

It must be St. Nick!

Bishop McKnight visited St. Nicholas Academy in Jefferson City and blessed the children and their home. They are receiving an excellent education in a loving faith-filled family environment.

Page 3



“Cuthbert the Eagle” . . . Page 4

Tyronn Lue Service Day . . . Page 5

Teachers’ service retreat . . Page 6

One serving at a time . . . Page 7

Priceless family heirloom . Page 15

40 days and year-round . . Page 11

The CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN

December 8, 2023 • Vol. 67 No. 12

Newspaper of the Diocese of Jefferson City

An Advent call to prepare, be light in darkness



Father Anthony Rinaldo, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Loose Creek and St. Louis of France Parish in Bonnots Mill, elevates the Most Blessed Sacrament during a Candlelight Mass on the evening of the First Sunday of Advent in Immaculate Conception Church in Loose Creek.

— Photo by Jay Nies

Bishop urges the faithful to observe Advent as a season of joyful preparation for Christ

By Jay Nies

“Let us recommit ourselves to witnessing the beauty, joy and hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Not just between now and Christmas, but always and in every instance, Bishop W. Shawn McKnight exhorted.

“Hope is an infectious virtue, and it’s hard to be a downer when you’re surrounded by people full of faith, hope and charity,” he said in his homily for the First Sunday of Advent.

He did so in the context of installing Father Stephen Jones as the new pastor of Cathedral of St. Joseph Parish in Jefferson City.

Bishop McKnight pointed out that Advent, the season of preparation for Christmas, should be a time of joyful expectation, “with royal purple signifying the coming of the King who is to come.”

That is, Christ who became flesh and will return in glory

on the Last Day.

Advent is, “in effect, the liturgical season of the present age of the Church — from the time of our Lord’s Ascension into heaven until his coming again,” the bishop said.

As such, it is also a season of patient waiting and preparing, as no one but the Father knows when Jesus will return.

“And, as St. Paul reminds us, God provides us with every spiritual gift we need as we ‘await the revelation of the Lord,’” the bishop noted.

Faithful disciples embrace the spiritual poverty of not being in control of when or how the Second Coming will occur.

In place of that control comes well-founded and well-placed hope.

Toward that end, “a season of waiting exercises our trust

By Jay Nies

Dozens of flickering candles clashed with the darkness in Immaculate Conception Church in Loose Creek the evening of Dec. 3.

“These candles we have tonight, they’re a reminder that the world is still in darkness,” said Father Anthony Rinaldo, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish and of St. Louis of France Parish in Bonnots Mill.

The Loose Creek parish moved its 10 a.m. Sunday Mass to 4:30 p.m., close to sunset, for the First Sunday of Advent.

The candles, especially those on the reredos below the crucifix and above the tabernacle, cast the people and everything in the 1877-vintage church in warm, golden light.

“You and I are the light of the world,” the priest proclaimed in his homily as the sun’s rays steadily withdrew through the stained glass.

“We may be the only light that the people of the world ever see, as we present to them the Good News that God has sent his Son into the world to forgive us of our sins and bring us to everlasting life,” he said.

The people prayed the Rosary together in church and sang carols before Mass as part of the parish’s annual St. Nick Night observance.

Advent is the season of preparation for Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Christ.

“It’s a time of watchfulness and waiting,” said Fr. Rinaldo. “Jesus gives us a one-word command: ‘Watch!’”

Not unlike dozens of generations of God’s people who eagerly awaited the coming of the promised Messiah, but also in anticipation of his Second Coming at the end of the age, along with his

See CANDLELIGHT, page 23

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See ADVENT, page 18

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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OLD PARISH _____

12/08/23

Pray for deceased priests

Dec. 13 — Fr. Edwin J. Cole, St. Patrick, Laurie (2009)

Dec. 14 — Fr. Joseph W. Starmann, Our Lady of the Snows, Mary's Home (2011)

Dec. 16 — Msgr. Edward E. Connolly, Holy Rosary, Monroe City (1973)

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.

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**.



Our Lady of the Lake Parish welcomes new parishioners

"As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." — 1 Peter 4:10

By Deacon Jim Hankins

One of the clearest revelations that came out of Session 1 of the *Grateful Living* small-group faith-sharing groups at Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Lake Ozark was a well-substantiated need for welcoming new parishioners to the parish.

Participants stated: "Our parish needs an event that starts with a personal invitation, gathers new parishioners for fellowship, lets us share about parish commissions and ministries, and closes with giving thanks to God for all the gifts we have received."

Orchestrated by the parish's Social Concerns Commission, the planning for such an event began.

The vision of all commissions and ministries joining together to welcome new parishioners became a reality on



— Photo by Deacon Jim Hankins

Saturday, Oct. 21.

Parishioners joined together for dinner, fellowship and faith-sharing.

Together as one body, the

people discerned opportunities for parishioners to serve the parish and community, as well as opportunities for our parish to serve the parishioners.

Christmas Special Collection

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Look for your envelope in the December 15 issue of The Catholic Missourian

DIocese of Jefferson City

Correction

The article, "St. Ann Parish's new memorial prayer garden in Warsaw is a beautiful place of respite," in the Nov. 10 edition of *The Catholic Missourian*, included a misspelled name and incorrect hometown for the man who helped design and build the monument. Mike Chavers, the builder, lives near Stover.

We apologize for the error.

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

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Parish Secretary — Eldon

Sacred Heart Parish in Eldon, Mo. is seeking a dedicated and organized individual to fill the position of Parish Secretary. The Parish Secretary plays a crucial role in supporting the administrative functions of the parish. This is a 30-hour per week position and is benefit eligible, including medical, dental and vision coverage along with a retirement plan and other voluntary benefits. This position also qualifies for paid time off. Any interested individual should complete the application found on **Indeed.com**. Please contact the parish if you have any questions at 573-392-5334.

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.

Bishop blesses St. Nicholas Academy and its students

Boarding school in Jefferson City helps boys who are at risk reach their full potential

By Jay Nies

One of the children held the Book of Blessings, one held a container of water, and another held a thick reed.

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight proclaimed the Scripture passage about Jesus on the Road to Emmaus, then extended his hands and pronounced the prayers of blessing.

“Bless this house and all who inhabit it,” he prayed. “Fill them with the light of Christ, that their concern for others may reflect your love.”

The children led the bishop from room-to-room and down the stairs, with him sprinkling holy water onto the walls at every stop.

“You’re gonna get a little wet!” he told them as the holy

water, a reminder of Baptism, rained down on them.

At last, they returned to the Great Room, where an impressive painting of St. Nicholas of Myra, patron saint of children, overlooks a large fireplace.

“There! Now your house is blessed!” the bishop told them.

“It really is!” said Michaela Newell, Ph.D.

Dr. Newell is executive director of St. Nicholas Academy (stnick.org), a faith-based boarding school in Jefferson City that helps boys who are at risk reach their full potential.

She and her husband, Kyrell Newell, also serve as the houseparents to the five boys, ages 8 to 13, who now live there.

All of the students attend St. Peter School in Jefferson City.

“The biggest thing St. Nicholas Academy provides



In the presence of friends, board members, houseparents and students, Bishop W. Shawn McKnight blesses the St. Nicholas Academy building in Jefferson City on Dec. 1.

— Photo by Jay Nies

is a family setting, a family environment where boys feel loved and have structure while doing everyday things such as attending school, going to sports practice, participating in plays, going to church, going to sleepovers and so forth,” said Dr. Newell.

“Just being able to have this inclusive family setting where they feel free to be themselves,” she said.

High expectations and love

St. Nicholas Academy is an independent 501(c)3 tax-exempt nonprofit organization, governed by a board of directors.

The academy’s recently refined mission statement, approved by its board, is: “We partner with families to help children reach their full potential physically, academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually, in an inclusive family setting that provides love and compassion in a protected and safe environment.”

Its vision statement is: “to form students who leave as high school graduates, equipped to pursue their dreams, sharing their lives with others through compassion, service and love.”

Elizabeth Huber, a member of St. Peter Parish in Jefferson City, founded the academy with help from dedicated board members and Sister Susan Renner of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, who came to Jefferson City to serve as the academy’s first director.

The idea came from a discussion Mrs. Huber had with a teacher who was frustrated

that children with great potential were falling behind because they didn’t have a consistently stable home environment.

Capital Region Medical Center owns the building and provides it to the academy with an extremely reasonable lease.

Mrs. Huber and Sr. Susan raised money, and with wonderful donations of time and materials from community businesses and individuals, oversaw renovating the building into a large home.

The academy began accepting students in 2020.

Growth has been steady.

Counselors in local school districts and the Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Association connect St. Nicholas Academy with families who could benefit from what it offers.

“If you give kids consistent expectations and love, they thrive,” said Dr. Newell. “That’s all we do: give them consistent expectations and love in a family setting. They

put in the work, and they thrive.”

“It’s very good”

All of the boys have parents or guardians living in or near Jefferson City. The boys, however, spend most of their time at school, at extracurricular activities and in the St. Nicholas Academy building, where they sleep and have their meals and down time.

“They only go home about one weekend a month and on holidays,” said Dr. Newell.

The academy also includes a year-round program with summer activities that provide many growth-filled experiences.

“I like all the activities that we do,” said Lucas, a third-grader at the academy. “I like the fun time I get to have here. The people here. What Michaela and Kyrell have been doing.”

As St. Nicholas Academy’s newest student, Lucas visited a few times about a year ago and moved in in January.

“It’s very good,” he said. “I’m very happy here.”

The Newells gave birth to a baby girl named Iva in mid-November.

“I like their little baby, too,” Lucas stated. “She’s pretty cute!”

Dr. Newell said the boys all treat Iva like their adopted little sister.

“We are a big family,” she said. “Anything you’d do with siblings and a new baby, we do. We sanitize our hands a lot.

See ST. NICHOLAS, page 14

Seeking conversion stories from Pope’s 1999 visit

Pope St. John Paul II visited Missouri nearly 25 years ago, on Jan. 26-27, 1999.

Some who attended the Papal Youth Gathering, Solemn Vespers in the Cathedral or Mass in the Dome with the Pope in St. Louis later pointed to those events as being pivotal moments in their relationship with God.

The Catholic Missourian is working on a 25th-anniversary feature on the papal visit. Do you have a story you’d like to share about how God used those events to draw you to himself? If so, please contact the editor at editor@diojeffcity.org or 573-635-9127, ext. 235.



Bishop McKnight’s Calendar

DECEMBER

Dec 5-11	Lead Diaconate Ordination Retreat for the Diocese of Honolulu, HI
Dec 13	Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri Board Meeting, noon, Jefferson City
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

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.

Lessons from Columbia parishioner's journey to faith find expression in new storybook for children

Former CIA officer fell in love with God and the Church through good people and the RCIA

By Jay Nies

Children's author Laura Theissen was taking a French test at the University of Missouri when she found out that terrorists had flown commercial airliners into the Pentagon and the World Trade Center.

She got back to her room and turned on the TV in time to see another plane slam into the second of New York's most massive skyscrapers.

"That day shaped my life forever," she said of Sept. 11, 2001. "Because I knew more than ever that I wanted to serve my country and give something back."

That conviction led her into a 17-year career as a counterterrorism officer with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

It also launched her into a faith odyssey toward a level of communion with God that she never imagined possible.

"I tell people that God literally led me through the desert to bring me home to himself," said Mrs. Theissen, author of a

newly released children's storybook, *Cuthbert: The Eagle Who Found His Wings* (Christian Faith Publishing).

The book, modeled on the life of St. Cuthbert, a seventh-century Anglo-Saxon saint, stemmed from a project to name the mascot of her son's Catholic grade school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Cuthbert is the tale of a majestic American bald eagle who loves to swoop and fly above the clouds until one day, his life changes," Mrs. Theissen stated. "Through adversity, he learns the power of God's love and grace and what it really means to soar."

The first copies of the book arrived at her home in Columbia in October.

"All the glory goes to God!" she said. "There's just no other way to explain the miraculous things that have transpired for me and my family."

"And not just in the past year but through our whole lives!" she said. "Because I'm confident that all of these experiences with my family and work and life and coming home to the Catholic Church came together for this book."

"You who dwell ..."

Mrs. Theissen was born into a devout Christian family in Jefferson City and lived for eight years in a home overlooking the Missouri River, where she watched eagles soar.

Her grandmother on her mother's side was an avid bibliophile whose home was filled with books.

Young Laura once borrowed



Laura Theissen displays her newly published children's storybook, *Cuthbert: The Eagle Who Found His Wings*, with her son, Lucas, and her husband, Andy.

a book of prayers and used it to memorize the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary."

"There was no reason logically for that, because neither side of her family was Catholic," she recalled. "But I now know that it wasn't my logic, it was God's."

Her family moved to St. Peters, Mo. near St. Louis when Laura was in second grade, and her father began work as an agent for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

After high school, she went to the University of Missouri in Columbia to study political science and international affairs, with a minor in French.

She met her husband, Andy Theissen, at a student-government event they helped organize for children of international students.

They talked for four hours and started dating.

Laura's grandmother died that year, and Andy's, a devout Catholic, became her adopted grandmother.

The couple went on to get married in St. George Church in Hermann, where Mr. Theis-

sen had grown up as a parishioner.

Mrs. Theissen was working for the Institute of Public Policy at the University of Missouri in 2005 when her application to the CIA was accepted.

The Theissens spent about two years back in Missouri after their son, Lucas, was born. They moved back to Washington, D.C., and later overseas — Mrs. Theissen is still not allowed to say where.

She found her work with the CIA to be challenging and meaningful, yet inhospitable to a close relationship with God.

"I felt very proud to be able to do my part for the country and help keep people safe," she said. "But that kind of work is hard on you mentally and hard on your family."

Both husband and wife drifted away from their faith.

