

**Deacon adds joy to
“St. Pius South Campus”**

Deacon “Jumping John” Hill helps lead Catholics at the Moberly Correctional Center to Christ.
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The CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN

January 5, 2024 • Vol. 67 No. 14

Newspaper of the Diocese of Jefferson City

Julia Greeley’s joy inspires artist’s smiling painting



By André Escaleira Jr.

Who would have thought that Denver’s “Angel of Charity” would make it all the way to Europe?

While her little red wagon might not have crossed the Atlantic, the life, witness and example of Servant of God Julia Greeley has continued to inspire people all over the world.

Such was the case for Ruben Ferreira, a Portuguese Catholic artist living in London.

Mr. Ferreira met Julia in his continued efforts to “find the immense richness of knowing lesser-known saints worldwide that are so modern, diverse and contemporary,” he told the *Denver Catholic*, official publication of the Archdiocese of Denver, Colorado.

Upon meeting her, Mr. Ferreira said he knew he had to share Julia’s story with the world.

“After I read the story of Julia Greeley,” said Mr. Ferreira, “I was moved by her humility and simplicity in the midst of such a dramatic life. The world seems to show us that discrimination and hate are valid options, but Julia shows us the opposite.

“She shows us tolerance, humble service, joy, and faith in action that doesn’t have time to hate or judge others,” Mr. Ferreira stated. “Julia didn’t seek the first place, to be seen or popular. Julia Greeley shows us what God’s Love is.”

The Missouri native, born into an enslaved family near Hannibal before the Civil War, is one of six African American Catholics currently under formal consideration for being declared a saint.

One of the others is Venerable Father Augustus Tolton, the Roman

European artist Ruben Ferreira poses with his new painting of Servant of God Julia Greeley who grew up in Missouri before converting to Catholicism and becoming known as Denver’s Angel of Charity.
— Photo courtesy of Ruben Ferreira

Pope’s Christmas message: Say ‘yes’ to the Prince of Peace, ‘no’ to war

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

Vatican City

Celebrating the birth of Jesus, the prince of peace, should mean making a commitment to opposing all war, to cherishing human life, feeding the hungry and speaking up for those who have no voice, Pope Francis said.

“To say ‘yes’ to the Prince of Peace, then, means saying ‘no’ to war — and doing so with courage — saying no to every war, to the very mindset of war, an aimless voyage, a defeat without victors, an inexcusable folly,” the pope said Dec. 25 as he read his Christmas message and offered his blessing “*urbi et orbi*” (to the city and the world).

As he stood on the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica with an estimated 70,000 people gathered in St. Peter’s Square, the pope began his message speaking of Bethlehem where celebrations of Jesus’ birth are muted this year because of the Israeli-Hamas conflict.

But he also used his message to preach the hope of Christmas, which he said was found in God, who loved humanity so much that he sent his son to be born in a manger.

In the midst of darkness for whole nations or for individuals, he said, God sends his light.

“Let us exult in this gift of grace,” Pope Francis said.

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See JULIA GREELEY, page 23

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OLD PARISH _____

01/05/24

Pray for deceased priests

- Jan. 7 — **Fr. Michael N. Schaller**, St. Margaret of Antioch, Osage Bend (1980)
 Jan. 8 — **Fr. Leo T. Buhman**, Immaculate Conception, Macon (2011)
 Jan. 9 — **Fr. Thomas F. Greaney**, Immaculate Conception, Jefferson City (1967); **Fr. Jeremiah F. Kennedy**, Immaculate Conception, Jefferson City (1967); **Bishop Michael F. McAuliffe** (2006)
 Jan. 12 — **Fr. Paul M. Hartley**, Immaculate Conception, Montgomery City; St. Patrick, Jonesburg; and Church of the Resurrection, Wellsville (2022)
 Jan. 14 — **Fr. Senan M. O'Connell**, Shrine of St. Patrick, St. Patrick (1973); **Fr. J. James Offutt**, Holy Spirit, Centralia (2020)
 Jan. 16 — **Fr. Krsto J. Jelenic**, St. Michael, Kahoka (1978)
 Jan. 17 — **Fr. Michael M. O'Donovan**, St. Elizabeth Hospital, Hannibal (1979); **Fr. Peter Walsh**, Sacred Heart, Vandalia; and St. John, Laddonia (2011)

Like Us On  **Diocese of Jefferson City**

Director of Youth Ministry

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

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.

Farewell to Christmas concert

DATE: January 7
TIME: 2:30 pm

The Our Lady of Lourdes Contemporary Group will perform its ninth annual "Farewell to Christmas" concert and Christmas carol sing-along on Sunday, Jan. 7, at 2:30 p.m. in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 903 Bernadette Drive in Columbia.

The theme will be "Rise Up Shepherd." A free-will offering will be taken up to benefit the building of an eco-friendly kitchen at a Catholic school in Father Simon Kanyike's home town in Uganda.

The school has 660 pupils in the boarding section and 485 in the day section.

The school has a dilapidated kitchen, jeopardizing its efforts

Handbell concert

DATE: January 7
TIME: 3 pm

The "Bells of Christmas-tide" Community Handbell Concert will be held on Sunday, Jan. 7, at 3 p.m. in the Cathedral of St. Joseph, 2215 W. Main St. in Jefferson City.

Handbell choirs from the Cathedral of St. Joseph and several other local congregations will perform.

Each choir or soloist will play selections from their repertoire of Christmas music as a way to close out the Christmas season on the Feast of the Epiphany.

Canned goods or monetary donations to the Samaritan Center will be accepted.

The Catholic Missourian

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

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

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight
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to provide quality services for which are paramount for learn-better nutrition and health ing.

St. Clement one-day retreat on Eucharist

DATE: January 27
TIME: 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

Monsignor Eugene Morris, a dynamic presenter from the St. Louis archdiocese, will lead a one-day retreat on Saturday, Jan. 27, at St. Clement Parish in St. Clement.

It will be from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

The topic will be: "The Most Holy Eucharist — Source & Summit of Our Catholic Lives."



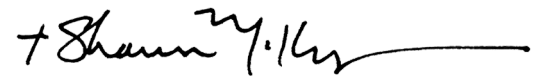
Official Decree of Appointments

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

Priests

Reverend Anthony N. Onyeihe, from associate pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish, Jefferson City, to parochial administrator of Holy Cross Parish, Cuba, St. Francis Caracciolo Parish, Bourbon, and St. Michael Parish, Steelville, effective Jan. 5, 2024.

Given at the Chancery in Jefferson City this 23rd day of December in the Year of our Lord 2023.



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



Mr. Benjamin Roodhouse, JD, JCL
Chancellor

St. Gertrude Parish and School

Sausage Dinner

January 21, 2024 - 11 am - 6 pm
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Dinner includes sausage, mashed potatoes & gravy, sauerkraut, green beans and dessert

\$15 Adults
\$7 Kids



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Bishop McKnight gives perspective on Vatican declaration on pastoral meaning of blessings

By Jay Nies and Jacob Luecke
Sometimes, it's not just what is said that matters. It's how it's said.

That was one of the points Bishop W. Shawn McKnight made in a discussion on a re-

cent Vatican declaration titled "Fiducia Supplicans: On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings."

This document, released Dec. 18 by the Holy See's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the

Faith, has drawn widespread attention for how it describes blessings of same-sex couples.

It has also led to some confusion.

Bishop McKnight recently shared some thoughts on the document and encouraged the diocesan communications director to share those thoughts with the people of the diocese.

Portions of the discussion were assembled into a Podcast for the Diocese of Jefferson City, titled "Understanding Fiducia Supplicans," and released Dec. 22.

It can be found online at: diojeffcity.org/podcast

Bishop McKnight noted that some of the confusion about the document comes from a tendency in the English language to equate a blessing with approval.

"That's not what the Holy See is talking about in this latest document," the bishop stated.

He pointed out that the authors of the document go to great lengths to explain what they mean by blessing — "that there are liturgical blessings, official blessings, blessings that have rites that deacons or priests have to follow — and that's not what they're talking about here."

"It's more of the general sense of blessing, of asking a priest to pray for them," the bishop said.

He spoke of how priests and deacons often receive requests for a blessing, such as in a time of difficulty or before leaving on a journey.

(That blessing) "is not intended in any way to validate or give approbation or approval — even though our English use of 'blessing' sometimes has that sense," the bishop said.

The document itself makes no change whatsoever to doctrine or Church teaching.

Nonetheless, Bishop McKnight believes "Fiducia Sup-



an important key to understanding this and other efforts by Church leaders to address difficult and uncomfortable topics is the desire to lead people into a relationship with Christ.

That relationship changes everything.

"So, ('Fiducia Supplicans' is) really helping us to be more faithful to Jesus in how we treat others," the bishop said.

He encourages everyone with questions about the "Fiducia Supplicans" to pull up the document and read it for themselves.

A link to it can be found on the diocesan website at diojeffcity.org.

He said the document is "in many ways quite a beautiful description of what a blessing is and how we use the term."

"Fundamentally, blessing is about us praising God and invoking God's graces and assistance upon us," the bishop noted.

The Eucharist, he said, "is the greatest and most supreme blessing that we have — where we as human beings praise God and in so doing, God blesses us."

"We should be encouraging everyone to want to join us," he stated. "And how we do that and the tack that we use is very important."

Mo. Catholic Conference opposes legislation to criminalize women who have an abortion

The Missouri Catholic Conference, public-policy agency of the state's four Roman Catholic dioceses, released the following statement on Dec. 21, 2023, in anticipation of the start of the Missouri General Assembly's 2024 Legislative Session:

The Catholic Church has consistently been at the forefront of efforts to safeguard the fundamental principle of the right to life.

Through its ministries and advocacy, the Church supports efforts to protect the unborn and to address the underlying social causes for abortion by expanding care and resources available to mothers.

For those women suffering from the pain of an abortion, the Church offers healing and hope through its Project Rachel Ministries.

Legal efforts to punish women after an abortion are inconsistent with these fundamental principles and with the history of the pro-life movement.

The Missouri Catholic Conference opposes any legislation that would seek to criminalize the mother.

We respectfully ask members of the General Assembly to oppose such measures and to work on legislation that provides life-affirming resources for women and children.

Fr. Tolton webinar

DATE: January 10
TIME: 7 - 8 pm

Reg Akrom, author, speaker, and expert on pre-Civil War Illinois, will discuss Servant of

God Father Augustus Tolton, the Roman Catholic Church's first recognizably Black priest, from 7 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 10 via Zoom.

This program will be livestreamed on Looking for Lincoln's Facebook page and YouTube Channel. The event is free.



Bishop McKnight's Calendar

JANUARY


- Jan 5-11** Region IX Bishops' Annual Retreat, Prince of Peace Abbey, Oceanside, CA
- Jan 18** Pontifical College Josephinum Board of Trustees Academic Affairs Committee Meeting, 1 pm, Virtual
- Jan 23** Priests' Personnel Board Meeting, 1:30 pm, Chancery

Bishop McKnight's January prayer intention for our Local Church

For the gift of patience; may we embrace poverty of spirit when suffering the shortcomings of others and ourselves.

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

Por el don de la paciencia. Que abracemos la pobreza de espíritu cuando sufrimos las deficiencias de los demás y de nosotros mismos.



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

Deacon “Jumping John” Hill helps lead prison residents to Christ

The following article uses pseudonyms for men who are incarcerated, in order to maintain their privacy and that of their families:

By Jay Nies

Matthew didn't waste any time finding the chapel after being transferred to the Moberly Correctional Center (MCC) in September 2021.

Upon learning that the new resident was Catholic, the chapel worker smiled and exclaimed, “Jumping John! You're gonna love him!”

“I had no idea what he was talking about, let alone how deeply ‘Jumping John’ would ultimately impact my life,” said Matthew.

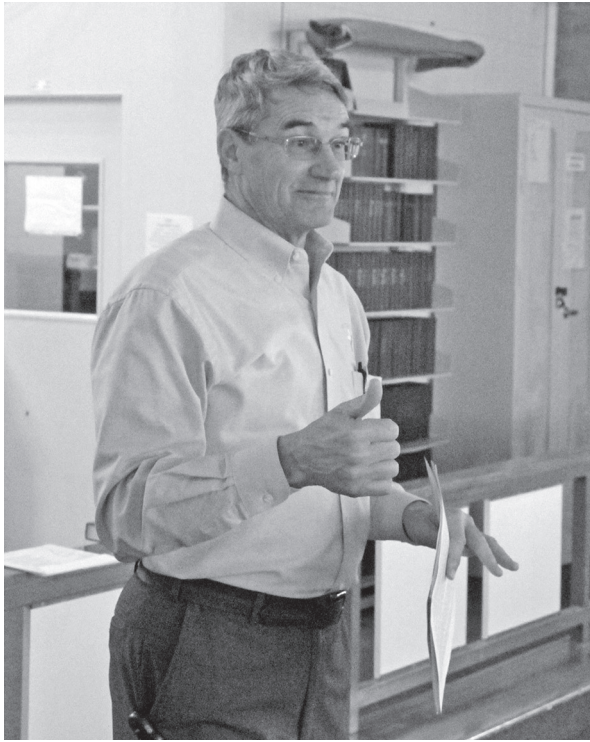
He was referring to Deacon John Hill, who assists the pastor of St. Pius X Parish in Moberly and serves as a volunteer in corrections (VIC) at the Moberly prison.

Or, as Deacon Hill refers to it, “the South Campus of St. Pius X Parish.”

“He gives us men who are inside the institution every reason to feel fully and completely a part of the true Body of Christ,” said James, a member of the Catholic community at MCC.

Deacon Hill's broad range of diaconal responsibilities includes a heavy emphasis on ministry to the residents of MCC.

“Prison Ministry is simply about being present to and encouraging those who have a desire to strengthen their faith, have lost their faith, or



Deacon John Hill addresses Catholic residents of the Moberly Correctional Center before Mass in the chapel in this photo from 2019. — Photo by Jay Nies

are trying to find something to believe in,” Deacon Hill stated earlier this year.

“A true servant”

Deacon Hill spends the time between Sunday Masses at St. Pius at the prison, as well as on Tuesday afternoons and evenings and occasionally on Thursday evenings.

He and his wife also help one Saturday a month with a program called Story Link, where residents make and send recordings of themselves reading to their children.

In the past four years, he has served on the teams for nine three-day Residents Encounter Christ retreats for people who are incarcerated.

Matthew said Deacon Hill offers the gift of his full and undivided presence every time he comes to the prison.

“He stays and talks, encourages, teaches and listens,” said Matthew. “He helps each candidate through RCIA [the Rite

of Christian Initiation of Adults], and when he's not busy doing that, he'll take time to just sit down one-on-one with you and find out how you're doing.

“He listens and doesn't judge,” Matthew stated. “He cares and he loves.”

