

Anchors aweigh!

A woman was enduring too many horrors to fathom. The Rosary helped get her escape to Anne's Anchor, a loving place for her and her baby daughter to live.

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The CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN

December 15, 2023 • Vol. 67 No. 13

Newspaper of the Diocese of Jefferson City

Visitor stops to pray in Wien each Christmas Eve



A bearded visitor in red kneels and prays before the Nativity scene in St. Mary of the Angels Church in Wien at the conclusion of Mass on Christmas Eve in this 2022 file photo.

By Jay Nies

A seasoned gentleman in polar attire steps into St. Mary of the Angels Church in Wien at the end of Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

He walks slowly, reverently, bells slightly jingling as he falls to his knees before the Nativity scene.

He stays there for a little while, absorbed in prayer and wonder.

The man silently departs, leaving behind a sack of simple gifts for the children in the congregation.

Outside, he cries out the names of eight reindeer, then bids everyone a Merry Christmas and a good night.

"This has been happening every year for decades here at St. Mary of the Angels," lifelong parishioner Joe Bertsch noted.

"It's one thing the kids around here all remember," said Parish Secretary Katrina Steffes.

Father Thomas Waickman, who was pastor, and lifelong parishioner Wes Weimer first invited Santa Claus to stop by the church on his busiest night in 1987.

The man in red came back every year since then, although Mr. Weimer was always busy helping with something else and never got to see him.

Fr. Waickman, now deceased, and his successors have consistently welcomed Santa and his unwavering witness.

Mr. Weimer served for years as an active Catholic Youth Organization leader at St. Mary of the Angels and as the parish's official contact with Santa until the COVID-19 pandemic.

At that time, Mr. Bertsch, one of Mr. Weimer's cousins, asked a former student to step into Mr. Weimer's role

See SANTA, page 15

Diocesan Christmas Collection to support seminarians, Infirm Priest Fund

By Jay Nies, Jacob Luecke and Annie Williams

What do seminarians in all stages of formation and priests battling traumatic or lingering infirmity have in common?

A growing sense of total dependence on God, an inclination to surrender to his will, and the need for spiritual and material support from the people of their diocese.

Part of that support comes from the Diocesan Christmas Collection, which will be taken up in parishes throughout these 38 counties at all Christmas Vigil and Christmas Day Masses.

A special envelope has been inserted in this issue of *The Catholic Missourian*. Parishioners can use the envelope, or any envelope marked for this collection, to make their gifts.

"It's very freeing that we can say, 'You're able to take this next step without any monetary fears, because you have a diocese that's backing you, and the people of God love you and want to support you in this,'" said Jacob Hartman, a seminarian in his first year of theology studies at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago.

"It's a huge, huge support from the diocese, knowing that we are being prayed for by those we know and love back home, but are also being supported in all facets through having our education and formation paid for," said Shane Kliethermes, a seminarian in his first year of theology studies

See COLLECTION, page 14

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MOVING? If you are moving or changing parishes, please fill out information below. Clip and mail to THE CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN, 2207 West Main Street, Jefferson City, MO 65109-0914. Or complete the online form at diojeffcity.org/update-individual-contact-information. Allow two weeks.

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ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

NEW PARISH _____

OLD PARISH _____

12/15/23

Pray for deceased priests

Dec. 19 — **Fr. Guido M. Nardoni**, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Vienna (1962); **Fr. Leo G. Oligschlaeger**, Assumption, Morrison (1972)

Dec. 21 — **Msgr. Gerold J. Kaiser**, Holy Family, Freeburg (1987); **Fr. Patrick J. Shortt**, Our Lady of the Snows, Mary's Home (2017)

Dec. 22 — **Fr. Stephen J. Carew**, St. Aloysius, Baring (1970)

Dec. 26 — **Fr. Robert J. Arnold**, St. Anthony of St. Padua, St. Anthony (1989)

Dec. 27 — **Fr. John W. Buchanan**, Holy Guardian Angels, Brinktown (1984)

Dec. 28 — **Fr. Gottlieb V. Steinwachs**, Holy Spirit, Centralia (1989)

Jan. 1 — **Fr. Robert J. Dwyer**, Immaculate Conception, Montgomery City (1982)

Jan. 4 — **Fr. Edward M. Owens**, Chaplain, Pershing Memorial Hospital, Brookfield (1997)

Jan. 6 — **Fr. John W. Groner**, St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Robert; and St. Jude, Richland (2023)

CATHOLIC CHARITIES IS HIRING

Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri is looking to fill several openings. Candidates must possess a strong commitment to the mission of Catholic Charities, understand Catholic Social Teaching, demonstrate its philosophy and values, and adhere to the social and moral teachings of the Catholic Church.

Welcome Center Specialist (Jefferson City) — answer phones, welcome/provide client intake or referrals, administrative support and volunteer coordination

Director of Community Services (Jefferson City) — oversee strategic planning and program management, develop budgets, staffing needs, monitor program objectives and policies/procedures, evaluate outcomes

Director of Counseling Services (Jefferson City) — liaison with agency leadership, program staff, therapeutic service providers, local and regional service partners and regional/national agencies to ensure quality services for clients

Director of Refugee Services (Columbia) — oversees strategic planning and program management for resettlement efforts, submit grant requests, financial reports, data tracking, oversee staff orientation, training and ongoing supervision

More information is available through our job postings on **Indeed.com**.



Chancery closings, last issue of *The CM* for 2023

The Chancery offices in the Alphonse J. Schwartze Catholic Center will close at noon on Friday, Dec. 22 and reopen on Wednesday, Dec. 27, for Christmas, and will be closed on Friday, Dec. 29, and Monday, Jan. 1 for News Years.

This is the final issue of *The Catholic Missourian* for 2023. The next issue will be dated Jan. 5, 2024.

Must be St. Nick



St. Nicholas of Myra, a close friend of Father Stephen Jones, pastor of Cathedral of St. Joseph Parish in Jefferson City, visits St. Joseph Cathedral School on his feastday, Dec. 6.

The Catholic Missourian

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"A diocesan paper serves as a bond of unity by publishing diocesan happenings and promulgating official regulations and decrees. It also plays a teaching role by reporting notable events of a religious and secular nature, and interpreting them in the light of Christian principles."

— Bishop Joseph M. Marling C.P.P.S., July 7, 1957

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight
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cathmo.com

SHROUD OF TURIN PRESENTATIONS WITH FR. ANDREW DALTON

Wednesday, January 3

2-4 pm or 7-9 pm

Jefferson City @ Cathedral of St. Joseph, Cana Hall

Thursday, January 4

2-4 pm or 7-9 pm

Columbia @ St. Thomas More Newman Center

The Shroud is the most studied archaeological object of all time and has yielded fascinating information about Christ, and about His suffering, death and burial. Fr. Andrew Dalton is an American priest who now teaches at the Pontifical University in Rome. For a preview of Fr. Dalton's talk on the Shroud go to <https://www.shroudcenter.com/>.

Director of Youth Ministry

St. Thomas More Newman Center Parish in Columbia, Mo. is seeking to fill the position of Director of Youth Ministry. To see a full job description, go to <https://www.comonewman.org/job-openings/>

Principal Opening — Loose Creek

Immaculate Conception School in Loose Creek, Mo. is currently accepting applications for a principal for the 2024-2025 school year. We are a Catholic elementary school, serving kindergarten through 8th grade, with a current enrollment of approximately 104 children. This position will involve day-to-day interactions with parents and students in an ongoing effort to provide our community with a strong Catholic faith and a healthy and challenging academic environment. The principal reports directly to the pastor, and should lead an exemplary Catholic life in addition to continuing educational and professional growth. A job description and application can be found on the diocesan web page at diojeffcity.org/school-office. Questions can be directed to Dr. Erin Vader, Superintendent of Catholic Schools at evader@diojeffcity.org.

Controller



The Chancery Office of the Diocese of Jefferson City is seeking a Controller to manage the accounting department. Duties include managing personnel, Sage accounting and investment portfolio platforms, cash flow, accounts payable, billing, accounts receivable, PP&E, GL level and general accounting platforms. Specific duties include monthly accounting period closings and reconciliations, preparing monthly trial balances, preparing monthly financial analysis and quarterly financial statements. This individual will also manage the annual financial audit process and oversee all Chancery bank accounts and supervise maintenance of budgets.

Requirements include Bachelor's degree in accounting; minimum of 10 years of job-related experience including 501(c)(3) fund accounting and/or public accounting preferred, but not required; strong computer skills and ability to easily work in Sage, MS Excel and Word. An equivalent combination of education, training and experience will be considered.

Qualified candidates are encouraged to apply on **Indeed.com** or send resume to hrdir@diojeffcity.org.

Bishops encourage Missourians to safeguard sanctity of life

By Jay Nies

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight and his fellow Roman Catholic bishops of Missouri are urging Missourians to remain vigilant in safeguarding human life from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death.

This comes at a time when amendments are being proposed to the state Constitution that would remove hard-fought legal protections for women and preborn children, threatening the dignity of human life in its earliest stages.

“Though several initiatives are being contemplated and none have yet to be finalized for the November 2024 ballot, we encourage all Catholics and people of good will to safeguard as much as possible the fundamental principle of the right to life,” the bishops said in a unified statement Dec. 11.

The statement’s signatories include: Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski of St. Louis; Bishop James V. Johnston Jr.

of Kansas City-St. Joseph; Bishop McKnight; and Bishop Edward M. Rice of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, functioning in their role as officers of the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC).

The bishops reiterated their support for efforts to reduce or eliminate the underlying social causes for abortion by expanding care and resources available to mothers.

“Even with legal protections for the unborn as we have in our state today, more can still be done to build a culture of life,” the bishops noted in their statement.

They said the MCC will continue to collaborate with diocesan pro-life offices and with other pro-life groups to protect the health and safety of women and their children.

The bishops, as they did after the Supreme Court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision was overturned



+ Mitchell T. Rozanski

Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski
General Chairman
Archbishop of St. Louis



+ James V. Johnston, Jr.

Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr.
Vice Chairman
Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph



+ Shawn McKnight

Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight
Executive Chairman
Bishop of Jefferson City



+ Edward M. Rice

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

in 2022, pointed out that “the Catholic Church stands ready to continue providing spiritual and material support to expectant mothers and their

families through our parishes and ministries, and to advocate on their behalf and on behalf of their unborn children at the state and federal levels.”

“We look forward to the day when every child, born and unborn, has the love and support needed to thrive and reach his or her full potential,” the bishops stated.

“Let us pray for a greater recognition of the gift of each and every human life in our society,” they said.

The text of the statement can be found on the MCC website at:

mocatolic.org/news-and-events/latest-news.



Official Decree of Appointments

The Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight, Bishop of Jefferson City, hereby makes the following appointments to provide the most effective pastoral care of the Diocese of Jefferson City:

dence at St. Michael Rectory, Russellville and priest coverage as assigned by the Vicar for Priests, effective Jan. 22, 2024.

Reverend Walter Kispotta, from priest coverage as assigned by the Vicar for Priests

with residence at St. Joseph Rectory, Pilot Grove to temporary sacramental ministry at St. Mary Parish, Milan and the Mission of St. Mary, Unionville with residence at St. Joseph Rectory, Edina, effective immediately.

PRIESTS

Very Reverend Christopher L. Cordes, from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Columbia to Pastor of St. Andrew Parish, Holts Summit, effective Jan. 22, 2024, and continuing as Vicar for Priests.

Very Reverend Roberto M. Ike, Ph.D., returning from leave of absence for sabbatical with Lincoln University, to Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Columbia and continuing as Dean of Missionary Priests, effective Jan. 22, 2024.

Reverend Alejandro (Cesar) Anicama, from Associate Pastor of Mary Immaculate Parish, Kirksville and sacramental ministry at St. Mary Parish, Milan and the Mission of St. Mary, Unionville to temporary medical leave of absence, effective immediately.

Reverend Simeon A. Etonu, from temporary Parochial Administrator of St. Andrew Parish, Holts Summit to full-time service at the Matrimonial Tribunal with resi-

**Given at the Chancery in Jefferson City
this 1st day of December in the Year of our Lord 2023.**

+ Shawn McKnight

Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight, S.T.D.
Bishop of Jefferson City

Ben Roodhouse

Mr. Benjamin Roodhouse, JD, JCL
Chancellor



Bishop McKnight's Calendar

DECEMBER

Dec. 15 Missouri Catholic Conference Meeting, 2 pm, Virtual; St. Andrew's Dinner, 5:30 pm, Bishop's Residence

Dec. 22 Mass, 11 am, St. Alphonsus Liguori Chapel; Chancery Staff Christmas Luncheon, noon, Chancery

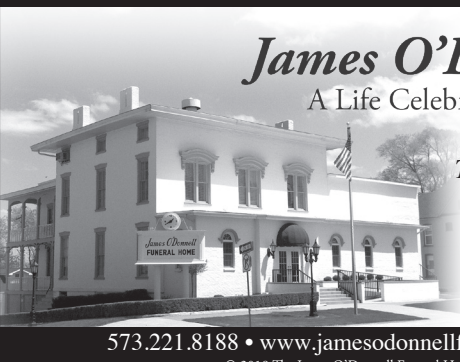
Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Mass, 4 pm, Cathedral of St. Joseph, Jefferson City

Dec. 28 Holy Hour with Vespers, 5 pm, Cathedral of St. Joseph; Seminarian and Priests of the Diocese Christmas Dinner, 6 pm, Cana Hall, Jefferson City

JANUARY

Jan. 3-4 SEEK Conference, St. Louis, MO

Jan. 5-11 Region IX Bishops' Annual Retreat, Prince of Peace Abbey, Oceanside, CA



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Bishop McKnight's December prayer intention for our Local Church

For the family; that all fathers, mothers and children of our community may follow the example of the Holy Family in practicing the virtues of family life and be bound more strongly together in the bonds of charity.