"There were definitely a lot of years that I not only put my light under a basket, I covered it with dirt and buried it and did everything I could to tamp down my relationship with God at work," said Mrs. Theissen.

Upon returning to the Unit-

ed States, she was determined for her family to get right with God.

She and her husband went to a Sunday service at a non-denominational church.

His reaction: "It just didn't feel right."

So, where should they go?

"I want to go to a Catholic church," he told her.

Mrs. Theissen said she'd try it, although as a counterterrorism officer with secrets to keep, as a non-Catholic wife of an inactive Catholic, and as a mother of a 7-year-old who was being raised with no faith, she worried about being judged.

But the pastor of the church where they went to Mass was a military chaplain and understood her completely.

The couple were making arrangements to have their son baptized just before his eighth birthday when the director of religious education said to Mrs. Theissen, "And what about you?"

"It hit me like a ton of bricks," she recalled.

Mrs. Theissen entered the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults a week after Lucas's Baptism.

Her husband, who had stood beside her and served as the "glue" for the family while she was working — agreed to be her sponsor.

"And you know, through those classes, not only did I fall in love with the Catholic Church, but Andy fell in love with it again," she said.

She received the Sacraments of Initiation the following Easter.

"Just an inspiration"

The Theissens became active parishioners and enrolled their son in All Saints Catholic School in Manassas, Virginia.

"It's been an incredible experience to find this thing in your life that you didn't even know was missing, but you can't even image your life without it now," said Mrs. Theissen.

She had been carrying so much trauma from what her work had brought her into contact with.

"So, to be baptized and start

See CUTHBERT, page 17

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Advent communal Reconciliation services

Advent is a good time for an examination of conscience and to receive the sacrament of reconciliation in preparation for the celebration of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Here is a partial list of Advent communal reconciliation services in the Jefferson City diocese. Most services will include a short prayer service followed by individual confessions. Extra priests from neighboring parishes are typically present to help out. Additional services will be added to updated online versions of this article as they are publicized.

Brookfield — Tuesday, Dec. 12, 7 pm, Immaculate Conception Church

Canton — Friday, Dec. 22, 6 pm, St. Joseph Church

Columbia — Thursday, Dec. 14, 7 pm, Our Lady of Lourdes Church

Edina — Friday, Dec. 15, 6:30 pm, St. Joseph Church

Ewing — Thursday, Dec. 14, 6 pm, Queen of Peace Church

Fulton — Wednesday, Dec. 13, 6:30 pm, St. Peter Church

Hannibal — Wednesday, Dec. 13, 6:30 pm, Holy Family Church

Holts Summit — Wednesday, Dec. 20, 7 pm, St. Andrew Church

Jefferson City — Sunday, Dec. 10, 2 pm, Cathedral of St. Joseph
— Tuesday, Dec. 12, 7 pm, Immaculate Conception Church

— Wednesday, Dec. 13, 7 pm; Friday, Dec. 15, 9:30 am-2 pm, St. Peter Church

Kirkville — Sunday, Dec. 10, 2 pm, Newman Center

Macon — Thursday, Dec. 14, 7 pm, Immaculate Conception Church

Marceline — Wednesday, Dec. 20, 6:30 pm, St. Bonaventure Church

Mexico — Wednesday, Dec. 13, 6:30 pm, St. Brendan Church

Monroe City — Wednesday, Dec. 20, 6:30 pm, Holy Rosary Church

Osage Bend — Monday, Dec. 18, 6 pm, St. Margaret of Antioch Church

Palmyra — Thursday, Dec. 14, 6:30 pm, St. Joseph Church

St. Martins — Wednesday, Dec. 20, 6 pm, St. Martin Church

Shelbina — Wednesday, Dec. 13, 7 pm, St. Mary Church

Taos — Thursday, Dec. 14, 7 pm, St. Francis Xavier Church

Wardsville — Friday, Dec. 15, 6 pm, St. Stanislaus Church

St. Brendan School students dive into citywide day of service

By Jay Nies

The children of St. Brendan School in Mexico helped make their hometown a better place, as part of a communitywide day of service held in honor of an esteemed hometown.

St. Brendan kindergartners through fourth graders organized a food drive to benefit the Help Center in Mexico.

Fifth through eighth-graders went out into the community to carry out acts of service.

They helped move mattresses and paint walls at the Audrain County Shelter Resource Coalition, to prepare for the opening of the Room at the Inn cold-weather shelter.

They spread mulch outside the YMCA, helped clean up inside and made cards for veterans. They organized donated items to prepare for distribution at The Help Center, Mexico's local food bank and donation center.

At the Handi-Shop, which provides employment to adults with disabilities, students helped employees with art projects.

It was all part of the Tyronn Lue Day of Service, held each year in honor of the Mexico native, former NBA basketball player and current head coach of the Los Angeles Clippers.

"He still has a strong hometown connection, and even though he has money and fame, he continuously supports our town of Mexico,"

said Melissa Buckman Young, a member of the St. Brendan School Advisory Council.

"Because Coach Lue does so much for our community, he motivates other people to do the same," she said.

The annual day of service, held this year on Oct. 13, draws participants from schools all over Mexico, including cadettes from the Missouri Military Academy, as well as individuals, local merchants and city and county employees.

"This year, there was everything from trash being picked up, to city employees painting the new fence at a park," said Mrs. Buckman Young.

"We had individuals and groups and even small businesses do things like going into schools to read to children and anything you can imagine," she said. "Besides St. Brendan, other school children collected items and went to the Help Center to deliver them."

Each school and business came up with its own plan for the service day, and the Chamber of Commerce kept track of



Students from St. Brendan School in Mexico help prepare the Audrain County Shelter Resource Coalition to host the Room at the Inn cold-weather shelter, during the citywide Tyronn Lue Day of Service on Oct. 13. — Photos by Portia Leverett

all of it and created a photo album to present to Coach Lue.

"Mexico is a very community-oriented town," said Mrs. Buckman Young. "This annual day of service really speaks of Mexico's spirit."

She said she hopes all the children who participated in the day of service learned about the importance of giving back to their community.

"Whether you're a millionaire or you're living in poverty, you have time, talent and treasure that you can give back to God by helping other people, just like what we've been teaching kids in our parish about stewardship," she said.

Although the Tyronn Lue Day of Service is a nonsectarian event, Mrs. Buckman Young believes St. Brendan School succeeded in making a religious connection for its students.

"I think we mix spirituality with everything we do at St.

Brendan's," she said. "So while the Day of Service is not just a St. Brendan activity by any stretch of the imagination, it's certainly part of that stewardship calling."


Mrs. Buckman Young and her husband have an eighth-grader and a fifth-grader at St. Brendan School.

"I'm a generational Catholic-school kid," she noted. "My mom went to St. Joseph School in Martinsburg, and so did I. So it was really natural for my husband and I to make

the decision for our kids to attend St. Brendan."

They love the closeness of the students, faculty and families, how hard the teachers and principal work, "and the academic excellence that is always rooted in the Church and teaching kids what's really important in life," she said.

Portia Leverett, a member of the St. Brendan School Advisory Council, contributed to this report.

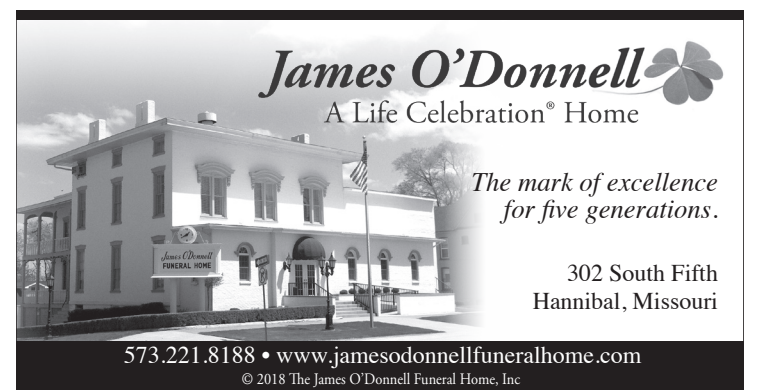
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Service retreat invigorates J.C. St. Peter School faculty

By Jay Nies

Fellowship and a shared mission.

That's exactly what the teachers and administrators of St. Peter School in Jefferson City needed the Monday after Thanksgiving Day.

"We got a chance to laugh with each other and also serve the community together," said Donna Stuckenschneider, music teacher at the school.

"And this spending time together was definitely a retreat," she said. "The good that came out of it was very spiritual."

Catholic school educators in the Jefferson City diocese are required to take part in at least one spiritual retreat each year. This helps them stay focused on the school's highest priority: leading souls to Christ.

"Our theme for this year is service," noted Mark Veit, St. Peter's assistant principal. "We discussed that we could have someone come and talk to us about service, or we could actually do something that is of service."

"We decided to do service," he said.

Specifically, they set about preparing a hot meal and inviting anyone in need to come and eat it in St. Peter Parish's hospitality hall.

Many of the teachers also went out in groups of two and three to deliver meals to people at home or where they might go to eat.

They also gave away dozens of "blessing bags," each containing personal care items.

"We delivered 65 meals to the Salvation Army (Center of Hope), because they serve lunch every day," said Mr. Veit.

"We're also taking about 75 to the Catholic Charities Food Pantry, because they're open this evening, so they can hand them out as people come in," he said.

Teachers delivered about 100 meals to residents of public housing in the city, 35 to a local senior living community and a handful to the homes of parishioners who are mostly homebound.

A handful of people came to the hall to be served in-person.

"And after we clean up, a few teachers and I are going

to drive to a few places where people who are homeless are known to hang out," said Mr. Veit.

At local newspaper photographer Julie Smith's suggestion, they also delivered 25 meals to a local daycare center for families with low incomes.

"What better way to serve God's people than to feed the hungry?" Mr. Veit proposed.

"The best time"

Mr. Veit and Principal Gayle Trachsel got an enthusiastic "yes!" when they pitched the retreat day of service to the teachers.

"They were all like, 'I'm so excited! I can't wait! What can we do to help get it going?'" Mr. Veit recalled.

He noted that the teachers already do "tons of service" but don't always realize that they also serve each other.

"They don't treat this as work," he stated. "It's what they view as their duty, their obligation as Catholics, not necessarily as teachers."

When word got out about the project, students' families started donating items for the blessing bags.



Students took part in a "dollar dress-down day," receiving dress code leniency for a contribution to the cause.

"That paid for all the food," said Mr. Veit.

The teachers wanted to serve something hot, nourishing and uncomplicated to prepare, dish



ABOVE: The second shift of faculty members and administrators of St. Peter School in Jefferson City gather in St. Peter Parish's Msgr. Hoog Hospitality Hall during their service retreat the Monday after Thanksgiving Day. **RIGHT:** Members of the kitchen crew get more meals ready for delivery.

— Photos by Jay Nies



out and deliver.

Debbie Schrimpf, the school's head cook, suggested spaghetti and meat sauce, salad, beans and hot rolls.

Mrs. Schrimpf ordered the ingredients, Mr. Veit picked up salad at a wholesale club, and the teachers prepared desserts.

The first shift arrived at the hall at 7 a.m. to begin preparing the food. The next shift arrived midday to serve and deliver food and prepare some more of it.

"Working together as a team and having fun in the kitchen — it was the best time," said Sara Garner, the school counselor.

"Very rewarding"

First-grade teacher Betsy Lauf said it was like encountering Jesus when people opened up their doors and welcomed strangers into their homes.

"Just the look in their eyes when you tell them you're there to bring them a hot meal!" she said.

One woman who received a visit and a meal said that no one had ever done anything like this for her.

"She asked, 'What do I owe you?'" Mrs. Lauf recalled. "We said, 'Not a thing.'" She said, "Thank you very much. Can I do anything for you?"

And I said, 'Could you pray for us?'"

Jane Schneider, a special education teacher for the school's Vogelweid Learning Center, recalled delivering a meal to a woman with severe disabilities, and her caregiver.

There were others who didn't have caregivers but seemed to need them.

"They were all very appreciative," said Mrs. Schneider. "We got to stay and visit with some of them."

Some of the teachers got a list of parishioners who are mostly homebound, and called ahead.

"Some cordially said, 'No, thank you,' but others said, 'Sure, come on by,'" Mrs. Stuckenschneider recalled. "Either way, I liked putting myself out there."

Fourth-grade teacher Maddie Gramlich said everyone was welcoming and extremely appreciative for the visit and the meal.

"While I'm not super-comfortable going out and doing things like this," she said, "it was nice to do it with my co-workers and friends and to

be able to talk together about what we'll say and how we can help people feel loved."

She referred to her fellow faculty members as "my school family."

"I didn't expect today to feel so easygoing," she said. "There was no stress. We were all just having fun together."

"It's teamwork!" said Mrs. Lauf. "Doing this by myself wouldn't have been nearly as fun as working with three of my coworkers and riding around, talking and visiting."

"It's been a very good day," she stated. "Very rewarding in many ways."

"A chance to laugh"

Mr. Veit commented on what seemed like providential timing for the service retreat.

People had been fed well by various organizations in the days leading up to and on Thanksgiving Day.

"But today, there wasn't much else going on," he said.

He noted that many of the teachers are still sad about fifth-grader Harper Hummel,

See RETREAT, page 19

Thanksgiving meals served by Camdenton, Sedalia, J.C. parishes

Once again Thanksgiving Day drew people of faith together for massive efforts of gratitude and service.

Camdenton

St. Anthony Parish in Camdenton hosted its 18th annual free Thanksgiving Day Dinner, with organizers deeming it “another success for fellowship, caring and sharing.”

More than 60 volunteers participated on Thanksgiving Day, with more than 20 taking part in early preparation, turkey carving and hall decorating two days previously.

Twenty-two turkeys were prepared.