James was transferred from a maximum security facility to Moberly, which is medium security, in 2019.

He had been longing for years to find a way to get back into a right relationship with God.

“Then, after the COVID lockdown, I met

a true servant and brother of my Lord Jesus Christ,” James stated. “Deacon John Hill and our other Catholic brothers led me through the Christian Initiation, and I was confirmed and entered into the Roman Catholic Church on April 18, 2021.”

“Welcomed and wanted”

Matthew said meeting Deacon Hill immediately filled him with an unexpected sense of “acceptance and of ‘okayness.’”

“Deacon John has been an absolute blessing, to be the face of Christ through this very challenging time in my life,” Matthew continued.

“He is a man who is truly living the Gospel,” he said. “He is a great example and inspiration in my life and the lives of all those he meets.

“He has helped me to not only feel welcomed but wanted,” Matthew added.

Being available

Deacon Hill was born into a large family in the Queens borough of New York City and grew up in upstate New York.

He moved to Moberly with his wife, Margaret, and their children in 1996.

He entered discernment for the Diaconate in 2008 and was ordained in 2013.

“We do not have a complete idea of what God or the bishop or the pastor will be asking us to do,” he stated at that time. “But with the grace that comes through ordination, we will serve with the gifts God has given us.”

Deacon Hill said he believes in drawing people to Christ by “just being available, listening and responding with love.”

“That can be at work, at home, in the grocery store, running a marathon, at church — anywhere,” he said. “I believe that we are given many, many opportunities to bring Christ to the world every day

Andrew is still amazed at how well Deacon Hill remembers people's names.

“He takes the time to get to know each person,” said Andrew. “Whether it's during Mass or a Tuesday evening Catholic service or a Thursday evening ‘Celebrate Recovery’ session, Deacon John is here to welcome an offender to the chapel by spending a few moments with each man, learning his name and a little bit about him.”

“The way of love”

Bartholomew, a former MCC resident who has been discharged from prison, said Deacon Hill is a large part of how he came to know the love of God.

“He's taught me things that will stick with me for the rest of my life,” Bartholomew stated. “He led me through the RCIA and taught me what I was getting into and who I was saying ‘yes’ to when I was baptized and confirmed.

“I thank God for this man he put in my life,” said Bartholomew. “He's shown me the way of love, which is Jesus Christ.”

James said he's learned more about his faith than he ever could have dreamed at this point in his life.

“Because of the ministry of a loving deacon of the Church,” said James, “I can live and understand my faith life to the fullest through the sacraments and walk in new, mature dedication to the Lord our God, while I'm still serving out my sentence in prison.”

A combat veteran, James said being incarcerated has coincided with the deepest, darkest valley of his life.

“The spiritual battle was taking a toll on me, but God has given me his Church and the wonderful people of St. Pius X Parish to win this battle and journey,” he said.

James's sense of wonder remains unabated.

“There are not enough words to describe the wholeness and peace I get now as a member of God's true Church,” he said. “Thanks be to God for his mercy!”



Deacon John Hill

in how we live our life and how we respond.”

Called by name

James noted that as a VIC, Deacon Hill extends his ministry far beyond the Catholic community at MCC.

“He helps the staff, and people of all faiths and walks of life,” James stated. “He helps us all, no matter who you are.”


Whenever the prison chaplain is unavailable, Deacon Hill is one of the volunteers who steps in to make the chapel available to all people of faith.

All scheduled activities in Missouri prisons require a volunteer to facilitate and help supervise the residents.

“Without a volunteer to supervise these events at the chapel, they simply wouldn't be possible for us,” said Andrew, also a member of the Catholic community at MCC.

He said Deacon Hill welcomed him with open arms upon his arrival in January 2022.

See DEACON, page 18

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Statement from diocese: Fr. Medina found guilty of sexual solicitation during Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Diocese of Jefferson City is providing the following information which impacts the faithful, in a spirit of transparency and accountability.

Anyone who has experienced or witnessed abuse in a Church setting is encouraged to contact law enforcement and contact the diocese. Visit diojeffcity.org/safe-environment for information about how to do so.

Father Ignazio Medina, a retired priest of the Jefferson City diocese, has been found guilty of sexual solicitation of an adult on the occasion of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

This decision is the result of an administrative disciplinary process overseen by the Holy See's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

As punishment, Fr. Medina is permanently deprived of the right to hold any ecclesiastical office (parish or diocesan) and of the faculty to hear confessions.

Furthermore, he may not celebrate or concelebrate Mass except with his diocesan bishop's explicit permission, which will not be granted except for extraordinary circumstances.

These penalties are effective immediately.

This process began on April 15, 2022, when the Diocese of Jefferson City received a

report of sexual solicitation of an adult on the occasion of the Sacrament of Reconciliation via the diocesan Safe Environment abuse hotline (See diojeffcity.org/safe-environment for information about the hotline).

Canon 1385 of the Code of Canon Law states: "A priest who in the act, on the occasion, or under the pretext of Confession solicits a penitent to sin against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue is to be punished according to the gravity of the delict, by suspension, prohibitions, privations; and in more grave cases, he is to be dismissed from the clerical state."

Upon receiving the report, Bishop W. Shawn McKnight of Jefferson City immediately placed temporary restrictions on Fr. Medina, barring him from hearing confessions and from being alone with anyone other than his family on Church property.

The bishop also launched a preliminary investigation into the actions of Fr. Medina, who was then pastor of Our Lady of the Lake Parish, Lake Ozark.

Because of the crime's serious nature, jurisdiction is reserved to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome.

On June 2, 2022, the results of the diocesan investigation were delivered to the Dicastery.

On Oct. 25, 2022, the Holy See instructed Bishop McKnight to establish an administrative disciplinary process to determine guilt, and if Fr. Medina were to be found guilty, to impose appropriate penalties.

To ensure an impartial process, Bishop McKnight delegated the matter to an experienced priest and canon lawyer from the Archdiocese of Toronto in Canada.

During the process, Fr. Medina was represented by a canon lawyer and given the opportunity to provide his defense.

On Nov. 27, 2023, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith approved a decree finding Fr. Medina guilty of the crime and allowed the imposition of permanent penalties.

Fr. Medina chose not to appeal. With the expiration of the appeal period, the decision is now final.

The three elements of the penalties are:

- Fr. Medina is permanently banned from hearing confes-

sions;

- he cannot celebrate or concelebrate Mass publicly without the explicit permission of his diocesan bishop; and

sacred trust and power for sinful purposes."

Bishop McKnight explained: "I have met with Fr. Medina to express my concerns and informed him he will not be allowed to celebrate or concelebrate Mass publicly except for Funeral Masses of his immediate fam-

"I thank the victim in this case for stepping forward, and I pray for healing. I also thank all who helped during the investigation and disciplinary process."

— Bishop W. Shawn McKnight

- he can never hold an office within the church again.

Fr. Medina remains a priest of the Diocese of Jefferson City and continues to receive support as a retired priest.

Throughout the process, the victim has been offered assistance for healing.

"I want to be clear that sexual solicitation during Confession is a sacrilege, a crime in our Church, and a grave form of abuse; it cannot be tolerated," Bishop McKnight said.

"With God's help, we must work to continue to eradicate abuse from all corners of our Church," the bishop continued. "Please join me in prayer for all who are left in pain and confusion when a trusted leader abuses their position of

ily, at the gathering of priests at their annual conference in October, and at the Chrism Mass during Holy Week."

"I thank the victim in this case for stepping forward, and I pray for healing," Bishop McKnight said. "I also thank all who helped during the investigation and disciplinary process. In addition, I am very grateful for our clergy, parish staff and parishioners who are dedicated to ensuring our diocesan Safe Environment protocols are followed.

"As we move forward together, I seek the renewal of our Church by facing the awful reality of abuse with the hope and grace of the Gospel, which provides the healing we all need," the bishop said.

'Don't give up,' NY bishop urges survivors of Hamas attack, families of hostages

OSV News Service

New York

At a meeting with survivors and relatives of the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel, a senior member of the Archdiocese of New York's leadership listened intently to their descriptions of hostages who remain in Hamas hands and urged the group "to keep speaking."

"You are here for the love of your family and friends. You need to keep speaking," he said. "Don't stop. Don't give up. Don't give up on the love. Don't give up on your loved ones."

The Dec. 13 meeting was held at the headquarters of the American Jewish Committee.

About 30 family members and friends of hostages, representing the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, pleaded for assistance in getting their relatives back.

A total of 240 hostages were taken back to an unknown location or locations in Gaza on Oct. 7 and 8, including citizens of Israel, the United States and other nationals. During a truce in late November, 105 civilians were released from Hamas captivity.

Three hostages were mistakenly killed by the Israeli Defense Forces Dec. 15; the bodies of five hostages were recovered from a Hamas tunnel

underneath Gaza.

About 130 hostages remain in Gaza.

On Dec. 7, New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan and Brooklyn Bishop Robert J. Brennan were part of another interfaith group that listened to other survivors' accounts of Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks.

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Volunteers from several parishes become like family while preparing, serving their first community Christmas meal

The people interviewed for this story asked to remain anonymous:

By Jay Nies

There was plenty for everybody.

Plenty of food. Plenty of work. Plenty of grace and fellowship.

Plenty of Christmas cheer to go around.

"For me, this was the best Christmas ever," said the pastor of several rural parishes in neighboring counties in the Jefferson City diocese.

"Between the Masses — all full — and how this came together and the enthusiastic response of my parishioners, I couldn't have asked for anything better," he said.

Members of the parishes, along with a few Catholics from a bit greater distance, pitched-in to prepare, serve, deliver and clean-up after more than 400 hot meals on Christmas Day.

Each consisted of baked ham, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, green beans, dinner rolls and desserts.

Several people enjoyed the meal in the festively decorated confines of a local community center.

Others accepted their meals and took them home to their families.

A battalion of parishioners turned out to visit residents of both counties who requested to have their meals delivered at home.

Many who asked for delivery are elderly, homebound or in need of material assistance.

Meals were also dispatched to the Christmas shift of deputies and staff of the local sheriff's department, people residing in the jail, staff of the local hospital and emergency room, staff of six local nursing homes, 911 dispatchers, EMTs, local police and other community servants.

"Basically, if you had to work on Christmas and we knew about it, you got a meal," the pastor stated.

Trays of cookies were also delivered to the staff of the nursing homes, law-enforce-

ment, the hospital and a children's home.

"We had a constant 20 to 25 volunteers on the premises at any given time," the pastor noted. "We also had more drivers than we knew what to do with."

Some people arrived to set up at 8 a.m. and stayed until the clean-up was completed at around 4 p.m.

"It was amazing!" said the priest. "We had people of all ages from each of the parishes. Some were meeting each other for the first time and jumping right in and helping and getting to know each other."

It was as if the parish bound-

Pastor: "Everybody forgot that they belonged to this parish or that parish and remembered they belong to one Catholic Church."

aries had dissolved for the day.

"Everybody forgot that they belonged to this parish or that parish and remembered they belong to one Catholic Church," said the priest.

"That's what we were hoping for," he stated. "Not just feeding the masses but building communion among these people."

"Why not?"

All of this came together in about three weeks, beginning with a rollicking staff meeting.

"We tend to use those meetings as an incubator for ideas," the pastor said. "The idea came up to serve a hot meal on Christmas."

"There are parishes in the diocese that have been doing this for years," he noted. "We looked at each other and said, 'Why not? Let's try it.'"

He presented the idea to parishioners in homilies at all Masses on the Second Sunday of Advent.

He summoned volunteers to a leadership meeting at one of the parishes the following Thursday.

A handful showed up, "and they took off with it," said the priest.

From that point forward, "everything just kind of naturally fell into place," he said.

A parishioner who orders the food each year for the Altar

Society's annual fundraiser took on that assignment for the Christmas Meal.

"Basically, all I had to do was call and make sure the door was open when the deliveries came," she said.

It came to pass

For one parishioner, helping wasn't just a great way to honor God, dish out a delicious meal and make new friends.

It was also a much-needed lift.

"I figured it would be better to stay busy this time

of year than not to be busy," said the parishioner, whose mother passed away in October.

As it turns out, that mother enjoyed entertaining guests, while the daughter was better suited to helping out behind the scenes.

"From the time I was a little kid, this kind of fell into what I've always done when Mom would entertain," she stated. "I would be in the background getting things done, making sure the food was out and the dishes were getting done."

So, that's what she did this Christmas.

The pastor chose a central location to serve and dispatch the meals.

The kitchen was not large, but the volunteers adapted to the environment.

"It got to be kind of playing chess," he said.

As things got underway on Christmas, the priest reminded everyone of one of the rules in the Rule of St. Benedict: "All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ."

"They really got that," the priest said.

Organizers gave clear directives to the people delivering to homes:

1) A lot of smiles, "Merry



A Sheriff's Department that had hot meals delivered to the people spending Christmas Day in the county jail posted a photo of one of one of the meals on its Facebook page.

Christmas" and open arms;

2) Accept no donations;

3) When someone asks who's responsible for this, just say, "This free meal is for you. Enjoy it, and enjoy Christmas."

"We didn't want to go into their homes, blowing a trumpet ahead of us," the priest explained. "We didn't want this to come off as a PR move or a way to fill our pews."

"We wanted to let the good we were doing speak for itself," he said.

"This way, we're keeping the focus where it belongs," one of the parishioners stated. "It's like, 'You may be thanking me, but you're really thanking God. Because it's all from him.'"

That's why the pastor and parishioners agreed to speak anonymously for this story.

Wondering eyes

Children at a local Catholic school and from the parishes'

CCD programs made greeting cards for every nursing home resident.

People began arriving at the hall to cook and heat the food at around 8 a.m. on Christmas, with more arriving to help after the 9 o'clock Mass.

"There were Knights of Columbus already there slicing hams up and trimming them and putting them in roasters to get that warmed up," a parishioner recalled.

"People were starting the vegetables to get that warmed up and cooked," she said, "and making mashed potatoes and setting the tables, getting them decorated, and packaging the desserts and cutting them up."

A man who moved into one of the parishes two years ago organized all the deliveries with laser precision, using a color-coded list according to address.

The atmosphere throughout the operation was light and joyful.

"I was just amazed at how easily everything flowed, even as they were trying to tackle not seeing something coming, or space being at such a premium," the pastor said.

One of the organizers said it was great to meet and visit with people from other parishes while stirring mashed potatoes or heating green beans.

"All the while, people were so willing to do whatever you needed them to do," she said.

Some of the deliverers were greeted with tears from people who were happy just to be remembered on Christmas.

"It was exhausting but very good," one parishioner stated.

She was overwhelmed by the number of people who came to help.

"Even with the short no-

See CHRISTMAS, page 17

Inaugural Hispanic leadership meeting points to collaboration

By Jay Nies

A vision for Hispanic ministry that has been taking shape for decades in the Jefferson City diocese reached an import Dec. 19.