Intención del mes de diciembre del Obispo McKnight por nuestra Iglesia Local

Por la familia, para que todos los padres, madres e hijos de nuestra comunidad puedan seguir el ejemplo de la Sagrada Familia practicando las virtudes de la vida familiar y para que estén más fuertemente unidos por los vínculos de la caridad.



Please be so kind as to make this a part of your group and private prayer.

The Rosary was a lifeline for human trafficking survivor, now a resident at Anne's Anchor maternity home

By Jay Nies

Elizabeth was too far gone to realize that her once-beautiful mind was disintegrating.

The drugs, the repeated trauma and the infections had claimed her sanity and nearly all of her intellect.

"I've always been very capable, very intelligent," she noted. "Through all of my struggles and trials, I held onto this arrogant fallacy that I could go right back to being the smartest person in the room whenever I chose to."

Yet, by this time, she was being trafficked by the man she was living with — the same man who also got her addicted to narcotics.

"I got an infection," she added. "A unique part of this particular infection is that you go crazy. You lose it. It became a daily struggle just to keep a sane thought in my head."

The only thing that made any sense anymore was praying the Rosary — something she and her large Catholic family had done together every night while she was growing up.

And now, it was her lifeline.

"I had this infection for 4 or 5 years," she noted. "I was in the last stage of it. I was able to stop using drugs, and I was still crazy — I can't even express the depth of the insanity.

"I call that when I hit rock-bottom," she said.

The red beads strung together with a crucifix brought her peace and several moments of lucidity that likely saved her life.

"I still don't know how I made it out alive," she said. "I'm convinced that that's where God came in."

Then and now

Elizabeth and her children are now flourishing.

They've been residents of Anne's Anchor transformational maternity home since July.

Anne's Anchor is a locally-funded interfaith nonprofit agency that provides a safe, welcoming community for pregnant women who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

It is named in honor of St. Anne, mother of the Blessed Mother and grandmother of Jesus.

The agency's staff and board of directors are committed to helping the residents, as well as nonresident clients in the community, acquire the skills they need to become the best parents, providers and community members they can be.

Residential clients commit to spending a full year in the program but may end up liv-

ing at the home for several years with their children, saving up money and acquiring valuable life skills.

The goal is to help young mothers learn how to do for their families what St. Anne helped Mary prepare to do as mother of the Savior.

Clients use the "My Ridiculously Amazing Life" curriculum developed by Jane Dalton, executive director of the Bridges program in Rolla.

That challenging and effective method for teaching essential life and parenting skills focuses on seven core competencies for achieving self-sufficiency.

Ideally, that means earning enough money to support herself and her children in their own home, while maintaining a strong relationship with Jesus.

Hard work and accountability play a large role in creating that kind of environment.

"The people here in this community are very genuine and they keep their promises," said Elizabeth. "That makes it easier for me to do the same."

She now maintains a 4.0 grade-point average at Moberly Area Community College while studying to be a history teacher. She has been able to maintain her sobriety for 14 months.

Her children are growing up in a loving, family environment.

"I'd say we've flourished since being here — meaning to grow in an abundant way," she said. "I'm excited about my



Paulette Bruch, president of the Anne's Anchor Board of Directors; Elizabeth and Constantine; Georgia Hearn, Anne's Anchor Executive Director and her daughters Caelyn and Raelyn gather for Constantine's Baptism earlier this year. Elizabeth and Constantine are residents of the Anne's Anchor maternity home in Bowling Green.

future and I feel like there are many victories to come."

Valley of tears

Elizabeth was the 10th of 14 children born to her parents. They were homeschooled in safe suburban neighborhoods while learning and practicing their Catholic faith.

She called her childhood amazing.

"I can't imagine growing up in any other kind of family," she stated. "We learned a lot of things I think most people miss out on."

They went to Mass together on Sundays and holydays. They prayed the Rosary every night as a family.

"For a few years, I went to daily Mass," Elizabeth recalled. "I received the Sacraments. There was just this awareness that God is always present."

Her oldest brother entered a high school seminary at age 15 and went on to become a priest.

Elizabeth attended in-person high school and graduated with a 4.0 GPA, receiving several scholarships for college.

But college meant losing her way.

"Boys were difficult," she recalled. "I was really pretty and that was just too much. "It was a struggle on and off for many years."

Before she realized it, she was being trafficked.

"For those who don't know," she explained, "the difference between prostitution and human trafficking is, in prostitution you sell yourself. Trafficking is when someone, who is usually violent and frightening, sells you."

"It is horrible and awful, and really sad, and I see now that only God could lead me through it," she said.

Her mind and spirit were collaps-

ing. "In a very old and Biblical sense, I was wallowing in the depths of depravity and iniquity," she stated. "It distorted my view to the point of being in a whole different universe."

"Seeing God or feeling his presence was nearly impossible for me," she said.

Elizabeth had always pictured God as being very warm and loving.

"But there did come a time when he had to show me, 'Look at everything I gave to you, and you're squandering it, and I have the power to take it away from you,'" she said.

Pray for us sinners


People who were out of money would steal things and try to barter with Elizabeth's owner for drugs. One person traded in a red rosary.

"He must have thought it was pretty or maybe valuable, so he kept it," Elizabeth recalled.

She offered him \$10 for it. "I felt bad buying it from

See ELIZABETH, page 15

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SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital and Catholic Charities announce Hope and Healing Food Bags

Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri and SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital-Jefferson City have joined together to create the Hope and Healing Food Bags.

SSM Health is investing \$50,000 in the Hope and Healing Food Bag program for patients in Mid-Missouri.

This collaborative effort will improve access to food resources, which will impact the overall health and well-being of area residents through this collaborative partnership.

Three years ago, SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital and St. Mary's Hospital Foundation began a relationship with Catholic Charities to address food insecurity in the local community.

"Because we believe you cannot have optimum health without access to nutrition, we have invested \$445,000 over the past three years toward Catholic Charities' grocery model client choice pantry, at the former Shikles Auditorium, to improve the health and nutrition of our neighbors in the midst of low-income housing," noted K.C. DeBoer, SSM Health Mid-Missouri regional president and president of St. Mary's Hospital.

In recent years, the entire SSM Health system, spanning four states, has been on a mission-driven journey to proactively address social determinants of health, including food insecurity.

These efforts have included the creation of clinically-integrated food pantries in many of SSM Health hospitals and clinics.

Inspired by the sisters who founded the hospitals and guided by the mission they defined, St. Mary's and Catholic Charities built upon their already strong relationship to launch this new program in Jefferson City.

Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri Executive Director Litz Main said this new collaboration began this year when SSM Health approached Catholic Charities with a novel idea to address food insecurity among



Representatives of Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri and SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital-Jefferson City take part in a Dec. 12 ceremony marking SSM Health's \$50,000 investment in the Hope and Healing Food Bag program. — Photo by Jay Nies

their patients.

"Recognizing the importance of social determinants of health, particularly access to food resources, we joined forces to create a solution," said Ms. Main.

The shared vision was for Catholic Charities to provide two days' worth of food for the patients to take home upon being discharged from St. Mary's Hospital, along with additional resources for sustained food and nutrition support.

"Thus, the Hope and Healing Food Bags were conceived!" said Ms. Main.

A soft launch of the food bag program was initiated in August at St. Mary's Hospital. It expanded shortly thereafter to SSM Health Medical Group Pediatrics Clinic with the support of the pediatricians who recognized the need for nutrition for families served by the clinic.

As children grow and develop, they need important nutrients to be strong and healthy.

Some of the benefits of healthy eating include:

- stable energy;
- strong bones and teeth;
- improved mental health, facilitating clear thinking and alertness;
- maintenance of a healthy weight;
- prevention of chronic diseases

If patients of any age do not have access to adequate nutrition, they cannot move forward on their journey toward healing and health.

Patients without adequate

nutrition are more likely to return to the hospital.

These efforts are not just to solve the issue of needs for food for two days but to connect patients with resources such as Catholic Charities that can remove food insecurity from their life.

Pope asks Mary to watch over Ukrainians, Palestinians, Israelis

Catholic News Service

Rome

Mary's conception, free from original sin, shows that the destiny of humanity lies in life, brotherhood, harmony and peace rather than death, hate, conflict and war, Pope Francis said on the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

"Your person, the fact that you exist, reminds us that evil does not have the first nor the last word," the pope said to Mary during a prayer ceremony Dec. 8 while seated in front of a Marian statue in central Rome.

After a canceled trip to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and having an aide read his speeches for the past weeks due to a bronchial infection, Pope Francis went into the center of Rome to continue the tradition of praying before the elevated statue of Mary next to the Spanish Steps.

The pope asked Mary to "look at the martyred Ukrainian people, at the Palestinian people, at the Israeli people, plunged back into the

Shroud of Turin expert to present in Cathedral, Columbia Newman Ctr.

DATE: January 3 & 4
TIME: 2-4 & 7-9 pm

Father Andrew Dalton, one of the most respected authorities on the burial cloth of Christ, will give four presentations in the Jefferson City diocese on Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 3 and 4.

He will speak on Wednesday from 2-4 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. in Cana Hall in the lower level of the Cathedral of St. Joseph, 2305 W. Main St. in Jefferson City.

On Thursday, he will speak from 2-4 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. in the St. Thomas More Newman Center, 602 Turner Ave. in Columbia.

The subject will be the Shroud of Turn.

The Shroud is the most studied archaeological object of all time and has yielded fascinating information about

Christ and about his suffering, death and burial.

Fr. Dalton is an American priest who teaches Biblical theology of the Passion of the Christ at the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum in Rome.

Fr. Dalton said that initially, he didn't want to learn anything about the Shroud, but became so excited after watching a presentation that he couldn't sleep that night.

"How in the world am I 10 years a seminarian and I've never heard of this stuff?" he recalled asking, "The world needs to know it."

For a preview of Fr. Dalton's talk, visit shroudcenter.com.

To hear Fr. Dalton talk about the Shroud and its significance, search for "New Evidence for the Shroud of Turin with Fr. Andrew Dalton" on YouTube.

spiral of violence." The pope entrusted to Mary's care the "many mothers who, as happened to you, are grieving."



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For Deacon Seibert, Black Nativities and Santas celebrate a God who creates in all shades

By Jay Nies

Deacon Bill Seibert bought his first Black Nativity scene near St. Louis more than a quarter-century ago.

He found another set, one of his favorites, at a drug store in downtown Jefferson City.

“Actually, they only had some of the pieces there,” he recalled.

“Then, I was at a conference in Oregon and I went to a store there, and they had some of the pieces I didn’t have, and I thought, ‘You’ve got to be kidding me!’” he said.

He bought another set in Alexandria, Virginia — this one having been made in Africa.

“Nigeria, I think, but I’m not sure,” he stated.

Deacon Seibert, who is Black, assists the pastor of Im-

maculate Conception Parish in Jefferson City.

For him, finding representations of the first Noel that match his complexion are a

More photos from this event have been posted in *The Catholic Missourian's* online edition, cathmo.com. Select “Photo Galleries” from the “Multimedia” tab on the menu bar.

celebration of a God who created man in his “own image and likeness.”

“And I think to celebrate who you are in the eyes of God is a wonderful thing,” he said.

The Nativity tour continues.

“They’re all kind of spread out,” he said while moving

from the living room to the dining room to the den. “There’s a little one there and a little one there. Of course, you see this one here.”

The halls are also decked with Black angels and Magi on a Christmas tree.

Five Black Nativities are sprawled out on the dining room table, with room to spare for place settings and a family heirloom centerpiece.

A larger Nativity is situated under a Christmas tree on the landing at the top of the stairs.

“They’re kind of all over the place,” said Deacon Seibert.

So are scores and scores of Black Santas, most accompanied by Mrs. Claus.

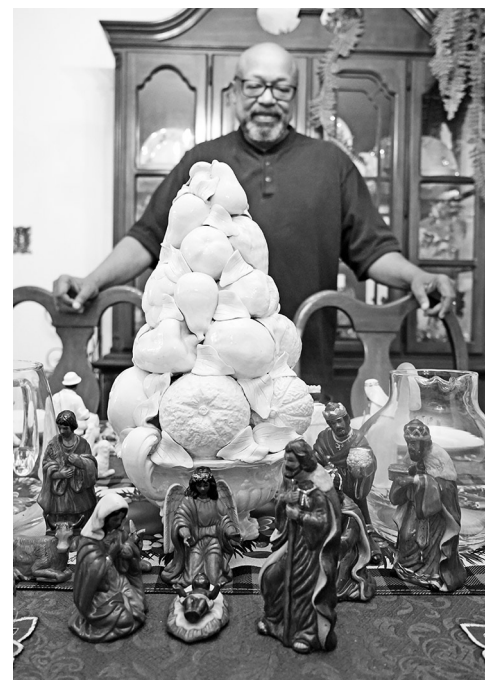
“There’s a real importance to that with me,” he said. “Especially with Rachele and me being married now for 47 years.”

Deacon Seibert didn’t set out to amass a collection of Black Nativities and Santas.

It started out a little at a time.

A close friend and colleague at the Missouri State Highway Patrol gave him his first Black Santa in a spirit of jest.

Rather than razzing his friend back,



Deacon Bill Seibert stands by one of the Black Nativity scenes he set up on his dining room table. The centerpiece belonged to his wife’s grandmother. — Photos by Jay Nies

Deacon Seibert got excited and said, “Where did you get this? Do you think they have any more of them?”

Yes, they did. And the rest is history.

“Interestingly enough,” said the deacon, “I’d say that about 90 percent of the Santas that have been given to me are from white people who go out and look for Black Santas for me. They are celebrating in my joy with me.”

He noted that it’s easier to find Black Santas in stores than Black Nativities.

He remembers buying his first Black Nativity scene while his children were still living at home.

“I bought that one for everyone to share and see,” he said. “It’s like I was saying to my sons, ‘I want you to know that there are religious things out there that celebrate everybody.’”

He said he finds it puzzling when he hears people say they’re “color-blind” — as if to imply that differences don’t matter to them.

