The Christmas artwork that graces the cover of this edition was created by two of the four winners of the Diocese of Harrisburg’s Christmas card contest. The image of the wise men and shepherds is by Grace Ringlein, a senior at Lancaster Catholic High School. The image of the Nativity scene is by Kristen Landsman, a sophomore at Delone Catholic High School in McSherrystown. Four winners were selected from contest entries, and are being used to illustrate Bishop Ronald Gainer’s Christmas cards this year. The other two images were featured on the front page of the December 11 issue.
Christmas Card Winners Honored

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

The four diocesan students whose artwork appears on Bishop Ronald Gainer’s Christmas cards this year were honored with a luncheon with the bishop and with Father Edward J. Quinlan, Diocesan Secretary for Education, and Livia Riley, Diocesan Superintendent, for their achievement. The luncheon took place at the Cardinal Keeler Center in Harrisburg on Dec. 16, and was open to the students’ parents, art teachers and principals.

Shown with Bishop Gainer are, from left, Grace Ringlein, a senior at Lancaster Catholic High School; Allison Hahalis, a fourth-grader at Our Lady of Lourdes Regional School in Coal Township; and Kristen Landsman, a sophomore at Delone Catholic High School in McSherrystown.

“I am very grateful for all those who entered the Christmas Card Contest and am really impressed by their creative talents,” the bishop said.

“I want to thank the students, their teachers and parents for helping to develop the students’ God-given talents and for giving artistic expression to the truth and beauty of the Christmas Mystery. It will be my great joy to use these cards to send my Christmas greetings this year.”

The Christmas Card Contest was open to the more than 11,000 students in the diocese’s Catholic schools. The contest called for the students to portray an interpretation of the birth of Jesus Christ as seen through their eyes. Some 60 submissions were judged by the Office of Education to three finalists in four categories (K-4, 5-8, 9-10 and 11-12), and a winner from those finalists was then selected by a vote from ballots cast by diocesan employees. The winning artwork appears on the front pages of the December editions of The Catholic Witness.

Enter Next Year’s Contest

The MCA Christmas Artwork Contest is open to all Catholic children in grades K-8. The deadline for this year’s entries is January 31, 2016. An entry form with contest rules is available online at www.propfaith.net/egreetings.

The Pontifical Mission Societies (now the Missionary Childhood Association) issued Christmas seals in 1916, and began to use children’s artwork for them in 1933. E-greetings were introduced in 2007.

ThePontifical Mission Societies, active in some 120 countries throughout the world, work to animate the faithful to a universal missionary spirit, and to gather support for the efforts of the Church in some 1,150 mission dioceses in Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands and remote regions of Latin America. The Missionary Childhood Association directs its efforts to elementary school age children, while the Society for the Propagation of the Faith seeks prayer and support for pastoral and evangelizing programs of mission dioceses from adults as well as high school and college students.

Morgan Neyer, a sixth-grade student at Sacred Heart School in Lancaster, receives an award for her artwork from Father Andrew Small, OMI, National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

Morgan Neyer’s winning artwork featuring The Three Wise Men is on display at the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., through Jan. 3.

Angel for the Missions:

Missionary Childhood Association Announces Local Christmas Artwork Contest Winner

From Pontifical Mission Societies and Diocesan Reports

Drawings depicting classic images of the Christmas story, each with a contemporary flair, took top honors in the Missionary Childhood Association’s annual art contest for elementary school age children.

“The birth of our Lord was heralded by the angels, ‘Good news for all people,’” said Father Andrew Small, OMI, National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, which include the Missionary Childhood Association. “Through the gift of their artwork, these young people are portraying the message of joyous, hope-filled message, ‘angels for the Missions’!

Two hundred four winners were chosen from among thousands of entries submitted by children in Catholic elementary schools, religious education programs and home schools across the country. Locally, Morgan Neyer, in sixth grade at Sacred Heart School in Lancaster, was one of the winners with her depiction of the Three Wise Men.

Talent abounds in the Diocese of Harrisburg, as last year it had two winners: Rebecca Donnelly of Sacred Heart School in Lancaster and Danny Leonard of Our Mother of Perpetual Help School in Ephrata.

Winning artwork from the contest is displayed at the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., now through the Epiphany, Jan. 6. A Mass for winners and their families was celebrated at the Shrine earlier this month, and winners received a plaque and recognition from Father Small; Monsignor Walter R. Rossi, Shrine Rector; and Monsignor Vito A. Buonanno, Shrine Director of Pilgrimages.

All winners are also featured as e-greetings during Advent at http://www.propfaith.net/egreetings.

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The Witness Returns January 22

The December 25 edition of The Catholic Witness is the final one for 2015. Our first issue of the New Year will be January 22, 2016.

2016 will be a special year for us, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of The Catholic Witness. The publication was established by Bishop George Leech in 1966. We have some special things in store for our anniversary, including the reproduction of iconic photos in editions throughout the year, interviews with former staff members, and a display in the Archives case at the Cardinal Keeler Center beginning in late January. Do you know that you can receive The Catholic Witness via e-mail? Sign up for this service by logging on to the diocesan Web site at www.hbgdiocese.org. Follow the News/Events tab to The Catholic Witness page and click on “Catholic Witness E-mail Sign Up.” Or, send your name and street address to witness@hbgdiocese.org, and we’ll sign you up. Each Friday that the newsletter is published, you will receive an e-mail with a direct link to the latest edition. Registration with the e-mail service will not cancel your mailed subscription unless you prefer otherwise.

As parishes, schools and organizations plan their event calendars for the New Year, we take this opportunity to let you know that our schedule of issue dates and submission deadlines for 2016 are now available. You can find the Publication Schedule and information on how to submit items to us by clicking on the “Catholic Witness” link at www.hbgdiocese.org. If you would prefer to receive the Publication Schedule and Submission Guidelines via e-mail or standard mail, contact us at witness@hbgdiocese.org or 717-657-4804 and we’ll be happy to send them to you.

Remember to stay in touch with news from the Diocese of Harrisburg by visiting its Web site, www.hbgdiocese.org, or by following it on Facebook and Twitter.

We send you best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year!

Thank You
...for your gifts of prayer and treasure to the 2015 Matthew 25 Collection.

Your gifts will offer hope and help to low-income families and communities working to overcome poverty and injustice throughout the 15 counties in central Pennsylvania.

Gifts are being accepted for potential year end tax deductions.

Mail Donations to:
Diocese of Harrisburg, Office of Development
4600 Union Deposit Road, Harrisburg, PA
17111-3710
(717) 657-4804
www.hbgdiocese.org or dbkg.org
Visa or MasterCard

Bishop Gainer’s Public Calendar

• December 25 – Celebrate Midnight Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral, Harrisburg, 12 a.m.
• January 3 – Opening Prayer at Dauphin County Commissioners Inaugural Luncheon, Harrisburg Hilton, 1 p.m.
• January 4 – Preside at 40 Hours Devotions, St. John Neumann Church, Lancaster, 7 p.m.
• January 17 – Annual Pro Life Mass & March to Planned Parenthood, St. Patrick Church, York, 10:45 a.m.
• January 22 – March for Life – Washington, D.C.
• January 24 – Christian Unity Prayer Service, Prince of Peace Episcopal Church, Gettysburg, 3 p.m.

The Catholic Witness

By Jen Reed

The Catholic Witness

Father Joseph H. Fennessy, Pastor Emeritus of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Berkeley, and a resident of Bloomsburg, died on Thursday evening, December 10, surrounded by his family, and as a patient in the Geisinger Medical Center in Danville. He was 86.

The Funeral Rites began Dec. 14 with a viewing and a Mass of Transference celebrated by Msgr. Robert Lawrence at St. Columba Church in Bloomsburg. The Funeral Mass was celebrated Dec. 15 at St. Columba Church by Bishop Ronald Gainer. Burial was in St. Joseph Cemetery, Fountain Springs in Girardville, Pa.

Father Francis Tamburro, pastor of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Berwick, where Father Fennessy served as pastor from 1986-1999, recalled the late priest as a pastor dedicated to his parishioners and to the larger community.

“He was well liked by the people here at St. Mary’s, and well-respected in the community too, even in his retirement, as he continued to assist at local parishes,” Father Tamburro said.

Father Fennessy was the pastor in the construction of its parish center in 1995, and it is used for the religious education program and parish functions.

“He was a very dedicated priest. That came out in the number of those who attended the funeral services,” Father Tamburro said.

“When I was assigned as pastor here, after Father H Cirro retired, several priests in the area told me I had big shoes to fill,” he recalled. “And they were right, but it was a blessing to still have him nearby.”