That afternoon, 13 leaders and representatives of various Church-affiliated agencies in the diocese met in the Alphonse J. Schwartz Memorial Catholic Center in Jefferson City.

Almost every participant was a first- or second-generation immigrant from a Hispanic country.

Nations of origin included: Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and the United States.

Participants included:

- Deacon Enrique Castro, diocesan executive director of faith formation, which includes Hispanic and intercultural ministries;

- Erick Chinchilla, pastoral ministry assistant for the diocese;

- Litz Main, executive director of Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri;

- Ilsi Palacios, Hispanic resource coordinator for Catholic Charities;

- Marissa Flores and Moises Sosa, DOJ accredited representatives for Catholic Charities Immigration Services;

- Guillermo Villa Trueba, Hispanic Outreach Manager for the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC);

- Cristhia Castro, executive director of El Puente-Hispanic Ministry in Jefferson City and California;

- Yasica Buitrago, Ashley Chavarria, Aurora Guillen, Nena Neal and Ariane Pizzol of the El Puente-Hispanic Ministry staff;

The entire meeting was conducted in Spanish.

Deacon Castro convened the group in the spirit of the new National Plan for Hispanic Ministry from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

His goal was to open up a dialogue regarding Hispanic Ministry in the diocese and opportunities for collaboration among the leaders in their various ministries.

Mrs. Palacios said she recognized God making his presence known throughout the gather-



This photo of (front row) Yasica Buitrago, Marissa Flores, Ilsi Palacios, Ashley Chavarria, (back row) Deacon Enrique Castro, Guillermo Villa Trueba, Erick Chinchilla, Moises Sosa, Litz Main, Aurora Guillen, Nena Neal, Cristhia Castro, Ariane Pizzol was taken during a Dec. 19 meeting of leaders who have ties to Hispanic ministry in the diocese.

— Photo by Mary Madelyn Mertes

ing.

“What stands out to me is the focus on collaboration and unity to work for those brothers and sisters who need us, and under our bishop’s leadership,” she said.

“God gave each of us different gifts and different resources,” she stated. “We’ll be able to do more if we work together.”

Ms. Main noticed the same dynamic.

“The gathering of leaders from various Catholic ministries has been a powerful testament to the strength that emerges when diverse voices come together for a common purpose,” she stated.

Uniting voices

Mr. Trueba joined the staff of the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC), public-policy agency for the state’s four Roman Catholic dioceses, in October.

He’s helping ensure that the agency’s efforts to shape public policy, promote the common good, uphold the dignity of the human person and keep people informed about important issues including linguistically and culturally appropriate engagement with Hispanic Catholics.

He pointed out that many Hispanic Catholics don’t know about the MCC or its purpose.

“The result we’re hoping for is for Hispanic Catholics to be more integrated into the community at large, know the issues that are being discussed in

the Capitol, and take action in order to defend the dignity of the life of the human person, in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church,” he stated.

He said it’s important for all Catholics to have their voices heard in the halls of power, “because we are standing for what our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to do, which is to advance the common good.”

Looking for work

El Puente-Hispanic Ministry is a separate, nonprofit agency offering an array of services to the Hispanic communities primarily in and near Jefferson City and California.

It serves as a link between cultures and between immigrants and the communities they’re joining.

Much of Ms. Chavarria’s work for El Puente involves providing transportation and providing Spanish-English interpretation services for people who have not yet mastered English.

In that role, she gets many requests for information and services that are outside her area of expertise.

“I want to learn more about what to do for people who come here seeking asylum,” she said.

She found out that Catholic Charities has experts on immigration law in its Refugee Services and Immigration departments.

She also found out about

ested in addressing many of the same issues.

She acknowledged her frustration at not being able to provide services that are available in bigger dioceses with larger Hispanic populations.

“But it’s going to happen,” she said. “It’s just a matter of time and work, and I think we’re on our way.”

She’s excited about various local agencies’ efforts to make people aware of their rights and ways of empowering themselves and advocating for their needs.

“A small group of people can only do so much, but when we come together, you’re in a whole other ballpark!” she said.

Limited resources are put to better use when organizations with similar goals stay in contact and point each other in the right direction, she stated.

Mrs. Guillen predicted that at future gatherings, participants will discuss specific ways to help people learn to be independent and get what they need for themselves and their families.

“Sometimes, when people come to our office, you can see their insecurities written all over them,” she said. “There

classes she can take to help her become more familiar with immigration law.

“Thank God!” she said. “This is something I’ve been needing for a long time because I have a lot of people asking me questions on immigration that I can’t answer.”

She knows learning the answers will bring more work and more responsibility.

“That’s what we’re here for!” she said. “And you know, the busier I am, the more I can help, the happier I am.”

She’s convinced that God was present in the Hispanic leadership gathering and was pleased with its results.

“He’s the reason we were all here,” she said.

Recognizing barriers

Mrs. Guillen enjoyed connecting with people who are Hispanic, bilingual and inter-

See HISPANIC, page 14

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QUESTION CORNER

Questions on baptismal records and on earthly sufferings and Purgatory

By Jenna Marie Cooper
OSV News

Q: My cousin is getting married soon and will need to obtain a copy of her baptismal certificate for inclusion in the pre-nuptial enquiry. As a newborn baby, it wasn't clear if she would survive and so she was baptized in emergency at the hospital. To whom should she write, in order to obtain her baptismal certificate? (Ireland)



A: The short answer is that she should write to the parish in whose geographical territory the hospital in question is located.

In Canon law, it's clear that sacramental record-keeping in general is intended to happen in a parish context. For example, Canon 535 tells us that: "Each parish is to have parochial registers, that is, those of baptisms, marriages, deaths... The pastor is to see to it that these registers are accurately inscribed and carefully preserved." Of course, marriages and baptisms can and do happen outside of parish churches. But even when a wedding or baptism is celebrated at a non-parochial space — such as a shrine, university chapel, or the chapel of a religious community, or even a hospital — the local parish must be informed so that it can be recorded properly in that parish's record books.

We read in c. 878 (which actually seems to envision an emergency baptism scenario, like your cousin's): "If baptism was administered neither by the pastor nor in his presence, the minister of baptism, whoever that was, must notify the parish priest of the parish in which the baptism was administered, so that he may register the baptism." Therefore, the hospital's local parish should have your cousin's baptismal record.

Granted, sometimes it can be hard to determine exactly which parish's territory the hospital was located, especially if it was part of a large urban area with several nearby Catholic churches. If your cousin runs into this issue, the best thing to do would be to contact the relevant diocese. The diocesan chancery office would have access to maps of parish territorial boundaries, and would also be familiar with any "quirks" of local sacramental record-keeping.

Q: When I was a kid, I would often hear adults say, particularly at funerals, that when a long term and chronically ill person finally passed, they would go "straight to heaven," as God counted their years of suffering as sufficient to pay for their sins, and required nothing further from them. Could you comment? (St. Joseph's, Indiana)

A: Short of a formal canonization process or a clear case of martyrdom, there isn't any way to know for sure how long or short a particular person's stay in purgatory will be, much less whether they have been able to skip purgatory altogether. Purgatory isn't about "serving time" for sins committed so much as it is a time of purification and becoming ready to enter fully into God's presence. The degree to which an individual needs this kind of purification is something which is only truly known between that soul and God.

That being said, the Church does teach that suffering in this life can be redemptive. As we hear in one of the prayers which a priest might use to conclude the sacrament of penance is as follows: "May the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the saints, whatever good you do and suffering you endure, heal your

See QUESTION, page 18

Papal Audience

January 3, 2024



Dear brothers and sisters:

In our catechesis on the virtues and the vices opposed to them, we have seen that the Christian life involves a constant struggle to resist sin and to grow in holiness. Jesus, himself sinless, submitted to baptism by John and was tempted in the desert, in order to teach us the need for spiritual rebirth, conversion of mind and heart, and unfailing trust in God's mercy and sustaining grace. May our weekly reflections on the virtues and vices help us to imitate the Lord's example, to grow in wisdom and self-understanding, and to discern between good and evil. As we advance in the knowledge and practice of the virtues, may we come to experience the joy of closeness to God, the source of all good, authentic happiness and the fullness of eternal life.

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's audience, especially the groups from Malta and the United States of America. I renew my spiritual closeness to all affected by the recent earthquake in Japan, and likewise to the victims of the collision of two aircraft yesterday at Tokyo's airport. I also pray for their families and for the emergency personnel. May you and your families cherish the joy of this Christmas season, and draw near in prayer to the Savior who has come to dwell among us. God bless you!

Journey to the heart of what's written in the Bible

This is the fifth in a series of teachings and reflections offered by the moderator of spiritual formation for the Jefferson City diocese:

By Father Matthew Flatley

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* instructs that there are four senses of Sacred Scripture.

It is crucial to understand this, so as to dive deep into their sacred meaning ... into the wisdom God is revealing.

This journey into the heart of the Scripture is a journey into our own hearts.

Once while hiking in the Rocky Mountains with a very wise Trappist abbot, I was droning on and on, trying to discern what the deepest desires of my heart were, whilst searching out God's will for me ... and the abbot casually responded, "Well, they are one and the same, Matthew."

His words pierced my heart. I now understand he was speaking words of wisdom. It was actually the Holy Spirit speaking.

According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses.

Monastics refer to the last sense as the Unitive Level.

The profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church.

The literal sense is the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture and discovered by exegesis (the critical explanation or interpretation of scripture), as guided by the Church.

All other senses of Sacred Scripture are based on the literal.

Thanks to the unity of God's plan, the spiritual sense then allows us to perceive not only what the text of Scripture reveals, but also the realities and events about which it speaks can be signs, inviting one to go deeper.

With the allegorical sense, we can acquire a more profound understanding of events by recognizing their significance in Christ.

Pondering the moral sense, the Scripture ought to lead us to act justly. As St. Paul says, the Scriptures were written "for our instruction."

Finally, with the anagogical sense (Greek: *anagoge* "leading"), we can view realities and events in terms of their eternal significance, leading us toward our true homeland.

A medieval couplet summarizes the significance of the four senses: The Literal speaks of deeds; Allegory to faith; The Moral how to act; Anagogy our destiny.

The classic example to demonstrate the four senses is the Temple. In the literal, it was the actual building — the Holy of Holies in ancient Jerusalem.

The spiritual sense has even higher importance because God has used it as a sign to tell us about greater realities.

Allegorically, the Temple points to Jesus, who said he was the true Temple that would be destroyed and raised up in three days.

Just as the Jerusalem Temple was the place of sacrifice for the Jews, so does Jesus's body house the everlasting sacrifice on Calvary for all humanity.

See FR. FLATLEY, page 19

Twist! A Christmas resolution for this New Year's

By Greg Erlandson
OSV News



I know that as soon as the last present has been unwrapped and the last carol has been sung, many thoughts turn to New Year's resolutions.

When I worked in a bookstore, back in the pre-Amazon stone age, the day after Christmas we boxed up the remaining stacks of cookbooks we had been selling as prospective gifts, replacing them with stacks of diet books. Back then, it was the Scarsdale Diet, followed by the Pritikin Diet and the South Beach Diet and the Atkins diet — all making the rounds come New Year's.

Diabetes drugs have probably rendered this particular post-Xmas self-improvement impulse null and void, but it left a lasting impression on me. As Americans, we are like Puritans on a

binge: First, celebrating with excess, then committing ourselves to an excess of self-reform.

Gyms fill up after Jan. 1. Neighborhood sidewalks suddenly see an abundance of walkers. We who had committed ourselves to a frothy orgy of spiked eggnog, now commit ourselves to a Dry January.

Perhaps this coming post-December, we can break this cycle. Let's simply commit ourselves to enjoying Christmas for a few days more — 12 days, in fact.

In 12 days is the feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 6. What if we resolve to simply try to celebrate the birth of the Savior for 12 days — a fraction of the time we spent shopping and cooking and cleaning in preparation for Christmas itself.

This will feel a bit odd, I admit. Christmas trees start appearing on the curbs on Dec. 26.

Walgreens dumps its Christmas remainders onto a sales table and rolls out the Valentine displays. Restaurants are advertising their New Year's Eve menus.

Nothing seems more passé than Christmas the day after.

Yet once upon a time, celebrations of this feast could last till Candlemas on Feb. 2 — more than a month of celebration to match the month of Advent we spent preparing for Christmas. If they fasted for Advent in preparation for the birth of the Savior, then our ancestors celebrated just as long for his arrival.

This Christmas season, let our New Year's resolution be to celebrate Christmas a wee bit longer than 24 hours. Have some favorite foods at meal times. Keep the tree up and continue to admire the lights and ornaments. Take a drive around town and appreciate the decorations and lights of others.

Christmas is a time for joy, but it is also a time for prayer and for gratitude. Go to Mass during the week once or twice. Think about the blessings you've received. Thank the Lord for his great act of love in sending us his Son and give thanks not just for the gifts received on Christmas Day, but for the many gifts

the Lord has given.

Those gifts and blessings include the people in your life. Reach out to someone you weren't able to see on Christmas Day: A relative in another city. An old friend. A neighbor who moved away.

You may have to go back to work before Epiphany arrives, but try spreading Christmas joy there as well. The time leading up to Christmas Day can be quite stressful for many people. Spreading a little cheer for the following 12 days is a gift. And say thanks to those who waited on you, rang up your groceries and wrapped your presents during the Advent frenzy.

If we have one New Year's Resolution to make this year, let's commit ourselves to celebrating what Christmas really means for just a bit longer.

Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News. Follow him on Twitter @GregErlandson.

The greatest New Year's challenge: Letting go

By Jaymie Stuart Wolfe
OSV News



Undoubtedly, some will be glad to see the end of 2023 and others will mentally designate it for the "Best Year Ever" file. Most of us will find ourselves reviewing what has transpired

over the past 12 months with an eye to the future. We'll contemplate things left undone in the previous year and recommit ourselves to them. And we'll recall those "well-enough" things we ought to have left alone but didn't. Whether quietly or out loud, we'll express our hopes for what the next year will bring. And many of us will try to take the bull by the horns by making resolutions about self-improvement and self-care and plans about what to take with us as we move forward.

What most of us won't do is consider what we ought to leave behind.

If I've learned anything about following Christ, it's that I must let him lead. Jesus won't drag me along if I'm not willing to move, but he won't let me pull him in the direction of my every whim either.

The world as God created it is full of marvelously shiny and genuinely good things and my natural inclination is to chase after them but — when I focus myself on getting and keeping what I want — I'm unlikely to receive what

God wants for me.

Being attached to anything other than God himself will prevent me from living in the fullness and freedom of his grace.

Learning to leave things behind might be even more important than figuring out what we should take with us into the new year. For Christians, self-help programs, radical self-sufficiency, and independence are at odds with the call to community, surrender and trust. Of course, there are things in our hearts and lives that need to change, but bootstrapping and white-knuckling our way through the year until we (inevitably) hit the wall won't help us to be made new. Relying on God's grace, on the other hand, will.

