Christmas Lights Reflect Truth that Christ is Light of World, Pope Says

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

The lights glowing on the Christmas tree in St. Peter’s Square, like Christmas lights everywhere, are reminders that Jesus is the light of the world, Pope Francis said.

The 82-foot-tall tree was a gift of the German city of Waldmünchen, but it grew just over the border in the Czech Republic. Mayors from Bavaria in Germany and Bohemia in the Czech Republic joined hands to light the tree.

“This tree is international,” the pope told the 350 pilgrims who traveled to the Vatican for the tree-lighting ceremony.

The Gospel story of Jesus’ birth tells how the shepherds tending their flocks nearby were surrounded by a “great light,” the pope said. “Today, too, Jesus continues to dispel the darkness of error and sin and brings humanity the joy of blazing divine light.”

“We should let ourselves be enveloped by the light of his truth so that the joy of the Gospel would fill the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus,” he said.

The Bavarians said they particularly were proud that it was the second time they donated a tree to the Vatican; the first was in 1984.

Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello, president of the commission governing Vatican City State, told the pilgrims that while the Christmas tree was a northern European tradition, it was a custom Pope John Paul II brought to the Vatican in 1982.

“The tree, in every culture, is a symbol of life,” the cardinal said. A Christmas tree is a reminder that “the Lord comes to give us his life. Let us welcome him in our hearts and, in the glow of his light, let us bring him to the world.”

The cupola of St. Peter’s Basilica and the top of the Vatican Christmas trees are seen following a lighting ceremony in St. Peter’s Square Dec. 13.

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Mandela ‘Touched My Heart, My Soul, My Life,’ Says Ex-Fellow Prisoner

Under Mandela, South Africa became Beacon to World, Says U.S. Bishop

Catholic News Service

Former South African President Nelson Mandela opened his eyes to the sun on June 18, 1962, in a South African jail cell that was a symbol of hope for those who had been imprisoned in apartheid South Africa.

Standing before the biggest gathering of world leaders, former South African President Nelson Mandela has made his final journey, surrounded by a sea of world leaders and former presidents.

Mandela, who died Dec. 5 at age 95 at his home in Johannesburg, was released from prison in 1990 after 27 years. As the country’s first black president, serving from 1994 to 1999, he promoted peace and reconciliation.

Mandela was “a great gift.”

The service was said to have been one of the biggest gatherings of world leaders, with nearly 100 presidents, kings, dukes, sheiks and celebrities in attendance. Pope Francis sent a special envoy, Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Archbishop William Slattery of Pretoria represented the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference.

The crowd, whose unruliness had included loud boosing of South African President Jacob Zuma, was silenced by a Nobel peace laureate, retired Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

"I am not going to give you a blessing until all of you stand, and I want to hear a pin drop," he said.

"We saw people who had never voted in their lives," said Bishop Ricard.

"We urged those present to join him in this pledge: ‘We promise God that we are going to follow the example of Nelson Mandela.’"

In a prayer at the start, Anglican Archbishop Thabo C. Makgoba of Cape Town asked God to “help us to build on the firm foundations left by Madiba” and to “give us the grace to live the values of Madiba and to share them with the world.”

"Go forth revolutionary and loving soul of Madiba. You have certainly done all that is noble," he said.

"We can choose a world defined ... by peace, justice and opportunity," he said, noting that Mandela lived out his belief that, “I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul.”

"We are a beacon to remember Madiba as an icon, removed from society, but the former president ‘insisted on sharing with us his doubts and his fears; his mis-calculations along with his victories. ‘I am not a saint,’ he said, ‘unless you think of a saint as a person who keeps on trying.’"

"The service was said to have been one of the biggest gatherings of world leaders, with nearly 100 presidents, kings, dukes, sheiks and celebrities in attendance."
Collection to Be Taken Up in the Diocese January 11 and 12

The annual collection for Aid to the Catholic Church in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa will be taken up in parishes in the Diocese of Harrisburg Jan. 11 and 12.

This combined collection supports the Catholic Church in several different parts of the world, funding catechesis, youth ministry and seminarian education.

Central and Eastern Europe: In the predominantly Orthodox Russian Siberia, the Catholic Church makes its rural terrain and difficult climate. These communities provide necessary care for orphans, for the homeless, and for families in need. In Bucharest, Romania, the collection funded a repair of the New Home Centre, run by the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart. The Centre provides a home for abandoned children, offering them nursery care and preschool education. However, the sisters’ building was poorly insulated and overcrowded. The repair and expansion project will provide living quarters for children and a separate kindergarten, and ensure that the children live in a safe and welcoming environment.

Latin America: Catholics in Latin America and the Caribbean face many challenges when it comes to sharing their faith; yet, the light always shines through and hope arises. In the Diocese of San Miguel, El Salvador, the youth of Holy Family Parish are at high risk for violence and gang activity. In response, the parish designed a youth enrichment and leadership program that addresses young people’s need for critical-thinking skills and values education. The parish hopes to help the youth live in these high-violence areas create a culture of solidarity and peace within their neighborhoods. The parish currently engages a group of 75 young adults who will become youth leaders to spread the Gospel message in their neighborhoods and break the cycle of violence.

Africa: The Church in Africa continues to grow rapidly, and by 2025, nearly one-sixth of the world’s Catholic population is expected to be living on the continent. The collection for the Church in Africa supports programs that ensure that the quickly-growing African Church continues to communicate its faith and work to overcome current challenges. One place in which the collection is making a positive impact is in the Diocese of Zomba in Malawi. Those living in Malawi face poverty, poor education, and only a few parish communities in which to nurture their faith. The parishioners at Chaoloka St. Paul Church in the rural area of Domasi built their own open-air church. Unfortunately, the danger of flooding during the rainy season made the need for a sturdy roof an urgent one. Donations to the collection helped hundreds of Catholics in Zomba worship safely in a weather-resistant structure.

(For more information on the collection to benefit the Church in Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa, visit the National Collections link at www.ncccb.org.)

PNC Financial Services Group, Inc., recently gave $2,500 in Pre-K scholarship assistance to the Diocese of Harrisburg’s Neumann Scholarship Foundation. The contribution was made possible by the business’ participation in Pennsylvania’s Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program, which provides tax credits to businesses that contribute to scholarship organizations, such as the Neumann Scholarship Foundation. Father Edward J. Quinlan, Diocesan Secretary for Education, received the check from Lori Alderman, Vice President, Director of Client and Community Relations, The PNC Financial Services Group Inc. For information on donating to the Neumann Scholarship Foundation, contact Paula Lasecki, Diocesan Director of Development, at 717-657-4804, or plasecki@hbgdiocese.org.
Word Made Flesh
By Sister Geralyn Schmidt, SCC
Special to The Witness

Once upon a time, the Divine Author sat down in front of His “keyboard” and opened up His “word processing program.” He laid His fingers at the “keyboard” and typed, “Fiat” [Let it be done as you say]. As the Divine Author sent a messenger to a young woman who echoed His words, her heart was inflamed with love. She smiled with glee, for everything she created reflected His infinite love. She paused and then typed “hominum.” He made humans, the highpoint of His creation, in His image and likeness. He gave them dominion over all of His creation. He loved them with a Father’s heart and gifted them with a choice to love Him in return. They chose not to respond to His love, forever affecting the progeny.

In order to heal the broken relationship, in the fullness of time, the Divine Author sent a messenger to a young woman who echoed His words, and said, “Mary’s heart was inflamed with love. She smiled with glee, for everything she created reflected His infinite love. She paused and then typed “hominum.” He made humans, the highpoint of His creation, in His image and likeness. He gave them dominion over all of His creation. He loved them with a Father’s heart and gifted them with a choice to love Him in return. They chose not to respond to His love, forever affecting the progeny.