Father Fennessy was born Oct. 12, 1929, in Locust Dale, the only child to the late Charles A. and Pauline (Watts) Fennessy. Throughout his younger years, he attended and graduated from Cenonyngham-Centralia Public School in 1947. He spent one year in preparation and two years of College at St. Charles College Seminary in Catonsville, Md., and later graduated from St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia in 1952. He was ordained to the priesthood on May 10, 1956, at St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg by Bishop George L. Leech.


Father Fennessy was very influential and active in ecumenical activities, a Spiritual Director with Legion of Mary in the Harrisburg Curia; Diocesan Coordinator of the Legion of Mary; member of the Diocesan Committee, Permanent Diaconate, Associate Moderator of Steetlon District Council of Catholic Women; member of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission; Diocesan Committee for Aid to Inner City and Mission Parishes; Diocesan Committee for Aid to Needy Parishes; area Moderator for both Ecumenical Activities; and the Northern Deanery Council of Catholic Women.

In his retirement, Father Fennessy moved to Bloomsburg and lived in the house of his late mother, who had been a member of St. Columba Parish there. Father Fennessy often celebrated Masses there, and at parishes in Berwick, Benton, Elysburg, Danville, Lewisburg and Sunbury, filling in for priests on vacation or at the annual continuing education workshop. He also traveled to Danville to celebrate Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the Sisters of Christian Charity and the Sisters of Sts. Cyril and Methodius.

“He was always willing to help,” said Msgr. Robert Lawrence, pastor of St. Columba Parish. “When he could no longer drive, people from the parishes or convents would pick him up and then drive him back home again.”

Deacon Thomas Conlin of St. Joseph Parish in Danville recalled Father Fennessy’s business card, which referred to him as “The Traveling Priest.”

“He was so willing to help other priests,” said Deacon Conlin. He first met Father Fennessy upon his assignment to St. Columba Parish as a new deacon in 2004.

“He was a true pastor….He cared for parishioners as though they were his own family,” he said.

Mssr. Lawrence recalled Father Fennessy’s love for conversation, and that often drew people to him. Living in an area near students from Bloomsburg University and enjoying daily breakfast at a local diner, he had many acquaintances of all ages.

“He was a good and holy priest. He certainly did enjoy the priesthood,” he said. Deacon Conlin spoke of Father Fennessy’s love for the Eucharist.

“He loved putting his hands over the bread and the wine and calling down the Holy Spirit,” he said. “When I met with him on Tuesday before he died, he gave me two regrets. One was that he could no longer say the Office, because he was totally drained and could not focus. The second regret was that he didn’t bring his case that he used to say Mass every day, because he would have said it in the hospital for himself.

“That’s an example of how connected he was to the Liturgy of the Office and the Liturgy of the Eucharist,” he said.

Father Fennessy Remembered for Love of Celebration of the Eucharist

By Jen Reed

The Catholic Witness
March for Life on January 22!

By Father Paul CB Schenck
Special to The Witness

The March for Life is the longest running public demonstration in American history. Begun in 1973 in response to the now infamous Roe v. Wade U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing and deregulating abortions, the March attracts tens of thousands of people committed to reinstating legal protections for unborn children, their parents as well as new-borns with disabilities and preemies. The Diocese of Harrisburg participates each year by promoting the March, urging attendance and publishing bus schedules. Parishes, schools and institutions arrange their own busses and transit times. Parking reservations are no longer available, so each bus makes its own parking arrangement. There are no reservations and no tickets required to participate in the March for Life. Information is available at http://marchforlife.org/mfl-2016/rally-march-info.

The Archdiocese of Washington provides youth rallies and Masses throughout the city on the morning of the March. Tickets for these events are required. Each diocese is assigned a specific site location for their rally and Mass. Tickets have already been provided to the Diocese of Harrisburg for the event. Only 450 tickets are available. Participating groups need to contact the Respect Life Office at 717-657-4800 ext. 313 to reserve tickets. Ticket reservations should be made by the Archdiocese of Washington: 202.465.6660 ext. 319, or by visiting the link on the Respect Life Office’s website: www.hbgdiocese.org/respectlife.

Father Paul CB Schenck, Diocesan Director of the Office of Respect Life makes its own parking arrangement. But the Diocese of Harrisburg arranges its buses, and deregulating abortions, the March for Life in Washington in 2015.

Activities stated, “The March for Life is a very important, perennial demonstration of the Church’s commitment to the sanctity of every human life and the dignity of every person. It is very inspirational for individuals, especially young people, to attend. It is also a compelling message to our representatives in Washington of the conscience of the nation and the demand that we protect every person within our borders, born and unborn.”

PCC Executive Director Receives Defender of Life Award

By Joelle Shea
Special to The Witness

Dr. Robert J. O’Hara, Jr., Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, was honored with the Defender of Life Award by the Pro-Life Union of Greater Philadelphia at their annual Stand Up For Life Dinner. Edel Finnegan, Executive Director of the Pro-Life Union of Greater Philadelphia said, “We are grateful for Bob’s leadership at the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference and his commitment to defending the sanctity of every life. The people of Pennsylvania are blessed to have Bob at the helm of the PCC. We are grateful for his friendship to our organization and it is a privilege to share in this work with him!”

The award is given to a public figure who stands courageously in defense of life. “I am honored to work with partners in the pro-life cause who will not stop until every unborn child is afforded the right to life. The public policy gains we’ve made are a result of constant collaboration, most closely with Francis Vigellette, the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference’s Director of Social Concerns, as well as the Pro-Life Union of Greater Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Family Institute, the Pennsylvania Pro-Life Federation and countless individuals across the state,” said O’Hara.

The Pro-Life Union has hosted the annual Stand Up For Life Dinner since 1982. The event brings together more than 1,500 people to celebrate the Culture of Life, including more than 500 students from area schools. Damon Owens, Executive Director of the Theology the Body Institute, was the evening’s keynote speaker.

DIOCESAN PRO-LIFE MASSES AND ROSARY PROCESSION

JANUARY 17 AT 10:45 A.M. • ST. PATRICK CHURCH, YORK

All are welcomed to attend the Diocesan Pro-Life Mass that will take place on Sunday January 17, 2016, at Saint Patrick Church, 219 South Beaver Street, York, PA 17401. Mass begins at 10:45 AM. Bishop Ronald W. Gainer will be the celebrant and homilist. Following Mass, there will be a Rosary procession from the church to Planned Parenthood.

SCHEDULE FOR THE DAY IN WASHINGTON

Ticketed events at the Verizon Center are hosted by the Archdiocese of Washington:

• 6:30 a.m. – Doors open
• 7:30 a.m. – Rally and Confessions begin
• 9:00 a.m. – Rosary begins
• 9:30 a.m. – Mass begins

March for Life (tickets are not needed):

• 11:45 a.m. – Musical Opening
• 12:00 p.m. – Rally: grounds of the Washington Monument, near the corner of 15th Street and Constitution Avenue
• 1:00 p.m. – March: begins on Constitution Avenue between 15th and 17th Streets

PARISH BUSINESSES TO THE EVENTS

Find an updated listing of parishes and organizations that are running buses to the March for Life by visiting the link on the Respect Life Office’s website: http://www.hbgdiocese.org/respectlife.

Bishop Ronald Gainer greets members of the Diocese of Harrisburg before leading them in prayer and joining them in the 2015 March for Life.

EMILY M. ALBERT, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

SARAH WEBB, WWW.CATHOLICPHILLY.COM
The girls’ soccer team from Trinity High School in Camp Hill, back-to-back PIAA Class A state soccer champions, were treated to a luncheon hosted by Bishop Ronald Gainer at the Cardinal Keeler Center in Harrisburg on Dec. 17.

“These are very special young women, and I am delighted to again be able to honor their tremendous achievement of winning back-to-back state championships,” the bishop said, congratulating Coach Mull “and her dedicated team that have brought this great honor to Trinity High School, our diocese and area.”

It is a diocesan tradition for sports teams from diocesan schools that win a state championship to have a luncheon with the diocesan bishop in honor of their outstanding achievement. The 2015 win was the second state championship for the Shamrocks, who were the defending champions and one of the premier scholastic girls’ soccer programs in the state.

—EMILY M. ALBERT, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

The cool weather is coming, and my family really enjoys both of these dinners. I have been making these for 30 years, and my children still come home for this meal.

We all talk about how this all started when my son Jason turned six years old. I made it, and he loved it. He would always ask me to make it. Then his sister Christine came along, and when she was old enough to try it, she loved it too. So I would make it every Wednesday, and I always made enough so a little would be there for the next day. My son would say, “Mom, could I have some of the potatoes and ring bologna for breakfast?” And I would laugh and say, “Sure,” but he had to wait until lunch time for it.

