a small crucifix, which proves, I suppose, that the priest remained in some sense Christian. But again, that’s just the kind of Christianity the regnant culture likes: utterly privatized, hidden away, harmless. So OK, perhaps a half-cheer for Rodrigues, but a full-throated three cheers for the martyrs, crucified by the seaside.

Bishop Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, an author, speaker and theologian, as well as the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, Skokie, Illinois, a nonprofit global media apostolate.

Upcoming synod needs young people's voices, Pope Francis says

By Junno Arocho Esteves

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis asked young people to tell him, their bishops and pastors about their hopes and struggles and even their criticisms.

In preparation for a meeting of the Synod of Bishops focused on youth, the pope wrote a letter to young people, saying the church wants “to listen to your voice, your sensitivities and your faith, even your doubts and your criticism.”

“Make your voice heard,” the pope told young people. “Let it resonate in communities and let it be heard by your shepherds of souls.”

The pope's letter was released Jan. 13 along with the preparatory document for the synod.

The document includes a series of questions to be answered by national conferences of bishops and other church bodies. The responses, along with input from young people themselves, will form the basis of the synod's working document.

Pope Francis chose “Young people, faith and vocational discernment” as the theme for the synod gathering, which will be held in October 2018.

Young people will have an opportunity to contribute to the working document by submitting reflections “on their expectations and their lives” through a dedicated website — www.sinodogiovani.va — that will be launched March 1, said Bishop Fabio Fabene, undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops.

In his letter, Pope Francis referred to God's call to Abraham. The Old Testament

patriarch, he said, “received a compelling invitation, a challenge, to leave everything and go to a new land. What is this ‘new land’ for us today, if not a more just and friendly society which you, young people, deeply desire and wish to build to the very ends of the earth?”

“A better world can be built also as a result of your efforts, your desire to change and your generosity,” Pope Francis told young people. “Do not be afraid to listen to the Spirit who proposes bold choices; do not delay when your conscience asks you to take risks in following the Master.”

The synod preparatory document offered three chapters for reflection by bishops and youths, which it defines as people roughly between the ages of 16 and 29: young people in today's world; faith, discernment and vocation; and pastoral activity.

Through the synod, the document said, “the church has decided to examine herself on how she can lead young people to recognize and accept the call to the fullness of life and love, and to ask young people to help her in identifying the most effective ways to announce the Good News today.”

The church, it said, needs to evaluate its pastoral approach to young people living in a rapidly changing world where globalization, technological dominance, as well as economic and social hardships pose significant challenges to discovering their vocational path.

“From the vantage point of faith, the situation is seen as a sign of our times, requiring greater listening, respect and dialogue,” the document said.

A special focus of the synod, it said,

will be “on vocational discernment, that is, the process by which a person makes fundamental choices, in dialogue with the Lord and listening to the voice of the Spirit, starting with the choice of one's state in life.”

Specifically for Christians, it said, the question is: “How does a person live the good news of the Gospel and respond to the call which the Lord addresses to all those he encounters, whether through marriage, the ordained ministry or the consecrated life?”

One of the major challenges for young people in defining their personal identity and finding their path in life is the countless options available — particularly when it comes to their careers — that may impede them from making a definitive life choice.

Many young people today, it said, “refuse to continue on a personal journey of life if it means giving up taking different paths in the future: ‘Today I choose this, tomorrow we'll see.’”

Lack of employment and social and economic hardships, it added, also contribute to “their inability to continue in one career. Generally speaking, these obstacles are even more difficult for young women to overcome,” it added.

Gender inequality and discrimination against ethnic or religious minorities, which can force people to emigrate, are other detrimental factors that the church is called to address to help young people

become “agents of change.”

“If society or the Christian community wants to make something new happen again, they have to leave room for new people to take action,” the document said.

By accompanying young people in their personal discernment, it said, “the church accepts her call to collaborate in the joy of young people rather than be tempted to take control of their faith.”

Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, general secretary of the Synod of Bishops, told journalists Jan. 13 that the presence of young men and women at the synod will help bishops understand how best to accompany youths who are searching for their vocation and path in life.