So with every Christmas card you write, keep in mind that you are evangelizing the birth of Christ. My challenge to you is to make known His greatness for you. Bring this to them by sharing your personal Magnificat, how God has done great things for you.

(Sister of Christian Charity, Geralyn Schmidt, is the Wide Area Network Coordinator at the Diocese of Harrisburg and a member of the IT Department. An educator for 28 years, she is responsible for Professional Development Programs for every age learner. In addition, Sister blogs for Powerful Learning Practices, a company providing in-service opportunities to educators. Through her presentations she challenges her audiences to be the individual God has called them to be.)
Anthony and Lorraine Murdocca will have quite an experience to share when they gather with family and friends this Christmas. The Murdoccas, members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Mechanicsburg, were blessed with a private audience with Pope Francis on Nov. 8 at Domus Sanctae Marthae, Latin for St. Martha’s House. Since their return from Rome, the Murdoccas haven’t been able to stop talking about the holiness Pope Francis exudes.

“We’ve used the word ‘simple’ not to brag — but because we want people to know how holy and humble the pope is,” Mr. Murdocca said. “Everything about him is so simple,” he added, noting the plain wooden chair Pope Francis used during the Mass, and his simple shoes that are nearly worn through on one side.

“He is humble, meek, but his words and actions carry much weight,” he said. The Murdoccas are well traveled in Rome. This most recent trip was their 108th time in the ancient city. They’ve made pilgrimages there together, and, as former educators, have taken students there for summer excursions.

During previous trips, they’ve enjoyed being part of the general audiences of Blessed John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. They were also in St. Peter’s Square when John Paul II died in 2005, and when Benedict resigned last February. As they planned this most recent trip, Mr. Murdocca suggested they inquire about having a private audience with Pope Francis in celebration of their upcoming 55th wedding anniversary this summer.

He wrote a letter of request in June. Two weeks later, the Murdoccas received an e-mail from Msgr. Assunto Scotti, affirming their request and providing details about where and when to arrive for the Mass and audience with the Holy Father. Mr. Murdocca then inquired with Msgr. Scotti about receiving a papal blessing for their wedding anniversary.

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The morning of Nov. 8, they reverently stepped into the chapel with 15 other people. Before long, with no thought that perhaps he had overstepped his bounds. But he received no reply to that request, and he was receiving a papal blessing for their wedding anniversary with the Holy Father.

“I was in such awe,” he said. “I love to talk, but I was dumbstruck. I’m still floating on air!”

Adding to the blessings of the day was a special surprise awaiting the Murdoccas at the private audience. Msgr. Scotti called them forward and presented them with the papal blessing they had inquired about several months earlier.

“When I think back to the day my husband wrote to request the private audience, I remember thinking it was such a pipe dream. But when I think about how the Holy Spirit has worked in our lives and the experiences we’ve had, I know we are truly blessed,” Mrs. Murdocca said.

“We loved Pope Francis from the day he was elected, and have read so much about him, how he is so meek, so connected to people,” she said. “When we were with him, I felt that presence. You feel a dynamic with him, and we brought that back home with us.”

Will they return to Rome for a 109th time? At this point, they don’t have another trip in the works.

“I think this might have been our last time to Rome,” Mr. Murdocca said. “Not just because this private audience was a wonderful way to cap off our time there, but because of this: We were there when John Paul II died, and when Benedict retired. We love Pope Francis so much and want him to be pope for a long time, so maybe now we will stay out of Rome.”

Lorraine and Anthony Murdocca, members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Mechanicsburg, display a framed photo from their private audience with Pope Francis last month. They requested the audience in anticipation of their upcoming 55th wedding anniversary.

“People have asked us if we felt apprehensive while we were waiting to greet him. On the contrary,” Mrs. Murdocca remarked. “We talked to him like he was one of our friends or neighbors. He was so easy to talk to.”

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Photo Courtesy of Phillip Figdore

The Capital Campaign for a new church and parish center at Holy Infant in York Haven has journeyed a great distance in a very short time. In October 2012, parishioners celebrated a kick-off event for the three-year campaign to raise $1.05 million. The campaign goal, presented as 350 shares at $3,000 each, represented a major portion of half the cost of building a church and parish center at a new location near Strinestown. Just eight weeks after that kick-off event, Holy Infant’s pastor, Father Edward C. Malecic, announced last December that the campaign exceeded its goal. At present, the parish has received nearly 55% of the amount pledged to the campaign.

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Holy Infant Parish Celebrates Halfway Mark of Capital Campaign with Mass of Thanksgiving

The Third Station of the Cross – Jesus Falls the First Time. A new set of Stations of the Cross, which came from another Church in Pennsylvania, were hung the day of the Mass of Thanksgiving, and will make their home in the new church as well.

From the fall 2009 discovery process through the campaign itself, the parish has placed an emphasis on keeping parishioners informed, through announcements at Mass and in the parish bulletin, short talks at Mass by lay leaders, the parish Web site, parish gatherings, and meetings, pastoral letters and newsletters.

The progress of the campaign is also illustrated by two framed puzzles, both with 350 pieces, representing the $1.05 million campaign goal of 350 shares at $3,000 each. The puzzle image is that of a mosaic of photos created from pictures spanning the parish history with the image of one of the church windows as its base. A completed puzzle illustrates the completed goal, while the incomplete puzzle shows the number of shares received so far.

Holy Infant Parish is home to 570 families, and the average parishioner age is 34.

(Archive source: Kathleen Myers, Communications Chair for the Holy Infant Parish Capital Campaign.)
**Lancaster Catholic Hosts Japanese School Students for Week of Cultural Exchange**

By Emily M. Albert

**The Catholic Witness**

What is the one thing you would miss most about home if you were in a foreign place?

For Naomitsu Kondo, it’s food from Japan, his home country.

Naomitsu and 111 other Japanese students from Hakodate LaSalle School in Hokkaido, Japan, journeyed to the United States – an almost 12-hour flight and Naomitsu’s first ever flight – to spend a week at Lancaster Catholic High School Dec. 8-13.

Hakodate is the third largest city on Hokkaido, the second largest, northermost and least developed of Japan’s four main islands. The school is an all-boys Catholic school.

The visit was Hakodate LaSalle School’s second trip to Lancaster Catholic in several years. Lancaster’s location to the country side and to the major cities like New York and Washington, D.C., make it ideal for the students to get a taste of American culture. They live with teachers and families from the Lancaster Catholic community, and join host students during their days at school.

“This gives our students a chance to experience another culture, while sharing a membership in a universal Catholic Church,” said principal Thomas Fertal.

“They have to communicate with the Japanese students, talk about their families, things that they all like. It’s also an opportunity for culture exchange, she said.

Amber Lou, an international student from China who is a sophomore at Lancaster Catholic High School, shared a bond earlier this month as 112 students from Japan spent a week at Lancaster Catholic, shadowing students, living with host families and experiencing American culture.

**EMILY M. ALBERT, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS**

**Restorer: Working on Church of Nativity Like Touching Piece of History**

By Judith Sudilovsky

Catholic News Service

Helping restore the roof of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is like touching a piece of the beginning of Christian history, said an Italian restorer who is heading work on the first phase of the long-term restoration of the iconic church.

“I am not a practicing religious person, but working on this church is very emotional,” said Marcello Picentini, 53, the on-site project manager and a restorer with his family’s company, Picentini Spa, which began the work in September. “I have restored many old churches in the world, but when I arrived here I knew I had arrived at the center of everything.”

More than five years in the planning and researching, the restoration of the church’s wooden beams and lead roof and its 38 windows represents the beginning of an ambitious project, said engineer Imed Nasser, technical representative of the Palestinian Authority’s national committee for the restoration of the Church of the Nativity. Nasser said that, two years ago, it was estimated that the repairs would cost $15 million, not including the construction management fees.