I was blessed again with my third child, a girl named Patricia. I came home Wednesday and my two other children said to me, “Mom, do you think you can make us some potatoes and ring bologna?” And my oldest daughter said, “Do you think our baby sister would like potatoes and ring bologna too?” Me and my husband just laughed and said, “Well, if you both like it, I am sure your baby sister will like it too, but she will have to wait a couple of years until she can enjoy it.”

To this day when they all come home, I still make their favorite dish. They do not have to ask me to make it; they smell it when they come through the door, and the smile on their faces brings so much joy to me. I am so blessed to have three wonderful children to share our meals with.

Our sweet potatoes casserole I make for family and friends. We enjoy it because it tastes like a dessert because of the brown sugar and nuts in it. This is another recipe everybody likes me to make. They call me up to see when they can come over and have some Sweet Potatoes Casserole.

—MARY J. SNYDER, OUR LADY OF Mt. CARMEL, Mt. CARMEL

Feeding The Faith

**Potatoes and Ring Bologna Dinner**

1 ring of ring bologna (peeled and cubed)  
6 large potatoes (peeled and diced)  
2 onions (peeled and diced)  
1/2 stick of butter  
16oz of water

**Directions:**  
After ring bologna, potatoes, and onions are chopped put all ingredients in a big frying pan with butter and water. Bring to a boil for 15 minutes.  
After water has boiled off, fry for 5 minutes. Serves 8.

**Sweet Potatoes Casserole**

Potatoes Filling:  
3 cups cooked and mashed sweet potatoes  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 cup butter  
2 eggs beaten  
1/2 cup milk

Topping:  
1/2 cup butter  
1/2 cup flour  
1 cup brown sugar  
1/2 cup walnuts

**Directions:**  
Preheat oven to 350  
Mix all ingredients (except for topping mix) into a 2 quart baking dish  
In a small separate bowl mix topping ingredients and sprinkle over sweet potatoes mixture.  
Bake at 350 for 25 minutes. Serves 8.

Send Us Your Recipes and Stories!

The Catholic Witness is looking to support family meal time by sharing family recipes in upcoming editions, as well as scripture and “food for thought.” Do you have a significant dish and memory to share with us? You may mail a copy of the recipe and your thoughts to 4800 Union Deposit Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111 or email it to witness@hbgdiocese.org.
Pope Recognizes Miracle Needed to Declare Mother Teresa a Saint

By Carol Glatz

Catholic News Service

Pope Francis has approved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Teresa of Kolkata, thus paving the way for her canonization.

The then-newly married man's wife had spent months praying to Blessed Teresa and given were ineffective and the man went into a coma, the postulator wrote.

The order she started – the Missionaries of Charity – continues its outreach to the “poorest of the poor.”

Among the other decrees approved Dec. 17, the pope recognized the heroic virtues of Comboni Father Giuseppe Ambrosoli, an Italian surgeon, priest and missionary who dedicated his life to caring for people in Uganda, where he also founded a hospital and midwifery school before his death in 1987. His father ran the highly successful Ambrosoli honey company.

The pope also recognized the heroic virtues of De La Salle Brother Leonardo Lanzuela Martinez of Spain (1894-1976) and Heinrich Hahn, a German surgeon.

Born in 1800, the lay Catholic doctor was the father of 10 children and dedicated much of his activity to providing medical care to the poor. He was also involved in public service, even serving in the German parliament.

He founded the St. Francis Xavier Mission Society in Germany and the “Giuseppino” Institute for those suffering from incurable illnesses. He died in 1882.

Author has Tips for Parents to Encourage Children to Come Back to Church

By Veronica Ambuhl

Catholic News Service

It’s a scenario that will probably play out in thousands of homes across the country this Christmas: A young adult goes home for the holidays and announces that he or she no longer attends Mass.

How parents should respond is the subject of a new book and video series by Brandon Vogt, content director for Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and author of the bestselling book, “The Catholic Church and New Media.”

It’s a scenario that will probably play out in thousands of homes across the country at Catholic conferences and events, at parishes and in small groups, and I noticed that the most pressing and pervasive problem among many of the people I encountered was that not all of them are raising their children to go to Mass, and they are raising their children to not care about God. I’m devastated. What should I do?”

While it’s important for parents to remain calm and keep the lines of communication open with children who have stopped practicing the faith, they can’t be complacent, Vogt said. One of the common myths about fallen-away Catholics is that, once they stop going to church, they’re not getting married.

When faced with a child who has drifted from the faith, parents must first pray and equip themselves with resources to answer any questions their children might have.

“You need to know where to find the things you don’t know,” Vogt said.

Also, it is important for parents not to be angry and confrontational, he said.

“Ask lots and lots of questions,” he said. “When your child has drifted away from the church, a bad approach is to confront him with lots of assertions about why he’s wrong and why he should come back. Ask, ‘Why did you leave? What have you found in this other religious tradition that the Church can’t offer?’

Vogt said that the new evangelization called for by recent popes is largely aimed at people who have been baptized but do not have a personal relationship with Christ.

“The new evangelization – if you were to sum it up in a sentence – is to help people encounter and re-encounter the Lord Jesus,” Vogt said. “That encounter is what’s missing for so many people. They reason they drift away is that they don’t have an anchor holding them to the Catholic Church, and the anchor is that encounter with the Lord Jesus.”

When the surgeon entered the operating room, he reported that he found the patient awake, free of pain and asking, “What am I doing here?”

Doctors reported the man showed no more symptoms and a Vatican medical commission voted unanimously in September 2015 that the healing was inexplicable.

St. John Paul II had made an exception to the usual canonization process in Mother Teresa’s case by allowing her sainthood cause to be opened without waiting the usual five years after a candidate’s death. He beatified her in 2003.

Before the 19th anniversary of her death, Sept. 5, 1997, the postulator for her sainthood cause, Father Brian Kolodiejchuk of the Missionaries of Charity, said the second miracle that was approved involved the healing of a now 42-year-old mechanical engineer in Santos, Brazil.

Doctors diagnosed the man with a viral brain infection that resulted in multiple brain abscesses, the priest said in a statement published Dec. 18 by AsiaNews, the Rome-based missionary news agency. Treatments given were ineffective and the man went into a coma, the postulator wrote.

The newly married man’s wife had spent months praying to Blessed Teresa and her prayers were joined by those of her relatives and friends when her dying husband was taken to the operating room Dec. 9, 2008.

“Almost every place I went, I heard some version of: ‘My son, my daughter, they went off to college, just leery of the institution of the Church.’”

“Treatments have risen four- to fivefold over the last decade,” Vogt said. “There’s a massive, massive number of people who are raised Catholic no longer call themselves Catholic today. They also found that 79 percent of Catholics who switch from one church to another, one skeptical of God and religion. ‘They make up the largest percentage of adult Catholics who don’t practice their faith,’ Vogt said.

Although each person’s story is unique, fallen-away Catholics typically fall into one of six categories, he said:

• Cultural Catholics: People who still identify as Catholic, but they don’t really have a sacramental life. Many researchers have noted that this describes the largest percentage of adult Catholics who don’t practice their faith, Vogt said. “The cultural Catholics are vast, and they’re the ones sitting on the bench between being in the church and wholly drifting away.”

• Shruggers: “A lot of people tell me that the problem with their children is not that they disagree with one of the Church’s teachings or have issue with the Church’s liturgy; they just don’t care,” Vogt said.

• Spiritual but not religious: Described by many parents as “millennials” confirmed the need for such a book, said Vogt, who announced “The Catholic Church and New Media.”

• Moral movers: People who leave the Catholic Church because they disagree with one of the Church’s moral teachings, such as contraception, abortion, homosexuality, or divorce and remarriage.

“Almost every place I went, I heard some version of: ‘My son, my daughter, they went off to college, just leery of the institution of the Church,’” Vogt said.

• Religious switchers: About a quarter of former Catholics who switch from one church to another, usually from the Catholic Church to either an evangelical or non-denominational Protestant tradition.

• Skeptics: Includes atheists, agnostics and any one skeptical of God and religion. “They make up a relatively small proportion of the population right now; about 3 percent of Americans are atheist and 4 percent identify as agnostic. But those numbers have risen four- to fivefold over the last decade,” Vogt said.

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The author has tips for parents to encourage children to come back to church...
In Peace Day Message, Pope Addresses Death Penalty, Debt, Migrants

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Pope Francis called for abolishing the death penalty worldwide, lifting the burden of debt on poor nations, global aid policies that respect life and revamped laws that welcome and integrate migrants.