As auditors, young people “will not only be able to take part in the meetings of the general assembly, but also the small working groups,” he said.

Federica Ceci and Elvis Do Ceu, young members of Rome's St. Thomas More Parish, joined the cardinal for the news conference and expressed their gratitude for Pope Francis' attention to the realities facing today's young people.

Ceci, a 24-year-old law student, said the synod was a call for young people to “get their hands dirty.”

Do Ceu told reporters, “Pope Francis, in a certain way, helps us understand that the only way forward is to offer a future — as well as a present — by engaging young people and giving them a leading role.”

Vatican Museums mobile friendly

By Carol Glatz

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In an effort to share its masterpieces with even more people around the world, the Vatican Museums has established a YouTube channel and revamped its website to offer high-resolution images and mobile-friendly information.

The “Musei Vaticani” YouTube channel lists short visual “tours” of some of its collections along with a handful of promotional videos highlighting specially tailored tours and services offered onsite, including signing guides for the deaf or hard-of-hearing.

Its website, museivaticani.va, has been completely revamped to be compatible with all platforms and devices in order to extend its reach to even “remote corners of the earth,” Barbara Jatta, the museums' new director, said at a Vatican news conference Jan. 23.

The site, offered in five languages, features a sleeker design, simpler texts and faster navigation, Jatta said.



Barbara Jatta, the new director of the Vatican Museums, leaves a news conference at which the revamped website for the Vatican Museums was unveiled. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Links to pages can be shared, also, via Twitter, Facebook or email.

The website provides information about booking visits and purchasing tickets to the museums, the Vatican Gardens, the “Via Triumphalis” necropolis under the Vatican hill and the pontifical villas at Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome.

For now, the site showcases a little more than 3,000 high-resolution photographs of masterpieces in its collections. The “ideal” plan, Jatta said, is to complete within one year the addition of photographs of all 20,000 objects currently on public display and then begin working on adding images of all art objects in storage, for a total of more than 200,000 works of art.

The site also allows the public to consult and search an online catalogue of some of the museums' paintings, sculptures and other art objects. While the museums already had a registry of their entire inventory, migrating everything to the public-accessible database is still a work-in-progress, Jatta said.

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Beverly — “Saints and Sausage” will be held Jan. 29 at St. Bernard Church. Skits will be presented by the first- and sixth-grade Parish School of Religion classes at 11:30 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon.

Buchtel — A bake sale will be held at St. Mary of the Hills Church Feb. 5, following the celebration of the 11 a.m. Mass.

Cambridge — A St. Benedict School open house, for prekindergarten through eighth grade, will be held from 4-7 p.m., March 9, at the school, located at 220 N. Seventh St. Teachers and parents will be available to answer questions concerning the school. For additional information, telephone the school office at (740) 432-6751.

Gallipolis — St. Louis Parish will present “River City Leather Bingo” Feb. 12. Doors will open at 1 p.m. at the 85 State St. church; games will begin at 2 p.m. Special games, concessions, \$1 grab bags and a split the pot will be part of the event. To become a sponsor for the leather purse bingo, donations of \$50, \$100 or \$150 can be made by telephoning Heather Sola at (614) 477-6225 or the parish office at (740) 446-0669. Tickets can be purchased Monday-Thursday, at the church office, from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., or online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/river-city-leather-bingo-tickets-30897875377>.

Ironton — The celebration of Sunday Mass will resume at noon, Feb. 5, at St. Lawrence O’Toole Church.

Malvern/Minerva — The St. Francis Xavier, Malvern, and St. Gabriel, Minerva, Justice and Social Concerns Committee will sponsor an annual Salvation Army dinner Feb. 7 at the Minerva Community Building, 123 Brock Ave. For additional information, telephone Ryan Irwin at (330) 205-5475.

The “Faith and Fellowship” study group will meet at 10 a.m., Tuesday mornings, at St. Gabriel Church annex, Minerva. The book “Resisting Happiness,” by Matthew Kelly, will be discussed.

Marietta — Winter coats, sweatshirts, hats, gloves and mittens are being collected for the uniform closet at St. Mary School. Items will be used by students to wear on the playground. Donations can be taken to the school, which is located at 320 Marion St. For additional information, telephone the school office at (740) 374-8181.