“I tell them that I personally don’t agree with that,” he said. “Because we’re all created in the image of God, and I think he intended for every last one of us to see color. It’s just what you do with it that matters!”

Namely, to show respect and gratitude for all people, in imitation of

Jesus.

Deacon Seibert encourages people of diverse backgrounds to look for Nativities, Santas and other Christmas decorations that reflect their own uniqueness.

“Be proud of who you are, because God created you!” he suggested. “Go, look. See what you can find. It’s out there. It just might take a little while.”

Deacon Seibert cut back a little on this year’s decorating, due to trouble with his knees.

“It didn’t take very long, maybe a week,” he said. “Last year, I put everything out that I had, and it was March before



Most of the Black Santa Clauses in Deacon Bill Seibert’s collection are accompanied by Mrs. Claus.

See SEIBERT, page 18

Las Posadas: Setting aside a prominent place for the Lord

By Jay Nies

The search for shelter, warmth, safety and hospitality is as old as humanity.

So, it may not have seemed extraordinary for a man and his wife, about to give birth, to crisscross the streets of a strange village late at night, knocking on barred doors in the hope of finding a place to rest and give the baby a proper welcome into this world.

The shreds of compassion and hospitality they finally encountered left them quartered with livestock in what somehow became a sufficient birthplace for the Word Made Flesh, the Savior of all humankind.

That is the story not only of how the Son of God first set foot upon the earth, but of how he takes up residence every day in the hearts and minds and communities of the people He came to save.

All who hear the Gospel are innkeepers who must decide whether to make room for him.

That is the basis for a time-honored Advent tradition that is observed each year in millions of households in this hemisphere.

Las Posadas — which means “The Inns” in Spanish — is a communal celebration that takes place throughout most Latin American countries in the days leading up to Christmas.

“It is a tradition of reenacting Mary and Joseph’s long and frustrating search for a place to rest and to have a baby,” stated Deacon Enrique Castro, diocesan director of Hispanic and Intercultural Ministries and executive director of faith formation, including marriage preparation and family life.

Rooted in movement and active participation, Las Posadas appeals to people of all ages, especially children.

Each evening, participants go from home-to-home, knocking on doors and singing.

“Those outside walking represent Mary, Joseph and Jesus going and trying to find a place to rest,” said Deacon Castro.

At each, they experience rejection, just as they did in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago.

“They do this until they get to a house where they are welcome,” Deacon Castro stated. “They open their doors and let them in.”

Once inside, people venerate an image of Jesus while raising their prayer toward heaven: “This Christmas, Jesus, I offer you room in the inn of my heart. Make it a manger where you can be born.”

It is a celebration that combines hospitality and reverence.

“It is also a time of prayer as we reflect on the uncertainty of Mary and Joseph as they desperately search for a place to give birth to their child, the Son of God,” said Deacon Castro.

In addition, participants reflect on the joy and awe of the shepherds, who, guided by the angel’s tiding, rushed from the fields into Bethlehem to adore their newborn Savior.

Most parishes with large Hispanic populations in the diocese offer some sort of communal observance of Las Posadas.

People of all ethnic, linguistic and cultural traditions are

“It doesn’t matter if you don’t know whose house you are visiting. You know you are welcome as members of a greater family that we call Church.”

— Jose Maria Gonzalez

invited to participate in this tradition communally or in the home, as an aid to their preparation for Christmas.

Becoming like children

Las Posadas started among Catholics in Mexico and spread throughout much of Latin America and the United States.

“Hospitality is rooted deep within the Latin culture and, consequently, in its religious traditions like Las Posadas,” noted Jose Maria Gonzalez, formation director for Sacred Heart School in Sedalia.

“In this celebration, the different houses — or other buildings, in some cases — become like an inn for the people who participate,” he said.

Together, they pray, share food, sing and rejoice for the Lord’s upcoming arrival.



Monica Reyes performs with a musical group during a posadas celebration at Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago in this file photo. Posadas, a traditional Christmas festivity in many Hispanic cultures, are marked by a candlelight procession.
— CNS photo by Karen Callaway

“It doesn’t matter if you don’t know whose house you are visiting,” Mr. Gonzalez noted. “You know you are welcome as members of a greater family that we call Church.”

Children are especially encouraged to take part, to help them understand and stay focused on the true meaning of Christmas.

“Children get to dress up and play the role of Mary, Joseph, the angels, shepherds and other important figures from the story of Christ’s birth,” Mr. Gonzalez noted.

The prayers and songs are typically focused on Christmas, with having their origin in Spain.

“The Christmas songs are called *Villancicos*, and they have a childish vibe — as if we were all little kids singing to Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus,” said Mr. Gonzalez.

“I like that a lot because it allows you to be a child and leave your ‘adult’ worries behind and focus on adoring our newborn Lord,” he said.

“Following His example”

Las Posadas has evolved while spreading through much of Central and South America and into the United States.

“Like any other tradition, it tends to merge with the culture of the country where it takes place,” Mr. Gonzalez noted. “The spirit is the same, but the way it is celebrated can change a lot.”

“No matter who the person is,” Mr. Gonzalez continued, “that person is valued by Jesus and created in the image of God, so he or she deserves all our love and hospitality.”

That connection is even stronger if the person is suffering or in need.

“If that’s the case, we have an even greater obligation to help and serve,” Mr. Gonzalez noted. “And we do this with joy because we are following his example.”

A clear purpose

Mr. Gonzalez pointed out that some Latin American countries — including Chile, his homeland — do not celebrate Las Posadas.

He cautioned against “accumulating devotions as if they were some sort of medals” or elevating them above the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist.

“The Holy Mass is at the center of our spiritual life,” he noted, “and we are free to develop devotions that help us get closer to God and, consequently, to people.”

With that in mind, he called Las Posadas “an excellent example of a Catholic devotion that helps people celebrate Christmas with a greater focus on God.”

“And since hospitality is an essential component of it, it helps people share and rejoice together, no matter their ethnic background,” he said.

Portions of this article were originally published in the Dec. 14, 2018, edition of The Catholic Missourian.

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QUESTION CORNER

Can one Mass satisfy my Sunday and Christmas obligation in 2023?

By Jenna Marie Cooper
OSV News

Q: Since Christmas is on Monday this year, can I go to a Christmas Vigil Mass on Sunday and have it fulfill my Sunday and Christmas obligations? (Boston, MA)



A: As you note, in 2023 Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday. And like all Sundays, Catholics are required to attend Mass in person, unless there is some legitimate reason (like illness or inclement weather) which makes attending Mass unduly difficult or impossible.

Of course the following Monday, Dec. 25, is Christmas Day, which is also a holy day of obligation. Because there are two days of obligation — Sunday and Christmas — this means that there are two distinct obligations to speak of. Each separate obligation needs to be fulfilled by attending a separate Mass. That is, you cannot “double dip” by attending a Christmas Eve Mass that happens to be on Sunday and have this one Mass fulfill two obligations. (In years when Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, Christmas essentially replaces the Sunday liturgically, which means there is only one obligation.)

Now for the part that can get confusing: Even though you must attend two Masses to fulfill the two obligations, all this means is that you must go to Mass on that calendar day or attend a vigil Mass the evening before. The readings and prayers do not necessarily need to match the day whose obligation you are fulfilling. So, you could go to a Christmas Vigil Mass on Sunday, Dec. 24 and have it count as your Sunday obligation this year; but if you intend for this to fulfill your Sunday obligation, then you must also attend another Mass on Christmas Day to fulfill your obligation for the holy day.

Of course, if you were to attend a vigil Mass on Saturday for Sunday, and then the Christmas vigil Mass on Sunday (Christmas Eve) for Christmas day, then you’ve got it all covered.

Q: I am a member of our Altar Society and was told we are not to use artificial flowers/plants to decorate the altar. Yet, during the Christmas season artificial trees with elaborate shopping mall decorations are displayed on the altar. Please explain the rationale and guidelines. There seems to be a contradiction. (City withheld, Hawaii)

A: As far as I can find, there is nothing in the Church’s universal law which strictly prohibits using artificial plants or flowers as sanctuary decorations.

The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (i.e., the “instruction book” for how Mass should be celebrated) does not discuss silk versus natural flowers, but in paragraph 305 it does specify that: “During Advent the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year,” and that “During Lent it is forbidden for the altar to be decorated with flowers. Exceptions, however, are Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), Solemnities, and Feasts.”

However, in 2000 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued their own document with guidelines on the proper celebration of the liturgy titled “Built of Living Stones.” In this document, paragraph 129 states a clear preference for decorating with natural, as opposed to artificial, plants, noting: “The use of living flowers and plants, rather than artificial greens, serves as a reminder of the gift of life God has given to the human community. Planning for plants and flowers should include not only the procurement and placement but also the continuing care needed to sustain living things.”

See QUESTION, page 19

Papal Audience

December 13, 2023

Dear brothers and sisters:

Today’s catechesis concludes our series of reflections on apostolic zeal and our baptismal mission to be joyful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In the rite of Baptism, our lips were blessed as a sign that, reborn in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are sent forth to share with others the Good News of our redemption and our newfound dignity as adopted sons and daughters of the Father. May the love of God, poured into our hearts by the gift of the Spirit, inspire within us ever greater zeal for the Church’s mission of proclaiming the Gospel, drawing all hearts to Christ and working for the spread of his Kingdom of holiness, justice and peace.

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s audience, especially the groups from Malaysia and the United States of America. I pray that each of you, and your families, may experience a blessed Advent in preparation for the coming of the newborn Savior at Christmas. God bless you!



Welcoming us home for Christmas

By Anita Frey

As the Christmas Season of 2023 draws near, many people will find themselves traveling.

They will be traveling to a place they call home.

Home is often viewed as a special place where they grew up and their roots began.

Home is where family and friends often still reside.

The feelings people experience when they return home to be amongst family and friends for the Christmas Season are usually feelings of happiness, joy and love.

This brings some thoughts to mind. Are we traveling on a spiritual road that will lead to our eternal heavenly home?

Are we striving to set our sights toward the goal of seeing our Savior Jesus Christ face to face for eternity in his abounding glory?

If we are not striving for this goal, then what is the point of Christmas?

Christmas is not about shopping, gift-giving, parties, cookie-baking and the like.

All of these things are nice, but Christmas is about the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the one who gives us happiness and joy.

Jesus is the one who was



This is 1622 painting titled “Adoration of the Shepherds” is by Dutch artist Gerard van Honthorst.

— OSV News photo/Bridgeman Images

born humbly as a babe, walked on this earth, and then died an atrocious death to save us all from our sins.

He never leaves us, he never gives up on us, and he loves us unconditionally forever.

Many Catholics will travel to their hometowns during the 2023 Christmas Season.

Many Catholics will grace the doors of the church and participate in Mass for Christmas and possibly throughout the Christmas Season.

They will find comfort and peace as they participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass where God will be with them in his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity.

They will truly be home as the heavenly angels will be on earth during the Mass.

Then, as Christmas Day passes and the Christmas Sea-

son fades out, what will these Catholics who came home do?

Will their hearts be drawn ever so close to their Savior and will they continue to visit and honor him at Mass, or will their faith eventually dull out and their hearts grow cold just like Christmas lights dimming out being unplugged, growing cold and boxed away until the next Christmas Season arrives?

Let us ALL realize that we are granted a short time here on this earth. We do not know how many Christmas Seasons we have to celebrate.

We must endeavor to travel the road home and help others get home to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

May our hearts be led this Christmas Season and ALWAYS to the Catholic Church, which is guided by the Holy Spirit, and uses Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, and the Magisterium to provide the best possible path to guide us all home — home to our Eternity with Jesus in Heaven.

God is waiting patiently for each of us. He is longing to welcome us home.

Anita Frey is a member of St. Alexander Parish in Belle.

This Advent, echo John the Baptist: 'Behold the Lamb!'

By Father Patrick Briscoe
OSV News



I often think of John the Baptist at one particularly dramatic moment during Mass.

John is the forerunner, the one who gives testimony. "I am not the Messiah," John says in answer to those asking if he was the long-awaited messiah (Jn. 1:20). John is not the anointed one. He's the one who points out Christ, who points to Christ.

I think of John the Baptist at Mass

after the Lamb of God. Holding the consecrated host over the chalice, the priest reveals it to the people and declares, "Behold the Lamb of God" (Jn. 1:29). It's a declaration. A proclamation. A crying out like the voice in the wilderness: "This is our God!"

'Look, it's Jesus'

I recently offered an Advent Mass at a friend's home. Gathered in the living room, children helped set the altar. I explained the linens, vessels and vestments as we prepared. We sang Advent hymns, including my favorite: "Lo He Comes." During the Mass, a soon-to-be first communicant read the second reading, and

her younger brother assisted with the lavabo and purification. They were attentive, reverent and absolutely darling in their service of the Sacred Liturgy.

But the best moment was when I said, "Behold the Lamb of God. ..." Turning from the fireplace-altar, holding the host aloft, I saw a host of little faces craning in awe, squirming to get a better view. For this instant, their wiggles were cast off; their eyes locked in at the host. Their parents gently encouraged them, saying, "Look, it's Jesus."

John the Baptist cries out to us, like parents urging their children, saying "This is the Lord!" But when we gaze upon him, what do we see?

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI declared, "He has brought God, and now we know his face, now we can call upon him." He tells us the origin and destiny of our hearts. He gives our lives purpose, opening a new horizon and awakening us to our eternal destiny.

Behold the Lamb of God

"Behold the one who loves!" we might declare. Because he has loved us, we can follow in his way of love. It is a path, a story, an identity. And yet, when we look up at the host, do we see that?

"Behold the one who comes to you!"

See FR. BRISCOE, page 19

Let the warmth of Advent pull the bleak midwinter from you

By Effie Caldarola
OSV News



Christina Rosetti's poem, "In the Bleak Midwinter," is a Christmas classic.

"In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, Earth stood hard as iron, water like a

stone..."