He urged individuals, communities and nations to not let indifference, information overload or pessimism discourage them from concrete efforts "to improve the world around us, beginning with our families, neighbors and places of employment."

Building peace, he said, is not accomplished by words alone, but through the grace of God, a conversion of heart, an attitude of compassion and the courage to act against despair.

The pope’s multifaceted plea came in his message for World Peace Day, Jan. 1. The message, which was delivered to world leaders by Vatican ambassadors, was released at the Vatican Dec. 15.

The message, titled “Overcome Indifference and Win Peace,” contained a three-fold appeal to the world’s leaders.

He asked that countries: “refrain from drawing other peoples into conflicts of wars,” which not only destroy a nation’s infrastructure and cultural heritage, but also their “moral and spiritual integrity”; forgive or make less burdensome international debt of poorer nations; and “adopt policies of cooperation which, instead of bowing before the dictatorship of certain ideologies, will respect the values of the local populations” and not harm the “fundamental and inalienable right to life of the unborn.”

Also part of building peace in the world, he said, is addressing the urgent problem of improving the living conditions of prisoners, especially those still awaiting trial. Since rehabilitation should be the aim of penal sanctions, effective alternatives to incarceration should be considered as well as the abolition of the death penalty. The pope asked government authorities to consider “the possibility of an amnesty” or pardons.

The pope called on national governments to review their current laws on immigration and find ways they could “reflect a readiness to welcome migrants and to facilitate their integration” as well as respect the rights and responsibilities of all parties concerned.

All nations’ leaders should also take concrete measures in alleviating the problem of unemployment, the pope wrote, as well as step discrimination against women in the workplace, which included unfair wages and precarious or dangerous working conditions. He said he hoped those who are ill could be guaranteed access to medical treatment, necessary medications and home care.

The pope’s message focused on the dangers of cynicism and indifference against God, neighbor and creation.

“Disregard and the denial of God,” he said, “have produced untold cruelty and violence.” And the exploitation of natural resources and mistreatment of animals have an effect “on the way we treat other people.”

“With the present Jubilee of Mercy, I want to invite the Church to pray and work so that every Christian will have a humble and compassionate heart” and that all people will learn “to forgive and to give,” he said in his message.

God is never indifferent to the world, he said. He not only sees, hears and knows, he “comes down and delivers” real healing and eternal teachings.

The credibility of the Church and its members rests on their willingness to live and act with the same tireless mercy God has for the world, the pope said.

“We, too, then are called to make compassion, love, mercy and solidarity a true way of life, a rule of conduct in our relationships with one another,” he said.

Since these attitudes of compassion and solidarity are often handed down from person to person, the pope emphasized the importance of families and teachers in showing what love, respect, dialogue, generosity, charity and faith mean.

He also reminded the media and communicators of their responsibility to “serve the truth and not particular interests.” They don’t just inform people, he said, but also form and influence their audience.

“Communicators should also be mindful that the way in which information is obtained and made public should always be legally and morally admissible,” he said.

In his message, the pope praised those journalists and religious who raise awareness about troubling and “difficult situations,” and defend the human rights of minorities, indigenous peoples, women, children and the most vulnerable people in society.

The Christmas tree and Nativity scene decorate St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican Dec. 18.

Pope: Creche is Reminder God Saves People with Love, Not Force

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Seeing baby Jesus in the Nativity scene reminds people that Christ uses humility and love to save the world, not impressive force or a magic wand, Pope Francis said.

“God does not love power- ful people’s imposing revolu- tions in history, and he doesn’t use a magic wand for changing the situation,” he said Dec. 18, meeting the people who do- nated the centerpieces of the Vatican Christmas decorations in St. Peter’s Square.

“Instead, he makes himself small, he becomes a baby, in order to draw us in with love, in order to touch our hearts, with his humble goodness, in order to shake up those who race to accumulate the false treasure of this world,” he said.

The northern Italian province of Trent donated the life-sized Nativity scene, and three small towns in Germany’s Bavaria region donated the 82-foot spruce fir. The tree was lit and the scene officially unveiled during an early evening ceremony in the square Dec. 18.

The painted ceramic tree ornaments were made by child cancer patients from a number of Italian hospitals.

The pope thanked the “tiny artists” who created the dec- orations and congratulated them for being so young and yet already having their art work showcased in St. Peter’s Square.

The birth of baby Jesus in Bethlehem shows that God didn’t “simply appear on earth” just to come and go, but that “he came to share in our life and embrace our desires.”

He came “because he want- ed to and still wants to live here, together with us and for us,” the pope said. “Because of his great mercy, he came down to us in order to stay permanently with us.”

He asked the children al- ways to remember that the Nativity scene also shows that God “does not impose with force.”

“In order to save us, he didn’t change history performing a grandiose miracle. Instead, he came with great simplicity, humility, meekness.”
The year of Mercy Begins

Holy Year is a Reminder to Put Mercy before Judgment, Pope Says

By Junno Aroro Esteves
Catholic News Service

On a cloudy, damp morning, Pope Francis’ voice echoed in the atrium of St. Peter’s Basilica: “Open the gates of justice.” With five strong thrusts, the pope pushed open the Holy Door, a symbol of God’s justice, which he said will always be exercised “in the light of his mercy.”

The rite of the opening of the Holy Door was preceded by a Mass with 70,000 pilgrims packed in St. Peter’s Square Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception and the beginning of the extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy.

As the sun broke through the clouds, heralding the start of the jubilee year, the pope bowed his head and remained still for several minutes in silent prayer.

Amid a crowd of dignitaries and pilgrims, a familiar face was also present at the historic event: retired Pope Benedict XVI, who followed Pope Francis through the Holy Door into St. Peter’s Basilica.

During his homily, Pope Francis emphasized the “simple, yet highly symbolic” act of opening the Holy Door, which “highlights the primacy of grace,” the same grace that made Mary “worthy of becoming the mother of Christ.”

“The fullness of grace can transform the human heart and enable it to do something so great as to change the course of human history,” he said.

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, he continued, serves as a reminder of the grandeur of God’s love in allowing Mary to “avert the original sin present in every man and woman who comes into this world.”

“This is the love of God which preceeds, anticipates and saves,” he said. “Were sin the only thing that mattered, we would be the most desperate of creatures. But the promised triumph of Christ’s love enfolds everything in the Father’s mercy.”

The Year of Mercy, the pope stressed, is a gift of grace that allows Christians to experience the joy of encountering the transforming power of grace and rediscovering God’s infinite mercy toward sinners.

“How much wrong do we do to God and his grace when we speak of sins being punished by his judgment before we speak of their being forgiven by his mercy,” he said.

“We have to put mercy before judgment, and in any event God’s judgment will always be in the light of his mercy. In passing through the Holy Door, then, may we feel that we ourselves are part of this mystery of love.”

Fifty years ago, he said, the Church celebrated the “opening of another door,” with the Second Vatican Council urging the church to come out from self-enclosure and “set out once again with enthusiasm on her missionary journey.” The council closed Dec. 8, 1965.

Pope Francis, the first pope to be ordained to the priesthood after the council, said the council documents “testify to a great advance in faith,” but the council’s importance lies particularly in calling the Catholic Church to return to the spirit of the early centuries, when “a journey of encountering people where they live: in their cities and homes, in their workplaces. Whenever and wherever the Church is called to reach out to them and to bring the joy of the Gospel. After these decades, we again take up this missionary drive with the same power and enthusiasm.”

Shortly after the Mass, as thousands of people waited in St. Peter’s Square for a chance to walk through the Holy Door, Pope Francis led the midday Angelus prayer.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception has a special connection to the start of the Year of Mercy, he said, because “it reminds us that everything in our lives is a gift; everything is mercy.”

Like Mary, the pope continued, Christians are called to “become bearers of Christ” and to “let ourselves be embraced by the mercy of God who waits for us and forgives everything.”

Nothing is sweeter than his mercy. Let us allow ourselves to be caressed by God. The Lord is so good and he forgives everything.

Holy Years Proclaimed to Encourage Spiritual Renewal

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

A holy year as a time of spiritual renewal has its biblical roots in the jubilees observed by the Jewish people at 50-year intervals, when debts were pardoned and slaves were freed.

The term “jubilee” itself comes from the Hebrew word “yobel,” meaning a ram’s horn, which was used to make the trumpet that signaled the beginning of this time of forgiveness.

For the Catholic Church, a holy year remains a time of great spiritual significance, and emphasis is placed on the examination of conscience and conversion, the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, concrete acts of solidarity and initiatives to restore justice.