Two hundred thirty-five “eat in” dinners were served for people who were alone or looking for a place to eat on an important American holiday.

Ninety-two people called ahead for a total of 362 prepared meals, 34 being delivered to 16 local households.

Many people also received coats, scarfs, hats, mittens and gloves, thanks to Steve Neiger and the St. Anthony Knights of Columbus council.

Parishioner Mike Casella started this tradition 18 years ago and continues to volunteer.

Sedalia

“Months of planning and hard work culminated in another successful St. Vincent de Paul Thanksgiving Dinner for those in need,” Father Joseph Corel, pastor, announced to the people of St. Vincent de Paul Parish of Pettis County.

“Our parishioners and school families came together to serve our community in a physical manifestation of God’s love,” he stated.

The volunteers prepared and

served approximately 960 meals — about 810 meals being delivered to homes throughout Sedalia, and about 150 being picked up by people to take home.

Planning for the free meal began back in September, when Deacon Jerome and Jayne Conery and Deacon Arvol and Janet Bartok working with the school’s cafeteria manager Betsy Gerke to figure out quantities and order the food.

The confirmation candidates and the youth group baked more than 40 dozen cookies and also made cards on Sunday, Nov. 19, to go with each meal.

Volunteers started cooking turkeys on Monday, Nov. 20.

The following day, high school students from Sacred Heart School helped move the dry goods from storage to the kitchen at St. Patrick Chapel.

The school’s junior high girls’ basketball team assembled more than 1,000 bags, each containing two cookies and one slice of bread to go with a meal, on Wednesday, Nov. 22.

Thanksgiving Day got under way very early for the volunteers who arrived at 7 a.m. to make mashed potatoes, dressing, green beans and gravy and slice the cranberry sauce.

Volunteers to work the serving line arrived at about 9:30 a.m.

The people who stepped forward to deliver meals gathered in the hall at 10 a.m., many after attending Thanksgiving Day Mass upstairs in church.



Volunteers at St. Anthony Church in Camdenton display the sign for the parish’s 18th annual free Thanksgiving meal.

Fr. Joseph Corel prayed over all the workers.

Volunteers began boxing up meals shortly thereafter — one line for delivery orders and another for pick-up orders.

The first delivery orders went out at 10:30 a.m., with the first walk-in orders being taken at 11.

All orders were completed by noon.

There were enough dinners left for all of the volunteers in the kitchen and serving lines to sit down and enjoy a Thanksgiving Day meal together.

“This was a huge effort with parish families and school families working together to make it happen,” said Jennifer Cordia, communications secretary for the parish and school. “We had tremendous financial support from the parish, and our school’s students even pitched in with a paid dress down day in October, to cover the cost of supplies.”

More than 2,500 cookies were donated by parishioners, school families, and school faculty to provide dessert with each meal.

Fr. Corel said the Thanksgiving Day Meal service project was a great opportunity for the people of the parish to share with those who are less fortunate the blessings of God.

“Over 150 volunteers, totaling hundreds of volunteer hours, made this endeavor possible,” he noted.

Jefferson City

This was the 15th year of free Thanksgiving Day meals at Immaculate Conception Parish in Jefferson City.

More than 200 volunteers prepared the meals, which included more than 1,000 pounds of turkey and donations from more than 300 people, the *Jefferson City News-Tribune* reported.

Volunteer Elaine Bryan told the *News-Tribune* reporter that the event was as popular among those hoping to serve as it was looking for a meal. She said the team usually has more helpers than it has jobs for them to do.

“People show up early in the morning and want to start working,” Ms. Bryan stated. “The community is just amazing as far as how many people want to volunteer, the desserts that are brought in, all the food that’s donated and all the money that’s donated.”

“What makes this project so successful is actually taking the

meals to the homes,” she said.

Both the meal and the service were a blessing, according to Jacqueline Huhman, who partook in both.

She told the *News-Tribune* that it was her second year serving, a tradition she’s carrying on in place of her late husband.

This year, she brought her son and daughter-in-law along from St. Louis to eat before taking their places amongst the other volunteers.

“It makes me feel good. And, of course, I’m very thankful for what I’ve got and to be able to help people,” she said. “I just think it’s a great opportunity, and the food is good.”

Most meals are delivered or picked up on-site and fewer than 100 people eat at the church.

Work started on Tuesday with the preparation of 50 turkeys. Once the baked turkeys cooled, they were broken down and refrigerated until Thursday, parishioner Mike Schnieders told the *News-Tribune*.

He and his wife Cindy started the meal 15 years ago and continue to coordinate it.

“Patricia Coleman makes fresh dinner rolls for all of the meals,” Mr. Schnieders said. “Even some cinnamon rolls for the volunteers. They are to die for — delicious! It’s been a labor of love for them, too, her children and their friends. She does that Wednesday very early in the morning.”

He said the holidays remind people of the Catholic Church’s mission.

“We at Immaculate Conception are God’s people,” he told the reporter. “God said to love each other and to take care of each other. That’s what we’re trying to teach our children. We take that seriously. Thanksgiving is a good time to do that.”

Contributing to this report were Bill Pauls in Camdenton, Jennifer Cordia in Sedalia, and Cameron Gerber and Joe Gamm with the Jefferson City News-Tribune.



LEFT: Volunteers prepare a free Thanksgiving meal for hundreds of people in the kitchen of the hall in the St. Patrick Chapel in Sedalia. RIGHT: Members of the Sacred Heart junior high basketball team display the bags of cookies and bread they assembled for the meal.

— Photos by Jennifer Cordia

QUESTION CORNER

What are the rules for Catholics and Christmas trees?

By Jenna Marie Cooper
OSV News

Q: When I was a kid we put up the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve and took it down a day or two after Christmas. As an adult, I put the tree up a day or two after Thanksgiving and left it up until January 2nd. Now as a Catholic, what is the best way for me to handle the Christmas tree? When does it go up and when does it come down? (Indiana)



A: Unlike certain other kinds of holiday decorations, such as an Advent wreath, a Christmas tree is neither a sacramental nor part of a liturgy. Because of this, there are no strict right or wrong answers as to when a Catholic should put up or take down a Christmas tree. Yet depending on your family's own particular holiday traditions and spiritual needs, there are some dates that might be especially appropriate in your own household.

In terms of when to put up a Christmas tree, there is nothing to prevent a Catholic from setting up a Christmas tree right after Thanksgiving if they so choose. But for other families waiting until Christmas Eve to set up a tree could be a helpful way of respecting the season of Advent as a time of quiet and even penitential preparation for the coming of Christ at Christmas. In contrast to the secular emphasis on pre-Christmas celebrations, waiting until Christmas to set up a tree makes it clear that Advent is not Christmas, but rather its own important season of waiting.

And of course, it's always possible to find a middle ground between these two extremes. For example, perhaps a family could set up a Christmas tree earlier on during Advent, but only start decorating it closer to Christmas.

Or, you could take some cues from our liturgy as for when to set up your Christmas tree. One option would be to wait until Gaudete Sunday — the “pink” Sunday of the third week of Advent — when the Church's prayers specifically tell us to rejoice at the closeness of Jesus' upcoming birthday.

Another liturgically fitting day to set up a Christmas tree would be Dec. 17, one week before Christmas Eve. This is the day when the Church starts praying the “O antiphons” (antiphons which are most popularly well-known as the inspiration for the Advent hymn “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”) before the Gospel at daily Mass and before the “Magnificat” prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours. The beginning of the “O antiphons” marks a shift in the Church's liturgy, where Christmas is anticipated with a more immediate sense of urgency.

You can use a similar sense of liturgically informed prudential decision-making when deciding when to take down your Christmas tree. Although in my own opinion, it's good to keep in mind that for Catholics Christmas Day is just the very beginning of a whole Christmas season.

The Church celebrates the “octave,” or the eight days following Christmas, almost as though it were Christmas day itself. So, Jan. 2, the day after the octave concludes, could be a good day to take down a Christmas tree. Still, you would be more than justified in keeping your tree up even longer!

Jan. 6 is the traditional date of the feast of the Epiphany or “Three Kings' Day,” a feast which marks the last day of the 12 days of Christmas. But officially, the Christmas season doesn't end until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which the church celebrates the Sunday after Jan. 6.

Finally, even if late January is technically considered Ordinary Time, the latest feast in our celebration of the Incarnation

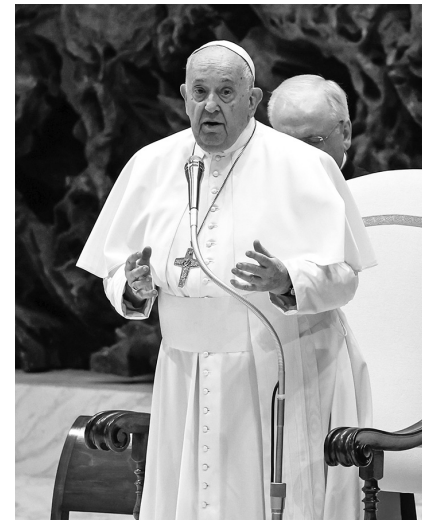
See QUESTION, page 18

Papal Audience December 6, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In our continuing catechesis on apostolic zeal, we now reflect on how the preaching of the Gospel always takes place in the power of the Holy Spirit. As the Gift of God (cf. Jn. 4:10), the Spirit prepares, sustains and fosters growth and new life in the Church. Yet, in every activity of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God the Father, who sent his Son among us and bestowed the gift of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. In our witness to the Risen Christ, we are called to imitate the creativity and simplicity that are the hallmark of the Spirit's work. May the fire of the Holy Spirit continue to burn within us, strengthen us in unity and missionary zeal, as we strive to be joyful witnesses of our salvation in Christ, even to the ends of the earth.

I welcome all the English-speaking pilgrims, particularly the groups from Malta, Australia, Japan, Indonesia and the United States of America. Upon all of you and upon your families, I invoke the joy and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!



Honored veterans gather in the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Columbia following a Veterans Day Assembly with Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School students Nov. 10. — Photo by Jay Nies

Columbia OLLIS students honor, pray for veterans

By Jay Nies

Twenty-four students carrying electric candles outlined the arc-shaped perimeter of the Our Lady of Lourdes Church sanctuary in Columbia.

Each candle represented a war or conflict in which U.S. service men and women fought and died — from the American Revolution through the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

The people paused and prayed as each candle was lit and the name of each armed conflict was solemnly read.

“The truth is that there have been many more in our nation's history,” fifth-grader Dalton Erdel noted.

Monsignor Michael T. Flanagan, retired pastor in service at Our Lady of Lourdes, then lit a white candle in front of the altar, symboliz-

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.

ing peace and the light of Christ.

Some of the 36 honored veterans, dressed in service regalia and seated near the front of the church, were tinged with emotion.

It was Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School's 2023 Veterans Day Assembly, held Nov. 10.

Prayers were offered and Scripture readings proclaimed, patriotic songs sung and gratitude expressed.

“I think that everyone should know about what veterans have done for our country and to protect us,” fifth-grader Laney Hilbrenner said afterward. “If not for them, we would not be so well protected and would not have so much help to keep our country safe.”

See VETERANS, page 20

Keep the candle lit: pouring out the greatest gift

By Christina Capecchi



Oprah Winfrey looks regal in a purple pleated skirt and matching sweater, beaming on the cover of the magazine that delivers her much-anticipated Favorite Things — “112 crowd-pleasing gifts for everyone on your list.”

Now in her 9th year partnering with Amazon, Oprah vouches for each product with her trademark hype: a \$22 silk eye mask she calls “life-changing,” \$350 Beats headphones that are “the best of the best,” a \$600 TrueBrew Drip Coffee Maker she lauds as “a dream for pernickety coffee drinkers.” Not to mention her new book, which will help you “be happier in 2024.”

It’s commerce with a spiritual bent. “What I know for sure,” Oprah writes, “is that what you give comes back to

It’s true! There is more joy in giving than in receiving

By Silvio Cuéllar
OSV News



We have just celebrated Thanksgiving and the air is now filled with Christmas music, special offers and sales. This materialistic culture invites us to buy and buy the latest, newest thing. However, this Advent season can also be a time to share our time, talents, and treasure with others.

In his recent homily for the World Day of the Poor, Pope Francis challenged us to multiply love by helping the poorest and asked us the following question: “What path will we take in our lives: the path of Jesus, whose very life was gift, or the path of selfishness? The path with hands open towards others in order to give, give of ourselves, or that of closed hands so that we have more things and only care about ourselves?”

In his message, the Holy Father used the parable of the talents in the Gospel of Matthew, where three men find themselves with enormous wealth in their hands, thanks to the generosity of their master who leaves for a long journey. “That master will come back one day and summon those servants, trusting that he might rejoice with them on how they had made his wealth increase and bear fruit,” the Pope said.

This parable applies to us and our lives, for God has given each of us dif-

ferent talents and one day, he will ask us to give an account of the use we have made of them in serving others.

I’ve always been intrigued by the television queen’s shopping list, but what strikes me most is how much company she now has. These days, everyone has a holiday gift guide — from high-profile peddlers to micro-influencers and suburban moms.

You can follow them in real time, linking every item. The wreaths they’re hanging. The bows they’re hanging on the wreaths they’re hanging. The joggers they’re wearing while they’re hanging the bows on the wreaths they’re hanging.

’Tis the season to spend money. It’s never been easier to do, requiring the kind of deliberation that vanishes in the blink of an eye, the tap of a button. It can almost feel like play money — no paper trail, no accountability, just an invisible Venmo transaction.

What we lack in time, we try to make up for in money, throwing it at people and problems who actually need minutes and hours. The kindergartener

doesn’t need a fancy new baseball glove but an adult to play catch with. Back and forth, again and again, chasing all the errant throws until, finally, there are fewer.