Letting go is an art and a discipline that every follower of Christ is called to practice. But we often manage to avoid it by convincing ourselves that we aren't perfectly certain of what to detach from.

What should we leave behind? First of all, our sins. Too many of us justify, rationalize and excuse behaviors we know we shouldn't be indulging. Beyond that, we must let go of our affection for the "little peccadillos" that often masquerades as nostalgia for "good ole days" that were anything but good for us or for anyone else.

And then we should let go of everyone else's sins: the ones we facilitated or encouraged, certainly, but especially the

REFLECTION

Ponder anew

By Mark Saucier

I don't know if you noticed it, but another year has passed. It saddens me in some ways.

I remember when it arrived, full of hope and promise. And then suddenly, it was gone, quietly slipping out the back as we ceremoniously awaited the coming of its successor.

"This one is going to be so much better," we say confidently while secretly praying that our New Year's celebration may not be premature and that, this year, we will not be disappointed.

We may well forget that we felt much the same last year, and the year before that, as we neared the summit of these annual divides.

We toasted the New Year, and all its opportunities for personal change, for healthy habits, for requited love, and for life to conform more to what we want it to be.

I don't know if we blamed the year for the many ways that it failed to live up to its hype, but somewhere along the way, many gave up on it like a team with no chance of post-season play.

No doubt, there are those who cannot rid themselves fast enough of the past year.

There are those for whom loss will forever mark it. It was hard for those who lost an older loved one, but there were so many more deaths that were unexpected and inconsolable.

There are other losses — relationships, jobs and dreams of all fashions — that will permanently scar the year.

And there are our own foibles and failures — our addictions and fears, selfishness and indifference — that we projected rather than faced.

For the eternal optimists that we at least pretend to be, it's no wonder we happily bid the old year a cold adieu and warmly welcome the new.

However, as the revelry subsides and the decorations disappear, the gray winter days offer an invitation to do as Mary did, "pondering them in her heart."

We need to take the time to revisit those painful moments of the past year, claim them in our lives and make them a part of who we are in the New Year.

Christmas is not as much a birthday as it is a revelation of Incarnation, a reminder that all of life is infused with the divine.

There can be no love without pain, no joy without sadness, no growth without adversity.

Pondering this, professing this, living this is Incarnational.

More than any resolution, it will make this New Year different.

See WOLFE, page 19

'Padre Pio' actor Shia LaBeouf fully enters the Catholic Church New Year's Eve

By Gina Christian

OSV News

An actor who recently portrayed a beloved saint on screen has now fully come into the Catholic Church in real life.

Shia LaBeouf, a Hollywood veteran and star of director Abel Ferrara's film "Padre Pio," received the sacrament of confirmation, completing his initiation into the Catholic faith, during the New Year holiday weekend, according to announcements posted Jan. 2 to Facebook and Instagram by the Capuchin Franciscans' Western American Province.

The friars posted several pictures of a smiling LaBeouf with the friars and Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, who had previously interviewed the actor through his Word on Fire apostolate.

Capuchin Father Joseph Seraphin Dederick, the provincial, told OSV News that Bishop Barron administered the sacrament to LaBeouf at the Old Mission Santa Inés in Solvang, California, on Dec. 31.

OSV News has reached out to the Capuchins' Western American Province and Bishop Barron for comment.

"We are thrilled to share that our dear friend Shia LaBeouf has fully entered the

Church this past weekend through the sacrament of confirmation!" the friars said in their posts, adding that they "are overjoyed to welcome him into the fold and witness his deep commitment to his faith journey."

LaBeouf developed both working and personal relationships with the friars while researching his role in "Padre Pio."

Speaking to OSV News in May, LaBeouf said he "wasn't even trying to make movies" when Ferrara approached him about the role.

The acclaimed 37-year-old actor — whose Emmy-winning career as a kid on the Disney Channel blossomed into big-screen success — found himself "totally lost" after his inner demons led to partying, work conflicts and run-ins with the law.

"I was wandering around, living in my truck," he said. "I wasn't interested in acting anymore."

As LaBeouf began confronting his personal issues, Ferrara tapped him for "Padre Pio," a saint to whom the Bronx-born director — best known for his gritty cinematic



Shia LaBeouf stars in the 2023 film "Padre Pio." LaBeouf entered into full communion with the Catholic Church after receiving the sacrament of confirmation on Dec. 31, 2023.

— OSV News photo/Gravitas Ventures

takes on the underworld — felt himself "drawn."

While researching the film, LaBeouf met Brother Alexander Rodriguez, a Capuchin Franciscan who is assistant vocation director at the order's Old Mission Santa Inés in Solvang, California.

Soon LaBeouf was asking about more than one of the congregation's most beloved saints.

"Shia was looking to know about Padre Pio, and then delved into the faith," Brother Alexander told OSV News in May. "He got into RCIA (referring to the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults). The

friars and I were helping to catechize him."

LaBeouf told OSV News at the time "(learning) how to pray the rosary" brought a "tangible relief" that he had previously sought through drugs, alcohol and life in the fast lane.

The lessons continued as Brother Alexander accompanied LaBeouf to Italy for filming, with the Capuchin providing technical assistance for the project while appearing in the movie as Padre Pio's fellow Capuchin and spiritual adviser.

"I fell in love with Christ," LaBeouf told OSV News in May.

Now the actor, "known for his incredible talent and passion in the entertainment industry, has embarked on a profound spiritual journey that has led him to embrace the teachings of the Catholic Church," the Capuchin friars wrote in their Jan. 2 Facebook and Instagram posts. "His decision to fully enter the Church is a testament to his sincere desire to grow in his relationship with God and live out the Gospel values."

The friars added, "As Capuchin Franciscans, we believe in the transformative power of faith and the incredible impact it can have on one's life. We are humbled and grateful to walk alongside Shia as he takes this important step in his spiritual journey."

"We invite you to join us in celebrating this momentous occasion and to keep Shia LaBeouf in your prayers as he continues to deepen his faith and seek God's guidance in his life," the friars said. "May his example inspire others to explore their own spiritual paths and find solace in the loving embrace of the Church."

Gina Christian is a national reporter for OSV News.

U.S. demands release of imprisoned Nicaraguan bishop, clergy

By David Agren

OSV News

Mexico City

The U.S. Department of State has demanded the release of Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa and other imprisoned Nicaraguan religious leaders following a wave of detentions targeting Catholic clergy over the Christmas season.

The Jan. 2 statement described Bishop Álvarez and the other religious leaders — including Bishop Isidoro Mora of Siuna — as "unjustly detained" and deplored the conditions in which they were being held. Bishop Álvarez has been held for more than 500 days.

"Nicaraguan authorities have kept Bishop Álvarez in isolation, blocked independent evaluation of the conditions of his imprisonment, and re-

leased staged videos and photographs that only increase concerns about his well-being," read the statement, signed by State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller.

The regime of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, "continues to impose severe restrictions on religious communities and deny Nicaraguan citizens the ability to freely practice their religions and express their beliefs. We once again call on the Nicaraguan government to release Bishop Rolando Álvarez immediately and without conditions."

In a separate post on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, Miller called Bishop Álvarez's detention "unconscionable," adding, "Freedom of belief is a human right."

At least 13 priests — mostly in the Archdiocese of Managua — were de-

tained between Dec. 26 and Dec. 31, according to exiled Nicaraguan lawyer Martha Molina, who has tracked attacks on the Catholic Church in Nicaragua. Many were taken from their parish residences by police and paramilitaries.

Pope Francis expressed concern for Nicaragua and the captive priests Jan. 1 at his New Year's Angelus prayer.

"I have been following with deep concern what is happening in Nicaragua, where bishops and priests have been deprived of their freedom."

The pontiff expressed his "closeness in prayer" to the detained priests and their families, "and to the entire church in the country."

"I hope that we will always seek the path of dialogue to overcome difficulties. Let us pray for Nicaragua today."

Dialogue has proved difficult in

Nicaragua, despite church efforts to assume a mediating role after protests erupted in 2018 — with demonstrators demanding the ouster of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo. Priests provided shelter for protests and later accompanied the families of political prisoners, even as their parishes were besieged by pro-regime police and paramilitaries.

The calls for action on Bishop Álvarez and the detained clergy come as the regime crushes even the most minimal dissent in the country — which analysts have described as turning increasingly tyrannical and totalitarian.

Clergy in the country are often spied upon and paid visits by police and paramilitaries in acts of intimidation and to deliver orders — such as the suspension of acts of popular piety and public processions on feast days.

Palmyra native monk designs vestments for abbey's 150th

By Jay Nies

People whose visual acuity and command of history surpass that of most others took particular delight in the new vestments created for Conception Abbey's 150th anniversary.

Jubilee Masses were celebrated Dec. 8 and 11 in the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, the center of the sprawling northwestern Missouri monastery where Benedictine monks have been forming seminarians and welcoming guests for 15 decades.

"It's what kids refer to as an 'Easter egg' — something you might not notice right away but you're happy when you do," said Benedictine Father Pachomius Meade, a Palmyra native and artist who designed the vestments with several Benedictine of Mary, Queen of Apostles, sisters from the House of Ephesus in Gower.

Sisters in the Vestment Department there suggested incorporating a special damask fabric, adorned with a repeated pattern of three angels adoring Christ in the Eucharist.

"Our monastery's motherhouse in Switzerland is in Engelberg, which means 'Angel Mountain,'" Fr. Pachomius noted.

He took a sample of the fabric back to the monks who were planning the jubilee celebration.

"When they saw the angels and realized the significance, they said, 'We obviously need to do that!'" the artist-monk noted.

Fr. Pachomius previously designed the current Coat of Arms for the Jefferson City diocese and created several traditional icons for his home church of St. Joseph in Palmyra.

He ministered for several years at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Columbia while studying at the University of Missouri.

He sketched the designs for the new vestments and drew the various Coats of Arms that were to be scanned and embroidered upon them.



Benedictine Abbot Father Benedict T. Neenan of Conception Abbey in Conception and concelebrating priests wear the gold- and burgundy-colored vestments designed by Benedictine Father Pachomius Meade and Benedictine sisters from the House of Ephesus in Gower, during the Dec. 8 and 11 Masses to celebrate Conception Abbey's 150th anniversary. — Photos from the Conception Abbey Facebook page

He was the one who originally proposed having new vestments made for the jubilee celebration.

"We marked major anniversaries in the past with the commissioning of vestments," he noted. "That's one of the ways we've historically marked the passage of time here."

The monks still use for major celebrations the vestments that were created for the abbey's 100th anniversary a half-century ago.



Timelessly timely

The members of Conception's jubilee committee encouraged Fr. Pachomius to draw up some sketches.

He proposed having vestments not just for Mass but also for Solemn Vespers, part

of an ancient regimen of liturgical prayers prayed at times throughout the day.

His final sketches included three chasubles, which are ornate outer garments worn by priests during Mass; three copes, which are capes draped over the presider's shoulders during Solemn Vespers and Benediction; and a matching dalmatic for a deacon to wear at Mass.

Fr. Pachomius noted that for liturgical purposes, the color gold can be substituted whenever white is called for.

He suggested using a gold-colored briquetted fabric set off with burgundy-colored orphreys, which are wide bands of contrasting cloth most often seen on the back of a chasuble.

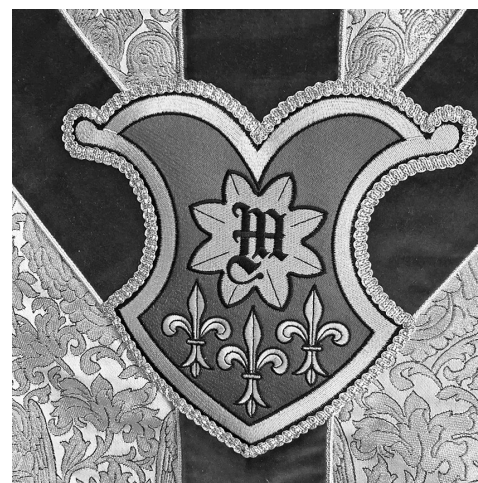
One of Fr. Pachomius's interests is heraldry, the ancient art of conveying history, identity and relationships through simple illustrations suitable for a banner or a shield.

"In order to show our lineage and heritage and relationships and ownership and mark the time, I wanted to incorporate some heraldic devices into the vestments," he stated.

He rendered Conception Abbey's Coat of Arms for the hood on the back of the abbot's



chasuble, and the basilica's Coat of Arms and that of the motherhouse in Engelberg on the orphreys.



"To show our lineage and mark the time between our founding and now, I also wanted our founding Abbot Conrad's Coat of Arms, and that of Abbot Neenan, our current abbot, on the other side," Fr. Pachomius said.

These images are also used in various groupings on the other vestments.

The front of each includes a stylized version of an ancient image known as "*Pax Inter Spinas*" — which means "Peace Among Thorns."

"It derives from a story from the life of St. Benedict, founder of the Benedictine order," Fr. Pachomius noted. "The word 'PAX,' which means peace, is depicted as surrounded by a crown of thorns."

Augmenting the abbey's Coat of Arms on the abbot's chasuble are three "*fleurs de lis*," flowers that symbolize the Holy Trinity, and an eight-point Germanic-style star that resembles the rose window in

a gothic cathedral. The center of the star is the monogram "M" for the Blessed Mother, patroness of the abbey.

Fr. Pachomius said the copes and chasubles were designed to have a main celebrant version with two assistants, "although any one of them could stand on its own at a liturgy."

Stiches in time

After the committee and Abbot Neenan approved the designs, Fr. Pachomius and Benedictine Brother Maximilian Burkhart began collaborating with the Benedictine sisters who work in the vestment department in Gower.

The sisters agreed to assign priority to the project, in order for the handmade vestments to be finished before Dec. 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the abbey's anniversary date.

The Jubilee Mass was the culmination of a yearlong sesquicentennial celebration. Mother Abbess Cecilia of the Benedictines at Gower, and Sister Scholastica, head of the vestment department, "were both here for the celebration and got to see the fruit of their work being put to good use," said Fr. Pachomius.

The Jubilee Mass was the culmination of a yearlong sesquicentennial celebration. Mother Abbess Cecilia of the Benedictines at Gower, and Sister Scholastica, head of the vestment department, "were both here for the celebration and got to see the fruit of their work being put to good use," said Fr. Pachomius.

Beauty and truth

The artist-monk noted that living simply is part of Benedictine life.

But, so is creating beautiful things in order to draw the

See VESTMENTS, page 14

Freeburg student artists turn cemetery lane into Christmas wonderland

By Jay Nies

Light shone in the darkness along the scenic walkway between Holy Family Church and the parish cemetery in Freeburg.