Car decals are being sold in the St. Mary School office, 320 Marion St. A St. Mary Home and School fundraiser, the cost is \$5 per decal.

Martins Ferry — St. Mary Central School will hold a quarter frenzy Jan. 29. Doors for the event will open at the school, 24 N. Fourth St., at 11:30 a.m., for shopping and a homemade soup and sandwich lunch. The auction will begin at 1 p.m. There will be vendors, door prizes, a raffle and a 50/50 drawing at the event. Admission is \$5 for the first paddle; additional paddles cost \$1. Tickets can be purchased at the school office or at the door on the day of the event.

St. Clairsville — Mass will be celebrated in Spanish at 2:30 p.m., Feb. 19, at St. Mary Church. The sacrament of reconciliation will precede Mass at 2 p.m.

Wintersville — The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults team from Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes parishes will feature a presentation on the sacrament of marriage by Permanent Deacon Randall F. Redington and his wife Mary Ellen Jan. 26. A Feb. 2 presentation on the sacrament of holy orders will be given by Permanent Deacon Mark A. Erste. Both talks will be held at 7 p.m. in lower Sargus Hall, located at Blessed Sacrament Church.

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish will sponsor an annual “Super Bowl” soup sale following the celebration of the 9:30 a.m. Mass, Feb. 5. Featured will be wedding, green pepper, bean, sausage and Italian vegetable soups and chili, for \$6 a quart.

Confessions will be heard Tuesdays from 7-8 a.m. and 9-10 p.m., and Saturdays at 3:30 p.m., at Blessed Sacrament Church.



The eighth annual St. Vincent de Paul Ministry Valentine’s Craft Extravaganza will be held from noon until 3 p.m., Feb. 12, at Blessed Sacrament Church, Sargus Hall, 852 Main St., Wintersville, announces Msgr. Kurt H. Kemo, center, pastor of Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes, Wintersville, parishes. He is joined by Father Michael W. Gossett, second from left, parochial vicar to Msgr. Kemo, and Permanent Deacon Mark A. Erste. Linda Freed, left, event coordinator, said local artisans will sell baked goods, candles, jewelry and other handcrafted items during the extravaganza, the only fundraiser held annually to benefit the St. Vincent de Paul Ministry. The ministry operates a food pantry and distributes free food to qualified households in the Wintersville and Bloomingdale areas. Elane Renzelli, right, director of the St. Vincent de Paul Ministry, said the ministry is a combined effort of Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes parishes. The money raised at the extravaganza is used to purchase food for the ministry. Renzelli said the ministry provides 21 meals for each person who calls for the distribution the third week of each month. In 2016, the group gave out more than 50,000 meals as well as food baskets and candy at Easter, food baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas and gifts for children at Christmas. Throughout the extravaganza, vendors will offer samples and drawings will be held for handmade items, Freed said. For more information on the event, telephone Freed at (740) 264-6539 or email her at dolcepizzelles@aol.com. For information on the St. Vincent de Paul Ministry at the Wintersville parishes, telephone (740) 264-9547. (Photo by Ward)

Around and About

Alhambra, Calif. — The Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles will sponsor a “Come and See” retreat, for single women between the ages of 18-35, Feb. 24-26, in Miami. For additional information, email miamicomeseandsee@outlook.com or telephone (626) 300-8938.

Canton, Ohio — The 2017 Woolman Lectures will be held at Malone University Feb. 21-22. Journalist Rod Dreher will present on the subject of his forthcoming book “The Benedict Option.” Lectures will be held at 7:30 p.m., in the university’s Johnson Center, Room 106, 2600 Cleveland Ave. NW. For additional information, telephone Julie C. McAbee at (330) 471-8240, or email jmcabee@malone.edu.

Carrollton — Anyone interested in volunteering at St. John Villa’s, 701 Crest St., can telephone Susan DeChiara or Glenda Modranski at (330) 627-9789, for additional information. The Villa provides training for individuals with developmental disabilities.