The jubilee is called a holy year because it aims to encourage holiness, strengthen faith in Christ and inspire greater communion within the Church and society.

The first Holy Year was proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300, when thousands of Christians from throughout Europe came on pilgrimage to Rome. Among those who journeyed to the Eternal City for the first celebration was the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, who is commonly said to have found the inspiration for his “Divine Comedy” during that pilgrimage.

Pope Paul VI set a 25-year timetable for holy years, which has been the norm since, in order to allow each generation the possibility of experiencing at least one holy year.

As a way to stress the importance of forgiveness and renewing one’s relationship with God, plenary indulgences are offered during holy years. An indulgence – that is, the remission of temporal punishment for sins – is customarily granted to those who make a pilgrimage to Rome and fulfill certain other conditions: reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, visits and prayers for the intention of the pope and performing simple acts such as visiting the sick.

Those who do not make a pilgrimage to Rome can gain the same indulgence by receiving penance and the Eucharist and praying for the pope during a visit or a community celebration in a church designated by the local bishop.

The Holy Year, symbolizing the door of salvation, marks the “extraordinary” spiritual passage offered the faithful during a jubilee year.

On Christmas Eve 1999, St. John Paul II changed the traditional Holy Door ritual at St. Peter’s Basilica where he did not strike the wall sealing the door. Instead, he pushed open the Holy Door – the wall had been dismantled beforehand.

Bishop Piero Marini, then-master of papal liturgical ceremonies, said, “Elements of the old ritual which have become obsolete will be replaced by others which better express the biblical and liturgical significance of the Holy Door.”

When Pope Alexander VI opened the Holy Door on Christmas 1499, “he used a mason’s hammer, and the blows were not completely symbolic; the pope tried to break through part of the wall,” Bishop Marini said. For centuries, the opening ceremony included a long pause to allow masons to finish taking the wall down before the pope crossed the threshold.

In addition to an “ordinary” holy year set at 25-year intervals, occasionally a special jubilee is proclaimed to mark some outstanding event. The custom of these so-called “extraordinary” jubilees began in the 16th century, and they can vary in length from a few days to a year.

There have been 26 “ordinary” holy years so far, the last one being the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. There were no jubilee celebrations in 1800 and 1850 because of political turmoil at the time.

There have been two extraordinary jubilees in the last century: 1933, proclaimed by Pope Pius XI to mark the 1,900th anniversary of Christ’s redemption, and 1983, proclaimed by St. John Paul II to mark 1,950 years since the redemption.
‘Be Merciful as Your Father is Merciful

Bishop Calls Faithful to Fully Experience God’s Mercy

Celebrating the opening of the Year of Mercy on Dec. 8 and then leading parishioners of the diocese through the Holy Door at St. Patrick Cathedral on Dec. 13, Bishop Ronald Gainer expressed his hope that this Extraordinary Jubilee will allow the faithful to become more personally aware of the need and abundance of God’s mercy, and then channel that mercy to extend it to others.

“As we experience more fully God’s mercy for us, then you and I become better conduits of the mercy we know and love, and it flows from us to others,” Bishop Gainer said in his homily during Mass at St. Patrick Cathedral on Dec. 8, the start of the Year of Mercy.

Opening the Year of Mercy on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is most appropriate, Bishop Gainer observed in his homily that day.

“Who, more than Mary, knew the mercy of God? Who knew how merciful God was in setting and fulfilling this plan for the salvation of humanity? Who, more than Mary, reflected upon and knew intimately God’s mercy in sending His Son to us?” he reflected.

“Jesus is the face of the Father’s mercy,” the bishop said, quoting Pope Francis’ bull of indiction to announce the special year, “and Mary, the Mother of Mercy, intercedes for her children before the throne of God.”

Five days after the opening of the Extraordinary Year, faithful of the diocese gathered again in Harrisburg, this time for the Rite of the Opening of the Door of Mercy. The ritual called for a procession from a stational church to the Door of Mercy, and so several hundred faithful assembled at St. Lawrence Chapel, a block south of the cathedral. As the pilgrimage to St. Patrick Cathedral began with the sun setting over the city, the participants carried candles in procession while chanting the Litany of the Saints until they arrived at the Door of Mercy.

Here, Bishop Gainer opened the door, saying, “This is the Lord’s gate. Let us enter through it and obtain mercy and forgiveness.”

As diocesan faithful passed through the Holy Door at St. Patrick Cathedral during the Dec. 13 service, many blessed themselves and touched the Door in reverence.

Solemn Vespers for the Third Sunday of Advent then commenced, with hymns, psalms, intercessions, a Scripture reading, and homily delivered by Bishop Gainer.

He reminded the congregation that the Holy Door of Mercy through which they had passed is not functional, but rather symbolic.

“That door first represents an obstacle to evil and sin, something that would block Satan himself. But through the prayer of the Church, that door is opened to allow us to walk into a new experience of God’s love and God’s mercy,” he said.

“The Holy Father has invited us to rejoice in the Father’s mercy. Jesus is the face of that mercy,” Bishop Gainer said. “For us, mercy is not simply a concept, not even just a demand or requirement. Mercy has a face, mercy has a name, and it is Jesus.”

A crowd of worshipers waits to pass through the Door of Mercy at St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg after its solemn opening on Dec. 13.

The bishop prayed that this Jubilee Year would be a time for the faithful to grow closer to God’s mercy.

“As we experience that mercy anew in our own lives, may we live mercy more fully for others. May we be witnesses to God’s mercy...to a world that so desperately needs to experience it,” he said.
A Pilgrimage Site for the Year of Mercy

In announcing the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis asked that Holy Doors be opened at cathedrals and churches of special significance around the world, as a sign of God’s mercy.

In the Diocese of Harrisburg, the following churches have been designated as pilgrimage sites during this year: St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg, the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Hanover, the Basilica of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Danville, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Lancaster, and Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in Fairfield. They will be featured in the upcoming editions of The Catholic Witness.

St. Patrick Cathedral, Harrisburg

Pioneer German Jesuits brought Catholicism to Central Pennsylvania in the pre-Revolutionary era. A small Catholic Mission in Harrisburg dates back to 1806. With the construction of canals, railroads and turnpikes along the Susquehanna River, many Irish immigrants soon arrived, necessitating the building of St. Patrick Church close to the riverfront. In 1824, Father Patrick Leary purchased the present site on State Street, and in 1826 the cornerstone was laid. The original church was constructed for $6,500. Records show that St. John Neumann, who had been consecrated Bishop of Philadelphia in 1852, listed in his diary two visits to St. Patrick Church, in 1855 and 1857.

When the Diocese of Harrisburg was formed in 1868, St. Patrick Church was designated as the pro-cathedral, the church that would have the bishop’s chair. During the 1870s, the church was enlarged.

Bishop John W. Shanahan was responsible for the building of the present cathedral. This building was designed by the firm of George I. Lovatt and constructed by the McShane Company, both of Philadelphia. Construction began in 1904 and was completed in 1907. In order to allow for sufficient building space, the dead buried in an adjacent cemetery were re-interred and laid to rest in Mount Calvary Cemetery on Thirteenth Street.

Cruciform in shape and built at a cost of $250,000, the exterior was executed in North Carolina granite. The architectural design of the cathedral was patterned in the Romanesque-Renaissance style.

The cathedral has several shrines honoring important figures in the life of the diocese and the Holy Family. Its dome features stained-glass windows of the Twelve Apostles. The current pastor and rector there is Father Joshua Brommer.

Renovations of the cathedral have taken place over the last 100 years, including the addition of frescoes, shrines, statues, lighting, audio and climate systems. In 2005, extensive restoration work was completed to the cathedral’s exterior dome and stained-glass windows. A major interior renewal and restoration work was finished in 2006 for the cathedral’s 100th anniversary in 2007. (By Jennifer Reed, The Catholic Witness)

Visit the Cathedral during the Year of Mercy

During the Year of Mercy, St. Patrick Cathedral welcomes pilgrimages from parishes, schools or organizations. Pilgrimages may include Holy Mass, the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, tours and presentations. Presentations include the Holy Door of Mercy, the relics of St. John Paul II and St. Faustina Kowalska, the Jubilee Year of Mercy, and the cathedral.

Confessions are heard at St. Patrick Cathedral on Monday, Thursday and Friday at 12:30 p.m., on Saturday from 4-5 p.m., or by appointment by calling the parish office.

Weekend Masses are Saturday at 5:30 p.m. (Vigil) and Sunday at 7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. Weekend Masses are celebrated at noon.