Our immigrant ancestors had no money and all the time in the world. They made use of long bus rides, early mornings, tiny apartments, daily walks to Mass. Stitching and scheming, painting and plotting.

Today we have flipped the script. We have all the money in the world, so it seems, but no time. We’re busy. And when we’re not busy, we’re distracted by screens siphoning our precious time. But the things we buy cannot replace quality time spent with loved ones.

I once read an article about a troubled teen who was turning to the wrong remedies. Her parents recognized a bet-

ter one and chose to lavish her with their time and attention.

“We took her kayaking, played more board games with her and watched more TV with her and took other short family trips,” her mom said. They asked their teen to stay off the internet and instead keep a journal. She obliged, even though she was frustrated.

Eventually, something shifted. Her depression lifted, and, in its place, a sense of self emerged.

This will be our first Christmas without my paternal grandma, who showered us with loving attention. She and my grandpa bought a modest cabin on a little lake up north where we all squeezed in countless hours and memories.

See CAPECCHI, page 19

REFLECTION

What are you waiting for?

By Mark Saucier

Advent. From the Latin *adventus*, meaning coming or arrival.

What is coming? Christmas. Incarnation. Emmanuel, the dwelling of God with us.

What is coming? The *Parousia*, the return of Christ to reclaim a world in which humanity has reached the end of this divine experiment.

And what is the Advent message? Wait and watch. Be vigilant, alert, aware. “No one knows the hour or the day.”

But we know the exact day, Dec. 25, the destination of the Advent trek. And what we celebrate then already occurred 2,000 years ago. What is to wait and watch for there?

There’s no ETA on the Second Coming. From early despondent disciples through centuries of augurs of annihilation, to the millennialist prophets of doom, every generation had its oracles of end-times.

But it hasn’t happened yet, and hopefully won’t for a while. I’m partial to this world and would like it to last.

And even Jesus admitted he was not advised of the schedule.

So here we are in the in-between times, living between what has already occurred in history and what will someday be the end of history.

What does the Advent echo of waiting and watching mean for us?

Maybe the waiting is not for something coming, but rather the patience, the slowing-down enough to catch what is already here.

Maybe the watching is not an eye on the horizon, a sentinel of our own mortality or that of the world.

Maybe our own lives are meant to be the object of this Advent waiting and watching.

Of course, like everything under the sun, this is not new. Back in the fourth century B.C., Aristotle took a hard look at what constitutes a good or flourishing society. He identified three lives critical for that.

There is the life of productivity and knowledge.

There is the life of leisure, play and entertainment.

The third is a life of reflection or contemplation.

It seems that most of us do well in our lives of productivity. We are, for the most part, avid doers.

God knows we have enough entertainment, though much of it might be more distraction than true leisure.

But reflection? That comes with a cost. It takes time. It demands honesty. It can be uncomfortable.

Maybe that’s why we need a season to encourage us.

So, sit before the fire. Stare at those lights. Sip that mulled cider.

Don’t worry about what you will ponder. That will come.

Just wait and watch.

See CUÉLLAR, page 19

Encounter

Creating hope where we see need

AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES



By Ashley Wiskirchen

“Providing care, creating hope for those in need — regardless of faith, culture, or situation.”

You may have seen this tagline on a flyer, sticker or t-shirt from Catholic Charities — we use it as often as we can, and as staff we keep those words before us as a reminder of the mission we aim to fulfill.

That mission to answer the call to respond to the needs of those most vulnerable — provide care in the form of supportive services, and create hope through acts of love for our neighbors.

If you'd indulge me, search the Oxford dictionary or the internet for the term catholic, and you'll turn up results like all-embracing, concerning the whole or universal.

Charity finds its roots in *caritas* — simplified as love or *agape*.

Some of us are familiar but for others this may be revelatory; we understand *agape* as the love that moves us to care for another, love in action, love poured out.

In short, your Catholic Charities is an agency of love poured out — made up of staff members and volunteers who are drawn to work for the good of their neighbor, established in 2011 by Bishop Emeritus John R. Gaydos with a mission to know, love and serve those on the margins.

Our Executive Director, Litz Main, characterizes it this way, “As the charitable arm of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Jefferson City, our commitment to serving the most

vulnerable is deeply rooted in our Catholic identity.”

She continued, “Our mission transcends faith, culture and circumstances, reflecting the compassionate essence of our beliefs. At the heart of our service is a steadfast dedication to providing aid and support to those in need, embodying the true spirit of charity within our community.”

Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri is merely one of 167 Catholic Charities agencies across the United States.

Outside of the states, the international network Caritas Internationalis claims an additional 160+ agencies operating across 200 countries.

I like to think about it this way: while one neighbor may walk through our doors to grab a shopping cart and fill their basket with grains, dairy, protein and produce for their pantry and refrigerator, across the globe another neighbor is seeking shelter and rest as they flee from their war-torn home.

In our Central Office, a family may come to visit with our DOJ Accredited Representatives to inquire about the process to reunite with their spouse or children after years of separation and navigating immigration, and in Santa Rosa, California a veteran is moving into his home after experiencing homelessness for over a year thanks to his local Catholic Charities.

The point is, we are one part in a whole — a global human family and a global network of care.

We are able to send prayers

and support across countries to those in need, and here in central and northern Missouri, we participate in the strong network of care available to our own neighbors.

“The transformative power of our services lies not only in their diversity, but in their ability to touch lives across faiths, cultures and circumstances,” Ms. Main shared with our staff last week.

“Through a lens of empathy, we have become a driving force in promoting positive change and fostering a sense of community well-being.”

This is the work of love your Catholic Charities agency pours out for others, sometimes by attending a working group meeting to ensure sustainable and affordable housing, other times by serving generations whose parents or grandparents were able to immigrate safely and thrive in their communities today.

And you, of course, are a part of that work.

As a person of faith, and as a Catholic in this diocese, you have a certain stake in seeing the work of Catholic Charities succeed.

The success of this agency depends on the investment — of prayerful support, of hands to volunteer, of donations to sustain programs — of every Catholic in the 38 counties of the Diocese of Jefferson City.

If you haven't had a touchpoint with us yet, I encourage you to take up the opportunity in the new year.

If you like to see us in person, we have great plans to travel across the deaneries again with another round of Parish Engagement and Charity Events (PEACE) and to host visitors who want to learn more about our agency and perform

Connect with Catholic Charities

- **Parish Engagement and Charity Events (PEACE):** we're coming to your deanery this year! Find dates and RSVP online at cccnmo.diojeffcity.org/peace
- **Catholic Charities 101 events** will be held at the Central Office in Jefferson City four times next year — they'll include an opportunity to visit with staff to learn more about our work, hands-on simulations, and a service opportunity in the CC Food Pantry. Register online at cccnmo.diojeffcity.org/about-us
- **Encounter at Catholic Charities podcast:** find our podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, iHeartRadio or anywhere else you get your podcasts! Subscribe to get new episode notifications straight to your phone.
- **Menus of Engagement** will be published monthly online, shared in the Monday Morning Memo and with newsletter subscribers. You can see examples now at cccnmo.diojeffcity.org/menus-of-engagement.
- **Catholic Social Teachings webinars** are on the calendar! We'll meet once a month beginning in March through October of 2024, check event days and times and register to attend at cccnmo.diojeffcity.org/events.

a Menu of Engagement for parishes and schools to participate in the “see, judge, act” calls-to-action with their ministry groups and classrooms.

If you're looking for a new study of Catholicism, one of our staff members, certified to teach Catholic social teaching classes in both English and Spanish will host a monthly webinar on the third Tuesday of the month, from March through October.

You can register for these Catholic Social Teachings Webinars easily, which also count as continuing education and formation hours for the diaconate community.


If you enjoy volunteering, serving your neighbors with your hands and heart in-person, we've got a place for you to plug in.

There are really no shortage of ways to join us in serving your neighbors — whether that looks like making an end of the year donation, or signing up for our newsletters to keep an eye on our work.

However you choose to provide care and create hope for others, we welcome you.

Ashley Wiskirchen is the Sr. Director of Communications at Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri. A life-long Catholic her desire to see Catholic social teaching embraced and to serve others led her to her role at the charitable arm of the diocese. In her

capacity there, she has helped establish the Parish Ambassador program, Parish Engagement and Charity Events, and Catholic social teaching formation opportunities. You can learn more about the work of Catholic Charities online at cccnmo.diojeffcity.org or connect with them across social media channels, @CCCNMO.



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24 HOUR SERVICE

40 Days for Life participants hear about importance of year-round presence on the sidewalk

By Jay Nies

The president of Mizzou Students for Life said seeing those who stand in the gap every day to help people turn away from abortion inspires her to keep making her own sacrifices.

Their prayerful determination in the face of taunts and inconveniences emboldens her to withstand persecution by fellow students on campus.

“Because I know you exist, I have the hope to encourage our members to come to meetings and have these very important conversations on campus,” said Kaitlyn Banning, a biomedical engineering major at the University of Missouri and president of the campus chapter of Students for Life.

Ms. Banning, who had to move out of student housing last year because of the death threats she received, spoke to more than 100 people who attended the 40 Days for Life Columbia Campaign Closing Rally and Dinner on Nov. 4 in the St. Andrew Parish Hall in Holts Summit.

Members of the parish’s Knights of Columbus Council 8400 prepared and served the meal.

Each person who attended the rally received a book titled *What to Say When: The Compete New Guide to Discussing Abortion*, by Shawn D. Carney and Steve Karlen.

Mr. Carney is president and CEO of 40 Days for Life International, which helps organize 40 Days for Life campaigns throughout the United States and abroad.

40 Days for Life is a peaceful, intensive campaign that focuses on 40 days of prayer and fasting, peaceful vigils at abortion facilities, and grassroots educational outreach.

The 40-day timeframe is drawn from examples throughout Biblical history where God brought about a world-changing transformation in 40-day periods.

Columbia was one of 561 cities that held simultaneous campaigns from Sept. 27 to Nov. 4 this year.

The local campaign draws volunteers to pray in the public right-of-way outside the abor-



LEFT: Heather Gardner, director of campaign advancement for 40 Days for Life 365, and Kathy Forck, campaign director for Columbia 40 Days for Life, turn toward the photographer while the audience applauds after Ms. Gardner’s keynote at the Columbia 40 Days for Life Closing Rally and Dinner Nov. 4 in the St. Andrew Parish Hall in Holts Summit. **RIGHT:** Kaitlyn Banning, president of the University of Missouri chapter of Students for Life, addresses the audience.



— Photos by Jay Nies

tion-referral facility at Columbia Planned Parenthood.

“We have so much to be thankful for!” said Kathy Forck, campaign director for Columbia 40 Days for Life, at the closing rally. “We completed our 14th year of prayer on the sidewalk with many faithful supporters, new and old, who have joined us in prayer both on the sidewalk, at home, or wherever you may have been.”

Abortions no longer take place at the facility, but referrals do.

Ms. Banning told the audience that the goal of Mizzou Students for Life is to transform the culture on campus that celebrates abortion to one that celebrates life.

She said it breaks her heart to see girls and young women her age walking into the Planned Parenthood in search of out-of-state abortion referrals.

“Then, I see you guys go and talk to them,” she stated. “You start conversations and let them know that they have other options. It’s so good to know you’re doing what you’re doing.”

“It’s working”

“I’m here to tell you that you’ll probably never know in this life how important your presence out there is,” Heather Gardner told the crowd at the closing rally. “Your dedication is so much more powerful than you realize.”

She said each former abor-

tion clinic employee who gets prayed out of the industry says, “Keep doing what you’re doing. It’s working.”

“With all of that, we know we’ve got to continue,” said Ms. Gardner, director of campaign advancement for 40 Days for Life 365, and keynote speaker at the closing rally.

She talked about being pro-life since her grandmother explained the “abortion stops a beating heart” sign on her car.

“I asked her what it meant, and she told me in an age-appropriate way,” Ms. Gardner recalled.

From that conversation forward, Ms. Gardner knew that abortion was wrong.

She started writing papers and giving talks on the subject at school.

She was studying at Texas A&M University in College Station when the 40 Days for Life Campaign was getting started. Friends from school and from church encouraged her to stand with them outside the large and very busy Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in the city.

“They invited me to go and pray and put my convictions into action,” she said.

Afraid of what might happen out there, she kept deferring.

“It can be very scary because we understand that death is happening right behind those walls,” she stated.

Finally, she did go out and pray on the sidewalk.

It took several more invitations to bring her back.

“Then, my friends said I should learn to be a sidewalk counselor, who greets women at the facility, reaches out and gives them love and hope and resources and talks to them about reconsidering abortion,” she said.

She thought they were crazy.

“No way I could do something like that!” she said.

Her friends persisted in inviting her to attend the sidewalk-counselor training. She finally went just to get them off of her back.

She found out during the training that while the College Station area has a large Christian population, not enough people were signing up to pray outside the abortion clinic.

“I realized that if I’m not doing anything about it, I can’t complain about anyone else not doing anything,” she stated.

An unexpected visitor

Ms. Gardner kept going out to the sidewalk, relying ever-more radically on God’s help and protection.

Right before she graduated, Mr. Carney, director of Coalition for Life, of which 40 Days for Life is a part, invited her to come and work for the coalition.

She felt unqualified, and she had other plans.

“I fought it the whole way,” she recalled. “But then, the doors to the other things I was pursuing started to close. So, I figured I’d go to work for the coalition temporarily.”

That was several years ago.

She began suspecting that she was on the right track when she started experiencing spiritual warfare in her personal and professional life.

Her spiritual director gave her a book written by Norma McCorvey, who was the “Jane Roe” plaintiff of the Supreme Court’s 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion-on-demand throughout the United States.