As Advent begins and the first wintry weather sets in, those words come to mind. As I write, today is such a day — gusty wind, hard rain, fluid and not yet frozen like a stone, but cold and bleak nonetheless.

In the darkest nights of our year, and in the dark nights of our world's present turmoil, it seems so wonderful, yet challenging, that hope appears in the guise of a baby born to the poor.

When we saw the news reports of tiny premature babies huddling together in bombed-out hospitals in Gaza, it seemed the baby Jesus lay there among them. And when some "preemies" were evacuated to medical care in Egypt, how can we not remember the little refugee who fled into Egypt with Mary and Joseph?

So much suffering in this world right now, so much sorrow. So many bad, despotic governments, so many refugees, so much climate catastrophe, so much divisiveness, so much terror, so much war.

Rosetti's poem asks us, "What can I give him/poor as I am ..." and ends by saying, "Give him my heart."

And in the midst of brokenness, we bring a heart made joyful by his presence, despite this weary world. It's up to us to decide how we might give our heart during Advent. We may need a plan.

A small daily journal might help. Keep it short and simple. A prayer offering each morning, a little commitment:

I will do this one thing today to simplify my lifestyle to honor our Earth, and one thing today to bring joy to another.

Maybe it's the season you put canvas bags in your car and begin the habit of using them instead of those disposable plastic bags. Maybe find the phone number of an old friend or an elderly relative and surprise them with a call.

Share Christmas cookies with a lonely neighbor. Give yourself a bonus point for letting your kids help. Start a bag and place one item cluttering your home into it each day. Bonus points for giving away something someone else can really use.

Write your pastor a note telling him what he's done or said to inspire you this year. Find people to thank. Find people to gently and courteously nudge, perhaps toward more environmental activity — your congressman, perhaps, or even your bishop. Add some thanks.

Sit down for a quick coffee with a friend. Give yourself a bonus point if you're at a coffee shop and you've brought your reusable coffee cup.

Add joy by not sniping at your spouse when you're exasperated. Bonus point for giving him or her a hug instead.

Make Advent loving and fun, with your focus on Jesus. Write all those little accomplishments in your journal. Keep it meaningful. We're all really busy right now, right? So go easy on yourself in these hard times. Remember that Christmas is all about joy, gratitude — and Jesus.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, writing in the first volume of his trilogy, *Jesus of Nazareth*, addressed the great question that the book would ask: "What did Jesus actually bring, if not world peace, universal prosperity and a better world? What has he brought? The answer is very simple: God. He has brought God."

And always remember: God alone is enough.

"We are all meant to be mothers of God," wrote the theologian Meister

Eckhart, "for God is always needing to be born."

Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and

grandmother who received her master's degree in pastoral ministry from Seattle University.

REFLECTION

Into sharper focus

By Mark Saucier

No Christmas pageant would be complete without a young girl in white dress and veil playing the role of Mary.

Remember, though, that, unlike the men of the gospels, Mary was not allowed to take center stage until the Council of Ephesus in 431 declared her *Theotokos*, God-bearer.

Since then, she has acquired quite a resume.

She is Queen of Heaven, Angels, Martyrs, Saints and Patriarchs.

She is the Morning Star, Gate of Heaven, Seat of Wisdom, and Mystic Rose.

She is "Our Lady of" a hundred places and "Virgin of" of a thousand more.

Life is filled with countless sufferings, needs and desires. It is only natural to want a loving mother, a woman who knows the terrifying depths of pain but also the ecstatic heights of joy, to come to our aid.

But this didn't really start in Ephesus, which was actually more about the nature of Jesus than it was his mother.

We must go back to Luke's nativity story and see Mary, not as the budding queen, but as a young woman, barely more than a child, whose life takes an unforeseen turn.

Betrothed at 12 or 14, her expected future was troubling enough — living with a man, having children, running a household.

Then, the angel Gabriel appears to her, which was not a normal occurrence in little no-name Nazareth. According to Luke, she is immediately suspicious when the angel greets her: "The Lord be with you."

"Surprise!" he says, "you're going to have a child. That child is going to be the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God."

Mary responds, "Let it be to me according to your will," but it is not as if she was given a choice about pregnancy.

It is no surprise that Mary runs off to be with her kinswoman Elizabeth. Helping the expectant Elizabeth was good cover to flee the embarrassment and the wagging tongues.

Somewhere in the long journey and the warm welcome of her cousin, Mary's path became clear and her commitment complete.

She proclaims, maybe sings, her "Magnificat," which begins, "My soul magnifies the Lord."

It is sometimes translated "exults," as in the song of Hannah, but I like magnifies.

In her courageous choice, in her "yes" to a hard childbirth, a poor household, and a suffering son, she "magnified" the Lord.

She made the promise of God more visible in all its love and consolation.

That's why the ages have turned to her.

Encounter

AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES

**Embraced by community, envisioning a radiant future:
My reflections on leading Catholic Charities**



By Litz Main

The vibrant tapestry of the community at Catholic Charities has woven a new thread into its rich history with my recent appointment as its new Executive Director, and the resounding welcome and support I have received are nothing short of heartwarming.

As I reflect upon my initial days in this role, I am profoundly moved by the community's generosity, the unwavering commitment of our dedicated staff, the support of the diocese and the collective drive toward the agency's success and its impact on those we serve.

The spirit of generosity and compassion that pervades our community is, to say the least, exceptional.

I have been touched by the countless individuals and organizations who have opened their hearts to support Catholic Charities' mission.

This generosity is the cornerstone of our work, allowing us to extend a helping hand to those who need it most.

Whether it's a business or individual donating funds or a volunteer dedicating their time, each contribution strengthens our ability to make

a difference.

Catholic Charities operates through various programs, each dedicated to its unique service mission.

The Community Services program stands as a testament to the agency's commitment to disaster preparedness and response and reaching out to the Hispanic community.

From disaster preparedness training to disaster case management and response, this program equips our community with the tools and knowledge needed to face adversity head-on.

Financial counseling and HUD-certified housing counseling further empowers individuals to take control of their financial futures, providing stability and security.

Counseling Services is another pillar of our agency's compassionate work.

Through individual and family counseling, and *Clinica para la Familia* (counseling in Spanish), we aim to address our community members'



Litz Main, Executive Director of Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri.

mental and emotional well-being.

By offering culturally sensitive services, we ensure everyone can access the support they need during life's challenges.

Family Immigration Services is a beacon of hope for immigrants seeking to reunite with their loved ones.

By providing low-fee immigration legal services, we are fostering the unity of families while enabling immigrants to navigate the complex immigration system.

It's a demonstration of the agency's commitment to serving those who come to our community in search of a better life.

The Parish Social Ministries program embodies the spirit of charity and mercy within our local communities.

It not only reaches out to neighbors in need but also strengthens the capacity of each parish to serve as a center

of compassion.

Catholic Charities provides leadership, formation, guidance and training to those who are called to serve and those who are in need.

This is done with mutual respect and a Christ-centered compassion that brings insight and adaptability to meet the ever-evolving needs of those we serve.

I am particularly moved by the extensive services the Refugee Services program offers.

Having faced unimaginable losses, refugees find solace and support in our comprehensive array of services.

From basic needs like food, clothing and shelter, to employment assistance and cultural orientation, Catholic Charities stands as a lifeline for those starting anew in our community.

Lastly, our Health and Nutrition Services program is vital in recognizing the interconnectedness of physical, mental and financial well-being.

By providing access to proper nutrition and alleviating barriers to healthcare services, we underscore the importance of holistic health in the lives of those we serve.

I am highly impressed by this program's Client Choice Food Pantry, which follows a model rooted in dignity and personalization, and reflects

our belief in serving individuals and families in a manner that respects their autonomy and choices.

As I look forward to the journey ahead as the Executive Director, I am inspired by the collective effort of the community, our dedicated staff and the guidance of the diocese.

Together, we are committed to nurturing a more compassionate and caring society.

The agency's success is not just a goal; it's a shared vision

that will be realized through the power of our unity.

Catholic Charities, with its programs and services, is poised to continue making a profound impact on the lives of those we serve.

We are devoted to extending our compassion to those who need it most, and with the ongoing support of our generous community, there is no doubt that we will thrive.

The road ahead is paved with hope, and I am deeply honored to be on this journey with each and every one of you.

Litz Main is the Executive Director of Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri. She took up the leadership position of the agency earlier this year and has rallied the staff, board members and supporters to reinvest in the mission of serving those in need with compassionate help regardless of faith, culture or situation. Having previously worked for a social enterprise branching from Catholic Charities of Southwestern Ohio, her experience with Catholic Charities, business administration and excellence in leadership have already left their positive mark on the charitable arm of the Diocese of Jefferson City. Learn more about the work of Catholic Charities at ccnmo.diojeffcity.org.



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Nativity, Christmas music take center stage at Missouri Capitol

By Jay Nies

Waves of children and adults passed back and forth through the doors of the Missouri State Capitol as carols and hymns ascended and spilled out onto the neighboring byways.

It was the 10th annual Nativity at the Capitol celebration, sponsored by 40 Days for Life Columbia and the Team P.L.A.Y. faith-based effort to end abortion in Missouri.

About 400 students from local schools took turns providing four hours of Christmas music on the Capitol steps inside the Capitol Rotunda.

They included: the St. Peter Preschool in Jefferson City; Our Lady of the Snows School in Mary's Home; St. Peter School in Jefferson City; Helias Catholic High School in Jefferson City; St. Martin School in St. Martins; St. Joseph School in Westphalia; St. Thomas the Apostle School in St. Thomas; Immanuel Lutheran School in Honey Creek; St. Francis Xavier School in Taos; and St. Joseph Cathedral School in Jefferson City; along with fifth-graders and the high school and middle school bands from Eugene High School and Bob and Sheila Thompson of the Rusty Strings ensemble.

Each group of performers outside the Capitol stood next to a substantial Nativity scene set up on the Capitol steps.

Groups of parents from each school gathered around the outdoor steps, then filed into the Capitol Rotunda, where another Nativity was set up on a stage filled with greenery and lights.

"Thank you for coming. We all remember the reason for the season — which is Jesus," said Kathy Forck, campaign director for Columbia 40 Days for Life and co-coordinator of Team P.L.A.Y.

"What an honor it is to share the joy of Christ, the true meaning of Christmas, through the gift of music," a representative of Helias Catholic stated on the school's Facebook page.

"We heard many positive comments from community members about their performance," a representative of



LEFT: Students from St. Thomas the Apostle School in St. Thomas sing Christmas songs next to a Nativity scene set up in the Missouri State Capitol Dec. 7. **RIGHT:** Students from St. Joseph Cathedral School in Jefferson City sing Christmas songs next to a Nativity scene on the Capitol steps. **BELOW:** Adults gather 'round to watch and listen.



— Photos by Jay Nies

Our Lady of the Snows School stated over social media. "We are so grateful for the opportunity to share our voices!"

One woman stopped when she saw the children outside, noticed the Nativity, and parked her car to find out what was happening.

She was delighted to see the Nativity scene and to know that another one was inside the Capitol and that the children would also be

performing inside after asking permission if she could go inside the Capitol.

"Of course," she was told, "It's your Capitol!"



"You can be a saint!"

Sixth-graders from St.

Thomas the Apostle School gathered in a side gallery after taking their turn on the steps and in the Rotunda.

"We sang at the capitol," said Isabella.

"We did it to inspire people and have a good time with them," said Cadyn.

"And to spread the Christmas cheer," said Isabella.

"Because we're Catholic and we like singing,"

St. Jacob added.

"I feel happy singing for other people," said Mara, a student at St. Joseph School in Westphalia.

Lucas, a first-grader at St. Francis Xavier School, said he liked singing Christmas songs in the Capitol.

"Because you spread God's word," he said.

"It spreads God's love," said first-grader Ellie.

"That's what you're supposed to do, and you can be a saint," said Cameron.

"It gets people closer to God if they don't know about him yet," said Wyatt.

Pope marks 800th anniversary of Nativity scene

Asks for fervent prayers for the Holy Land

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

Vatican City

Away in a cave near Greccio, Italy, St. Francis of Assisi had the first Nativity scene — a live one - staged for the faithful on Christmas Eve in 1223.

A 15th-century fresco now decorating the cave inspired the Nativity scene erected in St. Peter's Square for the 800th anniversary celebrations.

Before the scene was unveiled and the Christmas tree in the square was lighted Dec. 9, Pope Francis met with the more than 100 people involved in erecting the creche, officials from the Rieti Valley, which includes Greccio, and from the little town of Macra, in northern Italy, which donated the silver fir tree.

For St. Francis of Assisi, who had traveled to the Holy Land, "the caves of Greccio reminded him of the landscape of Bethle-

hem," the pope said.

The saint asked that a donkey and an ox, some hay and a manger be brought to the cave on Christmas Eve and invited other friars and people from the village, "creating a living Nativity scene. Thus, the tradition of the Nativity scene as we understand it was born."

Remembering Greccio today, the pope said, people should also think of Bethlehem.

"And as we contemplate Jesus — God made man, small, poor, defenseless — we cannot but think of the tragedy that the inhabitants of the Holy Land are living, expressing to those brothers and sisters of ours, especially the children and their parents, our closeness and our spiritual support. They are the ones who pay the true price of war."

Whether the Nativity scene is in St. Peter's Square, in a



The Nativity scene is revealed and Christmas tree is lighted in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Dec. 9, 2023. The creche is a reproduction of the scene in Greccio, Italy, where St. Francis of Assisi staged the first Nativity scene in 1223. The baby Jesus will be placed in the manger Dec. 24.

— CNS photo/Lola Gomez

church or in one's home, the pope said, people passing one should remember Jesus' birth 2,000 years ago and be moved to "silence and prayer in our often so hectic daily lives."

"Silence to be able to listen to what Jesus tells us from the unique 'cathedra' of the man-

ger," he said. "Prayer to express grateful wonder, tenderness and perhaps the tears that the Nativity scene stirs in us."