Fifth- through eighth-grade art students at Holy Family School spent their second quarter turning discarded materials into colorfully creative displays for the Christmas Season.

“This was our first time doing this. It was a nice adventure,” said Mary Holterman, art teacher at Holy Family.

Students transformed wooden pallets, poultry wire, a door, several tires and sundry other cast-offs into Christmas trees, giant ornaments, a festive pickup truck, a U.S. flag, a Santa, a Grinch and a snowman village, complete



— Photos by Mary Holterman

with a melted snowman.

“He was made of recycled fabric from the quilting ladies,” Mrs. Holterman noted.

They transformed “pool noodles” into candy canes and plastic hangers into snowflakes.



“A contractor in town cut strips of wood, and we nailed them together and created a gift box with lights on it and wrapped it in netting,” said Mrs. Holterman.

Perhaps the most prominent work in the collection was the Nativity scene painted on the side of a barn door.

“He’s the reason for all the rest of this,” the teacher stated.

Third- and fourth-graders helped the junior high students install their artwork in the days leading up to the school’s Dec. 13 Shadow Nativity performance.

“People donated a lot of lights — even more than we could use this year,” said Mrs. Holterman.

She likes using LED lights because multiple strands can

be strung together without blowing out any fuses.

The students rigged the lights to timers, which turned on all the lights shortly after 4 p.m. and left them on all night through Christmas.

They threw the switch for the first time after the Shadow Nativity, which was attended by school parents, grandparents and many other parishioners.

“The next morning, I went back out there to adjust some of the timers,” said Mrs. Holterman. “Before 6 a.m., people were driving through and enjoying it on their way to work.”

“People would drive down the lane and you’d hear such positive feedback,” she said. “That’s what made it a bit more exciting. You could see that our efforts were paying off.”

Mrs. Holterman liked the idea of bringing light and activity to the often-quietest corner of the parish property.

“I have a son buried in the cemetery,” she said. “There are a lot of people down there who don’t get visitors.”

“But when people come to see this, they go down the cemetery lane, and the people who are buried there get a lot of company.”

She noted that a cadre of parishioners led by Father William Debo, pastor of Holy Family Parish and of Sacred Heart Parish in Rich



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McKnight: The Nativity scene inspires beauty from brokenness

By Jay Nies

Nothing says “all things are possible with God” quite like a Christmas depiction of the Babe in the manger.

It is an essential reminder of the gift that changed the world and continues to do so.

“The manger scene is a shrine of our Catholic belief that out of humanity’s many forms of brokenness, something beautiful, something unexpected, something holy can come, with God’s help — not by chance or our work alone, but day by day, out of our acceptance and recognition of our own spiritual poverty, and only because of God,” said Bishop W. Shawn McKnight.

Bishop McKnight presided and preached the homily at the 4 p.m. Vigil Mass on Christmas Eve in the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Jefferson City.

Father Stephen Jones, pastor of the Cathedral Parish, and Father Joseph Luzindana, associate pastor, concelebrated.

It was the first Christmas Mass in the newly updated, repaired and beautified Cathedral, and took place on the 55th anniversary of the first Mass to be celebrated there.

“This is one of the great seasons of our faith!” the bishop proclaimed from the cathedra, or bishop’s chair, from which the Cathedral takes its name.

He talked about how the abject humility of the Son of God being born in a stable prefigured everything else Jesus would teach and do to procure salvation for those he was sent to save.

Right up to his brutal execution and totally definitive resurrection.

“That is why this baby was born to us, to show us the way to his Kingdom — not through power and might, not through money and ostentation, but through love, mercy, tenderness and poverty of spirit,” the bishop stated.

Jesus showed the way by allowing himself to become totally dependent on his mother’s care and his Father’s grace.

“What captures our attention, what resonates with our hearts, is the tenderness and meekness of the scene,” said Bishop McKnight.

Namely, the God who reigns over the entire Universe in its

incomprehensible vastness, is made visible in the person of “a humble, poor, vulnerable little human being lying in a manger.”

Mary, his mother, and Joseph, his stepfather, had little to offer Jesus in terms of material wealth or earthly comforts.

“And yet, they were the ones chosen by God to be entrusted with special responsibility for the care and raising of God’s only Son,” the bishop noted.

“You see, the simplicity and poverty of the manger scene foreshadows the end of this baby’s life, when Christ accepted his Cross and the poverty of his Passion — but in so doing, was brought to the Resurrection and the gift of new life,” he said.

Here and now

Bishop McKnight emphasized that Christmas is a celebration not only of a moment

in history but also something that “continues to happen in our day and in our world, especially in our very brokenness.”

“The Mystery of Christmas has the power to change our lives, particularly in moments of grief, isolation and difficulty, when we are tempted to depression, despair and discouragement,” he said.

He spoke of how God led an upright man who was befuddled with his circumstances, to embrace his vocation to be the husband and protector of the Blessed Mother, and stepfather

of God’s own Son.

The bishop said a close reading of Scripture makes clear that Joseph was not angry that the woman who was betrothed to him had become pregnant.

Rather, “he had a reverential fear for the great mystery of her

himself from the scene,” the bishop noted.

The angel convincingly reassured him, and “the mystery of Christmas changed Joseph into SAINT Joseph, husband

unborn child.”

Joseph was well aware of the prophesy that a virgin shall bear a Son, who would be “God With Us” (Isaiah 7:14).

Appearing to Joseph in a dream, God’s messenger told him not to be afraid to take up his pivotal role in salvation history.

But Joseph “feels his own unworthiness, and holy fear overcomes him, and he seeks to excuse



Bishop McKnight blesses the Nativity scene during the Christmas Vigil Mass in the Cathedral of St. Joseph.

See NATIVITY, page 19



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VESTMENTS

From page 11

monks and their visitors into reverence and a deeper experience of prayer and worship.

He addressed the tendency among Catholics in the West over the past half-century to overemphasize words and thoughts in the Liturgy, often at the expense of other aspects of worship.

"More and more people are coming to an understanding that 'I need a total experience of coming into prayer,'" he said.

He pointed out that the essence of the human person extends far beyond mere function.

"To have an encounter with God, people need to have their spirits raised," he stated. "And it doesn't just happen in words or in material ways.

"We need things that lift us out of our ordinary experience, to inform us that God is here and that this is actually happening," he said.

"We don't just find that in truth but also in beauty," he noted. "It raises our eyes and attracts our attention."

Fr. Pachomius referred to the "inexpressible groanings" of the Spirit that St. Paul writes about in his Letter to the Romans (8:26).

"These other things are part of how we encounter God in ways we cannot articulate — like visually and through music and through posture and through silence and in the spaces we inhabit," he said.

"All of these things are important for bringing us into prayer. And we know that these things often do have a profound effect."

For years to come

Fr. Pachomius called to mind a verse from "Asphodel, the Green Flower," by American poet William Carlos Williams:

*"It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every
day
for lack
of what is found there ..."*

He pointed out that although perishable like everything else in this life, these new vestments will likely out-

last every monk currently at Conception Abbey.

"I pray they'll still be used by the monks who come after

me and the many seminarians who come here to be formed

in prayer and worship in the years to come," he said.

HISPANIC

From page 7

are barriers of culture and language that may seem impossible for them to overcome, and you can see that in how they carry themselves."

All the more so for people who dealt with violence or intimidation in their homeland and endured a difficult journey to get here.

"So they come with a lot of weight on their shoulders," said Mrs. Guillen. "So, it's important to let them know what they're capable of in order to be independent, in order to feel empowered."

It's also essential to help people realize their own value and potential, she said.

"You can tell when people realize that 'I contribute something to this society — 'this is my community, I am part of this, it's part of me now' — you can see it, because they're more confident," she said.

She added that there's no reason for people to feel unwelcome here, "because the community is very welcoming."

Everyone has a different story. For some, the road here has been much more difficult than for others.

"But once they see that they're an asset to the community, to society, it reflects on their face, on their demeanor," she said. "And I want that so badly for all of them."

A common voice

Mr. Trueba predicted that the Hispanic Catholics' influence will become much more significant in the Statehouse as the MCC's outreach efforts continue.

It began with making all of the MCC's publications and podcasts bilingual.

"We have a lot of great publications," he noted, "and it was a shame that they weren't reaching out to all the Spanish-speaking Catholics in the state — Catholics and everyone else."

Mr. Trueba previously worked for 10 years in the State Department, Social Development Department and Treasury Department of the Mexican federal government and as a legal history professor at a law school in Mexico.

He said MCC Executive Director Jamie Morris found universal support among the state's Catholic bishops when he proposed creating the position of Hispanic outreach manager.

"So, I'm blessed to be able to join this great team, which is the whole Catholic Church in the state of Missouri," Mr. Trueba stated.

Tighter bonds

Ms. Main has been executive director of

Catholic Charities since September.

She said the meeting with fellow leaders of Catholic ministries was incredible.

The purpose, she stated, was "to address challenges, unite efforts, and present solutions aimed at serving the expanding Hispanic populations in the Diocese of Jefferson City."

"As the leader of the charitable arm of

**"God gave each of us different gifts and different resources. We'll be able to do more if we work together."
— Ilsi Palacios, Hispanic resource coordinator, Catholic Charities**

the diocese, I am honored to represent my Hispanic heritage and contribute to the collaborative efforts that have taken place," she said.

"The leaders brought forth innovative ideas, shared valuable insights, and demonstrated a genuine desire to make a positive difference," she stated.

She pointed to the strong support of Bishop W. Shawn McKnight, "who wholeheartedly embraces the richness of diversity within our parishes."

"His commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment has been instrumental in creating a space where different perspectives are not only acknowledged but celebrated," said Ms. Main.

She's optimistic that this kind of collaboration will continue to have a positive impact on the Hispanic population in the diocese.

"By working together, we can more effectively address the needs of our community and provide meaningful solutions that enhance the overall wellbeing of our parishioners," she said.

"Up to us"

The group set up two working committees — one focusing on immigration issues, another focusing on formation.

These committees will present their work to the group in a meeting on March.

"Immigration is a huge issue," said Mrs. Guillen. "Everybody has questions, everybody wants to know, everybody obviously wants to be legal if they're not.

"But sometimes, we don't have the answers," she noted. "Sometimes, even the immigration lawyers don't have those answers."

Meanwhile, the MCC and El Puente are both interested in educating Catholics

on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, beginning with the sacred God-given rights of every human person.

"So instead of both of these organizations doing it on their own, they can unite and have us here at the Chancery help them," said Mr. Chinchilla.

"That's why it's so important for us to know each other and what we're working on so we can help each other," he stated.

"Along those same lines, we have a lot of the same goals, so why not unite forces instead of tackling these issues separately?" he said.

He also said that Catholic organizations are in a strong position to lead people to faith, "but we're recognizing distinct barriers to that mission."

"We have this great treasure, but for many reasons, including the situations some people were living in before they came here, people forget that the most important thing they possess is their faith," Mr. Chinchilla stated.

"So it's up to us to help make things accessible to people and form the leaders who can help us," he said.

"Lord, hear our prayer"

The group plans to meet four times each year.

"It is our goal to find ways to serve more effectively our Hispanic brothers and sisters in light of our bishop's vision for our diocese as good stewards of God's gifts," said Deacon Castro.

Mrs. Guillen suggested that as the Christmas Season spills over into another new year, people should pray for families, immigrants and "people who have to leave their families and face an unknown fate."

Mr. Trueba suggested praying for the Church to be able to reach every single faithful person "and also people of goodwill who are not yet Catholic."

Mrs. Palacios said to give thanks for one's own family and security, and to pray for those who are suffering in war-torn places and for families that have been separated to be reunited.

Mr. Chinchilla suggested praying for unity and an end to barriers that are based on difference: "Just because someone has a different culture or language — ultimately, we're Catholic and we have the same goal."

Namely, to share the Gospel, live lives of virtue, and spend all eternity rejoicing together in God's presence.

"We want to get to heaven together!" he said.

Warm food, hospitality in Warsaw on Christmas

The Warsaw Knights of Columbus council held its annual Christmas Day Dinner for the community and provided a meal for approximately 400 people. Dine-in and carry-out service was provided to anyone who wanted to attend.

— Photos by David Grimes



‘Jesus, you take over,’ papal envoy cried out in Bethlehem amid wartime Christmas celebrations

By Paulina Guzik
OSV News

Christmas in Bethlehem was celebratory but not as festive as usual this year, given the outbreak of war in the Holy Land two-and-a-half months ago.

Visiting for Christmas, the papal envoy, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, prefect of Vatican Dicastery for the Service of Charity, assisted the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem in the wartime celebration amid the “helplessness” of not being able to ease suffering Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Cardinal Krajewski is in the Holy Land as part of a “journey of closeness” with Christians in the region.

On Dec. 24, Latin Patriarch Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa arrived in Bethlehem on the West Bank with Cardinal Krajewski, where they were escorted by Israeli police to the border of the West Bank, and then by Palestinian police.

“We got out of the cars very quickly and went on foot to the Church of the Nativity. There were thousands of people there. On the way to the church everyone wanted to touch, kiss the hands of the patriarch,” Cardinal Krajewski told OSV News in a recorded voice message.

At 4 p.m. on Dec. 24, both cardinals joined the solemn procession of the Franciscans to the Grotto of the Nativity, where hymns and Christmas songs were sung, followed by a festive dinner with authorities of Bethlehem.

“This year, the mayors of Assisi and Greccio, where St. Francis built his first Nativity scene, joined Bethlehem in a touching sign of solidarity,” Cardinal Krajewski said.

At the solemn celebration of early Christmas Mass on Dec. 24, Cardinal Krajewski said that 2,000 people filled the Church of the Nativity. Despite hard

times for the Holy Land, “people were all beautifully, festively dressed,” he said.

“For too many days, we have all been caught up in the sad and painful feeling that there is no room this year for the joy and peace that the angels announced to the shepherds of Bethlehem in this Holy Night, not far from here,” Cardinal Pizzaballa said during the homily.

“At this moment, our thoughts cannot be far from those who have lost everything in this war, including their closest loved ones, and who are now displaced, alone and paralyzed by their grief,” he said.

“My thoughts go, without distinction, to all who are affected by this war, in Palestine and Israel and the whole region. I am especially close to those who are in mourning and weeping and waiting for a concrete gesture of closeness and care. Tonight, I remember the hostages kidnapped from their families, as I remember the people who languish in prisons without having had the right to a trial,” Cardinal Pizzaballa said.

Instead of festive celebrations, Palestinian children in the streets of Bethlehem carried signs showing solidarity with suffering Palestinians from the Gaza Strip. White signs with black inscriptions read “Gaza in the heart” and “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

After the solemn Mass, the patriarch, accompanied by Cardinal Krajewski, went to the Grotto of the Nativity, “where we spent 30 minutes praying, singing, visiting the place and leaving the statue of baby Jesus there,” Cardinal Krajewski said.