Repairs are being done in several phases, as the funds become available, he said, with essential repairs such as the roof given priority. The next stage will include the completion of protection of the stone facade of the external walls once the funds are acquired, he said, noting that more than $2.7 million is still needed for that phase.

A member of the Franciscan order noted that members of the Catholic, Orthodox and Armenian churches, all of which have a presence at the Church of the Nativity, have agreed not to speak to the press in order to avoid any conflicts over sovereignty issues.

Though much care has been taken to not disturb the visitors and the church, Christmas pilgrims this year are being met with metal scaffolding, inside and outside, and protective wooden coverings around the marble columns inside the church.

Picentini brought special steel scaffolding from Italy to assist in the repair of the wooden beams inside the slanted ceiling. He will take the team of 10 Italian and five Palestinian workers about two years to complete their work, estimated Picentini, whose grandfather began the family tradition of carpentry and restoration work. Picentini and his four siblings made the tradition international.

Experts will analyze and study repairs throughout the restoration to assure the authenticity and quality of the work, he said.

The workers have already removed the wooden frames of many of the 50-year-old windows, some of which are pocketed with bullet holes received during the time that they were cut from the same cypress trees at the church and Israeli soldiers laid siege. The window frames will be replaced with Cypress wood, and special glass that blocks ultraviolet light will be used for the windows to further protect the frescoes and mosaics inside from the harsh Middle Eastern sun, said Picentini.

The current windows are machine made and “are not good material,” Picentini said, picking away at some of the rotted wood from one of the removed window frames. “But the wooden beams [from the ceiling] are from around the 1400s, from the time of Columbus, from... the Alps near Venice.”

Once the beams have repaired the wooden beams, they will make a new lead roof to replace the severely damaged old lead roof, which was last restored about 200 years ago, he said.

One of the important precautions they are taking is the protection of the five Crusader-era mosaics on the walls near the ceiling, covering them with special cotton gauze to prevent the pieces from falling or from being damaged by the work on the ceiling and roof, Picentini noted. Though they will remove the cotton textile and do some minimal cleaning of the mosaics, the restoration of the art work will be left for future phases of the church restoration, he said.

Piacenti said that he had been warned about the tense relations between the Armenians, Greek Orthodox and Franciscans at the Church of the Nativity because of issues with the Status Quo agreement over sovereignty over the church before he arrived. He was pleasantly surprised by the cordial relations he has witnessed at the Church of the Nativity.

“For me there has been no problem [with the monks], they are all very curious about the work we are doing and have asked me to explain. They are very happy for the work,” he said.

Most of the restoration work is done during the evening and nights, in order not to disturb the large numbers of worshipers. Workers have witnessed the lesser-known life of the church at night. They do not know the night life of the church, which continues to live even at 3 and 5 in the morning,” said Picentini. It is very special. We are a big family at night.”

**6 - THE CATHOLIC WITNESS, DECEMBER 20, 2013**
Teams that win big football games take control and seize the moment. And that’s exactly what happened in the PIAA Class AAA final at Hersheypark Stadium on a cold Dec. 13 that saw Archbishop Wood hand the Crusaders of Bishop McDevitt an especially difficult loss to swallow. It wasn’t that the Vikings were a better team or put more talent on the field. When pivotal moments came in the second half, the Vikings did what great teams do; they made their own destiny.

Trailing 3-0 at halftime, Archbishop Wood took the second half kickoff and drove the field behind a good offensive line and great, but diminutive, junior running back Jarrett McClenton. Wood’s offense is hardly complex; sweep left, sweep right and quick trap up the middle were the only plays the Vikings seemed to run. After scoring to make it 7-3, the Vikings stopped a Crusaders’ drive that seemed to have an answer. After a great punt that pinned the Vikings on their own 3-yard line, the game hung in the balance.

Twenty one plays, 97 yards, 12:06 off the clock, three crucial third-down conversions and one backbreaking fourth-down pass completion later, Archbishop Wood put the nail in the coffin with a final one-yard quarterback plunge that sealed McDevitt’s fate. When a team drives the field with eight first downs and plays small ball with that kind of grit, there is no blame to aim other than giving credit to a good football team that took matters into its own destiny.

Archbishop Wood’s Jarrett McClenton scores the go-ahead touchdown.

Archbishop Wood only threw the ball for 24 yards, but ran 66 plays, compared to McDevitt’s 23, which allowed the Vikings to out rush the Crusaders, 270 to 31.

The loss marks the second time in three years that the Crusaders have lost to Archbishop Wood in the final, and while McDevitt has made the state championship game in three out of the last four years without getting over the top, this loss was far less about McDevitt losing but more about Archbishop Wood winning.

“This loss is very, very disappointing…” McDevitt head coach Jeff Weachter said to reporters after the game. “But we have got to get over the hump and win one of these.”

McDevitt’s Drive to Win State Championship Comes Up Short

By Chris Heisey
The Catholic Witness

Archbishop Wood players celebrate their second state championship in three years.

Bishop McDevitt defensive back Joe Joe Headen, Jr., defends the goal line.

Bishop McDevitt assistant coach Lamar Banks consoles Jordan Mosley after their loss in the state championship.

Bishop McDevitt’s Nate Monroe congratulates an Archbishop Wood player after the game.

Emily M. Albert, The Catholic Witness

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Archbishop Wood’s Jarrett McClenton scores the go-ahead touchdown.
Karen Bruskewicz considers religious icons to be “windows that draw you into the Eternal.” She often brings her icons to her classroom at Good Shepherd School in Camp Hill, to use in teaching the students in her religion classes. Standing among the various sized images of the Blessed Mother and the Infant Jesus, the Angel Michael, and other icons not only because of their symbolism, her “Tree of Life” icon is a three-foot-tall work of faith. It stands in front of her other icons not only because of its size, but because of its representation of the Church and of Ms. Bruskewicz as a professed member of the Secular Institute of the Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ.

Along with religious life, secular institutes are a form of consecrated life within the Church, which were formally established within the Canon of the Church in 1947, where individuals live a consecrated life within the world, rather than apart from it. Members commit their lives to God within their state in life, and as consecrated women or men, live the Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They are called to daily prayer through the Liturgy of the Hours and other forms of prayer and meditation centered on the Eucharist and Penance, and living a life that God and others first. These secular institutes are the Secular Institutes in the United States, each having its own rule, lifestyle and mission.

Ms. Bruskewicz is a member of the Secular Institute of the Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ, who is a college of religious women which embraces the Franciscan spirituality of seeing the face of Christ in all people.

As a member of a secular institute, she lives and works in the world while giving witness to the Gospel. She is called to serve as leaven in the world, wherever we are in life,” she said.

During her many years in the Diocese of Harrisburg, Ms. Bruskewicz has done that as a teacher at Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary School in McSherrystown, as Director of Religious Education at St. Joseph Parish in Hanover, as Director of Religious Education and Youth Minister at St. Catherine Laboure Parish in Harrisburg, and now as a middle school teacher and religion coordinator at Good Shepherd School in Camp Hill. Ms. Bruskewicz already leads retreats and gives presentations for students, young adults and adults throughout the diocese. “I can’t think of a better occupation for me than to be able to talk about Jesus all day,” she said.

A Living Image

Religious icons are sacred images that may depict Jesus, the Blessed Mother, saints or Biblical images. Artists are said to “write,” not paint, icons because the artist is writing God’s story through art. Ms. Bruskewicz explained, “The story is not about me, it’s about Jesus.” She wrote her first icon after the death of her mother, as she was seeking a new way to express her prayer. Her spiritual director, who is an iconographer, encouraged her to write an icon. Easing Ms. Bruskewicz’s concerns about not being trained in art, her spiritual director advised, “Icons are not works of art, they are works of prayer.”