For more information on visiting the cathedral, call 717-232-2169, or visit www.stpatrickcathedral.com.

The dome and arches above the altar, with stained-glass windows of the Apostles in the dome, and biblical scenes below.

The altar at St. Patrick Cathedral.
The Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius

The altar at the Basilica of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Danville.

The Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius was named after the spiritual patrons of the congregation: the missionary brothers Cyril and Methodius. The Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius is the daily place of prayer for the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius. In addition, it is also the site of ecumenical gatherings, pilgrimages, weekend and week-long retreats and days of prayer, not only for the religious sisters, but for the general public. During this Jubilee of Mercy Holy Year, the Basilica will also house special Jubilee events, and welcome pilgrims throughout the year.

The basilica was designed by architect Henry D. Dagit and Son of Philadelphia. They designed the building according to the historic cruciform plan, combining elements of the Romanesque style with modern styles.

The chapel was designated as a Basilica in 1989. The designation of a basilica is given to certain churches because of their architectural beauty, historical significance and importance as centers of worship and pilgrimage. The Basilica is visited regularly by architects, artists, photographers and many who simply admire beautiful buildings, the stained-glass windows and the many mosaics. However, the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius is primarily a place of prayer.

Since the dedication of the chapel on October 17, 1939, the Basilica has been used for prayer by hundreds of thousands of people, and the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius have gathered here for prayer every day and have brought the whole world with them in their prayers. Pilgrims are especially welcome to the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius during this Jubilee of Mercy Holy Year.

(By Sister Barbara Sable, SS.C.M.)

Year of Mercy Events to Take Place at the Basilica

The Basilica is open daily from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. for private prayer and pilgrimage. Guided tours of the Basilica are available by calling in advance, 570-275-3581. Evening Prayer and Eucharistic Adoration take place very Sunday evening from 4:00-4:30 p.m., January 10, 2016 - November 13, 2016, there will be public celebration of Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours, coupled with Eucharistic Adoration. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available at the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius for individuals or groups upon request. For information on any event, about visiting the Basilica, or to make arrangements for a group pilgrimage, call 570-275-3581.

• Closing of 40 Hours Devotion, coinciding with the end of the Year of Consecrated Life, on Feb. 2. Services at 4 p.m.

Indulgences during the Year of Mercy

In the Catholic Church, indulgences are granted through the Father’s mercy. For the Year of Mercy (December 8, 2015 - November 20, 2016), Pope Francis has granted a Plenary Indulgence to those who make a pilgrimage to the Holy Door in Rome, one of the Papal Basilicas, or one of the Cathedral Churches throughout the world, or one of the churches designated by local bishops. In the Diocese of Harrisburg, these pilgrimage sites are:

• St. Patrick Cathedral, Harrisburg
• Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Lancaster
• The Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Hanover
• The Basilica of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Danville

• Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Fairfield

Plenary indulgences wash away the temporal punishment for sin. In order to receive a plenary indulgence, the following conditions must be met:

• The intentional choice to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Door of Mercy and to pass through it.
• A true spirit of contrition
• A good confession of all sins in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation
• Reception of Holy Communion in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist
• Prayers offered for the intention of the Holy Father, and for his ministry
The names of the following deceased persons have been submitted by their parishes. Please remember in your prayers the happy repose of these recently departed souls and the consolation of their loved ones.

ABBOTTSTOWN — immaculate Heart of Mary: Ann Wainwright.

BLOOMSBURG — St. Columbia: Albert J. Kershbeamer.

CAMP HILL — Good Shepherd: Edward Houck, William C. Koehler, Nicholas Stahus.

COLUMBIA — Holy Trinity: Rita Bauer.

DANVILLE — St. Joseph: Theresa Mazzoli.

ELIZABETHTOWN — St. Peter: Ellie Rose Kophamel, Janine Marie Kophamel.

ENOLA — Our Lady of Lourdes: Catherine Billow, Patrick Philbin.

GETTYSBURG — St. Francis Xavier: Robert Redding.

HANOVER — St. Vincent de Paul: Margaret Bair, Phyllis Bradley.

HARRISBURG — St. Catherine Labouré: Barbara Bratina, Helen Schaffhauser; St. Margaret Mary: Edmund Ryan.

HERSHEY — St. Joan of Arc: Justin Capers.

KULPMONT — Holy Angels: Mary Backchowsky, Carolyn Dworak, Violet Feudale, Theresa Novakoski.

LANCASTER — Assumption BVM: Mary Ann (Frey) Eshleman, Olivia Lynch; St. Anne: Gregory Mirockie; St. Joseph: Dorothea T. D'Agostino; Marian Fulginiti, Rosemary Z. Greiner, Joseph R. Kirchner, John F. Magliulo, Joseph P. Sagerer, Jessie C. Sagerer.

LEBANON — Assumption BVM: Christine Matarazzo, John Roof, Dorothy Swoyer, Joan Wilson; St. Benedict the Abbot: Geraldine M. Elliott, Thomas C. Kristovsky.

LYKENS — Our Lady Help of Christians: Catherine Zelnick.

MIDDLETOWN — Seven Sorrows BVM: Alan Turyan.

NEW CUMBERLAND — St. Theresa: Frances Chambers, Alice Farrell, Frank Dean Kamkel, Jean Melodini, Stanley Stramsky.

NEW OXFORD — Immaculate Conception BVM: John C. Hoffnagle, Sr.


STEELTON — Prince of Peace: Isabelle Boucher, Dorothy A. Rubinie.

SUNBURG — St. Monica: Anthony J. Barnasconi, M. Eleanor Shaffer.

TREVORTON — St. Patrick: Elenor J. Kroposki, Mary Ann Zablosky.

WILLIAMSTOWN — Sacred Heart of Jesus: Lorraine Flynn.


Sister Anne Charles

Sister Anne Charles, OSF, formerly Sister Philomena Marie, died in St. Ann Convent in Tacoma, Wash., on Dec. 5. She was 81, and had been a professed member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia for 63 years.

Born in County Leitrim, Ireland, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in 1948. She earned a degree in Pharmacy from Fordham University in 1959, and went on to minister in education and health-care.

Sister Anne ministered for 30 years in the Archdiocese of Seattle, where she ministered at St. Joseph Hospital in Tacoma. She also served in the Diocese of Wilmington for 19 years, where she worked at St. Francis Hospital.

In the Diocese of Harrisburg, Sister Anne ministered at St. Joseph Hospital in Lancaster from 1967-1974. Additionally, Sister Anne served in healthcare ministry in New Jersey and Oregon. During her years in education ministry, she taught at schools in California and Oregon.

The funeral Mass was celebrated Dec. 16 at St. Ann Convent in Tacoma.

The book has earned the Catholic Writers Guild Seal of Approval, which recognizes both the Catholicity and editorial integrity of the book.

Mrs. Astfalk resides in the Hershey area with her husband and four young children. She is a member of Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Middletown, and is a member of the Catholic Writers Guild and Pennwriters.

Stay With Me is available on Amazon at bit.ly/staywithmenovel. For more information on Stay With Me and her blog, My Scribe’s Heart, visit http://carolynastfalk.com.

Parish Secretary Releases Book about Faith Journey

Binky Theodore, parish secretary at St. Joseph Parish in York, has written and published a book called His Plans My Hope. It is the personal and detailed story of her faith journey from a minimal faith foundation to being lit on fire for Jesus and the New Evangelization.

God paints on a canvas bigger than we can see, and his beautiful and perfect tapestry of life is woven from the back side with nothing but knots and criss-crossed, broken lines. And somehow, God’s perfect work of art would be less beautiful without the brokenness and overwhelming disappointments he has allowed in your life. But is it possible that God can still be a trustworthy, loving Father who is committed to providing you with abundant joy and peace while still allowing you to suffer and make mistakes?

Author Binky Theodore didn’t think so. That is until she embarked on an unwritten journey of revelation and truth through her inspiring and captivating true story of perseverance, surrender, and trust. With heartfelt intimacy and relatable candor, His Plans My Hope touches men and women alike as we weave through the physical, emotional, and spiritual trials of an otherwise typical life of a woman in modern America. From longing for an epic love, to enduring a mastectomy and chemotherapy, to bearing the cross of infertility, His Plans My Hope takes you on a journey on which you too may find just what you have been longing for—faith, hope, trust, and above all, the overwhelming peace that comes from knowing that God makes good of all things.

An overview, preview, as well as several reviews of His Plans My Hope can be seen at AuthorHouse.com: http://bookstore.authorhouse.com/Products/SKU-001044717/His-Plans-My-Hope.aspx.