“She wrote about how angry it used to make her when

See 40 DAYS, page 17



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Catholic Church 'never despairs' of souls lost to suicide, leaders say

By Gina Christian
OSV News

Nov. 18 marked International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day, dedicated to those who wrestle with the complex and often silent grief of having lost loved ones to suicide.

Part of the Church's mission is spreading awareness of the profound comfort those who have lost a loved one to suicide can find in Church teaching on the issue.

This is something Father Chris Alar, a priest of the Marians of the Immaculate Conception and superior of the order's U.S. and Argentina provinces, has been doing for several years.

Fr. Alar, whose grandmother took her life several years ago, co-authored the book *After Suicide: There's Hope for Them and for You* with fellow Marian Father Jason Lewis.

While the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses that suicide is "gravely contrary to the just love of self," Fr. Alar told OSV News that "if somebody does make that wrong choice, it should not cause us to despair."

He pointed to the *Catechism's* observation, in paragraph 2282, that "grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can

diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide."

As a result, the three conditions for a sin to be mortal explained by the *Catechism* — a grave matter committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent — are usually not met in cases of suicide, Fr. Alar said.

"Most people who take their life probably don't have free will," said Fr. Alar. "They have some kind of mental illness or some kind of depression or anxiety."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Pre-

vention, suicide is one of the leading causes of death, with almost 49,450 individuals taking their own lives in 2022, an increase of 2.6% from the

year prior. Most of those who die by suicide are male, although suicide among females rose 3.8% in 2022 to 10,194 individuals.

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ST. NICHOLAS

From page 3

We're aware when we touch our face. Little things like that."

Everyone agrees that life is more fun with a baby around.

"They'll teach her things, she'll never be bored, she'll always have a playmate," said Dr. Newell. "It's just going to be beautiful."

God's timing

The Newells, who are members of the United Methodist Church, met in Iowa while Dr. Newell was pursuing a pharmacy degree and Mr. Newell was majoring in accounting. He later entered Fuller Theological Seminary.

Early in their courtship, they realized that God was calling them to lavish his love on children, whether or not they were their own.

"We knew at a really young age that that's what our marriage would be about sometime in our lifetime," said Dr. Newell. "That would be part of our mission."

The couple moved to Jefferson City, where Dr. Newell began honing her administrative skills with the Missouri Pharmaceutical Association, and Mr. Newell, newly graduated from the seminary, began ministering at the First United Methodist Church.

"Then COVID hit," Dr. Newell recalled. "And I was working a lot around policies and distribution of vaccines and all of that fun stuff."

The couple had applied to be houseparents for Boys Town

in Nebraska when Dr. Newell heard from friends in her Rotary International club that St. Nicholas Academy was in need of houseparents and an executive director.

That night, the Newells discussed applying for both roles. "It was kind of a sweet spot," Dr. Newell recalled. "We got to stay in Jefferson City. And we could follow the mission God gave us when we got married."

The board hired them in the Spring of 2021. Dr. Newell started as executive director that July, and the couple moved into the house the following month.

"So, God's timing turned out to be totally different from ours," Dr. Newell stated. "He was doing things his own way. We just didn't know it yet."

God provides

As house parents, the Newells do for the children what all parents typically do: "getting kids to school, getting them home, getting them to appointments during the week, basketball practices and games and the like," said Dr. Newell.

In addition, her work as director requires about 30 hours per week.

"Both roles are very different," she said. "So, it feels like a mom going to work during the day and picking up her kids after she finishes at the office."

Dr. and Mr. Newell are amazed at how quickly they fell in love with the children.

She said they've both

learned a lot about trusting God and making the best use of the gifts he's given them.

"God asks a lot of us, and you know that picking up his cross is going to be hard or life-changing," she stated.

"Once you're in it, it's just crazy life-changing!" she said. "You realize that he's going to supplement whatever you need at the time."

"God has always provided the joy or compassion or patience we've needed in a really amazing way," she said.

"The most Christ-like thing"

As houseparents, the Newells make decisions in close consultation with each child's parents or guardians, along with teachers at St. Peter School, to help promote stability and success for the child.

"We have a strong relationship with (the parents and guardians) and are sure to include them in all of our decision-making," said Dr. Newell.

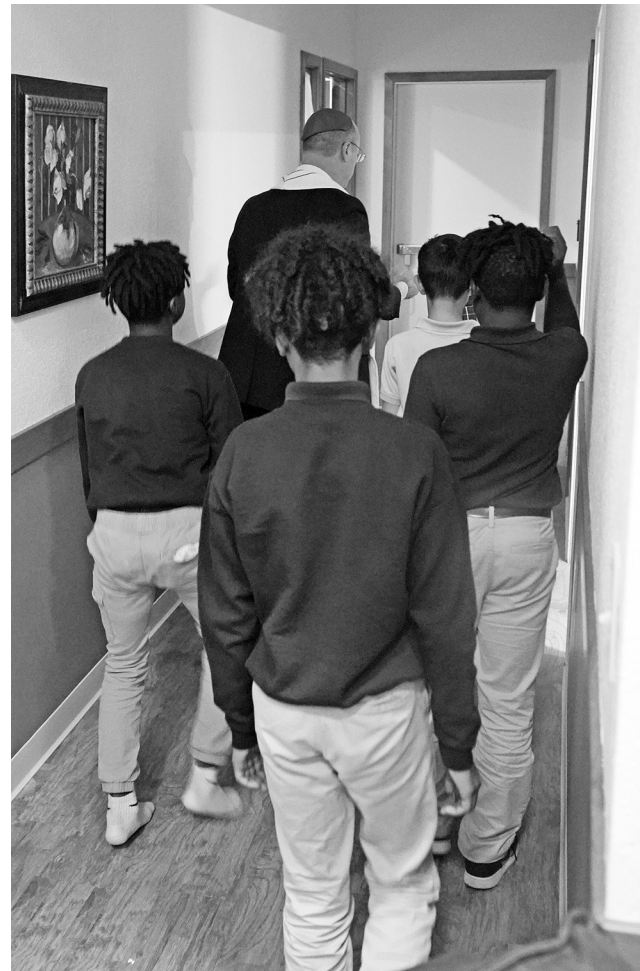
"We give them time to speak, and they know they're being heard and that we can help them."

It's a long-term commitment, right up until the student graduates from high school.

She lauded the families who realize they need help providing an environment that's more conducive to growth and success — and make the commitment to work with St. Nicholas Academy to make it happen.

"I personally think the most Christ-like thing a mother or grandmother or guardian can do is recognize that they need help in providing their kid with an opportunity," said Dr. Newell.

"It's honestly one of the



Students of St. Nicholas Academy join Bishop W. Shawn McKnight as he blesses their home with holy water.

— Photo by Jay Nies

most sacrificial and loving things I've ever seen anyone do, to be able to identify that 'I need extra help co-parenting, and this is an opportunity for my child to get an amazing education,'" she stated.

Love from God

Dr. Newell was quick to point out the close ties between St. Nicholas Academy and the larger community.

"As houseparents, we couldn't do life without St. Peter's — the teachers and the staff and their administration," she said. "I just want to thank them. As our broader community, they're just incredible."

The board and administration are preparing to open a separate home for girls. This will require raising enough money for another building and hiring more houseparents.

"St. Nicholas Academy is successful and thriving now, and we're looking to get more support," Dr. Newell said.

She said that she and her husband rely heavily on God for inspiration.

"I am a prayer warrior," she

said. "It can be very easy in a job like this to run out of patience if you're not asking for it at every moment ... or to run out of love or joy if you're not asking for it every moment."

"So I ask for it when I know I'm about to run out of it," she stated. "Because I couldn't do this job without that intervention."

She noted that she and Mr. Newell have a fantastic partnership and instinctively recognize when it's time for one to hand the baton to the other.

God is very much at work at St. Nicholas Academy.

"It's really cool to see the children grow in their relationship with

God," she said. "For them to know that Jesus knows and loves them. And for them to know that the love we show for them is from God. That's why we're here."

When the boys go home to spend time with their families, they bring that love with them and share it.

Dr. Newell said the boys, by their example, instruct the houseparents on resilience, forgiveness and finding the strength to heal and overcome difficulties.

She asked for prayers for each of the children at St. Nicholas Academy to discover how God sees them and to be filled with his love and self-respect.

She also suggested praying for her and her husband to remain joyful and patient houseparents.

"And for the board and all the community members, that they just continue to pour love into this," she added.

"We have such a tremendous community around us — that they continue to love us and take care of us."

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A moment with the Pope



Sister Cindy Weber of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND), who previously served at St. Joseph Parish in Westphalia, greets Pope Francis at the Vatican during the 25th SSND General Chapter this November in Rome.

Family's silver vase is testament to enduring marriages

By Jay Nies

What was once presented in jest has become a prized memento for marriage and family.

A sterling silver vase engraved with a growing number of names has been passed down for four generations of family members upon reaching their silver wedding anniversary.

"The total number of years of marriage that it represents continues to increase, because of the number of couples who have had it who are still married," said Dan Worthen.

He and his wife, Stephanie, recently became the 14th couple to receive the vase.

"The durability of silver represents the durability and the purity of marriage, with metal withstanding trials and tribulations," he stated. "That certainly fits our experience."

"It's not the most remarkable looking vase," Stephanie Worthen acknowledged. "But the number of couples is impressive. The engravable surface is pretty much covered."

The vase has acquired a few dings over the course of its 84-year existence.

Mr. Worthen said it's like any relationship that has withstood the test of time.

"What marriage doesn't have its struggles and trials and tribulations?" he asked. "We're certainly not spared from that. But you keep working through it the best you can."

A rose and a lily

The Worthens are members of St. Peter Parish in Jefferson City and were married in St. Peter Church in August 1998, with Monsignor Donald W. Lammers PA, who was pastor, presiding.

Until shortly before that time, Mr. Worthen was not aware of the tradition of the bride and groom leaving a rose at the side altar dedicated to the Blessed Mother.

"I was thinking, 'What about poor St. Joseph?'" he recalled. "I said we should also put a lily on Joseph's altar ... and that's what we did."

Twenty-five years later, a short while after receiving the vase with their newly engraved names on it, the Worthens set

one rose and one lily in the vase and placed it atop St. Mary's altar before Mass.

Father Brad Berhorst, who was serving as associate pastor at the time of the couple's anniversary, led them in renewing their vows, gave them a special blessing, and blessed the family heirloom.

"In all the years people have had it, I believe this was the first time it was ever blessed," said Mr. Worthen.

His great-grandparents, Frank and Pearl Gruler, got married in 1914 in Michigan and received the vase as an anniversary gift in 1939.

"For the next 20 years, it sat on a shelf in the kitchen, and her kids watched her polish it as it turned black in spots," wrote Dorothy Gruler Miles, Frank and Pearl's second-oldest daughter, in a brief history of the vase.

The couple raised four children — including Mr. Worthen's grandmother, Mary Katherine Gruler Worthen ("Grandma Kay") — in their home in northern Michigan.

Grandma Kay inherited the home and its contents after her mother died in 1960.

She was no longer married and "did not want this vase, did not need this vase, was not interested in this vase," Mr. Worthen noted.

She repeatedly tried to give it to her sister, Dorothy, but "Dorothy's vision of the vase was watching her Mom trying to beat the tarnish, which loves sterling silver, and she wanted no part of it," Mrs. Miles wrote.

"So ... and I've seen other examples of this in my life ... a thing that now has value was once meaningless," Mr. Worthen stated.

"They weren't going to get rid of it, pawn it, sell it or melt it down," he said. "But they clearly didn't want it."

Finally, Dorothy and her husband, Bill, who are Dan Worthen's godparents, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in 1968.

Grandma Kay threw a large party for them, had the silver vase filled with flowers, and adorned it with a gift tag.

It said, "From the grandsons."

"When my grandmother

wrote that note to Dorothy, my mother was pregnant with me," Mr. Worthen noted. "And there was no way of knowing in 1968 that you're pregnant with a boy."

His grandmother wrote presciently and was done polishing the vase.

Six years later, her sister came up with the idea of transforming the white elephant into a silver heirloom when her younger brother Al and his wife Helen reached their sterling milestone.

Dorothy had the names of the three couples engraved on the vase and presented it as a gift to the third.

Their brother Frank died before he and his wife, Mary, celebrated 25 years, but their names were later added with the notation, "in memory of."

The next generation began receiving the vase in 1990, beginning with Dan's parents, Dennis and Patricia Worthen.

"So, Dad had it for several years and then passed it on to the next couple," said Dan Worthen. "I never saw it again until it came to me."

"Anywhere in the world"

Mrs. Worthen said it's funny that the vase became an heirloom as part of a plot by her husband's grandmother to get rid of it.

"In that way, she started this amazing tradition that's been really cool to be a part of," Mrs. Worthen stated.

She recalled bringing her own cache of family customs into her relationship with Mr. Worthen as they fell in love and looked toward marriage.

She told him: "You can



Generation to generation

By Mr. Worthen's calculations, the names on the vase represent about 565 combined years of marriage.

"This family isn't particularly large, and because I haven't lived in Michigan since before I was 4, there's still a good part of the family I don't know," he said.

"And yet, here's this thread running through it that connects us to a past, connects us to a history which is very rooted and part of our identity."

Fr. Berhorst found a proper blessing for the vase in the Book of Blessings and incorporated it into the renewal of the Worthens' wedding vows.

"It was really satisfying, this witness that we're showing and sharing and making a bit of a big deal about," said

Mr. Worthen.

Mrs. Worthen said the vase helped highlight the significance.

"It's such a celebration of marriage to see all the names and the years they represent," she said.

"That it's been passed around to so many people, that it's celebrated as something important to all of them, it's such a positive uplifting thing to see and be a part of," she stated.

The Worthens look forward to holding on to the vase until presenting it to his brother and his wife on their anniversary in 2031.