St. Clairsville — A diaper drive will be held Feb. 11 and Feb. 12 by Knights of Columbus Our Lady of Peace Council 4243 at St. Mary Church. All sizes of diapers will be accepted; sizes 4 and 5 are especially needed. Diapers will be donated to the St. Mary Parish Miracle of Life Ministry.

St. Clairsville — Amedisys Hospice offers free bereavement counseling every third Tuesday of the

month. Meetings will be held Feb. 21, March 21, April 18, May 16 and June 20 at the Mark H. Kennedy Retirement Park, 108 Pine Ave. For more information, telephone Kellie Conaway at (740) 526-0970.

Steubenville — The Family of Jacopa Association will sponsor a valentine’s party, for widows, at 1 p.m., Feb. 12, at the motherhouse, located at 100 Belleview Blvd. Music, food and games will be part of the event. For reservations, telephone (740) 275-6168 or email familyjacopa@yahoo.com.

Waynesburg, Ohio — St. James School will hold an open house and carnival Feb. 3 at 400 W. Lisbon St. The event will include food and activities for preschool, kindergarten and school-age children. To learn more about the school and tuition incentives, visit www.sjswaynesburg.org or telephone the school office at (330) 866-9556.

Wheeling, W.Va. — World Marriage Day will be celebrated Feb. 11 at St. Vincent de Paul Marist Center, 2244 Marshall Ave. Mass will be celebrated at 5 p.m. A candlelight dinner will be served and a precommitted couple will give a brief witness to their experience on the sacrament of marriage. The evening will conclude with coffee and wedding cake. Cost is \$45 per couple. Reservations, required by Feb. 8, can be made by telephoning (304) 238-4904 or (304) 242-8156.



The Catholic Woman's Club at St. Frances Cabrini Parish, Colerain, has elected officers. Father Timothy P. McGuire, St. Frances Cabrini Parish pastor, prepares to install the officers, who include, from left, Donna Donley, treasurer; Nancy Fillipovich, secretary; Donna Pettit, auditor; Pamela Ambrose, president; Ruth Utter, vice president; and Brenda Fowler, historian. (Photo provided)

Feb. 7-14 – National Marriage Week

STEUBENVILLE — Pope Francis' exhortation "The Joy of Love" ("Amoris Laetitia") challenges the church to reach out to married couples and families, Michele A. Santin, director, Diocese of Steubenville Office of Family and Social Concerns (Catholic Charities), and Joseph A. Schmidt, diocesan marriage ministry coordinator, said, as they announced National Marriage Week Feb. 7-14 and World Marriage Day Feb. 12.

Each day of the weeklong celebration is themed, the two pointed out. "Marriage is a Blessing and a Gift" is the theme for the first day of National Marriage Week.

"Among the many blessings that God has showered upon us in Christ is the blessing of marriage, a gift bestowed by the Creator from the creation of the human race," reads the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan," Page 1.

"The vocation to marriage is inscribed in the very nature of man and woman," reads the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1603. As a natural institution, marriage has certain God-given characteristics. It is the permanent, faithful union of a man and a woman, intended for the good of the spouses and the bearing and raising of children.

Marriage was redeemed by Christ and elevated by him to become one of the seven sacraments. In this way, Christ made marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman a sign or visible embodiment of his love for the church (see, Ephesians, Chapter 5, Verses 21-33).

Sacramental marriage does not replace natural marriage, but raises it beyond what husband and wife could achieve on their own, allowing them to share in God's own divine life. As Pope Francis explains, "The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of commitment. The sacra-

ment is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses" ("The Joy of Love," Paragraph 72).

On the second day of National Marriage Week, the theme is "Marriage is the Unique Union of a Man and a Woman" – God created man and woman in his image, "male and female he created them" (Gn 1:27). God planned that man and woman would be made "for each other":

"They are equal as persons ... and complementary as masculine and feminine" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 372), "uniquely suited to be partners or help-mates for each other"

(USCCB, "Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan, Page 10).

As the week continues themes are: "Marriage is a Communion of Love and Life," "Marriage is a Sacrament of Christ's Love," "Marriage is the Foundation of the Family and Society," "Marriage is a Journey of Human and Spiritual Growth" and "Marriage is a School of Love and Gratitude."