Enrico Bressan, co-curator of the Nativity scene in the square, told reporters that

See 800th, page 17




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Amid Russia’s war, Advent fast takes on deeper meaning for Ukrainian Catholics

By Gina Christian
OSV News

Eastern Catholics has taken on a deeper meaning amid Russia’s war on Ukraine.

The Fast of St. Philip, also known as the Philipian or Nativity Fast, is observed by Eastern Catholics and Christians worldwide.

The fast — instituted at the Council of Constantino-ple in 1166 — begins prior to Advent on Nov. 15, the feast day of St. Philip, and ends on Christmas Eve.

During the fast, faithful typically abstain from meat on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, while observing a lesser form of abstinence on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The fast is often intensified in the days immediately preceding Christ-
mas.

Although less strict than the Great Pascha fast of Lent, the St. Philip Fast is intended to prepare the faithful for the joy of Christ’s birth.

The bishops of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the U.S. issued a pastoral letter coinciding with this year’s fast, saying that the observance marks the “embarking on a journey that culminates in the contemplation of an indescribable mystery — God’s condescension to humanity.”



The letter, released Nov. 18, was signed by Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic

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See FAST, page 13

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FAST

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Archeparchy of Philadelphia; Bishop Paul Chomnycky of the Eparchy of Stamford, Connecticut; Bishop Venedykt Aleksiy-chuk of the St. Nicholas Eparchy of Chicago, who wrote the document; and Bishop Bohdan J. Danylo of the St. Josaphat Eparchy of Parma, Ohio.

“It is at the Nativity of Our Lord that God draws near to us,” said the bishops, who quoted “Christ Our Pascha,” the catechism of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church: “In the union of the divine and human, ‘the incorporeal one takes on flesh, the Word becomes approachable, the invisible one is seen, the impalpable one is touched, the one beyond time enters time, the Son of God becomes the Son of Man.’” (179)

The bishops said that “in this divine event, God not only reveals His name but also makes Himself visible, inviting us to recognize Him.”

Yet that invitation can be difficult to discern or accept amid Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, said the bishops.

Russia’s war — which continues aggression launched in 2014 and which has formally been declared a genocide in two reports from New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights — has killed more than 10,000 Ukrainian civilians (including 510 children) and has injured some 18,500, while committing at least 113,522 documented war crimes.

In a July 2023 joint report, New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights reiterated their May 2022 conclusion that Russia has violated the 1948 Genocide Convention through its atrocities in Ukraine.

At least 2.5 million Ukrainians have been forcibly taken to the Russian Federation, and close to 19,600 children are being held in Russian “re-education” camps, with the actual number for the latter feared to be much higher.

Currently, there are an estimated 5.1 million individuals internally displaced within Ukraine, according to the International Organization for Migration, part of the United Nations network. More than 6.2 million Ukrainians have

sought safety abroad since the start of the full-scale invasion.

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COLLECTION

From page 1

at Mundelein Seminary.

"I'm here to grow closer to God, fundamentally, in the biggest way," said Luke Dalton, a seminarian in his first year at Conception Seminary College in Conception.

"But in the same way, I can look to the people of our diocese who are supporting me and helped put me here, and know that I'm here to make a diligent discernment for them," he said.

A time to heal

The Christmas Collection also supports the diocesan Infirm Priests Fund, which helps priests pay for medical care not covered by insurance, when their assets are exhausted.

Monsignor Michael T. Flanagan, retired pastor in service at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Columbia, fought back from near-death several times this year due to an infection and kidney failure.

His insurance covered the cost of his lengthy hospital stay, surgery and follow-up treatment, so he didn't need to rely on the Infirm Priest Fund.

But he rests better knowing it's there if he ever needs it. Just like the prayers of the people he's been ministering to in his first 58 years of active Priesthood.

"That whole process, the fact that so many people were praying for me, and I heard

from so many people all over the diocese, and they were so happy that I came through it all," said Msgr. Flanagan.

"It was truly miraculous, and it did affirm the faith in many that God does heal us and answer our prayers," he stated.

"Am I called?"

There are currently 10 seminarians in various stages of formation and discernment for the Jefferson City diocese, including Rev. Mr. Christopher Hoffmann, who was ordained a transitional deacon this spring.

This has been Mr. Dalton's first semester as a seminarian.

His very large family came to visit him for Family Weekend at the sprawling seminary campus in northwestern Missouri.

"It was so cool to see them, at all different stages of their faith, and for them to be able to see seminary life, to see it for what it is," said Mr. Dalton.

"In reality, this is a college for men to go to ask the question more thoughtfully, 'Am I called to Priesthood?'" he stated. "It's not some scary, closed-door place. It's a college."

He called it a wonderful spiritual and academic environment.

It's also rigorous and challenging.

"A seminary is a place for you to grow in relationship with God," he stated. "The priests and chaplains here walk with us on this journey, to help us grow in human formation and spiritual forma-

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tion."

Grateful for the prayers and material support, Mr. Dalton includes all of the people in this diocese in his daily Morning Prayer intentions.

"Their prayers have been the most contributing factor to my growth here at the seminary," he said.

Knowing oneself

Mr. Kliethermes said one of the most profound graces of seminary life is being part of a community of prayer — "being surrounded by other guys pursuing the same thing you are and also encouraging each other and helping each other in our spiritual lives."

Mr. Hartman said seminary is a process of growing in self-knowledge, in order to be able to make a complete gift of self to God as a priest — if that is, in fact, the calling one has received.

"So, I think the biggest blessing and growth [in the seminary] is providing time for me to get to know who I am and get to know my own heart, and then to have that self-possession of growing in virtue, in who I am and what my gifts are, what I struggle with, and working on those things," he said.

Mr. Kliethermes emphasized that being a seminarian means much more than studying.

"There are four pillars for formation, and intellectu-

al formation is only one of them," he noted. "There are other ways that we're being encouraged to grow."

Mr. Hartman pointed out that seminary isn't a place for people who are perfectly holy or who have everything figured out.

"For me, the most refreshing thing is seeing the humanity and realizing that seminary

Mr. Hartman noted that seminary formation can take six, eight, 10 or more years to complete.

"From the outside looking in, it can be really daunting, especially since you go into it not being certain that this is what the Lord is calling you to," he said.

"I'm very grateful for that freedom to discern well with-

out having to worry about the monetary problems that would occur," he stated.

"It's a huge gift," said Mr. Kliethermes.

Staying strong

Msgr. Flanagan

is back to offering one Mass each Sunday in the church he led his parishioners to build while he was pastor, and fills in for other priests during the week.

"It helps me stay connected with people," he said.

He's still relying on people's prayers as he continues his quest for strength and better health.

"I go to the gym every day. That strengthens me," he said. "I want to keep my legs strong and walk and get around."

He no longer needs the cane that he used after being discharged from the hospital.

"It's great!" he said. "It gives me a sense that I can live on my own, I can dress myself, I can take care of myself."

"That's something you don't want to lose," he said. "That's a great motivator to exercise every day."

"It's a huge, huge support from the diocese, knowing that we are being prayed for by those we know and love back home, but are also being supported in all facets through having our education and formation paid for."
— Shane Kliethermes

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SANTA

From page 1

and bring Santa back to St. Mary of the Angels.

That friend was Cullen Bruner.

"I don't think he really wanted to, but he wouldn't let me down," Mr. Bertsch recalled in 2021. "He was really nervous but did a good job anyway."

Yet, like Mr. Weimer, Mr. Bruner never actually got to see Santa.

Mr. Bertsch told him: "The thing that matters is the joy and laughter he brought everyone in a year [the pandemic year] that didn't have much joy."

Mr. Weimer died in June of 2021.

Mr. Bruner brought Santa back to town again at Mass the following Christmas, but his responsibilities at college precluded him from doing so a third year.

He helped convince his cousin, Jace Bixenman, to carry on the tradition.

"Cullen and Jace, their grandpa and grandma were very good friends with Wes Weimer, so there was a very good connection there," Mr. Bertsch noted.

"Big shoes"

Parishioner Donald Meissen had the privilege of bringing Santa to St. Mary of the Angels in 2022.

He's on stand-by this year, just in case.

"I considered it an honor to be asked to do it," said Mr. Meissen. "I also felt I had some big shoes to fill."

"It's a very humbling experience," he stated. "My first child was born in 1991. All of my children have memories of Santa coming to Midnight Mass."

Santa told him that "seeing all of the big-eyed kids" watch him walk slowly and reverently up the aisle and spending a few moments in front of the Nativity scene was "moving and humbling."

Mr. Meissen said Santa's visit does not take away from the solemnity of the Liturgy, it highlights it.

"We're allowing God to be part of Santa, not Santa to be part of God," he stated. "It's just a wonderful tie-together



to help the kids relate to Santa and Church."

On bended knee

Bringing Santa to Wien can be a healing experience.

Mr. Bertsch thought back to the year when Mr. Weimer's wife passed away. That Christmas, Mr. Weimer left church after Holy Communion to make sure Santa was coming.

"A while later," Mr. Bertsch recalled, "I went over to see him, and I saw that he had been crying and was missing his wife and thinking about

how she had always helped him with this.

"So, we prayed together and shared tears, and then we'd compose ourselves and he would go and bring Santa again," he said.

Mr. Bertsch was 5 when Santa made his first pilgrimage to St. Mary of the Angels Church. Every year since then, he has paid close attention to how the visitor acts in church.

"It's important to see that he kneels before the Christ Child in the manger," said Mr.

Bertsch. "Even Santa comes forth to adore the Christ Child."

He noted that Mr. Bruner and Mr. Bixenman aren't just former students of his, they're also his friends.

Mr. Bruner served as best man at Mr. Bertsch's wedding last year, and Mr. Bixenman was an usher.

"They are both an important part of my life, and now my wife Kelsey's and my life," said Mr. Bertsch. "I hope I have been influential in their lives ... in a good way."

ELIZABETH

From page 4

him, but I knew I needed it," she said. "So it was like, 'I will not buy drugs from you, but I will buy that.'"

She took it home to the place where she was living and being sold.

"I kneeled down in the kitchen and started praying," she said. "I didn't know where else to turn. And that's where the spiritual experience began."

She prayed it once. Then again. And again.

"I know I was still nuts when I started praying it, but something happened," she said. "The Holy Spirit took over."

A moment of lucidity allowed her to call and ask a friend to take her to the police department to report what was being done to her.

It was getting cold and she had nowhere else to go, but she was determined to leave after he threatened her life again.

"I think that's the one thing up until now that I've been most sure of: I had to leave, and it was going to be okay," she said.

She lived in a vacant house for a few weeks.

Then, she went to an outpatient appointment at an elaborate Catholic ministry that provides treatment and housing for women with substance-use disorders.

The initial evaluation included a drug test and a pregnancy test.

"The woman said, 'Do you know you're pregnant?'" Elizabeth recalled. "I said, 'No.'"

Upon finding out about the baby, who was Elizabeth's second child, she checked into the inpatient program.

Her brother, the priest, was stationed at a nearby church. She often went there for Mass and to visit him.

She got treatment for her infection and started to recover.

"I didn't really appreciate how slow my mind had gotten until God started giving it back to me," she said.

She later moved to a Catholic maternity home and started taking college classes. The home was in a rough neighborhood, and Elizabeth wanted someplace

safer for her and her children.

Her sister gave her the phone number for Anne's Anchor in Bowling Green.

"I called, and we went through kind of a lengthy interview to see if I'm a good fit here," Elizabeth recalled.

She moved to Anne's Anchor in July of this year, becoming an active member of St. Clement Parish in St. Clement and having her baby daughter, Constantine, baptized.

Thine eyes of mercy

Elizabeth said buying a rosary from a drug dealer helped her realize that God is everywhere.

"Until then, I had this feeling that because I was sur-



Elizabeth and her daughter, Constantine.

ent Parish. "She is the best mom to Constantine. It's been amazing to see her story unfold and see her be able to become the mom that God always knew she could be."

Elizabeth is overcoming the kind of challenges most people never have to endure.

"And she has done it so gracefully," said Mrs. Hearn. "It's a true blessing to see all of this unfold."

Elizabeth is deeply grounded in her faith and eager to help the other mothers and children.

"Anne's Anchor

started because we wanted to help mothers like Elizabeth," said Mrs. Hearn, "moms who might have gone down the wrong path in one way or another but are truly trying and want something better for themselves and for their children."

Nothing the women do there is easy, but the program is designed to help them seize successful parenthood.

"And Elizabeth just takes it and runs with it, every opportunity she's given," said Mrs. Hearn.

"My identity is so thoroughly enmeshed in my Catholic faith and my family," said Elizabeth.

"I want my children to know God and to be examples of God's love in the world."

rounded by so much sin, God surely couldn't find me there," she stated.

"But seeing that crucifix and that rosary in that place, from that person, drove the point home for me that Jesus really did conquer sin, and I didn't need to live that way anymore," she said.

Her parents and siblings are happy to see her rebuilding her life and becoming stronger in her faith than she's ever been.

"They said that this was what they've been praying for for a really long time," she said.

Georgia Hearn, Anne's Anchor's Executive Director, said the home is a better place because Elizabeth lives there.