In the meantime, their oldest daughter plans to get married in December.

"Will the vase come back to her in 25 years?" asked Mr. Worthen. "I sure hope so!"

marry me and we'll live anywhere in the world as long as it's Jefferson City."

"And really, I love it here," Mr. Worthen added.

Now, they are the first of the great-grandchildren's generation to become caretakers of the vase.

They delayed opening the unceremoniously wrapped vessel until they were gathered with friends at a social before renewing their vows at Mass.

"Some of our closest friends through church, and my folks and several of our relatives were there," said Mr. Worthen.

Guests ranged from three weeks married to 58 years. The Worthens figured that among about 30 couples present, their combined years of marriage added up to nearly eight centuries.



By Father Donald Antweiler

ACROSS

1. The TEN _____ were given by God to Moses.
11. "The piazza was not secure. This was to be an in-and-_____ affair, as the Pope's security teams tagged it," —*The Third Secret*, Steve Berry.
12. "Asked how he felt about Republican (election) losses, Lincoln said: 'Somewhat like that boy in Kentucky, who stubbed his _____ while running to see his sweetheart. The boy said he was too big to cry, and far too badly hurt to laugh,'" —*Leadership in Turbulent Times*, Doris Kerns Goodwin.
13. "Running can be a source to _____ and let things out," —J. R. Martinez.
14. Colonel Leonard Wood, who served _____ the Regular Army and had been awarded the Medal of Honor, and Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, formed an effective and complimentary team," —*Leadership in Turbulent Times*, Doris Kerns Goodwin.
15. Wide shoe size.
16. Baby bed.
18. Naval Criminal Investigative Service (_____) is a top-rated primetime TV series, airing for 18 seasons; seen in more than 200 countries.
20. Amtrak's passenger _____ service from St. Louis to Kansas City makes stops at TEN cities, three of which are in our diocese.
21. Prefix for annual or centennial.
22. "For we must all appear before the judgment _____ of Christ..." (2 Corinthians 5:10).
23. "If anyone thinks it _____ that a smooth-cheeked simply dressed child should be sitting alone
24. Healthcare professional.
25. "The people rushed the railroad cars, pressing their faces to the windows, smudging the glass, grimacing, shouting 'Here's old _____!'" —*The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage*, Daniel Mark Epstein.
26. A brand of beer.
28. A type of bee.
32. The dragon about to devour the child had TEN _____ signifying power/danger (see Revelations 12:3).
33. Mo.'s Governor's Mansion is located on TEN _____ adjoining the State Capitol grounds.
34. _____ Jima; in WW II the 36-day battle for this Pacific Japanese island resulted in over 26,000 American casualties, by far the highest single-action losses in the war.
35. Short for room.
36. Wolf.
39. The _____ called the runner safe at third.
42. The Chief called _____ Council to consider the white trader's offer (2 wds.).
45. This State got its name from the Quapaw's word "acansaw," meaning downstream place (abbr.).
47. Though not as famous as other battles, the 1862 Civil War battle of Island No. TEN in the Mississippi near New Madrid, Mo. was a significant blow to Confederate _____ of the Mississippi.
49. "If the faith of parents is joyful and life-giving, the children will be attracted to _____," —Supreme Knight Patrick Kelly.
50. Utah gets its name from these native-Americans.
51. Letters for Environmental, Social and Governance; an instrument to assess an organization's practices and performance on sustainability and ethical issues.
53. "The pub known as the lonely shepherd was _____ the Russell Square underground station," —*The Bourne Treachery*, Brian Freeman.
55. Letters for Saint Louis

among these gray-bearded (Temple) rabbis, they are not saying," —*Killing Jesus*, Bill O'Reilly.

Univ.; a Jesuit university which is the oldest university west of the Mississippi river; established already in 1818, even before Mo. became a State.

56. Vacation motor home.
57. Mary's mom.
60. Abbr. for "in other words."
61. "A poet could write volumes about _____ because they're brightly lit, with chrome and booths and great waitresses," —David Lynch.
62. TEN virgins took their _____ to meet the bridegroom (see Matthew 25:1).

DOWN

1. In the parable of Luke, a woman starts with TEN _____ (see Luke 15:8).
2. An _____ of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
3. Abbr. before Sinai or Carmel.
4. "They all _____ and were satisfied," (Mark 6:42).
5. "Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is _____ virtue at all," —G.K. Chesterton.
6. TEN beads make one _____ of a rosary.
7. "We can run from _____ but we can't hide," —*The Lamb's Supper*, Scott Hahn.
8. (Old) abbr. for the State where "Arbor Day" began in 1872, with the planting of one million trees in the State. Arbor Day in this State is a legal holiday.
9. Elvis Presley's Graceland is located in this State.
10. There are sometimes as many as TEN _____ on a lyre in the Bible (see Psalms 33:2).
15. Abbr. for the 19th book of the Bible.
17. "Get _____ of the foreign gods that you have among you..." (Genesis 35:2).
19. In gov't. and the military, letters for Internal Affairs which investigates incidents and suspicions of criminal misconduct in the organization.
20. The 1942 book, *The _____*, by Lloyd C. Douglas is a classic novel about a Roman soldier winning Jesus's garment as a gambling prize at the crucifixion. It is the basis for the 1953 Academy Award-nominated film

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61								62				

21. Kellogg's Raisin _____ cereal; a regular box contains between 201 to 241 raisins.
25. "I wish (St.) Paul would be more discreet. It's true that he wins souls but he _____ wins enemies," —*Aquila in Priscilla and Aquila*; Lois Henderson and Harold Smith.
26. Mother pig.
27. In 1857, with the border _____ with Kansas and the Civil War nearing, Mo.'s gov't. was a bit unstable; it had four Governors in TEN months.
28. TEN was the final number of good men Abraham _____ for with God to save Sodom, to no avail, for there weren't even that many (see Genesis 18:32).
29. Letters for Univ. of Central Mo. in Warrensburg; over 11,000 students from nearly 60 countries.
30. Abbr. before a male's name.
31. A graph showing the distribution of something; a small number of very high performers and an equivalent number of very low performers with the bulk clustered near the average (2 wds.).
32. Informal hello.
37. Cause of great distress or annoyance.
38. _____ Famous (salad)
- Dressing is based in Carthage, Mo.
40. Informal for mother or mama.
41. TEN _____ were necessary to convince Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go free.
43. "Oct, 1864: Confederate Gen. Price passed by Jefferson City a few days ago, skirmishing there. Our forces were after him but he destroys the Pacific _____ after him," —*Troubled State [of Mo.]: Civil War Journals of Franklin Archibald Dick*.
44. Moon of Jupiter.
46. An abbr. for route.
48. Letters for Occupational Therapy.
52. "... (do) not forget the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them _____ from your memory as long as you live..." (Deuteronomy 4:9).
54. Son of Prince Valiant.
57. "The miracles are evidence not simply of Jesus's status _____ prophet but specifically of his divinity," —*The Miracles of Jesus*, John Bergsma.
58. Letters for the group in which the St. Louis Cardinals belong.
59. Letters for Executive Assistant, an expert in project management.

See ANSWERS, page 19

CUTHBERT

From page 4

over as an infant was the most freeing experience you can imagine," she said. "I can't even describe the weight that's been lifted."

All Saints School went to virtual learning at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020.

As a way to raise spirits and preserve a sense of community, school administrators opened up a contest for giving the school mascot, a bald eagle, a name.

Mom and son did an online search

for saints that are associated with eagles. They found out about St. Cuthbert, who was known for protecting birds, as well as praying to ward off plagues.

Fellow students liked the suggestion, and Cuthbert became the eagle's new name.

One day in Lent, while Mrs. Theissen was reading her daily devotional, she started thinking about St. Cuthbert, in light of all the turmoil that was going on in the world, with children feeling sad and frightened about the pandemic and being separated from friends and loved ones.

She started writing the story of Cuthbert the Eagle.

She included her close friend, a veterinarian who was at that time with the University of Missouri's Raptor Rehabilitation Project.

She thought back to happy memories of taking turns reading to Lucas at bedtime when he was little.

"I wanted to write a story that we would have wanted to read to him back then," she said. "The message that even in hard times, God's light will shine through. No matter what happens, your spirit will always soar in the love of God. Embrace his grace. Look for the helping spirit in others. There are good people out there."

She had the whole story written in about an hour.

"There's no explanation for it, just an inspiration from the Holy Spirit," she said.

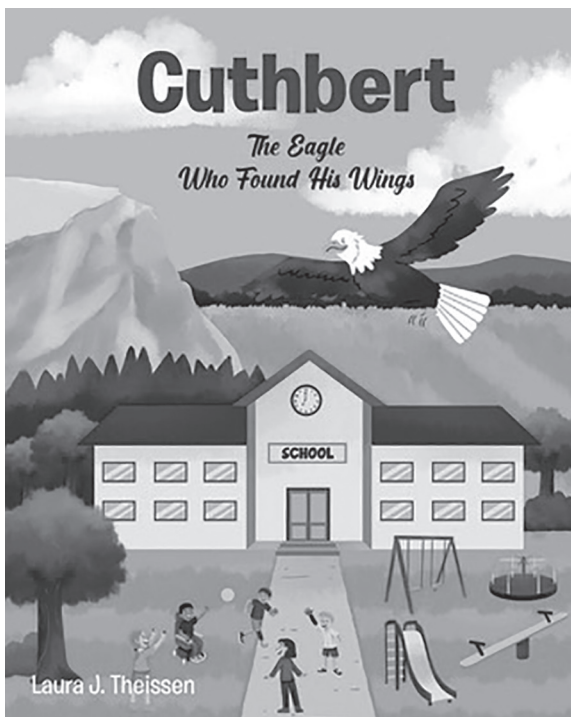
Friends and family members, including her mother, who holds a degree in editorial journalism from Mizzou, encouraged her to publish the story as a children's book.

She put together an afterword about the life of St. Cuthbert and submitted the manuscript to a handful of publishers.

Months later, she got a voicemail from Christian Faith Publishing. They liked the book and wanted to get it into print.

That process, including editing and illustrating, took about a year.

Mrs. Theissen remembers the first finished copy she saw.



"It's really surreal," she said. "It certainly wasn't something I set out to do. It wasn't a life goal or a childhood dream for me. It's just something that happened.

"But it's such an incredible blessing, and I hope the book can be a blessing to others," she said.

"Hand-in hand"

Mrs. Theissen also made a decision to let God's light shine through her at work.

She began praying during each day's commute: "Let me be the face of Jesus to the

people I meet today."

"Of course, I couldn't verbalize that because I was in a federal workplace," she noted. "But in how I spoke and treated people and how I cared and how I didn't speak sometimes and just listened — people responded to that in a way that was overwhelming."

Last year, the Theissens decided that it was time to move back to Missouri, to be closer to family and their roots.

How they'd do it was still a mystery.

In prayer, they determined that if they had not figured out a way by the time their son started high school, then relocating was not what God wanted for them.

"Lucas had already moved so much," Mrs. Theissen noted. "We wanted him to have some stability."

One of her coworkers, a devout Catholic, encouraged her to keep trusting God and stay open to his guidance.

Mrs. Theissen and her husband both wound up getting job offers from the University of Missouri. They found a good home to move to in Columbia and had offers to buy their house in Virginia.

They wanted Lucas to go to a Catholic school, but Fr. Tolton Regional Catholic High School had a waiting list.

They found out in May that a slot had opened up for this fall.

"It just reinforces the importance of trusting in God," said Mrs. Theissen.

Now, she gets to work across the street from the St. Thomas More Newman Center.

"It's great!" she said. "I can pop over for weekday Mass in the middle of my day. It's such a gift to be able to do that."

She hasn't forgotten what it felt like to not have God in her life.

"I knew he was walking beside me, but not to be holding his hand was awful," she said. "Now, I know what it's like to walk with him hand-in-hand. It's wonderful!

"You just want to shout it from the rooftops: 'There's nothing better! This is it!'"

40 DAYS

From page 11

people prayed outside the abortion facility," Ms. Gardner said.

"But they kept on loving and praying and finally broke the callouses on her heart, and they prayed her out of the industry," said Ms. Gardner. "It was miraculous!"

The book was just what Ms. Gardner needed to regain her joy and motivation.

A short time later, she was working at the Coalition for Life office when the manager of the nearby abortion clinic arrived in tear-soaked clothes, sobbing and saying she didn't want to be part of the abortion industry anymore.

At first, Ms. Gardner did not believe her, but it soon became clear that Abby Johnson meant what she was saying.

Mrs. Johnson went on to become an ardent pro-life advocate and to write a book that was adapted into the popular movie, "Unplanned."

"We wound up becoming very close," said Ms. Gardner, who is now the godmother of two of Ms. Johnson's children.

Worth it

Ms. Gardner spoke of a time when she was praying alone, in intense heat and humidity, outside another abortion clinic that was next to an auto-repair shop.

"It was miserable," she recalled. "I was out on the sidewalk, having a pity party. It was super-hot, super-humid, I was super-alone, and abortions were going on inside."

Just then, a man who was having his car fixed came up and asked what she was doing.

She explained that she was praying for the women going inside, and trying to offer them alternatives.

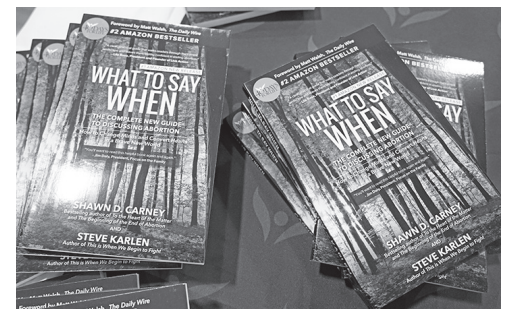
The man's face lit up.