World Marriage Sunday offers the opportunity to reflect on the radical call to faithfulness in marriage spoken of by Jesus in the Gospel, and the joy all Christians receive when following the Lord's commandments, resources from the USCCB read. "With the help of God's grace, it is always possible to follow his law," (see, Sirach, Chapter 15, Verse 15).

A prayer offered married couples:

Almighty and eternal God, you blessed the union of husband and wife so that we might reflect the union of Christ with his church: Look with kindness on us. Renew our marriage covenant. Increase your love in us, and strengthen our bond of peace so that, (with our children), we may always rejoice in the gift of your blessing.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

'Caritas' recipient dies in Chicago

CHICAGO — John R. Korzi – a 1968 recipient of the "Caritas" medal, a Diocese of Steubenville award – has died.

The 88-year-old Korzi, a longtime Franciscan University of Steubenville faculty member and member of St. Peter Parish, Steubenville, died Jan. 1 in Chicago.

Born Nov. 27, 1928, in Windber, Pennsylvania, a son of Anna and Andrew Korzi, he received his early education in schools in Pennsylvania, obtained degrees from Providence College in Rhode Island and Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, and did additional study in Pennsylvania and Ohio schools.

Korzi joined the faculty of what was then The College of Steubenville in 1955 and shortly thereafter became involved in Diocese of Steubenville ministries. Among other things, he served the diocese's pre-Cana program and was a member of diocesan boards that dealt with schools, social services, clerical and teacher place-

ment and St. John Vianney Seminary admissions, as well as was chairman of the bishop's Commission on Christian Education.

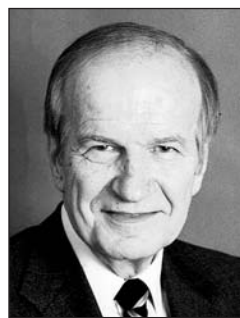
In 1968, Korzi received the "Caritas" (charity) medal from the Steubenville Diocese's first bishop, John King Mussio, who initiated the award in 1955. Bishop Mussio awarded the medal to people who exhibited exceptional Catholic action. Recipients were cited for an exemplary public and private Catholic life, distinguished service to the diocese, contributions toward diocesan enterprises and promotions of the faith by some medium, such as writing or public speaking.

Korzi was the recipient, also, of Franciscan University of Steubenville awards for his contributions there, especially in the areas of psychology and counseling.

He, too, was active in the Steubenville community, serving the Jefferson Behavioral Health System board and conducting psychological testing for community, county and state agencies, as well as local businesses and public schools.

Korzi is survived by a daughter Karen and grandchildren.

A funeral Mass was celebrated Jan. 14 at St. Peter Church, Steubenville; interment in Mount Calvary Cemetery, Steubenville.



(Photo provided)

John Korzi

Born Nov. 27, 1928, in Windber, Pennsylvania, a son of Anna and Andrew Korzi, he

Obituaries

Dominican Sister of Peace Lillian Kapelewski – born in 1926 in Amsterdam, one of four children of Anton and Mary Wilks Kapelewski – has died.

She entered the congregation of St. Mary of the Springs, now the Dominican Sisters of Peace, in 1943.

Sister Lillian ministered in New York, Connecticut and in Cincinnati, Columbus and Somerset, Ohio, as a physical therapy aide.

In addition, Sister Lillian served her religious order as sacristan at its Mohun Health Care Center, Columbus, where she died Jan. 5.

A funeral Mass was celebrated at the Columbus motherhouse Jan. 18; burial followed at nearby St. Joseph Cemetery.

Pat Burman, 79, St. Gabriel, Minerva, Jan. 10.

Ruth M. DiCarlo, 86, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Jan. 12.

John R. Fithen, 66, Steubenville, St. Francis of Assisi, Toronto, Jan. 16.

James A. Gaudio, 85, St. Lucy,

Yorkville, Dec. 13.

David Jozwiak, 63, Flushing, St. Mary, St. Clairsville, Dec. 28.

Virginia R. Kovalski, 91, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Jan. 15.

Angela J. Massie, 92, Carrollton, Our Lady of Mercy, Jan. 11.