“Mother of Compassion,” an image of the Blessed Mother and the Infant Jesus not only because of its size, but because of its representation of the Church and of Ms. Bruskewicz’s first icon, which she dedicated to her mother. “Writing an icon is a spiritual experience,” she remarked. “As I wrote the ‘Mother of Christ’ icon, at first my prayer was focused on my relationship with Mary and Jesus, but soon it became intercessory, as I started to pray in the ‘we’ for all those in need of my prayer, and all those with whom I would share the icon: ‘Mother Mary, keep us safe under your mantle. Show us the way to your Son. Let us embrace Jesus the way that you embraced him.’”

“An icon is a sacred image, a living image, one that invites us into a relationship with the artist and the community being depicted, and to what they teach us about Jesus and about the Trinity,” she said.

The Holy Trinity is depicted through the tree itself, representing God the Father, the risen yet wounded torso of Christ (the same torso on the San Domenico Crucifix), and the Holy Spirit in the form of the dove sent forth from the hand of the Virgin. Christ is also represented in the three tree roots, pouring the waters of Baptism. The Holy Spirit is expressed through His fruits found in the Latin Vulgate Bible of St. Jerome. The fruit describes spiritual virtues (written on the tree branch bearing each fruit) and are connected to the lives of the apostles.

The two mounts on either side of the tree represent the Old Covenant on the left – Mt. Sinai – and the New Covenant on the right – Mt. of Olives. The lighter color blue chosen for the waters represents our Heavenly Mother, whose life flows freely from the heart of the Trinity; and the fish are those baptized and sent forth into the world, reflecting the Light of the Son.

The cross is one with the tree, as evidenced by the grain that runs through them both, but depicted in gold, as upon it our salvation was won. Because Christ is the Light of the world, the entire tree glows with His radiance and serves as the Light in our darkness, which surrounds it. Christ’s halo bears the Greek lettering meaning “One Who Is,” and the Greek wording at the top of the icon reads “The Tree of Life.”

The cross is hand-painted, a flame indicates the sense of healing to the early Church. The apple hangs by Jesus’ hand, representing Christ teaching Philip patience and deepened his trust in Him to the point of martyrdom.

St. Bartholomew: Cherries, kindness. Flaying knives, indicating the bloody death he endured. It is supposed that he is the Nathaniel to whom Philip made his announcement about Jesus under the fig tree. “Behold a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile,” said Our Lord, as Nathaniel came toward Him down the road, indicating his purity of intention and heartiness.

St. Thomas: Orange, charity. A carpenter’s square and a spear. Thomas, a missionary to India, preached and built a church there with his own hands. He was stoned but did not die, so he was shot with arrows, according to tradition. Then, still alive, he was thrust through with a spear. Moving from his earlier days of doubt, Thomas truly became a great witness of charity fidelity to Christ.

St. Matthew: Fig. joy. Three money bags. Matthew’s occupation as a tax collector is represented in the bags of money; three of them also indicate the immediate and joy-filled conversion in his life through the work of the Holy Trinity. He is supposed to have been martyred in Ethiopia on a T-shaped cross.

St. Simon: Strawberry, self control. A ship indicates惠us the New Covenant on the right – Mt. of Olives. The apple hangs by Jesus’ hand, representing Christ teaching Philip patience and deepened his trust in Him to the point of martyrdom. St. James the Less: Olive, peace. A spear head indicates the hand with a spear. Moving from his earlier days of doubt, Thomas truly became a great witness of charity fidelity to Christ. St. Matthew: Fig. joy. Three money bags. Matthew’s occupation as a tax collector is represented in the bags of money; three of them also indicate the immediate and joy-filled conversion in his life through the work of the Holy Trinity. He is supposed to have been martyred in Ethiopia on a T-shaped cross.

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CYO Teams Raise Breast Cancer Awareness While Donating Hair

By Emily M. Albert
The Catholic Witness

Basketball player Calie Appar smiles as a hair stylist shows the results of her donation to Pantene Beautiful Lengths.

EMILY M. ALBERT, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

CyO Teams Raise Breast Cancer Awareness While Donating Hair

Seated in the middle of the gym floor at St. Joseph’s in Hanover, Syndi Roth easily explained why she had just allowed someone to snip off some eight inches of her hair.

“I wanted to give back to someone,” said the CYO basketball player from St. Joseph’s and several other girls’ basketball teams—Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Francis, St. Leo the Great, Sacred Heart, as well as Hanover—participated in the sixth annual Pink Out tournament Dec. 6 and 7. Teams play each year wearing pink uniforms and pink shoelaces, using a pink basketball and even sporting pink stripes in their hair.

The tournament is for breast cancer awareness, and this year Syndi and more than a dozen other CYO players donated eight inches or more of their hair to Pantene Beautiful Lengths, an organization that takes donated hair and creates wigs for breast cancer patients. Three local area salons donated their time to help make this event happen: Designers Edge, Salon Trarofa, and Dynamic Edge.

For Makenna Martin, the tournament was a way to support her family members who have battled cancer. Her fellow basketball players shared her same perspective: “It is a great chance to help other people and give back.”

Stephanie Kline of St. Leo’s moves the ball past Sacred Heart’s Riley Virgins during the ‘Pink Out’ tournament.

DECEMBER 20, 2013, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS - 9

Tree of Life
Continued from B

We want to control when and how we receive our gifts. It then took thousands of years for us to be ready again to receive what You had to give. We didn’t recognize the Gift at first, hidden as it was in powerlessness and poverty for thirty years...

You then granted us three more years, where You taught us, healed us, and forgave us: You embraced us, nourished us, and washed us clean. ‘Now you are ready,’ You whispered to our hearts, with great anticipation.

And You raised up the tree again, this time in the form of a cross, hung upon it Yourself, and said, ‘Now take and eat… This is My Body… Now take and drink… This is My Blood…’

‘That’s the beauty of icons,’ she said. “Writing them encourages you to stay open to Christ’s love and direction, and to keep trying. In our human life, God has a way of making crooked ways straight.’

The Search for a Deeper Place

Ms. Bruskewicz says she has felt found a home, and I felt God calling me even deeper,” Ms. Bruskewicz said. “Around that time, a priest friend suggested that she look into joining a secular institute, through which she could enter into a deeper relationship with God and with others. She researched several of them and inquired with one in particular, but didn’t find the right fit. She found herself frustrated to tears.

“I felt I had a calling to a vocation, but it didn’t seem like I fit anywhere. I didn’t feel that I was being called to community life, but couldn’t find a secular institute that fit me, either, as I had not found one that was Franciscan,” she said.

She continued to pray. Again, she felt God calling her to a secular institute. Again, she searched online. The second link that she clicked – Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ – took her to a Web site with an image of the San Damiano Cross – the Cross that Francis was praying before when he received the commission from the Lord to rebuild the Church. Seeing the Franciscan image, Ms. Bruskewicz burst into tears of joy. She found what she had been searching for.

She applied for acceptance into the Secular Institute of Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ, participated in a retreat, and eventually found herself in formation.

The Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ follow Franciscan spirituality, which, according to their Web site, “sees in the person of Jesus Christ the human face of God, and in every person the divine image of the Creator, with all creation stamped with God’s beauty and goodness.”

Formation begins with a period of candidacy to discern the institute’s way of life, followed by three years of aspirancy involving an active prayer life, Eucharistic celebration and living the Good Gospel. Aspirants then make their First Profession, which Ms. Bruskewicz did a few years later, after five more years of continued formation after the First Profession, members make their Definitive Profession.

Missionaries consecrate themselves to the Lord through the vow of celibate chastity and the promises of poverty and obedience. Their vow of chastity is a sign of their commitment to orient their entire lives to God above all other things. Through poverty, they live simply and commit to allocate all resources according to Gospel priorities. Their obedience lies in their obligation to be faithful to the institute’s way of life guided by its leaders, and to the Church.