"She's inspiring," said Mrs. Hearn, a member of St. Clem-



By Father Donald Antweiler
ACROSS

1. In this fast approaching Christmas time, this puzzle features Christmas related quotes and ____.
6. "When you hurry you're more apt to make mistakes. But...if you are not ____, you can't get things done," —Coach John Wooden.
10. A unit of blood, perhaps; or possibly letters for: Christmas Carols!
12. "And if he has done you any injustice or ____ anything, charge it to me," —Philemon 1:18 (2 wds.).
14. "____ in our world, a stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world," —*Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis.
16. Reading or Short Line in Monopoly.
17. "I heard the bells on Christmas Day, their old familiar carols play, and wild and sweet the words repeat, ____ peace on earth, goodwill to men," —Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
18. In Mexico, "up" or "above"; or "Go!" in a cheer.
20. Hospital scan.
22. Strangely, "A history of Lincoln Univ. (____) reveals that on two occasions Jesse James, the outlaw, contributed funds to the Institute," —*Civil War in Missouri As Seen from the Capital City*, Dino Bangioni.
23. A type of steak (2 wds.).
24. To depict in painting or words.
25. "He was gifted with the ____, sharp instinct for self-preservation that passes for wisdom among the rich," —Evelyn Waugh.
27. A small island.
28. ____ S. Grant; General who led the Union Army to victory in the Civil War; also 18th Pres. of the U.S.; married and lived in St. Louis for a time.
31. Prefix for teem or cargo.
33. ____ is a portable round

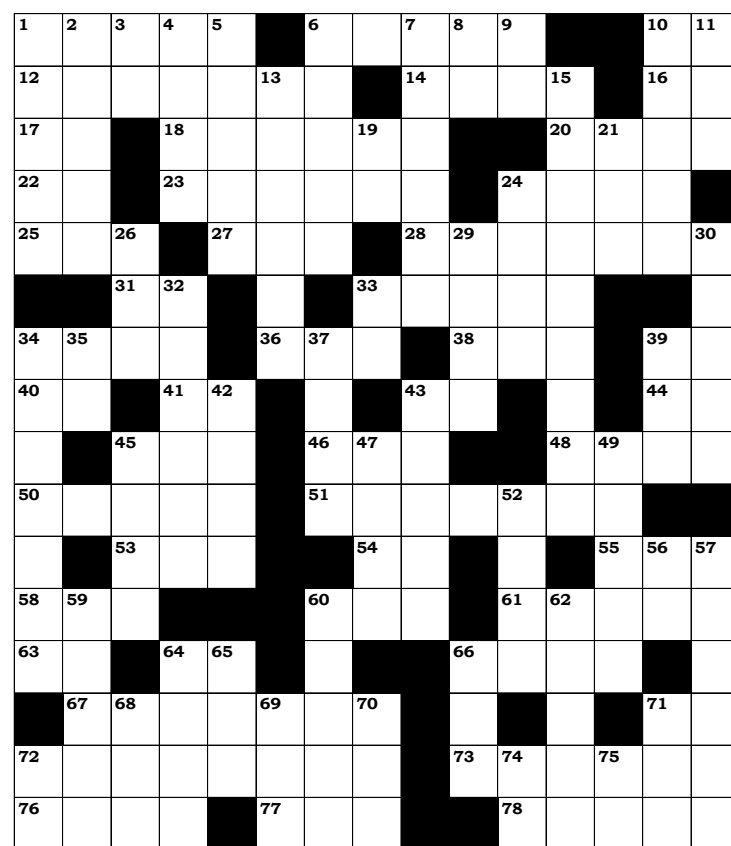
tent covered and insulated with skins, commonly used in nomadic Mongolia. A modern deluxe version is available for rent at Table Rock State Park (2 wds.).

34. "...it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be ____," (Matthew 18:14).
36. Fast flier.
38. "Y____, some people, they reach a point in their life, money don't matter, 't' all. It ain't what's important. Yeh are what yeh are; money don't change 'at," —Polly to Sherlock Holmes in *The Jewel of Covent Garden*, Wayne Worcester.
39. "I made a decision some time ago, that once I attained the age of seventy, I would begin to compute my years in the opposite direction. ____ one has yet shown there are rules that forbid this practice," —Ben Franklin in *The Glorious Cause*, Jeff Shaara.
40. "God bless ____, everyone!" —Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*, 1843, Charles Dickens.
41. Prefix for new or view.
43. Abbr. before a canonized person.
44. Letters for the place for hospital surgeries.
45. "(When) Springfield's capital had gathered...bright the lamps shone ____ fair women and brave men," —*Peoria Democratic Press* in *The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage*, Daniel Mark Epstein.
46. ____ is the name given to the Greek letter "P" which, perhaps strangely, is pronounced like the letter "R" in English.
48. Noel, Mo. in McDonald County, is known as Christmas _____. It has its own special Christmas postmark during the Christmas season. Way back in her day, well-known singer Kate Smith promoted it on national radio shows.
50. "For a child is born to us, a son is ____ to us..." (Isaiah 9:5).
51. "It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its mighty ____ was a child Himself," —Charles Dickens.
53. Summer on the Seine.
54. Postal abbr. for the State called "Big Sky Country."

55. Stomach muscles.
58. Frankfort, not Berlin, in this country (abbr.) is an important financial center, home to the EU's central bank and the country's major stock market.
60. Abbr. for the 16th book of the Bible.
61. "A gentleman would be ashamed should his deeds not ____ his words," —Confucius.
63. Hospital place for those in need of immediate medical attention.
64. The Mo. Dept. of ____ is the State agency promoting and maintaining a strong public education system.
66. "You seek Jesus of Nazareth...He has been raised. He is not ____," (Mark 16:6).
67. Part of ROTC.
71. Original 12-step program.
72. "It is my heart-warm and world embracing Christmas hope that all of us—the high, the low, the rich, the poor, the admired, the ____, the loved, the hated, the civilized, the savage, may be gathered in heaven of everlasting rest and peace and bliss," —Mark Twain, Dec. 23, 1890.
73. One of those mentioned in Matthew 21:34.
76. A scriptural garden.
77. Uncle Sam's tax dept.
78. "We consider Christmas as the encounter...between God and mankind. He who has ____ knows this truly; let him rejoice," —Pope Paul VI.

DOWN

1. "____ rush in where angels fear to tread," —an essay on criticism, Alexander Pope.
2. "This is the Christmas that a war-weary world has prayed for through long and ____ years. With peace come joy and gladness. The gloom of the war years fades as once more we light the National Christmas Tree," —Pres. Harry Truman, Dec. 24, 1945.
3. Letters for Common Era, often used in scientific or secular contexts instead of A.D.
4. Former Russian monarch.
5. "This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of ____," (Luke 2:2).
6. "Midnight Christmas Mass is one of the most glorious



- nights of the year. It's the darkest, most ____ time of night and that's the time that the Son of God was born in Bethlehem," —St. Louis born and raised Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York.
7. All the vowels.
8. The Canadian National (____) railway company has a rail network reaching across to both Canadian coasts and through the Midwest to the Gulf of Mexico.
9. Letters for the home of the NFL Chiefs.
10. Seeing a ____ in Mo. is a rare sight. This tall lanky bird with a red ring on its head will migrate in fall or late winter on the eastern and western edges of Mo.
11. "At the Christ child's birth, only two groups of people heard the ____: the Shepherds, who know they know nothing, and the Wise Men, who know they don't know everything. Never the man who thinks he knows everything," —Bishop Fulton Sheen.
13. "I describe all the positions of the ____ together with the movement (of) the earth that this book might contain the general scheme of the universe," —Nicolaus Copernicus.
15. "It is clear that the Pope is no superman and his mere ____ is not sufficient to conduct his role," —*Last Testament*, Pope Benedict XVI.
19. "To be Catholic means to be a member of the Family of God, joined together ____ bonds that are even stronger than human relationships," —*The Church as the Family of God*, Fr. Pablo Gadeng.
21. Abbr. for rooms.
24. "(Jubal) was the ancestor of all who play the ____ and the pipe," (Genesis 4:21).
26. "It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you. ____, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand," —Mother Teresa.
29. One of the deadly sins.
30. The Christmas ____ is found in Luke 1:1-20 and Matthew 1:18-2:12.
32. "Miracle on 34th ____" is a 1947 Christmas classic movie in which Kris Kringle is taken to court to prove he really is Santa Claus.
33. "As for me, I like to take my Christmas a little ____ a time, all through the year," —David Grayson.
34. "I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he/she handles these three things: a rainy day, lost ____, and tangled Christmas tree lights," —Maya Angelou.
35. Bone.
37. ____ and turf; a combo of both seafood and meat.
39. "There are three stages of

CLUES continued on page 17

CLUES

From page 16

- man: he believes in Santa Claus; he does ____ believe in Santa Claus; he is Santa Claus," —Bob Phillips.
42. Sea eagle.
43. Santa Claus is traditionally not from the ____ pole but from the North pole.
45. Mo. has ____ 4,400 springs, including Big Spring, largest (286 million gallons per day) in Mo. and one of the largest in the U.S.
47. On Christmas Eve in 1819, Mass was said in the chapel of Old St. Ferdinand in Florissant, Mo. for the first time. The Church was ____ to Mo.'s saint, St. Rose Philippine Duchesne for many years.
49. Very angry.
52. "A nickel ain't worth a ____ anymore," —Yoga Berra.
56. Prior to A.D.
57. A flexible protector for knives, axes, meat cleavers, etc.
59. Made a mistake.
60. "God ____ gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If he gives the gift of Christmas, it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it." —Pope Francis.
62. The Enterprise Center in St. Louis is not only the home of St. Louis Blues hockey but is an ____ hosting over 175 events bringing over 2 million people to downtown St. Louis every year. This includes a holiday tradition in December of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra with The Ghosts of Christmas Eve.
64. Sports channel.
65. *Ad Majorem ____ Gloriam* (For the Greater Glory of God), Jesuit motto.
66. Part of Santa's necessary ensemble is his ____, red with white trim and a classy pompom on top.
68. Dir. from Kirksville to Perry.
69. In therapy, letters for Repetitive Strain Injury, caused by over-use of a body part.
70. Bradley and Asner.
71. "Go to the ____, O sluggard, study her ways and learn wisdom," (Proverbs 6:6).
72. Prefix for base or brief.
74. ADHD is a disorder of Executive Function (____); i.e., poor self-regulation which leads to poorer academic and occupational functioning.
75. Letters for Artificial Intelligence.

See ANSWERS, page 19

Joy to the world!



Students of Our Lady of the Snows School in Mary's Home conclude their annual Christmas Program in Our Lady of Snows Church on Dec. 4. — Photo from the Our Lady of the Snows Catholic School Facebook page

Yes, Christmas Eve is a Sunday, but no 'double dipping' for Catholics

OSV News

Typically, Mass celebrated at any time on Sunday fulfills Catholics obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Same goes for Saturday evening Masses that anticipate Sunday Mass.

Likewise, an evening Mass before a holy day of obligation (such as Christmas) also typically fulfills a Catholic's requirement (barring any extraordinary circumstances) to attend the holy day Mass. And this year, Christmas Eve is Sunday. So, many Catholics are asking if attending

Sunday evening Mass this year can "count" for both.

Canon lawyer Jenna Marie Cooper recently tackled the query in her regular "Question Corner" column for OSV News. "Because there are two days of obligation — i.e., Sunday and Christmas — this means that there are two distinct obligations to speak of. Each separate obligation needs to be fulfilled by attending a separate Mass," she wrote in her column, published Dec. 4 (see Page 8 for more details).

Like Us On  **Diocese of Jefferson City**

Celebrating with Our Lady of Guadalupe



Second- and sixth-graders at St Francis Xavier School in Taos help celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy and placing roses in front of the Guadalupe statue outside St. Francis Xavier Church. — Photo by Cathy Singer

800th

From page 11

when he and Giovanna Zabotti were asked two years ago to create the Vatican creche for the anniversary, "We felt like Giovanni Velita and his wife, Alticama," who helped St. Francis of Assisi stage that first scene.

Pope Francis, who usually visits the scene after vespers Dec. 31, stopped by Nov. 29 to see the work in progress and bless the workers, Bressan said. "It was a great joy for us and gave us strength."

Among the 103 people who worked on the scene, he said, one of the first was Francesco Artese, a master creche maker, who used the fresco now in the cave to design the scene. Antonio Cantone, who has been making Nativity scene figures in Naples for more than four decades, created the life-sized figures of the Holy Family, St. Francis of Assisi, other friars and the Velita couple.

Set and lighting designers from Cinecittà, the famed Rome movie studio, created the cave and the lighting.

Cantone also created the figures for Nativity scenes in the square in 2013 and 2017. But those had the facial fea-

tures and clothes of Neapolitans in the 1700s, which is now the standard for Italian Nativity scenes.

However, this year's figures resemble how people would have looked and dressed in central Italy in the 1200s, he said.

"For an artist who lives making Nativity scenes year-round," he said, being part of the 800th anniversary celebration "is like winning an Oscar for the years of sacrifice and the creches of the past."

The figures include a Franciscan priest celebrating Mass, just as one of St. Francis' confreres did in the cave on Christmas Eve in 1223.

Cardinal Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, head of the office governing Vatican City State, told those gathered in the square in the evening for the unveiling that the representation of the Mass at the manger "emphasizes how the incarnation of the son of God has remained among us through his body and blood in the Eucharist."

Zabotti said that for her, Nativity scenes were always

See NATIVITIES, page 18

Need more info about an event or want to see more events?
Visit the diocesan EVENT CALENDAR at diojeffcity.org/events.
Want your event listed?
Fill out the ONLINE FORM at diojeffcity.org/event-listing.