Pope Francis said in his Christmas message Dec. 25 that children dying in wars, including in Gaza, are the “little Jesuses of today.” He said that Israeli strikes there were reaping an “appalling harvest” of innocent civilians.

In the Christmas Day “*Urbi et Orbi*” (to the city and world) address, the pontiff also called the Oct. 7

attack on Israel by Hamas militants “abominable” and appealed for the release of around 100 hostages still being held in Gaza.

Cardinal Krajewski said he was unable to reach Holy Family Parish in Gaza City by phone on Christmas Eve, but, along with the patriarch, he met 20 people who have loved ones trapped in the Gaza Strip. He assured Christians in Bethlehem that “the Holy Father is with them,” in their suffering, and “expressed his closeness.”

Cardinal Krajewski said the church feels “helpless” watching the situation in the Gaza Strip.

“We are able to organize a huge amount of aid in a few minutes and send everything to this place of great tragedy. But it is humanly impossible at the moment,” he told OSV News. “That’s why prayer is so necessary today. Jesus, you take over! We do not have such opportunities, we do not have access to Gaza. We are simply helpless.”

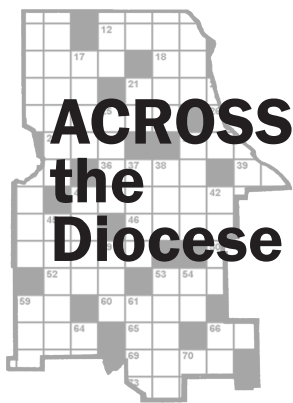
Still, the cardinal added, “there is hope, and we do not lose hope.”

On Dec. 23, Cardinal Krajewski visited poor Christian families. “I went with ‘koleda,’” he said, referring to a traditional Christmas visit of priests in the homes of their parishioners in his native Poland.

“They live very modestly. So I was with them and passed greetings from Pope Francis. I also left very concrete help — I thought they could pay a few months’ rent for the sum,” he said.

“But I learned then that the Latin Patriarchate rents apartments owned by the church for free to the poor Christians,” he said. “The church has a great deal of wealth, and all over the world you can help the poor in a very concrete way, the way they do in the Holy Land. We can learn from them.”

Paulina Guzik is international editor for OSV News.



By Father Donald Antweiler
ACROSS

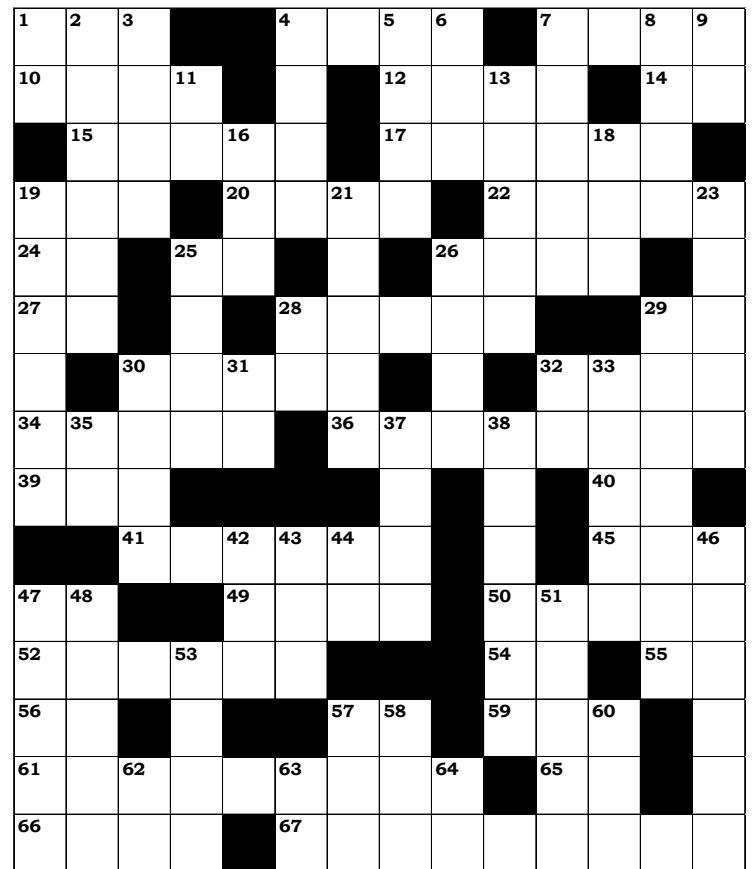
1. A bear hibernation home is called a ____.
4. An ant's home is an ant ____.
7. Sports channel.
10. A squirrel's home is in a ____.
12. The State of Israel's airline.
14. Companion to #9 DOWN.
15. Q-W.
17. A home for a horse is in a ____.
19. He gets ticketed for speeding and yet tells me I drive too fast. That's the ____ calling the kettle black!
20. "(In Capernaum) boats and ____ line every inch of the hundred feet between the stone pier and the breakwater," —*Killing Jesus*, Bill O'Reilly.
22. "He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its ____ to the stream," (Jeremiah 17:8).
24. "Strangely, the blows didn't hurt as much this time. It wouldn't be much longer. It couldn't be, ____ he might die, and he doubted these men would want that," —*The Last Man*, Vince Flynn.
25. Moon of Jupiter.
26. The home of a goldfish is in a ____.
27. "I handed him the length of chain and said, 'If anybody tries to stop ____, you swing that chain like you were driving money-changers from the temple. Let's go,'" —Watson in the Sherlock Holmes mystery *The Jewel of Covent Garden*, Wayne Worcester.
28. Common musical instrument in church.
29. "Parents need to introduce children to relationships that reinforce their faith, to ____ around friends and other families who take their faith seriously,"

- Supreme Knight Patrick E. Kelly.
30. A beaver's home is called a ____.
 32. Cross letters.
 34. County seat of Knox County and home of one of the 12 St. Joseph parishes in our diocese.
 36. This name is almost the definition of genius; one of the greatest physicists of all time; responsible for the theory of relativity and contributor to the theory of quantum mechanics.
 39. "In the ____ living room there was one narrow window that let in the afternoon light..." —*The Hermit of Eytton Forest*, Ellis Peters.
 40. This State is the second least populous State, after Wyoming, and its capital city is the least populous (8,000) in the U.S. (abbr.).
 41. A groundhog's home is a ____.
 45. "Brother Cadfael hardly spared a look or an ____ for the steady bustle far up the great court..." —*The Heretic's Apprentice*, Ellis Peters.
 47. Abbr. for Sister, a member of a women's religious order.
 49. A city in Arizona.
 50. An eagle's home is called an ____.
 52. A rabbit's home is called a ____.
 54. Abbr. for Rheumatoid Arthritis, an autoimmune and inflammatory disease.
 55. Letters for sodium on the Periodic Table.
 56. Short for Anno Domini, the time in which we live since Christ was born.
 57. A common college degree.
 59. A pig's home is called a ____.
 61. "Only 16 players have hit 50 or more homers in a season. To me, that's a very special ____," —Mark McGwire.
 65. Short for Executive Order.
 66. The home for a koi is a ____.
 67. "At noon darkness came over the whole land until three in the ____," (Mark 15:33).

DOWN

1. Abbr. for 5th book of the Bible which contains the second listing of the Ten Commandments.

2. No hits, no runs, no ____.
3. Home for a bird.
4. Home for bees.
5. "Hack remembered me and wanted to know if I am a Christian. 'More or ____,' I said. Hack said, 'More is better,'" —New Orleans; Charles Kuralt's America.
6. In gov't. and military, letters for Long Lead Time.
7. "Brother Cadfael knew better than to be in a hurry where souls were concerned. There was plenty of ____-room in eternity," —*A Rare Benedictine*, Ellis Peters.
8. "Every great architect is — necessarily — a great _____. He must be a great original interpreter of his time, his day, his age," —Frank Lloyd Wright.
9. Companion to #14 ACROSS.
11. ____ *cum spiritu tuo*.
13. Spokesman for and brother of Moses (Exodus 4:14 & 16); and priest (Exodus 28:1).
16. A card game.
18. Laugh out loud, in text.
19. (God) saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the holy Spirit, whom he richly ____ out on us..." (Titus 3:5-6).
21. "Before the cock crows you will deny me ____ times," (Matthew 26:75).
23. A beer mug.
25. ____ County, Mo. is in the St. Francois Mountains of the Ozarks Plateau. Home to dozens of mountains, it includes the 1,772 ft. Taum Sauk Mountain, highest point in Mo.
26. Home for a cow.
28. King of Bashon (Numbers 21:33).
29. The country we fought to gain our independence in the Revolutionary War.
30. "When I contemplated him on the cross, his hair was almost all torn off, and what remained was matted and clotted with blood; his body was one wound, and every ____ seemed as if dislocated," —*The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ — Visions of Sr. Anne Catherine Emmerich*, 1774-1824, mystic, stigmatic, visionary.
31. In mental health, letters for Dissociative Amnesia, when one feels a discon-



- nect between memories, identity, and surroundings.
32. "An army officer, Col. Leonard Wood, observed that 'Theodore Roosevelt knew that...delay would be fatal. He felt the responsibility and he took ____,'" —*Leadership in Turbulent Times*, Doris Kerns Goodwin.
33. "I ____ in my life felt more certain that I am doing right, than I do in signing this paper," —Lincoln signing the Emancipation Proclamation in *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, Doris Kerns Goodwin.
35. 501 to Cicero.
37. "Conley was a drug addict, has five arrests...The arrests were in Missouri, ____, two in Nebraska, and one in Minnesota," —*Deadline*, John Sandford.
38. One pair of ____ is great for trimming hedges, another for cutting fabrics.
42. A type of bread.
43. "They that hope in the Lord...will ____ and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint," (Isaiah 40:31).
44. A (sacred) sound or mantra in Hindu meditation.
46. "If it is not within us to create something permanent here, to give meaning to America...then there is no ____ to fight this war,"

- The Glorious Cause*, Jeff Shaara.
47. Mingo Nat. Wildlife Refuge shows how southeast Mo. looked before development, when 2.5 million acres was bottomland hardwood forest and cypress tupelo ____.
48. FDR used this medium to give his famous "fireside chats" during the Great Depression.
51. "...Who told you that you were naked? You have ____, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you..." (Genesis 3:11).
53. "What did you go out to the desert to see — a ____ swayed by the wind?" (Luke 7:24).
57. In automobile manufacturing, letters for Body on Frame, as used in production of trucks at the 3.7 million sq. ft. GM car assembly plant in Wentzville, Mo.
58. Resident of #4 ACROSS.
60. ____hoo; "a Beloved Beverage for 8 generations" says Dr. Pepper/Seven Up., Inc.
62. Related to Ct. or Trl.
63. In Britain, informal "thanks."
64. Letters for a Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, esp. at Mo. S&T in Rolla.

'I AM HERE' campaign invites all to discover Christ's real presence in Eucharist

OSV News

Detroit

This Advent the Archdiocese of Detroit wanted people to know they weren't spiritually alone, no matter how isolating post-pandemic, 21st-century life might seem.

As part of the archdiocese's I AM HERE campaign, an immersive initiative designed to encourage Catholics and others to discover Christ's real presence in the Eucharist, a huge billboard near the Detroit People Mover, an elevated public transit rail system, reminded passersby of this simple, comforting fact.

The billboard, featuring

black-and-white photos of three individuals highlighted in the campaign, directed viewers to visit the website iamhere.org.

The I AM HERE campaign, which began in June 2022, is a response to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' three-year National Eucharistic Revival, which seeks to spark devotion to the Blessed Sacrament amid reports of waning belief among Catholics.

The campaign features hundreds of testimonials about the power of the Eucharist in people's lives through written stories, photos, videos and podcasts, as well as guided reflec-

tions and meditations in partnership with the Hallow app.

Anyone with a devotion to the Eucharist should consider

sharing their story via iamhere.org/submit to encourage others to discover what a treasure the Blessed Sacrament truly is, Leah

Butalid, project coordinator for the I AM HERE campaign in the Archdiocese of Detroit's communications department.

MESSAGE

From page 1

"Rejoice, you who have abandoned all hope, for God offers you his outstretched hand; he does not point a finger at you, but offers you his little baby hand, in order to set you free from your fears, to relieve you of your burdens and to show you that, in his eyes, you are more valuable than anything else."

U.S. Cardinal James M. Harvey, archpriest of Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, stood alongside Pope Francis on the balcony, announcing a plenary indulgence available for everyone present, listening by radio, watching on television or following with "other means of communication."

In his message, Pope Francis said Christmas is a call to push for peace and to educate oneself about the arms industry, which foments killing.

"People, who desire not weapons but bread, who struggle to make ends meet and desire only peace, have no idea how many public funds are being spent on arms," he said. "Yet that is something they ought to know! It should be talked about and written about, so as to bring to light the interests and the profits that move the puppet-strings of war."

War "is devastating the lives" of Israelis and Palestinians, he said.

"I embrace them all, particularly the Christian communities of Gaza and the entire Holy Land," the pope said. He again condemned the "abominable attack" Hamas militants carried out in Israel Oct. 7 and repeated his "urgent appeal for the liberation of those still being held hostage."

But Pope Francis also called on Israel to halt "the military operations with their appalling harvest of innocent civilian victims" and open corridors for the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The enemy of the prince of peace, according to the Bible, is "the 'prince of this world,' who, by sowing the seeds of death, plots against the Lord, 'the lover of life,'" the pope told the crowd.

According to the Gospel of Matthew, he noted, soon after Jesus' birth, Herod ordered the execution of all male children under the age of 2 in the vicin-

ity of Bethlehem.

"How many innocents are being slaughtered in our world — in their mothers' wombs, in odysseys undertaken in desperation and in search of hope, in the lives of all those little ones whose childhood has been devastated by war," he said. "They are the little Jesuses of today."

"From the manger, the child Jesus asks us to be the voice of those who have no voice," the pope said. "The voice of the innocent children who have died for lack of bread and water; the voice of those who cannot find work or who have lost their jobs; the voice of those forced to flee their lands in search of a better future, risking their lives in grueling journeys and prey to unscrupulous traffickers."

Pope Francis also prayed for peace and stability in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Sudan, South Sudan, Cameroon and Congo.

Looking to the Americas, where a second Nicaraguan bishop was arrested Dec. 20 and where several nations are experiencing social and political strife, Pope Francis prayed that the newborn Lord would inspire political authorities and all people of good will "to resolve social and political conflicts, to combat forms of poverty that offend the dignity of persons, to reduce inequality and to address the troubling phenomenon of migration movements."

With the opening of the Holy Door and the inauguration of the Holy Year 2025 only a year away, Pope Francis prayed that people would use the next 12 months as "an opportunity for the conversion of hearts, for the rejection of war and the embrace of peace and for joyfully responding to the Lord's call, in the words of Isaiah's prophecy, 'to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners.'"