"You guys saved my baby!" he told her.

He said, "Keep doing what you're doing! I wouldn't trade my baby for anything. She's the best thing that ever happened to me!"

"It matters"

Ms. Gardner invited ev-



Attendees at the 40 Days for Life Closing Rally and Dinner in Holts Summit received copies of the book, *What to Say When: The Complete New Guide to Discussing Abortion*.

— Photos by Jay Nies

everyone at the closing rally to sign up to help keep the sidewalk outside the Columbia Planned Parenthood covered with prayer throughout the year.

"Keep going further out of your comfort zone," she exhorted. "You have friends. Invite them to come with you. Do it because it matters. Do it because it works."

Mrs. Forck noted with distress that the number of abortions performed in states neighboring Missouri has shot up since Missouri became an abortion-clinic-free state.

All the more reason to be present and be ready to help mothers and fathers and families find alternatives instead of traveling to get an abortion.

That's why sidewalk counselors and the prayer warriors who support them need to be out on the sidewalk whenever Planned Parenthood is open and giving referrals, she said.

For information about 40 Days for Life 365 in Columbia or to sign up to take part in a sidewalk vigil, visit 40daysforlife.com/columbiainmo.

For assistance or for more information, contact Mrs. Forck at 573-821-5130.

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Eventos del Ministerio Hispano

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

Dec. 9

Holts Summit, St. Andrew Parish Christmas Bazaar & Bake Sale, noon-5 pm

Dec. 10

Belle, St. Alexander Parish breakfast, 7-11 am; **Laurie**, "O Holy Night" live nativity with refreshments, carolers, St. Nicholas and bonfire, 4-8 pm, National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church

Dec. 11

Jefferson City, Helias Catholic High School Music Department Christmas Concert, 7-8 pm, Miller Performing Arts Center

Dec. 12

Jefferson City, Helias Catholic High School & Interparish Bands Christmas Concert, 7-8 pm, Miller Performing Arts 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 ecasastro@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. 11

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@cathedraljlc.org

Dec. 14

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>

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@cathedraljlc.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>

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. 8

Holts Summit, Annual National Night of Prayer for Life, with Adoration, Rosary and silent prayer at top of each hour, 8 pm-midnight, St. Andrew Church, for info call 573-821-5130

Dec. 10

Jefferson City, Advent recital series and Solemn Vespers, featuring Andrew Meagher, organist, 5 pm recital, 5:30 pm Solemn Vespers, St. Peter Church

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

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

ADVENT

From page 1

in God and expands our hope," said Bishop McKnight. "Hope is the reason for the Season of Advent!"

He cited as an example the hope he experienced at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) last month in Indianapolis, which more than 300 people from this diocese attended.

He said anyone who feels depressed, discouraged or disillusioned over the state of the world should spend time with some of the faith-filled young people of the diocese.

"It is good for the soul!" he said.

He described the NCYC as "nothing short of a religious revival."

"My celebration of Mass and dinner afterward with the youth of our diocese was like being bathed in the energy and vibrant hope of our young people," he said.

Shortly before installing Fr. Jones, Bishop McKnight advised him that while preaching the more difficult and challenging teachings of the Word of God, he should "always remember to include the hope and promise of grace to live the Gospel."

Pope Francis often criticizes the mindset of people who act like "God's moral police," devoid of charity or joy.

"The Holy Father is not inviting us to consider changing our doctrines to be more acceptable to the world around us," the bishop pointed out, "but rather, to consider the ways in which

we witness the truth and beauty of the Church's definitive teachings more credibly, more authentically."

Noting that Catholics are called to help bring others to the Eucharistic table, Bishop McKnight invited Fr. Jones and everyone present to consider how the Church in this area can do better at witnessing to the beauty and goodness of the faith.

"The answer must include charity and hope," said Bishop McKnight. "Sacrificial love is what catches everyone's attention."

It also requires a spirit of joyful expectation of the good things the Lord has in store, he said.

In addition, it calls for a commitment to proper stewardship of all of God's gifts; mutual respect and proper cooperation among clergy and laity; and the goal of making all parishes recognizable centers of charity and sanctuaries of mercy.

"That," said Bishop McKnight, "is exactly what our Cathedral Parish is called to be in this time, in this place."

"Hope is the reason for the Season of Advent!"
—Bishop W. Shawn McKnight

QUESTION

From page 8

is actually the feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2. This is the last day that the Vatican keeps up their Christmas tree and crèche in St. Peter's square in Rome, so a Catholic who follows suit can hardly be criticized for keeping up their Christmas decorations until this point!

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 CatholicQA@osv.com.

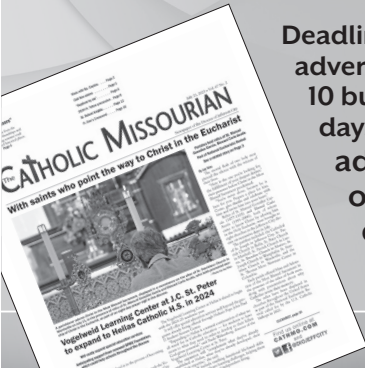
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September 13 & 27
October 11 & 25
November 8 & 22
December 6 & 20



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
Tom & Peggy Wildhaber, 45 years

Marshall, St. Peter
Albert & Alice Markes, 70 years

Mary's Home, Our Lady of Snows
Gail & Vicki Binkley, 30 years

St. Martins, St. Martin
Perry & Carole Mathes, 50 years

Wien, St. Mary of the Angels
Lloyd & Jeannie Burk, 50 years
Mike & Kyra Brehm, 35 years

Baptisms

Salisbury, St. Joseph — **Amelia Diane** and **Wyatt Patrick Farnen**, children of Robert & Kylie Jones Farnen

Wardsville, St. Stanislaus — **Conway John Bernard Wilbers**, son of Ashton Wilbers

CAPECCHI

From page 9

The porch was the gathering place where Grandma was always perched, catching all the comings and goings, the fishing reports, the sunscreen applications. We played 500 at the long dining room table where Grandma placed the centerpiece: a chianti straw bottle holding a taper candle. She lit it every day, letting the wax from candle after candle drip down the straw, lumpy strands of mauve and violet, sage and cream.

It was a visual of our time together, hour after hour, a

work of art that could not be rushed. Our layered family, ever expanding yet bound together. The sum, greater than the parts.

It will not make Oprah's Favorite Things list. But it was, indeed, "life-changing," "the best of the best." Time together — the ultimate Christmas gift.

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

CUÉLLAR

From page 9

wherever you go, the people you meet will see in you the light of Christ and will want to join your community of faith, not because of what you say, but because of your witness of life.

In our parishes, we have instruments to help the poor in our communities. Still, we cannot forget those around the world who live in extreme poverty and also need our help. The U.S. bishops founded Catholic Relief Services after World War II to help refugees from the war. Today, U.S. Catholics serve the poor through this agency in more than 115 countries. Perhaps in your city, there is a local CRS group or chapter, where you, too, can share your time, talent, and treasure.

Finally, God calls us to share our financial blessings and our treasure with

others.

This Advent, I would like to challenge you to adopt a poor or immigrant family needing our help. A tradition can be to look for a family we can adopt, buying gifts for the children and perhaps a basket of necessities.

A few years ago, our pastor started an awareness campaign about our offerings, promoting giving God our first harvest in thanksgiving for all the blessings we receive. One way to do this is perhaps to divide a tenth of our income by giving a significant portion to the parish, another portion to the annual diocesan Catholic Charities campaign, and a final portion to help other charities or people around you who are in need.

I want to conclude this month's col-

Catching up with friends



Father Matthew Flatley, pastor of Immaculate Conception, and Father Donald Antweiler, retired pastor of the parish, visit with Sisters Laura Magowan, Bertha Flores, Peggy Bonnot and Josetta Eveler, all of whom are Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word (CCVI) who all have solid ties to Immaculate Conception Parish, in San Antonio, Texas, where the congregation's motherhouse is located, on Nov. 16.

RETREAT

From page 6

who died on Nov. 5.

"She was an amazing kid," Mr. Veit stated. "She was always smiling. So, we're all kind of rebounding from that, and I think this has been a good help."

The teachers said they'd be giving thanks to God for the people they got to meet and spend time with, and for the abundance of blessings in their own lives.

"We got a chance to laugh with each other and serve the community, too," said Mrs. Stuckenschneider.

They all agreed that they'd like to do something like this again and hopefully see it grow.

"What we're thinking is, this went really well, the people in this parish are very generous, and we're setting an example," said Mr. Veit.

"Anytime you can combine service and prayer and having a good time together, it's a good thing," he stated.

He likened the time the teachers spent with the people they visited to the interaction Jesus often initiated at meals and festive gatherings.

"I'm sure the food itself was very much appreciated, but the fact that someone came to their door and said, 'I think you're important enough for me to come and give you this' — I think that meant even more," he said.

Crossword puzzle answers

S	d	M	V	T	S	R	E	N	I	D
E	I	N	N	V	A	R	A			E
U	L	S				V	R	E	A	I
G	S	E			S	E	L	T	L	I
A		T	O	R	T	N	O	C	A	R
L	A	V								G
P					O		L	O	B	R
		O	W	I		S	R	E	A	C
S	N	O	H		E		B	L	E	B
G	A	V				A	B	E		
N				D	D	O				S
I				L	A	R		S		C
R								E		I
T										N
S	T	N								M



Massive food drive

Members of the Sacred Heart School Student Council in Sedalia display the 1,845 pounds of food collected by the kindergarten through 12th grade at the school during a November food drive competition the student council organized to benefit the Open Door Service Center.

— Photo from the Open Door Service Center Facebook page

“Drums and Dances”



Fourth- through eighth-grade students and teachers at St. Joseph School in Westphalia attend “Drums and Dances of Africa” at the Sheldon Concert Hall in St. Louis on Oct. 24. Students from each school were asked to come to the stage to learn an African dance and later the faculty from each school were asked to come to the stage to learn an African dance.

— Photo from the St. Joseph School, Westphalia Facebook page

Packing up Boxes of Joy



Members of the Ss. Peter and Paul School student council in Boonville, along with friends, siblings and adults sort and pack gifts for the Box of Joy project, which provides boxes filled with toys, clothing, school supplies, a rosary and *The Story of Jesus* to children in developing countries such as Haiti, Malawi and the Dominican Republic for Christmas.

— Photos from the SS Peter & Paul Catholic Church - Boonville, MO Facebook page

VETERANS

From page 8

“If we didn’t have them, a lot of history would be very different,” fifth-grader Charlie Ezell noted. “They are the ones who got us our freedom and helped us keep it.”

The school’s third-through eighth-graders attended the assembly, as did adult members of Columbia’s three Catholic parishes.

The school’s band played the official march for each branch of the military. Veterans from each branch were encouraged to stand and be acknowledged by the students.

Charlie looked out from the sanctuary while giving the introduction. He noticed how some of the veterans, perhaps recalling the horror they witnessed in combat and the lonely separation from family they experienced, were nearly moved to tears.

“I think it’s really important for us to see what veterans have done for our country and how they put their lives on the line for us,” he later stated.

Laney held the candle representing the Lebanon War.

“I could tell the veterans appreciated how much effort we put into the assembly,” she said.

The students and adults also prayed for veterans and all who served this country, for those who returned home with injuries to mind or body, for those who died in battle, and for an end to war and the affirmation of every human life.

In the days leading up to



Veterans attending a Veterans Day Assembly with Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School students watch as students commemorate the wars and armed conflicts U.S. service men and women have taken part in.

— Photo by Jay Nies

Veterans Day, Laney, Charlie and their classmates got a refresher course on the major wars and conflicts that affected the United States.

They also made a collaborative poster to hang in the school hallway.

“We each colored pieces of the poster and put it together, and it said ‘Thank you, Veterans,’” said Laney.

She said that when she prays for veterans, “I pray that they stay safe in what they’re doing and that they know they’re prayed for and loved.”

Charlie said he also prays for full recovery for veterans who have been injured in combat.

Principal Elaine Hassemer said this was the school’s largest Veterans Day Assembly yet.

“Every year, we get more and more veterans who come,” she said. “That tells me that it’s something important for us to continue to do.”

Mrs. Hassemer hopes the

students came away from the assembly with increased appreciation for veterans and the service they’ve given.

“Many vets are still dealing with trauma from their time in the service,” she said. “It’s important for our kids to understand the sacrifices these veterans made so they can have the choices they have today.”

She said she also hopes the students learn from veterans’ example of service to others.

“I think that’s a strength of Catholic education,” she said, “that we put emphasis on stewardship and giving of your time, talent and treasure for the sake of others.

“We start in kindergarten,” she said. “We do different activities through the school year to emphasize that and teach and give them exposure to it.

“We’re hopefully helping them build up habits that will stay with them when they’re adults,” she stated.

Bible Accent

When we hear the name Gabriel, we recall how this messenger angel visited Mary to announce that she would become the mother of Jesus.

But before he visited Mary, Gabriel delivered a special message about another baby who was to be born.

In Luke 1:5-25, we read about a priest named Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth. They did not have children, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were advanced in years.

Both were righteous in God's eyes, because they observed all of his commandments and ordinances.

One day, Zechariah entered the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense when Gabriel appeared to him.

"Your prayer has been heard," Gabriel told Zechariah. "Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John."

Since Zechariah knew the reasons why he and Elizabeth didn't have children, he did not believe what the angel told him.

Gabriel did not appreciate Zechariah's doubt, so he made it so Zechariah couldn't talk until after the baby was born.

Zechariah fulfilled his priestly duties and then returned home. Not long after, Elizabeth became pregnant, just as Gabriel had said.

The time finally came for Elizabeth to have her baby. She gave birth to a boy whom she and Zechariah named John.

We know him by the name John the Baptist.