There are more than 2,200 members of the Secular Institute of Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ in some 30 countries. There are annual formation retreats for those in formation, annual week long retreats on each side of the country for all missionaries, and all members come together every 14 years for a national gathering. Monthly gatherings of local members – Ms. Bruskewicz’s closest peers live near Philadelphia – help Missionaries uphold one another in their way of life.

“Francis preached by his public actions, and Clare focused on prayer in contemplative life. We are a marriage of both,” Ms. Bruskewicz explained. “Witnessing to the Gospel in our daily lives is very important, but contemplative and liturgical prayer, daily Mass and sacramental living, especially serving the poor and those in need. I couldn’t live without the Mass and regular Confession. I couldn’t live without the Eucharist. But that’s the fruit of the vocation: being drawn to a deeper place with Christ and His love, and bringing His love to others.”
Pope Celebrates Birthday Having Breakfast, Mass with Homeless Men

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

As part of a low-key celebration of his 77th birthday, Pope Francis celebrated morning Mass and had breakfast with three people who live on the streets near the Vatican. A small dog belonging to one of the homeless men, was also on the guest list.

The pope requested that the daily morning Mass in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae be attended by the staff of his Vatican residence “in order to create a particularly family atmosphere for the celebration,” the Vatican press office said in a written statement Dec. 17.

Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, the papal almoner, also invited the three homeless men to the Domus for the Mass and to greet the pope. In addition, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, dean of the College of Cardinals, represented the world’s cardinals at the Mass, and Archbishop Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, attended.

All those present sang “Happy Birthday” to the pope, the Vatican statement said, and then joined the pope for breakfast in the residence dining room.

By Francis X. Rocca
Catholic News Service

Pope Francis said that Mary would never be indifferent to the Lord’s voice: that the cry of the poor, the suffering of the sick, the loneliness of the elderly and the fragility of children may move us” and that everyone seek to love and respect every human life.

At the end of the prayers, Pope Francis kissed, hugged, greeted and blessed a few individual white roses from people and a few notes and presents.

After the ceremony, he stopped at Rome’s Basilica of St. Mary Major to pray before the basilica’s famous Marian icon “Salus Populi Romani” (health of the Roman people).

Reciting the Angelus earlier in the day to the crowds gathered in St. Peter’s Square, the pope said Mary never strayed from the love and plan that God had for her even when accepting the plan fully “was certainly not easy for her.”

However, God’s love and plan for Mary, he said, are not something “alien” or irrelevant to the rest of humanity, despite the presence of sin.

God wants and chooses everyone to be holy and immaculate, he said. “All along, we, too, have been chosen by God to live a holy life free from sin. It is a plan of love that God renews every time we approach him, especially in the sacraments.”

Pope Francis asked that, in contemplating Mary, people recognize their true destiny and vocation: “to be loved and transformed by love.”

May people look to Mary “to learn how to be more humble and also more courageous in following the Word of God and for accepting the tender embrace of her son, Jesus, an embrace that gives us life, hope and peace,” he said.

Pope Francis talks with three men Dec. 17 on the streets near the Vatican on his 77th birthday, the pope celebrated morning Mass and had breakfast with the men.

CNS/OSBORNE ROLLENSI ROMANO VIA REUTERS
17 DECEMBER 2013

Pope Asks That No One Be Indifferent to Elderly, Children, Sick, Poor

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Pope Francis prayed that people would never be indifferent to the cries of the poor, the suffering of the sick, the loneliness of the elderly and the fragility of children.

“May every human life always be loved and venerated by all of us,” he prayed on the feast of the Immaculate Conception Dec. 8.

Pope Francis marked the feast day with a traditional afternoon visit to a statue of Mary erected near the Spanish Steps.

He traveled between the Vatican and the heart of Rome’s tourist and shopping district riding in the passenger front seat of a four-door Ford Focus sedan.

The visit was to pay homage to Mary by praying before the statue, which commemorates Pope Pius IX’s proclamation in 1854 that Mary, by special divine favor, was conceived without sin from the moment she was conceived.

The pope offered a large basket of white roses trimmed with a white-and-yellow-striped ribbon decorated with the pope’s coat-of-arms. The basket was set among scores of other floral arrangements at the foot of the column topped by the statue.

While he did not give a speech or make any formal remarks to the crowds gathered for the event, he spoke from a preprinted prayer asking that Mary would “renew in everyone the desire to be holy, charitable, pure and chaste and to speak words that ‘glow with the splendor of truth.’”

Standing before the statue, he asked Mary to “help us stay attentive to listen to the Lord’s voice: that the cry of the poor, do not leave us indifferent, that the suffering of the sick and those in need not find us distracted, that the solitude of the elderly and the fragility of children may move us” and that everyone seek to love and respect every human life.

In another wide-ranging interview with an Italian journalist, Pope Francis denied he was a Marxist but said he took no offense at the label, dismissed the notion of women cardinals and rejected the Pope Francis’ “pure Marxism coming out of the Italian daily La Stampa and the website Vatican Insider. The interview was conducted Dec. 10 and published Dec. 14.

“Marxist ideology is wrong, but I have met many Marxists in my life who are good people, so I don’t feel offended” at being branded one, Pope Francis said.

Following the publication of the pope’s apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”) Nov. 26, U.S. radio show host Rush Limbaugh denounced what he called “pure Marxism” talking on the show about the document.

“I came past,” the pope said, “please wish to say the same to humanity: give of yourself.”

“The child was crying its eyes out as I passed by,” the pope said. “Please give it something to eat!” He said. She was shy and didn’t want to breastfeed in public while the pope was passing. I wish to say to the same to humanity: give people something to eat!”

Asked about the possibility of creating women cardinals, Pope Francis said: “I don’t know where this idea sprang from. Women in the Church must be valued, not clericalized. Whoever thinks of women as cardinals suffers a bit from clericalism.”

The pope reaffirmed his commitment to ecumenism, noting that Christians around the world are already bound together by their common experience of martyrdom.

“Those who kill Christians don’t ask for your identity card to see which church you were baptized in,” he said. “We are united in blood, even though we are not yet ready to take necessary steps toward unity between us, and perhaps the time has not yet come.”

Pope Francis mentioned a German priest who has had to leave his causes of a Catholic priest and a Lutheran pastor, both killed by the Nazis for teaching the catechism to children.

“This is what ecumenism is,” the pope said.

Pope Francis plans a meeting of the cardinals the day before his 77th birthday, on Dec. 14, to mark the event’s 50th anniversary of its establishment as a papal advisory body, and its website will receive a new design.

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“This is what ecumenism is,” the pope said.
Pope Francis prayed that Catholics throughout the Americas would open their arms to the poor, to immigrants, to the unborn and to the aged just as Mary open her arms to all.

The day before the Dec. 12 feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, Pope Francis said, “I ask all the people of the Americas to open wide their arms, like the virgin, with love and tenderness.”

Speaking in Spanish during his general audience Dec. 11, the first pope from the Americas explained that “when Our Lady appeared to St. Juan Diego, her face was that of a woman of mixed blood, ‘mestiza,’ and her garments bore many symbols of the native culture.”

“When the image of the Virgin appeared on the tilma [cloak] of Juan Diego,” the pope said, “it was the prophecy of an embrace: Mary’s embrace of all the peoples of the vast expanses of America – the peoples who already lived there, and those who were yet to come.”

Mary’s embrace, the pope said, was a sign that North and South America were called to be “a land where different peoples come together; a land prepared to accept human life at every stage, from the mother’s womb to old age; a land which welcomes immigrants and the poor and the marginalized in every age. A land of generosity.”