CHRISTMAS

From page 6

tice, the turnout was wonderful," she said.

Growing family

"I believe that we were definitely God's family while we were doing this," one parishioner stated.

Another said she was convinced that God was present in the project from its inception.

"He was there in our midst and in every person who came to work and in every person who got a meal," she said.

"I'm a strong believer in you don't ever look in the eyes of another person who God doesn't love," she added. "And you never know when you're going to cross paths with Jesus."

"It was a very special day," said another parishioner. "I came home and thought to myself, 'I feel completely blessed today. I met a bunch of people, and I came out with more family and more friends than I had before I got there on Christmas morning.'"

Weary world

The pastor preached at all the Christmas Masses about being a sign of hope.

He drew a lyric from the beloved Christmas hymn, "O, Holy Night" — "The weary world rejoices."

"There's a lot of darkness out there," he stated. "And we know this time of year, lots of depression, sadness, isolation. We are called to be a light of hope in the midst of that."

"That's why we didn't put our names on the dinner," he said. "We want the actual deed to be the sign of hope."

The priest is convinced that the Christmas meal might have been a turning point for the parishes.

"Not that we had a bad dynamic before," he noted. "But if you were an outsider watching, you wouldn't have known that all of these volunteers were from five different parishes. You'd have thought they had known each oth-

er from time immemorial."

He's convinced that setting the standards high draws the best from people and gives them an incentive to show up and help.

"After two years of preaching stewardship and the idea of parishes as centers of mercy and charity, this Christmas project told me they're hearing the message," he said.

He believed the homily he'd give the following weekend might be one of his most important.

"Basically, 'Look at what happens when we act as a family,'" he said.

He talked about how everybody who showed up to help had a distinct contribution to make, and all of it was from God.

"Everybody stepped up and did their thing," he said. "Everyone came away from that event tired but happy. And as a pastor, I can't ask for anything better than that."

Committed individuals

One of the organizers said her prayers on Christmas Night were songs of praise to God for everything that got accomplished that day with his help.

She's noticed that the parishes are feeling less separate and more like one family.

"And we're continuing to build on that family and that community feeling among ourselves," she said. "We're definitely very blessed."

She believes any parish that has parishioners who are generous with their time and their treasure can do something like what these parishes did on Christmas.

She pointed to a statement by social activist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed individuals can change the world. In fact, it's the only thing that ever has."

"It proved to be most definitely true on this day," the parishioner said.

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

Fundraisers & Social Events

Jan. 5-7

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

Jan. 7

Columbia, "Rise Up Shepherd," 9th annual Epiphany Concert benefiting the Uganda Project, 2:30-4 pm, Our Lady of Lourdes Church; **Jefferson City**, "Bells of Christmas-tide," community handbell concert, 3-4:15 pm, Cathedral of St. Joseph

Jan. 19

Jefferson City, Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie and Auxiliary #2693 fried chicken lunch/dinner, quilt drawing & silent auction, lunch 11 am-1:30 pm, dinner 4:30-7:30 pm, 1411 Missouri Blvd.; **Westphalia**, K of C

pre-Lenten drive-thru fish fry, 4-6:30 pm

Jan. 20

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

Jan. 21

Krakow, St. Gertrude Parish & School sausage dinner, 11 am-6 pm; **St. Thomas**, K of C pancake & sausage breakfast, 8-11:30 am, K of C Hall

Feb. 2

Westphalia, K of C pre-Lenten drive-thru fish fry, 4-6:30 pm

Meetings & Conferences

Jan. 18

Jefferson City, Faith-based health ministry meeting for those interested in health ministry in parishes, 10 am-2:30 pm, Catholic Charities office, to RSVP call 573-696-1424 or

email devaney.susan@gmail.com

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

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. 13

Monroe City, "Discovering the Women of the Bible," 8-10 am, K of C Hall, to RSVP call 573-735-4718

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

Jan. 17

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

Feb. 18

Jefferson City, Rite of Election, 3 pm, Cathedral of St. Joseph

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

Diaconate information meeting

DATE: February 24
TIME: 9:30 am - noon

The Office of the Diaconate for the Jefferson City diocese will hold an informational session on Saturday, Feb. 24, from 9:30 a.m. to noon at St. Pius X Parish, 209 S. Williams St. in Moberly.

Men who feel called to the Diaconate and their wives, or those who simply want to learn more are encouraged to come and find out about the life and ministry of permanent deacons, the application process and details concerning the formation requirements for becoming a deacon.

For details, visit: diojeffcity.org/event/information-session-on-the-permanent-diaconate-2/

Contact Deacon John Schwartze at jschwartze@diojeffcity.org or by phone at 573-635-9127 for information.

Pope: Diversity in the Church must be embraced

By Justin McLellan
Catholic News Service

Vatican City

Different ways of living out the Catholic faith, including different liturgical rites, should not be seen as threats to the unity of the Catholic Church but embraced as expressions of the body of Christ, Pope Francis said.

"You don't have to be afraid of the diversity of charisms in the Church," the pope said in a video released Jan. 2, sharing his prayer intention for the month of January: "For the gift of diversity in the church."

"We are not all the same," he said, and Catholics should "rejoice in living this diversity."

Pope Francis recalled how in the first Christian communities, "diversity and unity were very present and in a tension

that had to be resolved at a higher level."

The pope also noted that "to move forward on the path of faith we also need ecumenical dialogue with brothers and sisters from other confessions and Christian communities."

Dialogue, he said, is not "something that confuses or bothers, but a gift God gives to the Christian community so that it may grow as one body, the body of Christ."

Pope Francis pointed to Eastern Catholic churches, who, he said, "have their own traditions (and) some characteristic liturgical rites but maintain the unity of the faith. They reinforce it, they do not divide it."

The two-minute video shows several scenes from Eastern Catholic liturgical celebrations, such as using a spoon to dis-

tribute Communion and giving a blessing with large liturgical candlesticks.

Although they have their own liturgical and legal system, each Eastern church is considered fully equal in dignity to the Latin tradition within the Catholic Church.

The pope added that if the church lets itself be guided by the Holy Spirit, "richness, variety, diversity never provoke conflicts."

The Holy Spirit, he said, "reminds us that before all we are children of God, all the same in the love of God and all different."

Pope Francis ended the video asking people to pray to the Holy Spirit "so that it may help us recognize the gift of different charisms of Christian communities and to discover the wealth of different ritual traditions within the Catholic Church."

DEACON

From page 4

"A better disciple"

"Deacon John deserves to be recognized so that people outside these prison walls are aware of the tireless, selfless volunteer work this man puts in, hour after hour, week after week, year after year, simply because he has the heart to do so," said Andrew.

Deacon Hill believes he's already being substantially rewarded for his time and effort.

"What I have received is a wonderful op-

portunity to be surrounded by Catholic and Christian men and women who have every opportunity to lose hope but have found a way of growing their faith — even in the restrictive, hampered environment they are in," the deacon told *The Catholic Missourian* in 2023.

"The strength of their faith always inspires me to be a better husband, father, grandfather, friend and deacon," he said.

"In short — a better disciple of Christ."

QUESTION

From page 8

sins, help you to grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life." The clear implication here is that suffering, when patiently endured, can help heal the wounds caused by sins. So, I think it's reasonable to hope that a generally virtuous person who suffered through a long illness could have had their time in purgatory at least shortened — though it's important to still pray for the repose of their soul, regardless.

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.

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

Jefferson City, Cathedral of St. Joseph
Dave & Sharon Talken, 55 years

Jefferson City, St. Peter
Norvall & Barbara Bopp, 70 years

Mokane, St. Jude Thaddeus
Kevin & Mary McDonald, 30 years

Palmyra, St. Joseph
Ryan & Honeylen Morris, 10 years

St. Martins, St. Martin
Allen & Irmalene Rudroff, 50 years

Marriages

Taos, St. Francis Xavier — **Cortny Tynes & Joseph Reinkemeyer**

Birthdays

Rhineland, Church of the Risen Savior — **Margaret Bahr**, her 94th on Dec. 27

Baptisms

Rhineland, Church of the Risen Savior — **Lillian Ruth Rohlfing**, daughter of Kevin & Charlotte Rohlfing

Wardsville, St. Stanislaus — **Bennett Leander Gerstner**, son of Bret & Meghan Gerstner; **Luca Douglas West**, son of Travis & Courtney West

Deaths

Canton, St. Joseph — **Mildred Whiston**

Chamois, Most Pure Heart of Mary — **Marvin Lieneke; Cathleen Suess**

Marshall, St. Peter — **Monica Luebbering; Ayden Wright**

Rhineland, Church of the Risen Savior — **Catherine Eisenraat**

Salisbury, St. Joseph — **Daniel Enyeart**

Taos, St. Francis Xavier — **Glenn Knaebel**

Vatican news agency reports 20 missionaries murdered in 2023

Catholic News Service

Vatican City

In its annual report on Catholic missionaries murdered during the year, the Vatican-based news agency, Fides, noted what many of them had in common was living a normal life in areas where violence had become common.

“They did not carry out any sensational actions or out-of-the-ordinary deeds that could have attracted attention and put them in someone’s cross-hairs,” the report said.

“They could have gone elsewhere, moved to safer places, or desisted from their Christian commitments, perhaps reducing them, but they did not do so, even though they were aware of the situation and the dangers they faced every day,” it added.

Fides, the news agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies which is part of the Dicastery for Evangelization, reported Dec. 30 that 20 pastoral workers were killed in 2023: one bishop, eight priests, two religious brothers, one seminarian, one novice and seven laypeople.

The agency said its tally was slightly higher than in 2022 when it counted

18 missionaries who died violently.

In the 2023 list, Fides included Los Angeles Auxiliary Bishop David G. O’Connell, a native of Ireland who had been a priest and later a bishop in Los Angeles for 45 years.

He was the co-founder of the Interdiocesan Immigration Task Force and a steadfast advocate for immigrants and the marginalized.

The list also included U.S. Father Stephen J. Gutsell, 65, who died after being stabbed in the rectory of his parish in Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, Dec. 10, 2023.

NATIVITY

From page 13

of Mary and foster-father of Jesus — just as we see him in the manger scene,” said Bishop McKnight.

The angel’s message to Joseph — “Do not be afraid” — is for everyone.

So is the Christ Child’s example of helping others, even from a position of total dependence.

“Our words to others in broken situations don’t have to be great or

FR. FLATLEY

From page 8

The moral sense of the Temple is found in the Christian, whose body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Temple contained the awesome presence of God, so do the bodies of Christians hold the presence of the Holy Spirit by virtue of their Baptism.

Anagogically, the Jerusalem Temple finds its eschatological meaning in the heavenly sanctuary, where God will dwell among us in our eternal home, as described in the Book of Revelation.

This method of uncovering the four senses of Scripture is rooted in Catholic Tradition and has been used by many great saints, doctors, and Fathers of the Church,

and even by Jesus and the New Testament writers themselves.

Understanding the four senses of Scripture is bound to transform our reading of the Bible.

By using this Catholic approach to the Word of God, you can more easily overcome the distance of time and discover the intimate solidarity that exists between the people of God in the Bible and our life in the Catholic Church today.

With the four senses in mind, the Biblical narratives become much more than stories from the ancient past. These age-old Biblical narratives can no longer be seen as far removed and detached from our lives today.

Instead, they are intimately bound up with the present.

God who was fathering the ancient Israelites continues to work in similar ways with His children today.

By calling our attention to the profound connections between the biblical world and the Christian life, the four senses of Scripture ultimately should lead us to our knees, to a deeper level of praise and thanksgiving for God’s magnificent story of salvation that He continues to write in the fabric of history and in our very lives ... and in our hearts.

Fr. Flatley is pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Jefferson City.

WOLFE

From page 9

ones that hurt us. It’s hard to forgive, but it’s even harder to live the Christian life when we do not. Any who have struggled with unforgiveness know that it is both a poison and a prison, not for those we hold in contempt, but for ourselves.

It is also a barrier to grace. Once we abandon everything connected to sin, the work of sanctification can begin in earnest. But if holiness is our goal, it’s important for us to recognize that we cannot conform ourselves to the image of Christ. Only God can do that. Only God can make us godly. Only the Holy Spirit can make us grow in holiness.

So why isn’t the Church full of saints? Because it’s hard to let go of what we’re attached to. And yet, attachments — even to spiritual goods and practices — can easily become idols. The only desire or bond that

cannot devolve into idolatry is our attachment to God himself. When it comes to everything else and anything less, all bets are off.

Every one of us would do well to begin the new year by letting go and leaving behind not only all that is not of God, but all that simply is not God himself. If we do, 2024 will be a banner year for spiritual growth and for living more faithfully than ever before.

Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a sinner, Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.

Crossword puzzle answers

“Carol and the Belles”



St. Mary School students in Frankenstein present the musical “Carol and the Belles” to family and friends on Dec. 1. Carol, a waitress at Big Bill’s Diner, enters and wins a contest for the restaurant to host the Christmas Eve Special. Several catastrophes prevent the cast from getting to the diner in time for the production. In place of the Special, the town locals

decide to let the TV station film their annual Christmas Pageant. All 22 students from the school participated in the play.

— Photos by Theresa Wagner



Warm heads and hearts



Children of St. Jude Thaddeus Parish in Mokane and their pastor model the black and purple winter caps the parish gave them. With them is their pastor, Father Joseph Abah.

Out of the shadows



Fifth- through eighth-graders at Holy Family School in Freeburg perform a “Shadow Nativity” on Dec. 13 in Holy Family Church.

— Photos by Mary Holterman

Pounds of giving

High school youth group members from St. Peter Parish in Marshall — Mimi Sherman, Sam Sherman, Henry Pointer, Jack Donnell and Whit Thomas — display the 280 pounds of canned goods the group collected during their annual door-to-door drive for the local Food Pantry. Youth group member Eliza Papreck (not pictured) also took part.

— Photo by Carol Wolfe

Bible Accent

In 1 Samuel 16, we can read another story about David tending his father's sheep.

In verse 1, we learn that God had rejected Saul as king, and he wanted the prophet Samuel to anoint a new one.

"Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons," God told the prophet.

"How can I go? Saul will hear of it and kill me," Samuel said.

"Take a heifer along and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I myself will tell you what to do; you are to anoint for me the one I point out to you," God replied.

Samuel did as God said. At the sacrifice, Jesse presented his sons to Samuel one by one.

"Are these all the sons you have?" Samuel asked after meeting seven of Jesse's sons, none of whom God chose.

"There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep," Jesse replied.

"Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here," the prophet said.

David was brought before Samuel. David was a handsome youth and made a splendid appearance.

"There — anoint him, for this is the one!" God told Samuel.

Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David in the midst of his brothers, and from that day on, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David.