St. Dominic of Silos

St. Dominic of Silos was born in Navarre, Spain, in 1000. When he was young, he tended sheep near the Pyrenees mountains and learned to enjoy being alone. Dominic became a monk and was eventually named the prior of his monastery. But he had to flee to a monastery in Silos after the king of Navarre seized his monastery's land. He became prior of his new monastery, where he conducted a successful program of spiritual renewal. Dominic died in 1073, and we honor him on Dec. 20.



John preaches and baptizes in the desert

By Jennifer Ficaglia
Catholic Courier

A man named John the Baptist appeared in the desert.

He wore a leather belt and clothes made of camel's hair, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

John's appearance was not a surprise. It had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah:

"Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'"

When John appeared in the desert, he began to proclaim a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

People residing in the city of Jerusalem and those living all over the Judean countryside heard about John. They visited John in the desert to be baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

"One mightier than I is coming after me," John told the people. "I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

One day, Jesus came to the desert from Nazareth in Galilee. He also wanted to be baptized by John.

When Jesus came up out of the Jordan River after John had baptized him, he saw the heavens being torn open.

The Holy Spirit, like a dove, descended upon Jesus.

"You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased," a voice from heaven said.



Illustration by Linda Rivers

After his baptism, Jesus was driven into the desert by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus remained in the desert for 40 days. There, he was among the wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. He also was tempted by Satan during that time.

After John had been arrested for his preaching, Jesus began his public ministry. He came to Galilee proclaiming the Gospel of God.

"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel," Jesus said.

He then began to call his

first apostles.

The first two men he called were the brothers Simon and Andrew. Jesus saw them as they were casting their nets into the sea.

"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men," Jesus told them.

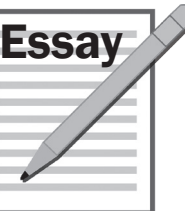
Simon and Andrew abandoned their nets and followed Jesus.

Read more about it...

Mark 1

1. Who proclaimed a baptism of repentance?
2. Who would baptize with the Holy Spirit?

Essay



Reading for
December 10, 2023:
Mark 1:1-8

**Why is it good to repent
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Puzzle

Using the hints provided, put a T next to the sentences about John the Baptist that are true and an F next to the ones that are false.

1. ___ John called the people coming to him a flock of sheep. (Luke 3:7)
2. ___ John baptized people in the Red Sea. (Matthew 3:6)
3. ___ John said God could raise up children to Abraham from stones. (Luke 3:8)
4. ___ John called Jesus the Lamb of God. (John 1:36)

Answers: 1. F; 2. F; 3. T; 4. T.

A selection of holiday movies

By John Mulderig
OSV News

One promising way to get in the holiday mood is to watch a Christmas-themed movie. And, since yuletide films naturally tend to qualify as family-friendly, they can also provide an opportunity to gather the clan, make some popcorn and relax together.

Following, in alphabetical order, are capsule reviews of eight such pictures with their OSV News classifications and, where applicable, their Motion Picture Association ratings. Please note that movies dating from before 1968 were not rated by the MPA upon their initial release.

“The Bishop’s Wife” (1947)

A debonair, smartly tailored angel (Cary Grant) uses his heavenly powers to help the neglected wife (Loretta Young) of a busy Episcopalian bishop (David Niven) renew her husband’s ministry to those in need rather than raise the money for a new cathedral.

Director Henry Koster’s sentimental Christmas fable has the virtue of a good script, sincere performances and some amusing moments with Grant’s angelic powers and Monty Wooley as a soft-hearted old cynic. Most of the family will find it charming

entertainment.

The OSV News classification is A-II — adults and adolescents.

“A Christmas Carol” (1951)

This British version of the Dickens classic has worn well over the years principally because of Alistair Sim’s zestful performance as Scrooge, the old humbug whose transformation into a loving human being is a pleasure to behold. Director Brian Desmond Hurst’s period piece does well with its 19th-century London setting, and the ghostly visitations are done simply but with considerable flair. The result is dandy family viewing.

The OSV News classification is A-I — general patronage.

“A Christmas Story” (1983)

Adapted from Jean Shepherd’s nostalgic piece of whimsy, “In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash,” the movie re-creates what it was like to be a boy (Peter Billingsley) yearning for a genuine Red Ryder air rifle for Christmas in the Midwest of the 1940s.

Director Bob Clark gets some good performances from Darren McGavin and Melinda Dillon as the understanding parents, and the period atmosphere is nicely conveyed with what is essentially a warm cel-

ebration of a more innocent, less sophisticated America.

Fleeting vulgar mutterings. (A-II) The Motion Picture Association rating is PG — parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

“Elf” (2003)

Warmhearted yuletide comedy about a foundling (Will Ferrell) raised by elves in Santa’s workshop who travels from the North Pole to New York City in order to reconnect with his long-lost father (James Caan), a workaholic scrooge bereft of Christmas cheer.

Full of goofy candy-cane humor, director Jon Favreau’s holiday film imparts a strong family-friendly message, but uses a secular sieve to filter out any religious references to the true meaning of Christmas.

Minimal mildly crude language and humor. (A-II) (PG)

“It’s a Wonderful Life” (1946)

A seasonal favorite about the joys and trials of a good man (James Stewart) who, facing financial ruin on the eve of Christmas, contemplates suicide until his guardian angel (Henry Travers) shows him how meaningful his life has been to those around him.

Director Frank Capra’s unabashedly sentimental picture of mainstream American life is bolstered by a superb cast (including Lionel Barrymore as a conniving banker) and a wealth of good feelings about such commonplace virtues as

Movie Ratings



General Patronage

Journey to Bethlehem (PG)
Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie (PG)
Wish (PG)



Adults and Adolescents

Trolls Band Together (PG)



Adults

The Creator (PG-13)
Freelance (R)
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

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

Ratings are supplied by OSV News Service.

hard work and helping one’s neighbor.

Young children may find the story’s dark moments unsettling. (A-II)

“The Man Who Invented Christmas” (2017)

This charming fact-based historical drama tells the origin story of Victorian author Charles Dickens’ (Dan Stevens) beloved novella, “A Christmas Carol.”

With his last three titles having failed to sell, Dickens fears falling into debt if his next production is equally unpopular.

As he struggles with writer’s block and the endless distractions of his burgeoning family’s domestic life — a visit from his feckless father (Jonathan Pryce), whom Dickens blames for the sufferings of his childhood, is a particular source of worry and conflict — the writer fancifully summons

up and interacts with his own characters, most prominently dour miser Ebenezer Scrooge (Christopher Plummer).

His patient wife (Morfydd Clark) and unpaid literary agent (Justin Edwards) offer him encouragement, and the conversion story he eventually pens finds a real-life counterpart in the amendment of Dickens’ own behavior.

Director Bharat Nalluri’s adaptation of Les Standiford’s 2008 book is family-friendly in most respects and will likely prove a winner with a broad range of age groups.

A very vague sexual joke, a single mild oath. (A-II) (PG)

“Miracle on 34th Street” (1947)

Familiar seasonal favorite follows a department store Santa (Edmund Gwenn) as he strives to convince a lonely

See MOVIES, page 23

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ABOVE: Members of Immaculate Conception Parish in Loose Creek hold electric candles during the singing of the meditation hymn after Holy Communion during a Mass by Candlelight Dec. 3, the First Sunday of Advent, in Immaculate Conception Church. **BELOW:** St. Nicholas of Myra and an angel make a visit to Immaculate Conception Church for the parish's St. Nick Night festivities after Mass on Dec. 3.

— Photos by Jay Nies

CANDLELIGHT

From page 1

arrival in the heart of each individual.

Fr. Rinaldo cautioned against the all-too-human tendency to stay busy and get drawn into the hoopla of the season without settling down and properly preparing.

"We need to enter into the season of Advent," he said, "to ask ourselves, 'Are we just phoning it in' or is our faith something that we live fully every day?"

He spoke of preparing for Christmas in the same way Catholics are obliged to prepare to receive Christ fully present in the Eucharist, which in itself is Jesus's perfect act of thanksgiving to the Father.

"Recently," Fr. Rinaldo recounted, "when we were having some priests over to the rectory for a meeting, some parishioners said, 'We need to come over and tidy up.'

"Because that's what you do when you've got company coming," he said. "You clean and you polish and you make everything right, and you put some things away.

"Are we ready, spiritually for the coming of Christ?" he inquired on the people's behalf. "Can he enter into my house, the house of my heart, and there find a warm, loving welcome? Or do I need to do some cleanin' up first?"

The priest urged everyone



to go to Confession during Advent "in order to prepare our hearts for Jesus."

"God is not in charge of keeping us on the straight and narrow; that's for us to do," Fr. Rinaldo noted. "He will give

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.

us every grace and blessing. When we choose the right, when we choose to follow him, the Good Shepherd will

lead us where we need to go."

Fr. Rinaldo repeated the call to stay joyfully alert in anticipation of the Lord's triumphant return.

"When will he come? Jesus said it's not up to us to worry about it," he said.

"So, we live our lives in constant readiness, always aware that this may be the day that either I or you are personally called home to the Lord, or he comes back for all of us at the end of time.

"In this holy season of Advent, may our hearts be ever-watchful," the priest stated.

"May our eyes be watchful. May our ears be open to hear his voice calling us."

After Mass, the people adjourned to Immaculate Conception School, where a pasta meal was being served and Advent activities for children were taking place.

Proceeds from the dinner will benefit the parish's Catholic Youth Organization activities and community-service projects.

Fr. Rinaldo thanked everyone, especially the young people, for helping to prepare for the Candlelight Mass and the other observances.

"I always say, we have some of the best kids in Osage County," he said.

Daily Readings

Sunday, Dec 10

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
Is. 40:1-5, 9-11
Ps. 85:9-14
2 Pt. 3:8-14
Mk. 1:1-8

Monday, Dec 11

St. Damasus I, Pope
Is. 35:1-10
Ps. 85:9ab, 10-14
Lk. 5:17-26

Tuesday, Dec 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe (USA)
Zec. 2:14-17 or Rv. 11:19a;
12:1-6a, 10ab
(Ps.) Jdt. 13:18bcde, 19
Lk. 1:26-38 or 1:39-47

Wednesday, Dec 13

St. Lucy, virgin and martyr
Is. 40:25-31
Ps. 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10
Mt. 11:28-30

Thursday, Dec 14

St. John of the Cross, priest and doctor of the Church
Is. 41:13-20
Ps. 145:1, 9, 10-11, 12-13ab
Mt. 11:11-15

Friday, Dec 15

Is. 48:17-19
Ps. 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6
Mt. 11:16-19

Saturday, Dec 16

Sir. 48:1-4, 9-11
Ps. 80:2ac, 3b, 15-16, 18-19
Mt. 17:9a, 10-13

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.

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MOVIES

From page 22

little girl (Natalie Wood) that he's the genuine article, despite the objections of her rigidly pragmatic mother (Maureen O'Hara) and a court trial that hinges on the U.S. Post Office.

Director George Seaton's amusing romantic fantasy has its sentimental moments while spreading a reasonable amount of holiday cheer, largely due to Gwenn's charming performance as Kris Kringle.

Problems of single parenthood. (A-II)

"The Nativity Story" (2006)

Dramatization of the New Testament birth narratives from the Annunciation to the birth of Jesus, focusing on the relationship between Mary (Keisha Castle-Hughes) and Joseph (Oscar Isaac) and their arduous trek from Nazareth to Bethlehem, with subplots tracking the journey of the

three Magi and the efforts of King Herod (Ciarán Hinds) to prevent the prophecy of a messiah from coming to pass.

A composite of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, embroidered with apocryphal traditions and the imagination of the filmmaker, the Bible story gets the prestige treatment in director Catherine Hardwicke's artful, reverent and affecting retelling, with soulful performances from an excellent international cast — including Shohreh Aghdashloo as Elizabeth — and impressive production design.

Mike Rich's screenplay manages to flesh out Mary and Joseph while remaining faithful to Scripture, poignantly suggesting the humanity beneath the halos.

Some violent images. (A-I) (PG)

John Mulderig is media reviewer for OSV News.

Pilgrimage to Fatima & Lourdes

September 15-24, 2024



Msgr. David D. Cox

Join Monsignor Cox and the St. Stanislaus Parish on a sacred journey to Fatima and Lourdes. This tour will transcend the boundaries of time and faith, weaving together the threads of history and beliefs.

Tour Highlights

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- Valinhos
- Cathedral of Burgos
- Lourdes
- Grotto of Massabielle
- Barcelona
- La Sagrada Familia



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Masses for Sunday, Christmas, and Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

This year, the Solemnity of Christmas falls on a Monday

and is a holyday of obligation.

All the faithful are obligated to participate in two Masses, from the anticipated Mass of the Fourth Sunday of Advent on Saturday evening Dec. 23 through the evening of Dec. 25.

In the "Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar," no. 34 states, "The Vigil Mass of the Nativity is used on the evening of December 24, either before or after First Vespers (Evening Prayer I).

On Christmas Day, following ancient Roman tradition, Mass may be celebrated three times, that is, in the night, at dawn, and during the day."

The Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, falls on a Monday (Jan. 1) in 2024 and so is not a holyday of obligation.

As a Solemnity, however, it still outranks the Feast of the Holy Family, which will be celebrated that Sunday Dec. 31. Any Masses celebrated on the evening of Dec. 31 should be for Mary, Mother of God.

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Solemn Vespers
5:30 pm

Christmas Mass Schedule
December 24 - 4:30 pm, Midnight Mass 12:00 am
December 25 - 9:00 am

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Please join us as we celebrate Mass by low candlelight, waiting for the sunrise, reminded of our waiting for the coming of the Lord.

Rorate Mass

at The National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church

Saturday, December 16
6:15 AM
in the chapel



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