In his main audience talk, Pope Francis concluded the series of audience talks about the creed started by retired Pope Benedict XVI during the 2012-13 Year of Faith.

Meeting some 30,000 people in a sunny but frigid St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis – suffering from a head cold and occasionally taking sips of a hot liquid – focused his talk on the creed’s profession of faith in “life everlasting” and in the last judgment.

In a certain sense, the final judgment is already underway because those who close themselves off to the love of the Lord and the love of their neighbors are saying they don’t need or want salvation, he said.

“This is where our responsibility comes into play,” the pope said. “In a way, we become the judges of ourselves by excluding ourselves from communion with God and with our brothers and sisters.”

The idea of a final judgment naturally sounds frightening, he said, but the Gospel tells people they don’t need to be afraid, just awake and aware.

“Salvation is opening yourself to Jesus. He will save you,” Pope Francis said. “We are all sinners all of us are. Let us ask forgiveness. With the desire to be good, let’s ask him, ‘Lord, forgive us.’”

“The love of Jesus is stronger than any other thing,” he said. “The love of Jesus is great. The love of Jesus is merciful. The love of Jesus forgives. But you must open yourself to it. And that means repenting, expressing regret for the things we’ve done that weren’t good.”

Another consolation offered by the Gospel, Pope Francis said, is that no one has to go it alone.

The entire communion of saints – all the holy men and women who are already with God – are interceding for those on earth.

“We can count on the intercession and benevolence of our many elder brothers and sisters who have preceded us on the journey of faith, who have offered their lives for us and who continue to love us in an indestructible way,” he said.

Two cardinals, two archbishops, two law enforcement officials and the president of the Vatican City State were among the more than 200 people who were given a papal audience Dec. 18 in St. Peter’s Paul VI Audience Hall.

A girl in St. Peter’s Square holds baby Jesus figurines for Pope Francis to bless. Pope Francis greets a man in a wheelchair during his general audience in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican Dec. 11.
The names of the following deceased persons have been submitted by their parishes:

**ABBTSTOWN** – Immaculate Heart of Mary: Jim Asello, Elnen Wantz.

**ANNVILLE** – St. Paul the Apostle: Rita Kasper, Wilhelm Miller.

**BERWICK** – St. Joseph: Joan Jordan.


**BONNEAUVILLE** – St. Joseph the Worker: Kenneth F. McDermott, Kenneth C. Sturtzman, Mrs. A. Weaver, Deborah L. Weishaar.

**BUCINAN VALLEY** – St. Ignatius Loyola: David J. Backhaus.

**CAMP HILL** – Good Shepherd: Dr. Edmond Sheidlofsky.

**CARLISLE** – St. Patrick: Paul L. Hunstting.

**CHAMBERSBURG** – Corpus Christi: Martha Jane Dennis-Senivity, Patricia Schrotto.

**COLUMBIA** – Holy Trinity: Margaret Weisser.

**CONEWAGO** – Sacred Heart of Jesus: Patricia A. Smith.

**CORNWALL** – Sacred Heart of Jesus: Anna Marie Fink.


**ELIZABETHTOWN** – St. Peter: Sylvia Hoyvanec.

**ENOLA** – Our Lady of Lourdes: Ralph Fulginiti, Sr., Josephine Koeberle.

**HANOVER** – St. Vincent de Paul: Patricia Kaeber, James Kopenhever.

**HARRISBURG** – St. Catherine Laboure: Alleman Leo, Dorothy Sutton, Anna Szekeres; St. Margaret Mary: Stephanie Ladavat.

**HERSHEY** – St. Joan of Arc: Lucy Heasey, Noreen Robertes, Helen Morelli, Lidia Pronio.

**LANCASTER** – Assumption BWM: M. Joseph “Joe” Guarino, Mary Ann Robertor; St. Anne: Bernard A. Gierz; St. Joseph: Alice M. Alston, Doris J. Bonanno, Frank W. Bostick, Beatrice V. Copeland, Mr. and Mrs. M. Martin; Mary M. Gegg, Margaret M. Heine, Philip L. Kirchner, Gail Mongeau, Frances M. Mortensen, Anna C. Reinfried, Jean M. Richelderfer, E. Carlene Roda, Bernadine E. Sheaffer, Helen L. Thompson.

**HUNTINGDON** – St. Aloysius: Martha Jane Dennik-Snively, Huntzinger.

**LITTLESTOWN** – St. Aloysius: Lawrence Roger.

**MARYSVILLE** – Our Lady of Good Counsel: Robert Richmond.


**MIDDLETOWN** – Seven Sorrows BWBM: Margaret Carricato, Stephen Gambino, William Wagner.

**MILLSVILLE** – St. Philip the Apostle: Robert Parkes.

**NEW FREEDOM** – St. John the Baptist: Mark Mulcahy, Louise Reimschussel.

**SINGINGROVE** – St. Pius X: John Nace.

**SUNBURY** – St. Monica: Mary H. Petruollo.

**TRENCHER** – Our Lady of Good Counsel: Robert Richmond.


**WAXONG** – St. Philip the Apostle: Robert Parkes.

**WIND Gap** – St. Mary: Mary Furlong, the coordinator of the Catholic-Muslim dialogue event, noted “The faith leaders called in 1986 to Assisi by Pope John Paul II was the beginning in modern times of interfaith and interreligious meetings.” To continue the dialogue, a visit to a local mosque service will occur on a Friday. Proceeds from this event will be divided equally between the St. Francis Xavier School development fund and the Noreen Neitz Scholarship Fund for 6th, 7th & 8th grade students attending St. Francis Xavier School who show service to the community and are active members of the parish and its youth group. Those interested in more information about this event can call St. Francis Xavier School at 717-334-4221, visit the school website at www.sfxs.org or email the St. Francis Xavier Development office at development@ sfxs.org.
Resurrection School Celebrates Feast Day of St. Nicholas

From Resurrection School

On Dec. 6, the spirit of St. Nicholas was alive in the halls and classrooms of Resurrection School in Lancaster. Resurrection celebrated the Feast Day of St. Nicholas by holding its fourth annual “Day of Sharing.” Following the example of St. Nicholas of sharing and giving to others, the students passed on this true meaning of Christmas to their parishes and the local community.

The school’s “Day of Sharing” began as the student body gathered for Morning Prayers. Brenda Weaver, principal, read about the life of St. Nicholas and led the students in prayer and song. The rest of the day bustled with many activities. The students made angel, star and dove ornaments and Christmas cards. These gifts will be shared with various parish and community organizations. The kindergarten and first grade students decorated the school with the Christmas chains and stars that they made. The students were also treated to a surprise visit from St. Nicholas, who filled their shoes with treats.

Miss Weaver said, “Our theme this year is ‘Called to be Saints.’ The children are taught that saints were ordinary people who did extraordinary things for others. We, like the saints, spent this ‘Day of Sharing’ creating ordinary ornaments and cards to provide some extraordinary smiles and happy moments for the people in our community. Resurrection Catholic School is a small school in the heart of Lancaster, but we are called to be saints, to show by our example that we are members of this community and to show the love of Jesus to everyone.”

At the end of the day, all the students prayed the rosary to give thanks for the Feast Day and the opportunity to participate in the “Day of Sharing.” A Christmas carol sing-along rounded out the day in joyous celebration.

Diocesan Institute Courses ~ Winter/Spring 2014

The Diocesan Institute for Catechetical and Pastoral Formation exists to provide a program of academic and pastoral formation for Catholic laity interested in service to the Church and personal enrichment. The Institute will assist laity in their life-long journey of formation, growth and service by deepening their understanding of scripture, theology and authentic spirituality. This process of formation seeks to develop their skills and abilities in order to become more efficacious signs of Christ’s presence among all of God’s people.