Fundraisers & Social Events

Nov. 23-Jan. 7

Laurie, Festival of Lights display, 5-10 pm each evening, the National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church and St. Patrick Church

Jan. 7

Columbia, "Rise Up Shepherd," 9th annual Epiphany Concert benefiting the Uganda Project, 2:30-4 pm, Our Lady of Lourdes Church

Jan. 20

Linn, Taste of Italy dinner & auctions, 4-9 p.m., St. George School Activity Center

Eventos del Ministerio Hispano

diciembre 16

Sedalia, Retiro Parroquial: Buena Administración, 9 am-3 pm, Parroquia San Vicente de Paúl, para más información contacte a Diácono Enrique Castro al 573-680-3650 en su celular o en WhatsApp o por correo electrónico a ecas-tro@diojeffcity.org

Faith Formation & Spiritual Renewal

Every Tuesday

Jefferson City, "Tuesday With Faith," small group discussions, 6:30-8 pm, Immaculate Conception Parish's Pleus Hall, for info, call 573-645-2478 or email jimkemna@gmail.com

Every Friday

Jefferson City, Centering Prayer Group, Immaculate Conception Parish, 11 am-noon

Dec. 18

Jefferson City, "Dwell: A Blessed Is She Study on The Eucharist" for women of all ages, 7-8:30 pm, Mary Room at the Cathedral of St. Joseph Parish Office, for info or to register contact julie.g@cathedraljic.org

Jan. 11

VIRTUAL, "Fuel the Body, Fuel the Soul," monthly program sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, 7-8 pm, for info visit <https://bit.ly/fuel-the-body-and-soul>

Celebrating Our Lady of Guadalupe in Jefferson City



Members of St. Peter Parish in Jefferson City take part in a procession, dance, children's play and celebratory meal after Mass in Spanish on Sunday, Dec. 10, in St. Peter Church, in anticipation of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas. More photos can be found by visiting cathmo.com and clicking on the Multimedia tab. — Photos by Jay Nies



NATIVITIES

From page 17

part of a family celebration of Christmas, but the two-year project for St. Peter's Square made her realize how St. Francis was trying to tell the simple people of Greccio that "whenever in the world people gather on that night in Jesus'

name, there is the Incarnation."

"Whenever someone sets up a Nativity scene," she said, "there is not just Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus. We are there. The people of today. We are the shepherds now."

Jan. 20
Columbia/Jefferson City/VIRTUAL, "Living Flame 1" 7-session program on in-depth spiritual study and enrichment of centering prayer, 9 am-2 pm; participants may join via Zoom or in-person at Broadway Christian Church in Columbia or Immaculate Conception Church in Jefferson City; to register visit cocemo.org; **Eureka**, "Seeds of Healing through Faith, Hope and Love" retreat for those who have lost loved ones through tragic death, 9 am-7 pm, Marianist Retreat and Conference Center, for info or to register call 314-910-3942 or visit marianistretreat.com/events/seeds-of-healing-retreat-2024

Liturgical

Dec. 16

Laurie, Rorate Mass, 6:15-7:10 am, National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church

Dec. 17
Jefferson City, Advent recital series and Solemn Vespers, featuring Karen Bretz, baroque flute, 5 pm recital, 5:30 pm Solemn Vespers, St. Peter Church

Dec. 23

Jefferson City, Rorate Mass by candlelight, 6-7 am, St. Peter Church

Jan. 17

Jefferson City, Crusader Family Mass, 7:15-8:30 am, Helias Catholic High School's St. Pius X Chapel

Youth & Young Adults

First Wednesdays each month Jefferson City, Rooted/Connected/Searching in Community young adult group, 5-8 pm, Immaculate Conception Parish's Pleus Hall, for info visit icangels.com/youngadults

Third Sundays each month Jefferson City, Young Adult Mass, 5 pm, Immaculate Conception Church

The CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN

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diojeffcity.org/event-listing/

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2024
PUBLICATION DATES

January 5 & 19
February 2 & 16
March 1, 15 & 29
April 12 & 26
May 10 & 24
June 7 & 21
July 5 & 19
August 2, 16 & 30
September 13 & 27
October 11 & 25
November 8 & 22
December 6 & 20

SEIBERT

From page 6

I had it all put away.

"That was, shall we say, a bit much," he stated.

Even now, the decorations in the den are sufficiently sufficient.

"It makes this room feel so warm, and I love it," he said. "What comfort it is to sit in a room with The Tree of Faith!"

"It feels so good to come here to read or study or watch TV or pray my Daily Office

and have the Nativity scenes out and the Christmas tree and all the religious figures," he said.

He laughed while noting that a few of the Christmas mementos escape getting put away at season's end.

"I kid you not: It will be the middle of summer when we realize we didn't put a few of them away, so we'll decide to just leave them out," he said.

To submit **Baptisms, Birthdays** for ages 90 and older, **Anniversaries** of 10+ years in increments of 5 ONLY (e.g., 15, 25, 45 years, etc.), **Elections, Honors and Appointments**, please go to:

diojeffcity.org/parish-correspondence

For marriages and deaths, use the form at diojeffcity.org/parishioner-update/ so that we may update our mailing lists and records.

Anniversaries

Argyle, St. Aloysius
Kenny & Janet Kliethermes, 45 years

Chamois, Most Pure Heart of Mary
Dale & Lena Hackmann, 55 years

Deaths

Hermann, St. George — **Robert Henson**

Lake Ozark, Our Lady of the Lake — **Linda Faigle**

Marshall, St. Peter — **Paul Collier; Janet Newton; Rosita Rhaym; Mike Vogel**

St. Thomas, St. Thomas the Apostle — **Harold Luebbering**

Wardsville, St. Stanislaus — **Margaret Rackers**

Marriages

Brookfield, Immaculate Conception — **Katie Sensenich & Khalid Spry**

Birthdays

Salisbury, St. Joseph — **Ralph Henke**, his 90th on Dec. 4

Baptisms

Hermann, St. George — **Anna Marie Bruckerhoff**, daughter of Cullen & Beth Bruckerhoff

Mary's Home, Our Lady of Snows — **Haven Layne Wyrick**, daughter of Clay & Rachel Wyrick

Salisbury, St. Joseph — **Levi Donald Link**, son of Justin & Kristy Link

QUESTION

From page 8

Granted, this is a stated preference and not an absolute prohibition. But it could be that your specific parish or diocese has a policy of using only natural plants.

But even in places where natural plants are strongly preferred, practically speaking I imagine that Christmas trees, wreaths and other evergreen garlands are one case where it might be reasonable to make an exception and use artificial greenery. As anyone who has ever had a real Christmas tree in their home knows, the regular shedding of dead pine needles can create quite the on-going clean-up project, which might become overly burdensome to Altar Societies or those charged with care of the sanctuary.

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to Catholic-QA@osv.com.

FR. BRISCOE

From page 9

This is the marvelous thing about a Eucharist procession. I love opening the Forty Hours Devotion with a small procession through the church. Bowing heads and striking the chest are little ways I see people echoing the Baptist's words, "I am not worthy to untie his sandals" (Jn. 1:27). I am always touched by people's reverence when they see the host coming to them.

"Behold the one who is not withholding!" Can the little host really be enough for us? Yes, yes, yes! Pope Benedict warns, "It is when we attempt to avoid suffering by withdrawing from anything that might involve hurt, when we try to spare ourselves the effort and pain of pursuing truth, love, and goodness, that we drift into a life of emptiness, in which there

may be almost no pain, but the dark sensation of meaninglessness and abandonment is all the greater." Living with Christ does not mean being spared pain. Life without difficulty, life without sorrow, is not the goal. But through all of that, he will not withdraw from us.

"Behold the Lamb of God!" Behold the one who we will worship for eternity. We will gather around his throne, joyfully singing his praises. Like new John the Baptists, we will delight in pointing to him, forgetting our unworthiness before him at last. And then, the peace of having met our destiny will wash over us.

Father Patrick Briscoe, O.P., is a Dominican friar and the editor of Our Sunday Visitor.

A happy day at I.H.M.



A child who attends Immaculate Heart of Mary Child Development Center in Jefferson City beams during a Dec. 7 visit with the North Pole's most popular resident.

— Photo by Annie Williams

Christmas: More than a day. It is an entire season.

By Phyllis Emmel

To the world Christmas, may seem to begin way before Dec. 25, so celebrating Christmas is just a one-and-done event.

But Christmas is surely so much more than just one day. It is an entire liturgical season to celebrate.

So, keep your tree, Nativity set, and other decorations out for a while.

As we know, Christmas is one of the most important days of the Church year. It is second only to Easter Sunday itself.

Celebrating the birth of Jesus, Christmas is the high point in the mystery of the Incarnation. Our students know the Incarnation is the event that occurred when God became flesh or Jesus became human.

Jesus took on flesh (*carne* in Latin) for a few reasons.

The main reason Jesus became human was to save us "by reconciling us with God."

In addition, Jesus came to fulfill and satisfy the prophecies of the Old Testament.

He became man to show us the Father and so we might know God's love.

Jesus took on our human nature to be our model of holiness.

Finally, Jesus became man to make us "partakers of the divine nature."

Some people might find it hard to believe that the true Christmas Season only begins on Christmas Day, given the fact that the "Christmas creep" now begins well before Halloween.

That's right — Dec. 25 marks the official start of the 12 Days of Christmas, the Christian tradition that shares its name with that famous stick-in-your-head Christmas carol.

The 12 days of Christmas is the period marking the time between the birth of Jesus and the coming of the Magi, the three wise men.

Some families choose to mark the

12-day period by observing the feast days of various saints (including St. Stephen on Dec. 26) and planning daily Christmas-related activities.

But for too many, things go back to business as usual after Dec. 25.

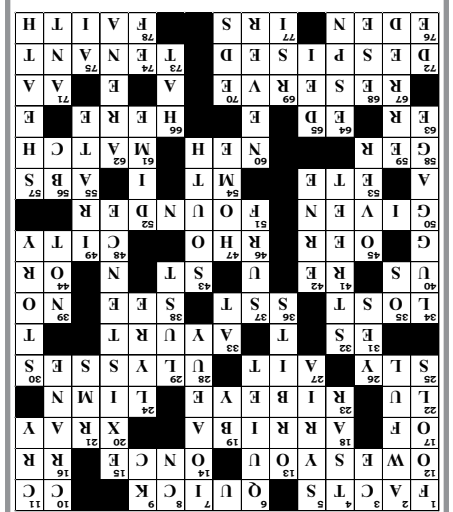
We must remember that the liturgical season of Christmas begins with the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve and concludes on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (which in 2024 will be celebrated Jan. 7).

During this season, we celebrate the birth of Jesus into our world and hearts and reflect on the gift of salvation that is born with him, including the fact that he was born to die for us.

I hope you will wait until Christmas Day to begin singing "The 12 Days of Christmas" instead of ending the song on Christmas Day.

Mrs. Emmel teaches at Immaculate Conception School in Jefferson City. This article was originally published in the December 2023 edition of News from the Pews, Immaculate Conception Parish's quarterly newsletter.

Crossword puzzle answers



Just like new!

Art students from the Fatima School District in Westphalia display the figures from the Knights of Columbus Westphalia Council's Christmas display that they repainted under the direction of their teacher, Sonya Walker.

— Photo by Richard T. Wieberg



A song in their heart

The St. Aloysius/St. Boniface PSR classes from Argyle and Koeltz-town sing carols at Westphalia Hills Senior Living in Westphalia.

— Photo by Lauren Luebbert

SPROUTS Club



Members of Helias Catholic High School's SPROUTS Club in Jefferson City make good use of a day off from school by participating in a stream clean-up near Washington Park in Jefferson City. They also learned about how different species living in the water can be indicators for the overall health of the stream ecosystem.

— Photo from the Helias Catholic High School Facebook page



Many would be fed

Holy Family School in Hannibal held a food drive on Nov 21 and donated over 700 items to the Douglas Community Center.

— Photo from the Holy Family School – Hannibal Facebook page

Bible Accent

God used dreams to speak to Joseph several more times. Three of those dreams were meant to help protect the newborn Messiah from harm.

Just before Jesus was born, Joseph took Mary to his family's home city, Bethlehem, the city of David, to be counted in a census. Mary gave birth to Jesus there, and the new parents were visited by Magi who had followed a star to the place Jesus was born. Not long after the Magi left them, Joseph had a dream in which an angel warned him that King Herod wanted to kill Jesus. The angel told Joseph to flee to Egypt with Mary and the baby. After the Holy Family left for Egypt in the night, Herod ordered the killing of all male children up to 2 years of age who lived in or around Bethlehem.

After Herod himself died, Joseph had another dream in which an angel said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."

Joseph did so. But in another dream, he was warned not to return to Judea, because it might not be safe. Instead, Joseph took his family to Galilee to live in Nazareth.

St. Sebastian

According to legend, St. Sebastian was born in Gaul (modern-day France) in the third century and was raised in Milan, Italy. He entered the imperial army of Rome around 283. He was a Christian who converted many officials and jailers and also urged Christian prisoners to stay strong in their faith. The Roman emperor found out that Sebastian was Christian and ordered his execution. Sebastian was shot with arrows and left for dead, but he survived and was nursed back to health. He later denounced the emperor for his cruelty to Christians, and the emperor had him beaten to death in 288. We remember Sebastian on Jan. 20.



In a dream, an angel speaks to Joseph about Mary and Jesus

By Jennifer Ficaglia
Catholic Courier

Joseph was a carpenter who lived in Nazareth. He was a devout and righteous man who always obeyed God's laws.

Although Joseph was not wealthy, he did come from a very important family. One of his ancestors was King David, the shepherd boy whom God chose to become ruler of the Israelites during Old Testament times.

Joseph was betrothed to a virgin named Mary. "Betrothed" means that Joseph and Mary were married but were not yet living together as husband and wife in the same house.

One day, Joseph learned that Mary was going to have a baby. Joseph decided that according to the law, he should not remain married to her. Joseph did not want to bring shame or harm to Mary, so he decided to divorce her quietly.

What Joseph did not know was that God's angel Gabriel had visited Mary and told her the Holy Spirit would come upon her.