The Holy Name Society at Holy Angels Parish in Kulpmont sponsored billboard signs on Route 61 in Kulpmont with messages to “Keep Christ in Christmas” and invitations to visit the parish again this year. The society has been sponsoring the Christmas billboard for more than 25 years, dating back to before the merger of St. Casimir and St. Mary parishes. This year, Father Andrew Stahmer, pastor, requested that the Holy Name Society also sponsor a billboard about the parish. The signs have been on Route 61 since early November, and will be there for at least two months.
**Parish, School & Organization News**

**St. Anne School in Lebanon is searching for any alumni who graduated from the school in the past 90 years. Contact us to let us know your current address and what you have been doing since you graduated from the school. Alumni night to go the website at www.stannelebanon.org. On the home page, in the top banner, click under “Contact” for “Alumni Information.” Once they click on this, the alumni information form will appear. Simply fill it out and hit submit.**

Volunteers are needed for parish ministry communication services and catechist at Dauphin County Prison, particularly on Saturdays and on Thursday afternoons, but also on other days. Please contact Deacon Jim 717-245-8504. OLBSEDEAON@comcast.net if you are interested and available for the ministry. It is a true work of Mercy and of the New Evangelization.

**Court Queen of Peace #1023 Daughters of the Americas**

**The Americas 2016 National Education Contest for Grades 4-12. Entries can choose from two themes: “WE ARE STEWARDS OF TRADITION” or “WE ARE STEWARDS OF CREATIVITY AND MENTORSHIP.” For details of contest rules and awards, please go to www.catolica.org. For more information and to download frequent downloads, and under contests, select Education Contest Form.**

**Internship Announcement:** Pennsylvania Catholic Conference (PCC) in Harrisburg is seeking an intern for the spring or summer 2016 term. Candidates must be upper-class students majoring in public relations, communications, marketing, or related discipline, or political science/government. This project oriented internship involves research, writing and outreach about public policy issues concern of the Catholic Church. Contact Amy Hill by 717-238-9615 or ahill@pactahio.org for more details.

**York Catholic High School Employment Opportunity**

**Academic Assistance Aid. York Catholic is seeking an Academic Assistance Aid Center Aide for the remainder of the school year.**

**Applications are now being accepted. Prior experience with students in special education serves students with identified learning needs. The Aide is responsible for assisting students with IEP goals, providing support to general education teachers, and providing support to students.**

**Applicants interested in applying should submit a letter of interest, resume, to: Katie Seufert, Principal, York Catholic High School, 100 Academy Drive, York, PA 17403, 717-646-8872 x12, kseufert@yk.org.**

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**Diocesan Notebook**

**Spirital Offerings**

The Epiphany Mass “Epifania Del Nostro Signore” will be held Sunday, January 3, 2016, at 12:15 p.m. at St. Catherine Labouré Church in Harrisburg. Confessions are heard in English prior to mass from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon (Republic).

The 11th annual Lenten Mass: “The Way of the Cross” will be held on Friday, March 18, 2016, at 7:00 p.m. at the National Shrine of St. Rose of Lima in York. For more information, call Father John Bateman at 717-965-5381.

Lenten Breakfast with Msgr. Joseph Bonnet will be held on Tuesday, March 29th, if possible, to register, or if you have questions. Thursdays 2/11, 2/18, 2/25, 3/3, 3/10, and 3/17 from 6:30-7:30pm. For more information, contact Mary Hill by 717-238-9615 or rhill@pacatholic.org.

**Retreats, Pilgrimages & Trips**

**Year of Mercy Pilgrimage—June 13, 2016.**

**Spiritual Pilgrimage to Poland (the Divine Mercy Shrine), Florence, Assisi, and Rome (a General Wednesday Papal Audience and the opportunity to attend an open Holy Hour to the Divine Mercy at the Divine Mercy Shrine).**

Spiritual Pilgrimage to Poland (the Divine Mercy Shrine), Florence, Assisi, and Rome (a General Wednesday Papal Audience and the opportunity to attend an open Holy Hour to the Divine Mercy at the Divine Mercy Shrine). Financial aid is available to daily Mass, 4 & 5 star hotels in downtown areas, and certified local food. For more info: 800-288-5756. Contact Karen Hurley at km-hurley@gmail.com or Deacon’s office for more information.

**“In the News” on Home Family Radio**

Tune in to AM 720 Home Family Radio every week for “In The News,” an hour-long interview program with Father John Trigilio and host Eleanor Rossmann. Father Trigilio is nationally known Catholic commentator receiving national attention on ETWN, a network of authors, an numerous books, and a regular contributor to Home Family Radio. He is the pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Marysville and St. Bernadette Parish in Danvncun.

**The Catholic Book Show** with Brenda and Ryan Loe on Holy Family Radio heard every Friday at 12:30 p.m. Stay in the know by tuning into “In The News” for a fast-paced presentation of recent events every Thursday at noon on 720 AM Holy Family Radio. The program is also available as a podcast at www.720WHYF.com.

**Events & Fund-Raisers**

**BIG BINGO at St. Benedict the Abbot in Lebanon on January 30 at 7:00 p.m. Bingo will have 10 rounds for $5 each and 25 regular games. 2 speed ball games. 6 progressive jackpots and 1 special 50/50 game. There will be plenty of door prizes, appetizers, desserts, drinks, and a chance to win a large number of great door prizes and refreshments. Tickets available at the parish office or call 717-455-4589 for info.**

**Trunk Show Weekend** to be held, a First Communion Trunk Show Weekend on Jan. 30, from 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Jan. 31 from noon-4 p.m. First Communion students and their guests are invited to attend. The event will feature the 2016 First Communion Dresses and Suits that will be available for purchase through the 2016 First Communion Season. There will also be a great selection of value, headpieces, shoes, jewelry, Rosaries and other Catholic gift items. The event will feature the 2016 First Communion Catalogue and a discount merchandise as well as 10% off non-sale merchandise purchased**

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**Parishioner services and catechesis**

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**YEAR END GIVING**

The apostles of today, our priests, deliver the life of God through their actions and words. They remind us of the birth of our Lord. His magnificent earthly life, and the life He willingly gave up for us all.

The cost of continuing education for the apostles of today and those who have entered into their lifetimes work has grown. You have responded so generously to the calls of these men in the past, both in prayer and monetarily that we are again appeal to you to keep the work going. This is our one and only gift this year for the benefit of our priests. Only with your help are we able to be able to our current priests to be more effective in their ministries and care for those who have worked so hard and so long for us.

In support, mail your potentially tax deductible treasure to the Diocesan Office of Development, 4800 Union Deposit Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111-3710. Noting in the memo “Apostle Care” or visit us on line at www.tfdgoose.org, utilize the general donation form and Visa Mastercard donations, again noting “Apostle Care” in the memo.

Thank you for your prayers and gifts.
Art Contest
Sponsored by the Harrisburg Diocesan Council of Catholic Women

Open to girls in grades 9-12 in the Diocese of Harrisburg
Grand prize: $150
Second prize: $75
Third prize: $50

Design an original art cover for a 9x12 inch folder that will be used by the participants at the 93rd Annual Convention of the Harrisburg Diocesan Council of Catholic Women on April 11, 2016.

The theme of the convention is “Sowers of Hope: Opening Our Hearts”.

The deadline to enter is January 15, 2016.

Entries may include an original drawing or painting. Mediums may include watercolor, oil, acrylic, charcoal or pencil.

Submit your entry as an attached JPEG (preferred size of 10-15 MB) to hdccw1@gmail.com with your name, address, phone number, email address, high school, grade, parish and artwork medium.

All contest participants will be given the opportunity to have their entry on display before approximately 350 women and priests from the diocese at the convention. Contest will be judged by local artists Regina Zogby and Mary Ann Muretic, and Father Joseph Gotwalt, HDCCW Spiritual Advisor.

To view and print the contest flyer, visit http://hdccw.webs.com. For information, contact the HDCCW at 717-860-0700 or hdccw1@gmail.com.

The Holy Year of Mercy announced by Pope Francis is intended to highlight the Catholic Church’s mission to be a “credible witness” to God’s mercy. “At times we are called to gaze even more atten-
tively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father’s action in our lives,” wrote Pope Francis in Misericordiae Vultus, his introduction to the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

The biblical theme of the year is “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:30).