Take advantage of Diocesan Institute offerings without having to leave the comforts home. You can participate in courses and workshops offered at the Cardinal Keeler Center via webinar. You can either join these webinars as they happen (real time), or view recordings of the webinars at a time that is more convenient for you. Offerings that are available via webinar are clearly marked on the schedule of courses. For more information, contact Ryan Bolster at 717-657-4804, ext. 225, or rboster@hbgdiocese.org.

INTRODUCTORY COURSES

Introduction to Scripture
6:30-9 p.m. Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24
St. Joseph the Worker, Bonneauville
Father Peter DiTommaso
7-9 p.m. March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1
Holy Spirit, Palmyra
Mr. Ryan Bolster

Introduction to Morality
6:30-9 p.m. March 31
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
Mr. Ryan Bolster
*Also available via webinar

Teaching Methodology, Part I
9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Feb. 1
St. James, Lititz
Mrs. Rose Poet

Teaching Methodology, Part II
9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Feb. 1
St. Columbia, Bloomsburg
Mr. Ryan Bolster
9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Feb. 22
St. James, Lititz
Mrs. Rose Poet

Introduction to Prayer
6:30-9 p.m. Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25
St. Columbia, Bloomsburg
Mr. Joseph Mullen
6:30-9 p.m. March 20, 27, April 3, 10
St. Aloysius, Littlestown
Mr. James Gontis

ADVANCED CERTIFICATION COURSES/ COURSES OF SPECIALIZATION

Christology
6:30-9 p.m. Jan. 27, Feb. 3, 10, 17, March 3, 10
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
Mr. Ryan Bolster
*Also available via webinar

Catechetical Documents of the Church
7-9 p.m. April 1, 2, 7, 8, 9
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
Mr. James Gontis

Advanced Scripture: The Gospel of Matthew
6:30-9 p.m. Feb. 6, 13, 27, March 6, 13, 27
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
Father James Lease
*Also available via webinar

Christian Martyrs of the Twentieth Century
7-9 p.m. March 12, 19, 26, April 9, 23, 30
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
Dr. Guy Carter

Pope Francis, Catholic Social Teaching, and the Sanctity of Life
9 a.m.-3 p.m. March 29, April 5
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
Father Paul CB Schenck

“Gather Up the Fragments”: The History of Catholicism in Pennsylvania
9 a.m.-3 p.m. March 29
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
Mr. John Corninsky

Catholic Morality: The 10 Commandments
7-8:30 p.m. Jan. 8
St. James, Lititz
Mr. James Gontis

“Bless Me, Father, For I Have Sinned”: The Sacrament of Penance
9:30-10:45 a.m. Jan. 12
St. Andrew, Waynesboro
Mr. James Gontis
7-9 p.m. Jan. 14
St. John the Baptist, New Freedom
Mr. James Gontis

Catholic Morality: Virtues and Vices
7-8:30 p.m. Jan. 15
St. James, Lititz
Mr. James Gontis

Top 10 List to Be an Outstanding Catechist
7-8:30 p.m. Feb. 12
St. Margaret Mary, Harrisburg
Mr. James Gontis

The Paschal Mystery
6-7:30 p.m. March 2
Christ the King, Benton
Mr. James Gontis

“My Sacrament Must Holy, O Sacrament Divine”
7-9 p.m. March 18
St. John the Baptist, New Freedom
Mr. James Gontis

From Resurrection School

Third-grade students Chris Kroener, Dahlia Navarro, and Joey Reisinger make Christmas cards during the “Day of Sharing” at Resurrection School in Lancaster.
Spiritual Offerings

The following liturgical services for the Croatian Catholic community will be celebrated by the Rev. Dubravko Turajlic at Prince of Peace—Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Steetown (717-705-0505). The following Mass will be celebrated, featuring traditional Croatian Christmas carols with tamburica accompaniment. After Mass, a social with traditional refreshments will be held in the gym of the parish center, celebrating the Croatian heritage and faith. Everyone is invited. The blessing of homes will take place Dec. 23 from 1-9 p.m., Dec. 24 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Dec. 25 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. To schedule a blessing, call Ivo Fisic at 717-602-2691 or 717-652-3970.

Italian Mass for the Christmas Season, La Santa Messa per le Feste Natalizie, will be celebrated by Father Paul Fisher. The Mass is celebrated Jan. 7 at 7:30 p.m. at St. Theresa Church in West Shore Parish Young Adults, a group for those between high school and 30-something, will gather at St. Katharine Drexel Parish in Mechanicsburg. Jan. 9 at 7 p.m. Suzanne Brugza will present “A New Year of Faith.” Each month, the group gathers at parishes on the West Shore for speakers, group prayer and socials. For information, visit www.facebook.com/groups/westshoreparishyouth or send an e-mail to mcreveeyes@gmail.com.

Theology on Tap in York, sponsored by the parishes of the York Deanery, will have its next session Jan. 15 in The Abbey (upper room) of Maewyn’s Irish Pub. The evening begins at 6:30 p.m. with a drink, grab a drink, catch up with friends. At 7:15 p.m., instead of a speaker, this month’s session will be “Hot Topic Discussions.” Participants will sit at tables marked with various topics, and then converse on those topics for a session. New sessions will start every ten minutes for participants to move on to other tables. Closing prayer will take place at 9 p.m.

“Drugs 101” will be presented Jan. 22 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at York Catholic High School. Parents can discover how teens are finding everyday items to use to support a drug habit. Find out the warning signs to watch for before your child develops a problem. Presented by the Susan P. Bynes Health Education Center and made possible through a generous donation by Randy & Susan Bynes. No registration necessary.

Theology on Tap, Lancaster, will have its next session Jan. 29 at Lancaster Brewing Company, Amy Hill, Communications Director of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, will speak on “Voting with a Catholic conscience.” Bishop Scharfenberger and Father Joshua Brommer will be the celebrant. The Italian Mass Committee will provide a prayer service in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. For more information, call Mary Ann at 717-564-7709 or Loretta at 717-737-7551.

The annual Sanctity of Life Mass of the Lancaster Region of the Order of Malta will be celebrated by Father Paul Schenck Jan. 8 at 7 p.m. at St. Leo the Great Church in Rohrersville. Father Schenck is the Director of the Diocesan Office of Respect Life Activities, administrator of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, and chairman of the National Pro-Life Center on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. For information on the Mass and the Order of Malta, visit www.orderofmalta lancaster.com.

Bereavement support series will be offered by the Pastoral Care Department of Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill on Wednesdays, Jan. 8-29. Afternoon sessions begin at 1-2:30 p.m. Evening sessions are from 6:30-8 p.m. There is no cost for participants. For information or to register, contact the Pastoral Care Department at 717-783-2118.
By Cindy Wooden

Catholic News Service

Pope Francis and the eight members of his international Council of Cardinals began their discussions on specific ways to reorganize the Roman Curia with the aim of “a renewal that will truly be a service to the universal Church,” the Vatican spokesman said.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the spokesman, said the cardinals planned to discuss the work of each congregation and, hopefully, each pontifical council. They had begun, he said, with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments.

The Vatican spokesman continued to insist journalists and other observers should not expect changes to the curia to be announced quickly because Pope Francis and the Council of Cardinals were committed to a complete overhaul of Vatican structures “in light of the expectations expressed by the College of Cardinals before the convocation” that elected the pope.

The pope and his Council of Cardinals, named in April, were not planning “to make amendments or limited adjustments” to Blessed John Paul II’s 1988 document on the Roman Curia, but rather expected to draft a completely new apostolic constitution.

The eight cardinals and the pope held their first full meeting in October and looked primarily at the role of the Vatican secretary of state since Archbishop Pietro Parolin was about to take over from Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone. The discussion also centered on what Archbishop Parolin late Dec. 3 to congratulate him and offer their support, Father Lombardi said, but he was not involved in the council’s work.