Theresa M. Meiser, 58, Waterford, St. Bernard, Beverly, Dec. 31.

Michael Miller, 70, Christ the King University Parish, Athens, Jan. 8.

Cindy Lou Mitchell, 60, Carrollton, Our Lady of Mercy, Jan. 8.

Natalie "Nat" Moscato, 87, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, Dec. 9.

Virginia Gaffney Romey, 83, Toronto, St. Francis of Assisi, Jan. 16.

Anthony "Butch" Sarratore, 69, 822 Seabrights Lane, Martins Ferry, St. Mary, Dec. 24.

Dolores Stoehr, 88, Belmont, St. Mary, St. Clairsville, Jan. 10.

Rose Marie Teramana, 74, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Jan. 13.

Barbara Williams, 87, St. Clairsville, St. Mary, Dec. 25.

Three schools in Steubenville open for perusing Feb. 26

STEUBENVILLE — An open house will be held Feb. 26 at the three parochial schools in Steubenville.

The doors will swing open from noon until 2 p.m. that day at Catholic Central High School and Bishop John King Mussio

Central Junior High School on Westview Avenue, while the nearby Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School on Etta Avenue will be open from 1:30-3:30 p.m., a spokeswoman for the elementary, junior high and high schools said.

St. Vincent College plans get-acquainted days Jan. 28, April 23

LATROBE, Pa. — Open houses for prospective St. Vincent College students and their families will be held Jan. 28 and April 23.

Talks on academics, admission procedures, financial aid and college life at

St. Vincent – a 168-year-old Benedictine liberal arts college – will be discussed. A tour of the campus will be given and an opportunity provided to meet faculty.

To register, telephone (800) 782-5549 or email admission@stvincent.edu.

The ecology of burial: Choices reflect beliefs about life after death

By Robert Duncan

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — In a craftsman's workshop on the edge of Rome's Campo Verano cemetery, two designers are working to revive what they see as a dying art: burial.

Unlike the masons who make the cemetery's gravestones and memorials, Anna Citelli and Raoul Bretzel are fashioning biodegradable burial pods.

Their prototype is an egg-shaped sarcophagus that can hold a corpse in the fetal position.

A young tree, chosen ahead of time by the deceased, will be planted over the pod in place of a headstone.

Citelli and Bretzel imagine a future where "sacred forests" co-exist with cemeteries.

The burial pods are part of a widespread movement focused on "green burial" practices, which use decomposable materials and avoid the use of embalming chemicals.

A growing number of Catholic cemeteries offer "green burials," but do so emphasizing how the practices and the motivations behind such a choice must coincide with Catholic faith.

"By burying the bodies of the faithful, the church confirms her faith in the resurrection of the body and intends to show the great dignity of the human body as an integral part of the human person whose body forms part of their identity," said an instruction on burial and cremation issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in October.

The Catholic Church, it said, "cannot, therefore, condone attitudes or permit rites that involve erroneous ideas about death, such as considering death as the definitive annihilation of the person, or the moment of fusion with Mother Nature or the universe, or as a stage in the cycle of regeneration, or as the definitive liberation from the 'prison' of the body."

The Italian pod makers, who named their firm Capsula Mundi (Latin for "earth pod") say the burial process should reflect the natural processes of the world with the dying and recycling of biological materials by other organisms.

"We are earth and to earth we will return," said Bretzel, echoing the words from the Book of Genesis spoken during the distribution of ashes on Ash Wednesday. Yet Capsula Mundi was inspired not by Catholicism or New Age spirituality but a critique of modern culture.

Consumerism, with the many creature comforts it affords, has led people to think of themselves as "outside of nature, of the biological cycle of life," and thus encour-

aged them to counteract the natural process of decay by embalming, Bretzel said.

"In ancient times, monks were buried in the cloister of their convent; they were wrapped in a sheet, but laid in the ground," he said.

Opus Dei Father Paul O'Callaghan, an expert on church teaching about end-of-life questions and a professor at Rome's Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in

Father O'Callaghan, noting that the words "human" and "humility" both come from the Latin word "humus," meaning earth.