St. Fabian

St. Fabian was a Roman layman who lived in the third century. He attended a papal conclave as an observer in 236. Even though he was not under consideration, he wound up being elected pope after a dove landed on his head. He was among the first to be martyred during the Roman Emperor Decius' persecution of Christians. St. Cyprian called Fabian "an incomparable man, the glory of whose death corresponded with the holiness of his life." Fabian died in 250, and we honor him on Jan. 20.



David kills Goliath for insulting the armies of God

By Jennifer Ficaglia
Catholic Courier

King Saul of Israel and his army were camped across from the army of the pagan Philistines. Each side prepared for battle.

One day, a giant named Goliath of Gath came out from the Philistine camp.

He was extremely tall and large, he wore heavy armor made of bronze and he had a bronze scimitar slung from his shoulders.

"Choose one of your men, and have him come down to me. If he beats me in combat and kills me, we will be your vassals; but if I beat him and kill him, you shall be our vassals and serve us," Goliath shouted.

King Saul and his men were stunned and terrified.

When Goliath issued his challenge, King Saul's armor bearer, David, was in Bethlehem watching his father's sheep.

David's father, Jesse, gave him food to take to his three older brothers, who were with the king's army.

When David arrived at the camp, Goliath again issued his challenge.

"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should insult the armies of the living God?" David asked.

David's words were overheard and reported to Saul, who sent for him.

"Let your servant go and fight this Philistine," David said. "Your servant has killed both a lion and a bear. This un-



Illustration by Linda Rivers

circumcised Philistine will be as one of them, because he has insulted the armies of the living God. The same Lord who delivered me from the claws of the lion and the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Saul agreed, and David went to meet Goliath, armed only with a staff, a sling and five smooth stones.

Goliath saw David and made fun of him.

"You come against me with sword and spear and scimitar, but I come against you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom you have insulted," David retorted. "Today the

Lord shall deliver you into my hand."

David and Goliath began moving toward one another. David used his sling to hurl a stone at Goliath's forehead. The stone embedded in Goliath's brow, and he fell to the ground.

David ran up to Goliath, took the Philistine's sword and killed him.

When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they fled.

Read more about it...
1 Samuel 17

1. Who was Israel at war with?
2. Which Philistine was Israel afraid of?

Essay

Reading for
January 17, 2024:
1 Sm 17: 32-33, 37, 40-51

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Puzzle

Using the hints from 1 Samuel, circle the correct answer to each question about David.

1. Which of Saul's daughters was in love with David? Merob/Michal (18:20)
2. Who was jealous of David and wanted to kill him? Saul/Jonathan (19:1)
3. Whose sword did David receive from Ahimelech the priest? Abner's/Goliath's (21:9-10)
4. Who refused to give provisions to David and his men? Samuel/Nabal (25:4-11)

Answers: 1. Michal; 2. Saul; 3. Goliath's; 4. Nabal

A fashion writer finds link between personal style and the theology of the body

Theology of Style: Expressing the Unique and Unrepeatable You, Lillian Fallon, Ascension Press (2023), 126 pages, \$15.95

By Julie Asher

Proper dress that shows respect for the institution and its members recently won out in the U.S. Senate, an outcome author Lillian Fallon would likely appreciate.

Pennsylvania's junior senator, John Fetterman, who favors shorts and hoodies, and his supporters had proposed changing an unwritten requirement that men and women members wear business attire on the floor of the chamber. The move failed.

By unanimous consent, senators passed a resolution to formalize business attire as the dress code inside the chamber.

"Clothing ourselves requires an understanding of appropriateness for our environment," Fallon writes in her new book, *Theology of Style*.

But Fallon's *Theology of Style* is about more than picking the right outfit for the right setting. She melds her

fashion and style knowledge with her deep study of St. John Paul II's theology of the body.

"But what if I told you that this innate pull toward certain items of clothing is actually a sign of being made in the image and likeness of God? I know, this sounds like a bit of a leap, but trust me, it checks out," she writes.

In his theology of the body, Pope St. John Paul lays out his integrated vision of the human person. Made in the image and likeness of God, he writes, the human body has a specific meaning, "making visible an invisible reality."

For Fallon, "a 'theology of style' shows how we live out being made in the Image every day — even in simple things, such as how we dress."

She also draws on the pope's 1999 "Letter to Artists."

"The artist has a special relationship to beauty," the pope writes. "In a very true sense it can be said that beauty is the vocation bestowed on him by the Creator in the gift of 'artistic talent.'"

Style is a "creative act,"

Fallon writes, that "combines the beauty of a material item with the beauty of the human person. In this creative act, the beauty of a garment unites with the beauty of a person's identity and emphasizes her unique personhood."

In Part 1, "Fashion Girl in a Catholic World," she recounts being a fashion-obsessed teen growing up in Pennsylvania, aching to be part of the fashion world in New York City. But a tension existed between that world and her Catholic upbringing in a house filled with books on saints and reminders that "Catholics should be in the world but not of the world."

She wasn't sure she could be both Catholic and a "fashion girl."

Attending Ave Maria University in Florida, Fallon was introduced to St. John Paul's theology of the body and was absorbed by it.

Then fashion drew her back in: She landed an internship at a fashion magazine in Manhattan. She became editorial assistant, then associate style editor and finally style editor.

Four years later she lost that job and returned home to Pennsylvania, returning to New York for a couple of short stints — once to help with a Fashion Week show. But that world had lost its allure.

Fallon saw more of the industry's cut-throat nature (think "The Devil Wears Prada") and had learned more

Movie Ratings



General Patronage

Journey to Bethlehem (PG)
Migration (PG)
Wish (PG)



Adults and Adolescents

Trolls Band Together (PG)



Adults

Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom (PG-13)
The Boys in the Boat (PG-13)
Freelance (R)
Freud's Last Session (PG-13)
The Holdovers (R)
The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes (PG-13)
The Marvels (PG-13)
Priscilla (R)
Renaissance: A Film by Beyoncé (Not rated)
Wonka (PG)



Limited Adult Audience

The Color Purple (PG-13)
May December (R)
Napoleon (R)



Morally Offensive

Anyone But You (R)
Silent Night (R)
Thanksgiving (R)

Ratings are supplied by OSV News Service.

about what goes on behind the glam: garment industry sweatshops and ill-treated workers.

Back home, praying for direction, a thought popped into her head: "You're a writer. So write!"

Fallon covers a lot of ground in her book. Part 2 is devoted to "Theology of Style," drawing more connections between the theology of the body and style. She also discusses masculinity and femininity and the important distinctions between the two.

Part 3, "Personal Style and You," includes what she titles, "The Dreaded Modesty Section," discussing how modesty has been approached in Scripture, and by the church and society. "Immodesty is just an indicator of a greater issue — a manifestation of a fractured sense of self-worth," she writes.

Fallon prefers the word "reverence," over "modesty," because it "implies a positive truth about the female body, rather than negativity."

She concludes with "The Real Purpose of Personal Style," offering "pillars" for developing one's personal style, which for her "is a tool for growing in understanding of your identity. It doesn't define who you are. You come first; clothes come later."

Fallon has been writing and speaking on "the intersection of faith and style" since 2015. It's a unique niche.

A reader won't have to be a clothes horse or a theology-of-the-body devotee to find a few takeaways from this book, subtitled, "Expressing the Unique and Unrepeatable You."

Julie Asher is senior editor for OSV News.

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JULIA GREELEY

From page 1

Catholic Church's first recognizably Black priest in the United States, who was also born in part of what is now the Jefferson City diocese.

Compassionate and deeply spiritual, Miss Greeley was known even in her lifetime as an Angel of Charity.

Her self-effacing kindness, missionary zeal and devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus emblazoned her memory onto the minds of people who encountered her in Colorado, where she spent most of her adult life.

She was blind in one eye due to the harsh treatment she had received while enslaved. Her body bore the ravages of excessive, menial work.

She never earned much money as a housekeeper, even to a Colorado governor and his family.

But as a Catholic convert, member of Sacred Heart Parish in Denver and a professed member of the Secular Order of St. Francis, she held nothing back in helping people who were worse off than she was.

She was renowned for her devout faith and her tireless, quiet service to the poor, to whom she regularly brought food, clothing and other goods in her little red wagon.

When she ran out of her own money to give away, she begged for more.

She worked in darkness and secret, in deference to the dignity of the people she was helping.

The outpouring of grief and devotion at the time of her death in 1918 revealed the bond God had forged between "Beloved Julia" and the many she had ministered to.

The Denver archdiocese opened a sainthood cause for her in 2016.

The following year, her earthly remains were moved to a new marble sarcophagus built for her in the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver.

After getting to know his new heavenly friend, reading about her, and reflecting on



Artist Ruben Ferreira's painting of Servant of God Julia Greeley depicts her holding a full grocery bag and an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

— Photo courtesy of Ruben Ferreira

the only existing photo of Julia, Mr. Ferreira said he was struck by her joy.

"I knew one thing: I had to do Julia smiling, full of joy, that joy that she felt from being unconditionally loved by God," he stated.

"And when people started seeing her face with a joyful smile, people got curious, wanting to know more," he said. "After all, no one wants to follow unhappy people!"

Joy radiates from Mr. Ferreira's smiling depiction of Julia, which also shows her hard at work, carrying a full grocery bag.

"Bringing that simple element to the painting indicates that even saints have to go shopping and that we are called to see God in all things," Mr. Ferreira explained.

"I must put as much effort into painting a grocery bag as the Sacred Heart of Jesus," he said. "God asks us to put love in the ordinary things of our lives in an extraordinary way. Always love in everything we do."

It is the deep love that Julia

Greeley exemplified in her life and works from which we can all learn, Mr. Ferreira said.

"Julia showed us that we are called to live in the present moment and love everyone unconditionally," he noted. "Julia shows us that love prevails and is above everything else.

"Love generates love, and we can only love by serving our brothers and sisters in this broken world," Mr. Ferreira continued. "Julia shows us that God is far bigger than our pasts and struggles, and he's always calling us to follow him."

To learn more about Mr. Ferreira's mission to spread the Gospel through art, visit rubenferreiraart.com.

Mr. Escaleira is the Digital & Social Media Manager for the Archdiocese of Denver. A version of this article was published in the Sept. 17, 2023, edition of the Denver Catholic. This article and the artwork are republished here with permission.

Daily Readings

Sunday, Jan 7

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Is. 60:1-6
Ps. 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13
Eph. 3:2-3a, 5-6
Mt. 2:1-12

Monday, Jan 8

The Baptism of the Lord
Is. 42:1-4, 6-7 or Acts 10:34-38
Ps. 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10
Mk. 1:7-11

Tuesday, Jan 9

1 Sm. 1:9-20
(Ps.) 1 Sm. 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8abcd
Mk. 1:21-28

Wednesday, Jan 10

1 Sm. 3:1-10, 19-20
Ps. 40:2, 5, 7-8a, 8b-9, 10
Mk. 1:29-39

Thursday, Jan 11

1 Sm. 4:1-11
Ps. 44:10-11, 14-15, 24-25
Mk. 1:40-45

Friday, Jan 12

1 Sm. 8:4-7, 10-22a
Ps. 89:16-17, 18-19
Mk. 2:1-12

Saturday, Jan 13

St. Hilary, bishop and doctor of the Church
1 Sm. 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1a
Ps. 21:2-3, 4-5, 6-7
Mk. 2:13-17

Sunday, Jan 14

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

1 Sm. 3:3b-10, 19
Ps. 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10
1 Cor. 6:13c-15a, 17-20
Jn. 1:35-42

Monday, Jan 15

1 Sm. 15:16-23
Ps. 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21, 23
Mk. 2:18-22

Tuesday, Jan 16

1 Sm. 16:1-13
Ps. 89:20, 21-22, 27-28
Mk. 2:23-28

Wednesday, Jan 17

St. Anthony, abbot
1 Sm. 17:32-33, 37, 40-51
Ps. 144:1b, 2, 9-10
Mk. 3:1-6

Thursday, Jan 18

1 Sm. 18:6-9; 19:1-7
Ps. 56:2-3, 9-10a, 10b-11, 12-13
Mk. 3:7-12

Friday, Jan 19

1 Sm. 24:3-21
Ps. 57:2, 3-4, 6, 11
Mk. 3:13-19

Saturday, Jan 20

St. Fabian, pope and martyr; St. Sebastian, martyr
2 Sm. 1:1-4, 11-12, 19, 23-27
Ps. 80:2-3, 5-7
Mk. 3:20-21

The Holy Father's prayer intentions for January:

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

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DISPLAY

From page 12

Fountain, set the pace for decorating with their magnificent work inside the church.

A beautiful outdoor Nativity scene also greets passers-by on nearby U.S. Highway 63.

Mrs. Holterman said her students started out lukewarm on the project but got more excited with each creative challenge they overcame.

"They did an amazing job,

once they got the gist of it," she said.

She hopes to have her students augment the collection of up-cycled artwork in time for Christmas 2024.

"We might start a tradition and be able to light both sides of the lane," she said.

A video of the display can be found on the Holy Family School and Parish Facebook page.

Women of the Bible, event in Monroe City

DATE: January 13
TIME: 8 - 10 am

Holy Rosary Parish in Columbia will hold a free presentation for women, titled "Discovering the Women of the Bible," on Saturday, Jan. 13.

It will be from 8 to 10 a.m. in the Knights of Columbus Hall, 405 S. Main St., behind Holy Rosary Church.

Parishioner Lori Watson of Joyful Love Ministries will be

the presenter.

All women are welcome to join us as we Discover the Women of the Bible.

Breakfast will be served.

Please make a reservation to ensure adequate preparations.

Contact Donna Long at donnalong.hrss@gmail.com or by phone at 573-735-4718 for information, or visit:

holyrosary.diojeffcity.org/ladies-of-holy-rosary/

House chaplain's prayer for first day of 2024 Legislative Session

Msgr. Robert A. Kurwicksi, vicar general of the Jefferson City diocese, pastor of St. Peter Parish in Jefferson City, and chaplain of the Missouri House of Representatives, led the House in praying the following prayer on Jan. 3, the opening day of the 2024 Legislative Session:

"Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them, will be like a wise man who built his house upon a rock."

— Matthew 7:24.

Eternal God, who is the refuge of the humble and the strength of the faithful, help us to realize more than ever that the only firm foundation upon which our state can build safely is a true faith in you and in a real devotion to our political and spiritual values.

May the security of our American way, the survival of our democratic spirit, and the support of our free institutions find inspiration in the assurance of your power, your wisdom, and your love.

Each day, may we keep ourselves committed to you whose love never falters, whose light never fades, and whose life never fails.

May we face each day with

courage and faith knowing you are with us always and forever here in the People's

House.

And the House says, "Amen!"

Come in out of the cold



A heavy, wet snow greets Mass-goers outside the Cathedral of St. Joseph before the 6:30 a.m. weekday Mass on Dec. 29, the Fifth Day of Christmas. — Photo by Father Stephen Jones

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