When Pope Francis named the cardinals to advise him, Father Lombardi said, he did not choose them as continent representatives; however, their positions have allowed them to attend meetings of different bishops’ conferences and to discuss questions and concerns from bishops in their parts of the world.

While the council does not include the pope in its discussions or council, he said, officials of the Roman Curia responded to an invitation to send their ideas and questions to the council.

In addition, the spokesman said, “the pope meets regularly and often with the heads of dicasteries [the Vatican offices], and these meetings go on for some time.”

“It’s not like they’ve been forgotten,” Father Lombardi said. “They have easy access to the Holy Father.”

Father Lombardi, who spoke with council members during their morning break on the first day of the Dec. 3-5 meeting, said they emphasized that they were looking “in depth” at the curia and ways of restructing it, not at “small touch ups.”

Father Lombardi said given the depth of what the council is trying to do, “I wouldn’t expect any conclusions in a brief period of time.”

The next meeting of the council with the pope is scheduled for Feb. 17-18, Father Lombardi said. The meeting will be right before a likely gathering of the entire College of Cardinals with the new pope, and the conclave to elect Pope Francis, the council plans to create new cardinals.

Pope Francis may use the gathering of the entire College of Cardinals as an opportunity to inform them of the council’s work to that point, Father Lombardi said.

The pope has asked his eight cardinal advisers for counsel on the Vatican’s finances, which is likely to be the theme of the February meeting, Father Lombardi said.

The reorganization of the Roman Curia and improved relations between local bishops and the Vatican were key topics at the meetings of the College of Cardinals preceding the election of Pope Francis in March.

The eight members of his council are: Cardinals Francisco Javier Errazuriz Ossa, retired archbishop of Santiago, Chile; Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India; Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising, Germany; Laurent Monsen of Lusaka, Zambia; Patriarch of Constantinople Philip of Albans, Greece; and Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Commentary

Wall Street vs. Main Street: Pope’s Words on Economy Stir Controversy

By Francis X. Rocca

Catholic News Service

In enunciating the principles of Catholic social teaching, popes have long stressed the Church’s special concern for the poor and the need for state intervention to promote economic justice.

Pope Benedict XVI, for instance, blamed the “logic of profit” for widespread hunger and pollution, called for a “true world political authority” to ensure “environmental protection, and – when still a cardinal serving as a high Vatican official – wrote that, “in many respects, democentric socialism is and is close to Catholic social doctrine and has in any case made a remarkable contribution to the formation of a social consciousness.”

Yet the international response to Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), published last month, has seemed to suggest the current pope wrote something shocking new. The document has excited ardent praise and criticism from Catholics and non-Catholics alike, especially for its words condemning an “economic exclusion and inequity” in the “idolatry of money.”

An editor of Britain’s Guardian newspaper praised the pope for giving “form to the emotion and justice of post-financial-crisis outrage in a way that has been rare since Occupy Wall Street disrupted America,” while a CNN show host Rush Limbaugh denounced what he called “pure Marxism coming out of the mouth of the pope.”

Much of the particular impact of Pope Francis’ words is doubtless due, on this subject as others, to his charactastically blunt and passionate style of expression. As he writes in an oft-quoted passage: “How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?”

Oblate Father Seamus Finn, director of the U.S. Missionary Oblates’ office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, said the pope’s exhortation “is a sign he expects local churches to give ‘actual living contact with people who are poor or unemployed or struggling.’”

Where the document has proven especially controversial is in its description and explanation of present-day economic realities.

Pope Francis writes of an “exponentially growing gap between rich and poor, which he blames for environmental degradation and rising violence, among other evils. He attributes it primarily to the breakdown of the influence of bad economic ideas.”

“This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and the financial speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to intervene in any form of control,” the pope writes.

He rejects “trickle-down theories with their主张 that a经济增长 can be encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naive trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting.”

Catholics who support free-market economic policies have disputed the factual assertions behind the pope’s analysis.

“There’s plenty of evidence out there, from the World Bank for example, that the number of people in absolute poverty over the past 30 years has shrunk dramatically, that in parts of the world, such as East Asia, we’ve seen a lot of people get out of poverty, and we’ve seen the emergence of large middle classes in countries like China and India,” said Samuel Gregg, research director at the Acton Institute and author of “Tea Party Catholic.”

Gregg also argues that the financial sector and the economy in general are already highly regulated, at both the national and international levels, and that, “aside from one or two anarcho-capitalists who spend most of their time talking to each other and have no influence on the conduct of public policy,” no economists today seriously argue that markets should be absolutely autonomous.

But Father Finn said the last two decades in the United States have witnessed a “growth in wealth and assets for the top 1 percent and stagnation of wages and assets for the middle class,” referencing for the Church, a realistic conversation with people in business,” he said. “They’re the people on the front line of this Wall Street-Main Street tension.”
From January of 2014 and – God willing – every January from now on, this Puerto Rican woman will venture into the cold Pennsylvania weather in search of what is almost impossible to find this time of the year: fresh grass. There will go my faithful, cold and glove-wearing hands, carrying a shoe box, as I refuse to give up on my childhood tradition. I can’t help but smile when I think of what will be going through the minds of my neighbors and my Irish-to-the-core husband as they watch me search for grass.

You see, every January 6 in Puerto Rico and many other countries like Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Malta, Portugal, Belgium, the Netherlands and Brazil, we celebrate Epiphany Day, which takes place 12 days after Christmas Day. On El Día de los Reyes Magos (The Day of the Three Royal Magi), we traditionally celebrate the group of kings or magi – as related in the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew – who arrived to worship and bring three gifts to the baby Jesus after following a bright star in the heavens. On the evening of January 5, children go out to fill a shoe box with fresh grass or hay and put it underneath their bed for the Wise Men’s camels. After feeding their camels, the Three Kings will leave gifts under the bed as a reward.

In Spain, most towns arrange colorful parades representing the arrival of Los Reyes Magos to town so children can see them on their camels or in carriages before they go to bed. It is on this day that children from different Latin American nations typically receive presents, rather than on Christmas, though this tradition has changed, and children now receive presents on both days.

In Spain and Mexico, families commemorate this day by eating the Epiphany bread/cake known as Roscón or Rosca de Reyes. The tradition of placing a figurine of the Christ Child in the cake is very old. The baby Jesus, when hidden in the bread, represents Jesus fleeing from King Herod’s plan to kill all babies that could be the prophesied Messiah. Whoever finds the baby Jesus figurine is blessed and must take the figurine to the nearest church on February 2, which is Día de la Candelaria (Candlemas Day). In the Mexican culture, this person also has to throw a party. In Spain, roscones hide in their interior a Jesus figurine and a dry faba bean. Whoever finds the figure is crowned and becomes the “king” or “queen” of the banquet, whereas whoever finds the bean has to pay next year’s roscón.

I remember the excitement of collecting the grass with my childhood friends the evening before el Día de los Reyes Magos, and can’t wait to share this cherished tradition with my daughter. My grandmother would cook traditional Puerto Rican meals like pernil (pork shoulder), arroz con gandulez (rice with pigeon peas) and pasteles (soft dough-like masses wrapped in a banana leaf and stuffed with meat). The banquet was the big giveaway that the day was indeed a special day!

While I love and embrace the beautiful Christmas season and the way it is celebrated here in the United States, I am filled with nostalgic memories from my childhood, and at times I find it heartbreaking to realize that this wonderful celebration is being lost among younger generations of Hispanic/Latino heritage. This is a beautiful way to celebrate not only your heritage and culture – if it applies to you – but it also is a meaningful way, as a Catholic, to celebrate the amazing gift the Father has given us: the gift of Jesus Christ. Let us celebrate and give thanks. Salud!