"You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus," Gabriel told Mary. "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But after deciding that he should divorce Mary, Joseph

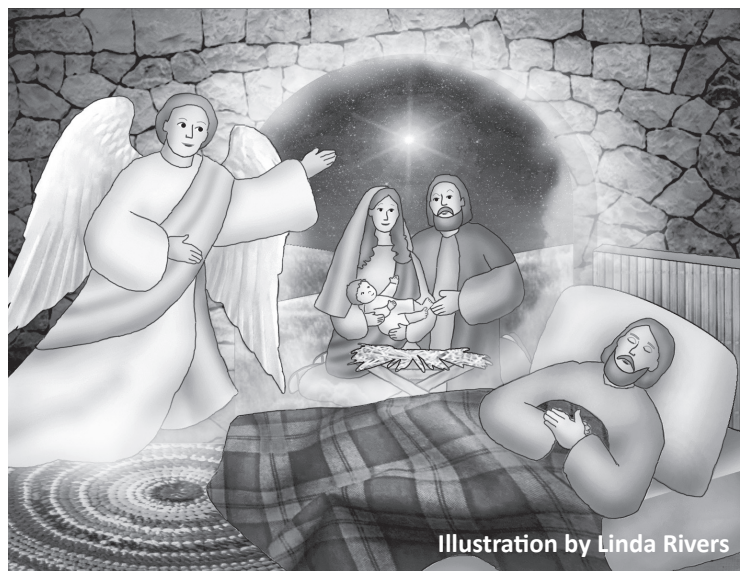


Illustration by Linda Rivers

had a dream in which one of God's angels spoke to him.

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home," the angel said. "For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."


The angel's words to Joseph fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy God had revealed to his people through one of his prophets: "Behold, the virgin

shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel." Emmanuel means "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke, he did just as the angel had told him. Instead of divorcing Mary, he took her into his home and waited for Jesus to be born.


Read more about it...
Matthew 1

1. What king was a relative of Joseph's?
2. Who spoke to Joseph in a dream?



After Gabriel appeared to Mary, whom did she visit?
(Hint: Luke 1:39-40)

Answer: Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist.

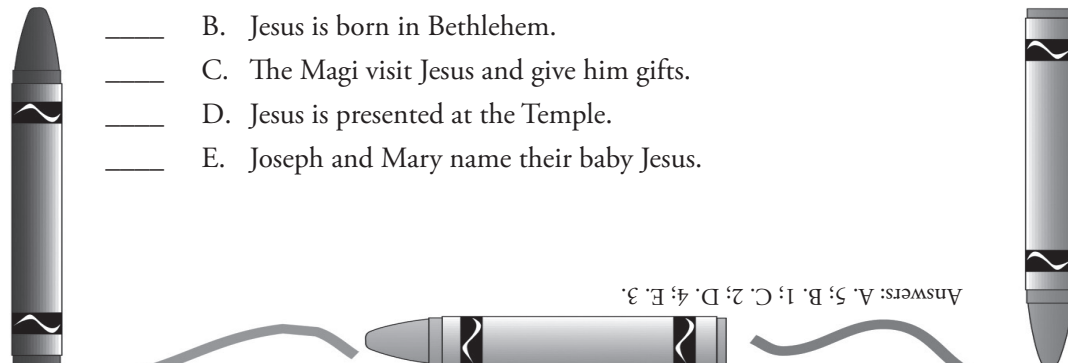


Puzzle

Below are some events surrounding the early life of Jesus. Put them in the order in which they happened. Hint: Answers are in Luke 2, except for C, which can be found in Matthew 2:10-11.

- ___ A. Joseph and Mary lose Jesus after a festival.
- ___ B. Jesus is born in Bethlehem.
- ___ C. The Magi visit Jesus and give him gifts.
- ___ D. Jesus is presented at the Temple.
- ___ E. Joseph and Mary name their baby Jesus.

Answers: A. 5; B. 1; C. 2; D. 4; E. 3.



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Musical 'Journey to Bethlehem' has 'energy, pazzazz, good intentions'

By John Mulderig
OSV News

New York

Swedish producer Adam Anders has long been associated with such peppy musical fare as the Fox TV series "Glee" and the big-screen comedy "Rock of Ages." As he makes his directorial debut with the lively song and dance-filled film "Journey to Bethlehem" (Sony), that legacy is on full display.

Call it the jazz-hands Nativity story.

Anders' script, which he co-wrote with Peter Barsocchini, chronicles Mary (Fiona Palomo) and Joseph's (Milo Manheim) effort to add personal commitment to their arranged betrothal.

It also follows a comic version of the Magi (Omid Djalili, Geno Segers and Rizwan Manji) on their long quest to worship the newborn Savior.

Before they can do so, however, the trio is forced to tangle both with evil King Herod (Antonio Banderas) and with his morally wavering son, Antipater (Joel Smallbone). The latter's spiritual struggle constitutes one of the movie's few substantive points.

Though more fleeting, Mary's reflections on her fu-



Fiona Palomo and Milo Manheim star in a scene from the movie "Journey to Bethlehem."
— OSV News photo/AFFIRM Films

ture, encapsulated in the song "Mother to a Savior and a King," are moving.

Much of the incidental humor infused into the film to keep things rolling along, by contrast, feels strained. Still, there's an upbeat tone to the production. So what it may lack in solemnity many will feel it makes up for with energy, pazzazz and unmistakable good intentions.

Regrettably, for those listening closely, the lyrics perpetuate the widespread confusion between the virginal conception of Jesus and the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

The former miraculous circumstance, moreover, and the plight in which it places the mother-to-be — while, of course, essential to the plot — might prompt pesky questions from little ones.

That issue aside, "Journey to Bethlehem" is perfect fare for a wide range of age groups and just about the whole family. A zestful new take on the opening chapter of the greatest story ever told, it may be dismissed by curmudgeons with a curt "Bah, humbug!" but will likely win far more fans than detractors.

Those open to the movie's lighthearted spirit will also

recognize an inspiring message underlying the proceedings. Namely, that God has a greater destiny in store for each individual than he or she can readily imagine.

The film contains brief, highly choreographed physical violence. The OSV News classification is A-I — general patronage. The Motion Picture Association rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

John Mulderig is media reviewer for OSV News.

Movie Ratings



General Patronage

Journey to Bethlehem (PG)
Wish (PG)



Adults and Adolescents

Trolls Band Together (PG)



Adults

Freelance (R)
Freud's Last Session (PG-13)
The Holdovers (R)
The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes (PG-13)
Killers of the Flower Moon (R)
The Marvels (PG-13)
Priscilla (R)
Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé (Not rated)
Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour (PG-13)



Limited Adult Audience

Dumb Money (R)
Napoleon (R)



Morally Offensive

The Exorcist: Believer (R)
Saw X (R)
Silent Night (R)
Thanksgiving (R)

Ratings are supplied by OSV News Service.

Expanded edition released of Eucharistic Adoration Prayer Book

"The Eucharist is God's greatest gift to us — it is where Jesus' heart meets the needs of the world daily."

Sister Marie Paul Curley of the Daughters of St. Paul invites readers to deepen their relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist with a newly updated and expanded edition of *Eucharistic Adoration Prayer Book*, part of the Pauline Books & Media Catholic Treasury Series.

In the spirit of the Eucharistic Revival now under way in the United States, Pauline Books & Media will also publish an abridged pocket edition of the prayer book, *Essential Prayers for Eucharistic Adoration*, priced for bulk distribution.

Eucharistic Adoration Prayer Book uniquely contributes to the Eucharistic Revival by weaving together Eucharistic catechesis, liturgy, history, and devotion in a single volume.

The book embraces a substantial collection of the best-loved Eucharistic prayers, hymns, scripture passages, and devotions spanning two millennia of Catholic tradition.

Alongside these expressions of Eucharistic

faith, Sr. Marie Paul offers catechetical content, including a brief history of Eucharistic Adoration; catechesis on the Mass and the Eucharist; practical suggestions for preparing for Mass; and a guide to the ancient practice of praying with Scripture.

She also outlines a model for Eucharistic Adoration based on the spirituality of Blessed James Alberione, founder of the Daughters of St. Paul, and includes 10 guided Holy Hours to accompany readers into a deeper, more integral style of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

The abridged *Essential Prayers for Eucharistic Adoration* gathers the highlights of the Church's Eucharistic prayers in a slim pocket-sized volume.

It is the latest edition in the Essential Prayer Books series from Pauline Books & Media.

Sister Marie Paul is a Boston native and professed Daughter of St. Paul since 1987.

She is the author of many books on Eucharistic spirituality and spiritual growth, including the bestselling *See Yourself through God's Eyes: 52 Meditations to Grow in Self-Esteem*.

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Diocese of
Jefferson City

Special guests at dinner under Bernini's colonnade — the homeless

OSV News

The lighting of a Christmas tree and unveiling of a Nativity scene at the Vatican Dec. 9 included a group of special guests.

For the first time in history, 150 homeless people had a festive meal, served by Italian journalists and their families, under the famous baroque Bernini's

colonnade in St. Peter's Square.

The meal was organized by the Dicastery for the Service of Charity and St. Peter's Parish with the support of the Governorate of Vatican City State as part of the "actions of a social nature of the Papal Basilica of St. Peter's in preparation for the Jubilee" of 2025.

In 1656, when sculptor and architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini was entrusted with the construction of the now-famous

colonnade, Rome was dramatically affected by the epidemic of plague, and it was difficult to find construction workers.

Pope Alexander VII decided to gather homeless people to help build what is today considered a baroque masterpiece.

'O, Holy Night!'



Visitors to the National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church, in Laurie on Dec. 10 partake of the Shrine's inaugural "O, Holy Night" event, which included a Live Nativity reenactment, art projects for children and refreshments, in addition to the annual Festival of Lights throughout the grounds of the Shrine. — Photos by Jay Nies

Daily Readings

Sunday, Dec 17

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Is. 61:1-2a, 10-11
(Ps.) Lk. 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54
1 Thes. 5:16-24
Jn. 1:6-8, 19-28

Monday, Dec 18

Jer. 23:5-8
Ps. 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19
Mt. 1:18-25

Tuesday, Dec 19

Jgs. 13:2-7, 24-25a
Ps. 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17
Lk. 1:5-25

Wednesday, Dec 20

Is. 7:10-14
Ps. 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6
Lk. 1:26-38

Thursday, Dec 21

St. Peter Canisius, priest and doctor of the Church

Sg. 2:8-14 or Zep. 3:14-18a
Ps. 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21
Lk. 1:39-45

Friday, Dec 22

1 Sm. 1:24-28
(Ps.) 1 Sm. 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd
Lk. 1:46-56

Saturday, Dec 23

St. John of Kanty, priest
Mal. 3:1-4, 23-24
Ps. 25:4-5ab, 8-10, 14
Lk. 1:57-66

Sunday, Dec 24

2 Sm. 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16
Ps. 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29
Rom. 16:25-27
Lk. 1:26-38

Monday, Dec 25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (Christmas)
(Holyday of Obligation)

Vigil:
Is. 62:1-5
Ps. 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
Mt. 1:1-25 or 1:18-25

Night:

Is. 9:1-6
Ps. 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13
Ti. 2:11-14
Lk. 2:1-14

Dawn:

Is. 62:11-12
Ps. 97:1, 6, 11-12
Ti. 3:4-7
Lk. 2:15-20

Day:

Is. 52:7-10
Ps. 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6
Heb. 1:1-6
Jn. 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

Tuesday, Dec 26

St. Stephen, the first martyr
Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59
Ps. 31:3cd-4, 6, 8ab, 16bc, 17
Mt. 10:17-22

Wednesday, Dec 27

St. John, apostle and evangelist
1 Jn. 1:1-4
Ps. 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12
Jn. 20:1a, 2-8

Thursday, Dec 28

The Holy Innocents, martyrs
1 Jn. 1:5-2:2
Ps. 124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8
Mt. 2:13-18

Friday, Dec 29

St. Thomas Becket, bishop and martyr
1 Jn. 2:3-11
Ps. 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6
Lk. 2:22-35

Saturday, Dec 30

1 Jn. 2:12-17
Ps. 96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10
Lk. 2:36-40

Sunday, Dec 31

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH
Sir. 3:2-6, 12-14
Ps. 128:1-2, 3, 4-5
Col. 3:12-21 or 3:12-17
Lk. 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40

Monday, Jan 1

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD
(not a Holyday of Obligation this year)
Nm. 6:22-27
Ps. 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8
Gal. 4:4-7
Lk. 2:16-21

Tuesday, Jan 2

Ss. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, bishops and doctors of the Church
1 Jn. 2:22-28
Ps. 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4
Jn. 1:19-28

Wednesday, Jan 3

The Most Holy Name of Jesus
1 Jn. 2:29-3:6
Ps. 98:1, 3cd-4, 5-6
Jn. 1:29-34

Thursday, Jan 4

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious (USA)
1 Jn. 3:7-10
Ps. 98:1, 7-8, 9
Jn. 1:35-42

Friday, Jan 5

St. John Neumann, bishop (USA)
1 Jn. 3:11-21
Ps. 100:1b-2, 3, 4, 5
Jn. 1:43-51

Saturday, Jan 6

St. André Bessette, religious (USA)
1 Jn. 5:5-13
Ps. 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20
Mk. 1:7-11 or Lk. 3:23-38 or 3:23, 31-34, 36, 38

The Holy Father's prayer intentions for December:

We pray that people living with disabilities may be at the center of attention in society, and that institutions may offer inclusive programs which value their active participation.

The Holy Father's prayer intentions for January:

Let us pray that the Holy Spirit helps us recognize the gift of different charisms within the Christian community, and to discover the richness of different ritual traditions in the heart of the Catholic Church.

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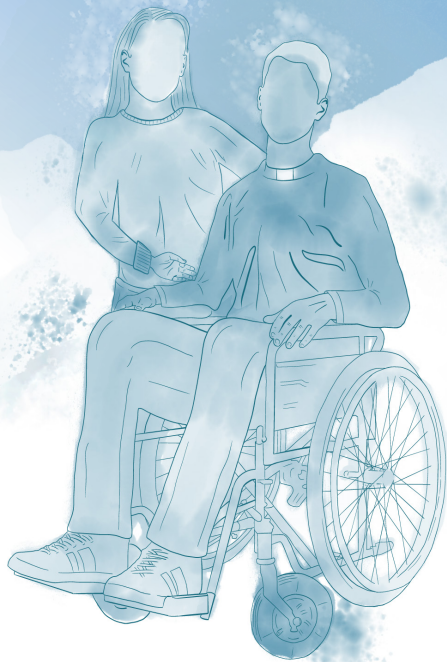




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