"The authentic Christian practice," Father O'Callaghan said, is burial "followed by natural decay." The eventual resurrection of the body promised in the creed will be the "fruit of divine intervention," he said.

The priest said he understands why

ground can "just take from the body what it wants, rather than the body being burned and heating up the atmosphere" where "most of the organic material is actually lost and is turned into CO₂."

But Father O'Callaghan also cautions Catholics to understand the philosophy undergirding some green burial initiatives.

"When you are promoting something" that deals with death and burial, "normally you have an anthropology, you have a view of what human beings are, and how they work, and where they're destined," he said. "There is a religious element, whether you like it or not."

For Citelli, "true immortality is to return to nature. That is where the sharing of and continuity of life take place. Because the transformation of the substances, of the organic material, gives life to death."

In the Catholic view, when a person dies, it is not merely that "a part of life has disappeared and can now sort of get mixed up in the ground and in the trees and in the plants," Father O'Callaghan said. "This particular person, who lived in this particular body, and who was loved as a person in this particular form, is being remembered."

Because the bodies of Christians have received the Eucharist during their lives, they have been carriers of God, the priest said.

A corpse should be seen not only as something loved by other people, "but also from the religious point of view as something that's sacred."

Because proposals for ecological burials vary from country to country, bishops and bishops' conferences "need to look into the anthropology, the eschatology and the theology behind" these diverse initiatives, he said.

For Father O'Callaghan, the important questions are: "Is there a real affirmation of the human body" as a "carrier of the Holy Spirit?" Is there "a clear element of the name of the person?" Is the commemoration not just of nature, but "of the person and the life they lived?" How is the belief in the resurrection represented?

"Very often that is represented by a headstone with a cross, which represents the power and salvation won by Jesus Christ," he said. Comparable symbolism, along with the name and dates of the individual's birth and death, would have to accompany any Christian form of a green burial.

"There's a very powerful message of concreteness, of that particular person who died in this particular situation, and his name and the date. The place is there; the cross is there. There is something that speaks to people in that," he said.



Raoul Bretzel and Anna Citelli set up a sample biodegradable burial pod developed by their company, Capsula Mundi, at their design studio in Rome Oct. 11. Recent Vatican guidelines on cremation and burial address the growing trend of "green burials." (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Rome, said burial methods often indicate underlying attitudes about the afterlife.

Christians recognize, "in all humility, that the body has to go back to where it came from, it goes back to the earth," said

Catholics might be motivated to be ecologically aware when planning for their death and burial.

Burial is more ecological than cremation, Father O'Callaghan argued, because the

Bishop opposes death sentence for man convicted of killing churchgoers

CHARLESTON, S.C. (CNS) — Jurors unanimously agreed to sentence Dylann Roof to death for killing nine black churchgoers.

In closing statements before the deliberation Jan. 10, the unrepentant 22-year-old told jurors that "I still feel like I had to do it," the Associated Press reported.

Bishop Robert E. Guglielmone said in a statement that the Catholic Church opposes capital punishment and reminded people that all life is sacred. "We are all

sinners, but through the father's loving mercy and Jesus' redeeming sacrifice upon the cross, we have been offered the gift of eternal life. The Catholic opposition to the death penalty, therefore, is rooted in God's mercy. The church believes the right to life is paramount to every other right as it affords the opportunity for conversion, even of the hardened sinner."

"Sentencing Dylann Roof to death conflicts with the church's teaching that all human life is sacred, even for those

who have committed the most heinous of crimes. Instead of pursuing death, we should be extending compassion and forgiveness to Mr. Roof, just as some of the victims' families did at his bond hearing in June 2015," the bishop added.

The jury had to reach a unanimous decision to sentence Roof to death. Had they disagreed, he would have been automatically sentenced to life in prison. He was convicted of 33 federal charges last month, including hate crimes. Roof acted as his

own attorney and did not question any witnesses. In his FBI confession, he said he hoped the massacre would bring back segregation or start a race war.

Bishop Guglielmone offered prayers of support for those who were killed and their families. "Our Catholic faith sustains our solidarity with and support for the victims of the Emanuel AME Church massacre and their relatives. We commit ourselves to walk with these family members as well as the survivors as they continue to heal. ..."