CATHOLIC CATECHETICAL CERTIFICATION COURSES

Introduction to the Sacraments
Mondays, February 1, 8, 22, 29, and March 7 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Rev. Paul Fisher

Monday, February 15, 22, 29, March 7 and 14 7-9 p.m.
Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, Middletown
Mr. Ray Kerwin

Mondays, April 4, 11, 18, 25, and May 2 7-9 p.m.
St. Katharine Drexel Parish, Mechanicsburg
Rev. Kenneth Smith

Tuesday, April 12, 19, 26, and May 3 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Saint Rita Parish, Blue Ridge Summit
Rev. Robert Malagesi, M.S.S.C.C.

Introduction to Morality
Wednesdays, February 17, 24, March 2, 9, and 16 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Mr. Dominic Lombardi

Monday, February 29, March 7, 14, and 21 6:30-9 p.m.
St. Columba Parish, Bloomsburg
St. Maximilian Kolbe Room
Mr. Joe Mullen

Teaching Methodology—Part 1
Tuesday and Thursday, March 8 and 10 6:30-9 p.m.
St. Joseph Parish, Hanover
Mrs. Stacey White

For more information and practical suggestions for how to celebrate the Year of Mercy, visit the Vatican’s Jubilee of Mercy website (www.vatican.va/misericordiae.va) and the USCCB’s Year of Mercy webpage (www.usccb.org/believers-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/jubilee-of-mercy/index.cfm).

The 2016 Winter/Spring Session of the Diocesan Institute for Catechetical and Pastoral Formation affords adults Catholics the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the Catholic Faith. All courses and workshops are open to any interested adult, including those who are pursuing catechetical certification in the diocese and those who simply wish to understand the Catholic Faith better.

Learn from home option: Numerous faith formation offerings are also available via webinar, allowing you to participate in “real time” from home or to request recordings to view at your convenience. Webinar offerings are clearly marked.

For information about the Diocesan Institute or obtaining catechetical certification in the Diocese of Harrisburg, contact Ryan Bolster at 717-657-4804, ext. 225, or rbolster@hbgdiocese.org.

To view the complete Winter/Spring session schedule, which includes course descriptions and fees, please visit www.hbgdiocese.org.

Adult Faith Formation Offerings Available during the Year of Mercy

The Parables of Mercy
Thursday, February 25 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Mr. Ryan Bolster

The Saints in Mercy
Thursday, March 3 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Mr. Ryan Bolster

The Four Women Doctors of the Church
Tuesday, March 8 7:30-8:30 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Mr. Ryan Bolster

THEOLOGY OF THE BODY

Body, Soul...and Divinity: Saint John Paul II’s Theology of the Body
Tuesdays and Thursdays, April 5, 7, 12, 14, 19 and 21 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Mrs. Ann Koshtue

Recent Church Documents on Evangelization and Catechesis
Mondays and Tuesdays, May 9, 10, 16 and 17 6:30-9 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
Mr. James Gontis

Theology of the Body

The Four Women Doctors of the Church
Tuesday, March 8 7:30-8:30 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Mr. Ryan Bolster

The Four Women Doctors of the Church
Tuesday, March 8 7:30-8:30 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Mr. Ryan Bolster

The Corporeal and Spiritual Works of Mercy
Thursday, March 17 7:30-8:30 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Mr. Ryan Bolster

For information about the Diocesan Institute or obtaining catechetical certification in the Diocese of Harrisburg, contact Ryan Bolster at 717-657-4804, ext. 225, or rbolster@hbgdiocese.org.

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COURSES OF SPECIALIZATION

ADVANCED CATHOLIC CATECHETICAL CERTIFICATION COURSES

Advanced Morality
Wednesdays, January 20, 27, February 3, 17, 24, and March 2 9:11 a.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Rev. David Dunneker

Christopher
Tuesdays, February 2, 9, 16, 23, March 1, 8, and 15 3:15-5:15 p.m.
Cardinal Keeler Center, Harrisburg
ALSO AVAILABLE VIA WEBINAR
Mr. Ryan Bolster

Mondays, March 28, April 4, 11, 18, May 2, 9, and 16 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Rev. Michael Rothan

Advanced Scripture: The Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians
Wednesdays, March 16, 19, 26, April 6, 13, 20, 27, and May 4 7-8:30 p.m.
Deacon David Hall

We warmly invite women from around the Diocese to join us as we gather at the Diocesan Center for our third Prayer Shawl Retreat on Saturday, January 16, 2016 from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

The program, hosted by the Harrisburg Diocesan Council of Catholic Women’s Organization Commission, will include Mass, prayer, knitting/crocheting, fellowship and lunch. You are welcome to attend even if you are a beginner and would like to be part of this time of fellowship and sharing.

While the program is free, advance registration is required so that we can arrange a comfortable work area and plan for lunch. Please call Kathy Kokoski at 717-448-8899 or Deb Black at 717-514-8815 or email them at kakokoski@comcast.net or mvdb01@verizon.net. Please register early as space is limited. Deadline is Wednesday, January 6, 2016.

P R AYER S H A W L R E T R E A T
Saturday, January 16, 2016
9:30 AM – 2:30 PM
Cardinal Keeler Center (Diocesan Center)
4800 Union Deposit Road, Harrisburg
T he Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, observed on Dec. 8, celebrates the fact that Mary, in order to be a perfect vessel for the Savior, Jesus Christ, was conceived without original sin.

The Catholic Church formally decreed the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in the Constitution Ineffabilis Deus on December 8, 1854. In that document, Pius IX pronounced and defined that the Blessed Virgin Mary “in the first instance of her conception, by a singular privilege and grace granted by God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved exempt from all stain of original sin.”

The Church regards the Feast of the Immaculate Conception as a Holy Day of Obligation. This year, Dec. 8 also marked the start of the Year of Mercy throughout the universal Church. To mark these occasions, Bishop Ronald Gainer celebrated Holy Mass at Trinity High School in Camp Hill for students, faculty and families as part of a pastoral visit there.

The bishop’s pastoral visit also included a presentation on stewardship, from the non-profit organization “Stewardship: A Mission of Faith,” and visits to classrooms by Bishop Gainer.

Prayer for the Jubilee Year of Mercy

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief. Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: “If you knew the gift of God!”

You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You will that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

Above: Sister Susan Kuk and Sister Carol Marie Walsh renew their vows during the Mass.

Left: A statue of the Blessed Mother is seen as Bishop Ronald Gainer celebrates the Liturgy of the Eucharist at Trinity High School in Camp Hill for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dec. 8.
BISHOP McDEVITT TESTED AGAIN IN QUEST FOR GOLD

By Chris Heisey
The Catholic Witness

Given that the senior class of Bishop McDevitt’s football team won a remarkable 56 games over the span of their Crusaders’ career seems to be achievement enough so as to impress all. While only losing six times in those four seasons, it will be the four losses in the past four Decembers that will undoubtedly nag these great football players for years to come.

This year’s December opponent was their familiar foe of Erie Cathedral Prep, whom the Crusaders have beaten a couple of times in recent years to earn their way to the state final in Hershey. Leading 34-21 at the half on a perfect weather night for football at E.J. Mansel Stadium in Dubois – located 2,140 feet upon the Allegheny Plateau of northwestern Pennsylvania – the Crusaders seemed poised to make a return trip to Hershey for the state final. The Crusaders had their way offensively in the first 24 minutes, striking on big pass hookups from quarterback Tayvon Bowers to his speedy wideouts Bryce Hall, Kobay White and Kyree Calli.

But in the second half, the Crusaders could not muster any big plays or sustain any time possession drives, which gave the Ramblers the momentum and the offensive initiative to shut down McDevitt’s potent offense. And the Ramblers, who seem to like every gimmick and trick play available in their playbook arsenal, took the lead late in the fourth quarter. If it wasn’t a hidden ball trick, it was a mad dash onside kick or wildcat formation to challenge McDevitt’s defense.

Just like last year against Central Valley in the state semi-final game, the Crusaders held their fate in their own hands after a key defensive stop with five minutes left. And with a first down on the Ramblers’ 17-yard line with 2:38 to go and only down 38-34, McDevitt was in business to win this football game. But after a two-yard run, the next three plays seemed to be desperation passes to the end zone as if there was not enough time to ram the ball right down the Ramblers’ throat for the win. With three timeouts in their pocket, running the football was the option most seasoned Monday morning quarterbacks might chose. Football is a game of second guessing, and it seems big games come down to big plays and big decisions in big moments.

When the fourth down fade pass was intercepted in the end zone, the Crusaders’ hopes for a state championship that has eluded them for 20 years were disappointingly dashed again. “Our kids played as hard as they could, and as a coach that’s all you can ask for,” head coach Jeff Weachter said after the game.

Perhaps this is hyperbolic, yet it seems as if a poetic sentiment out of the Book of Job continues to plague McDevitt football. They have dealt with loss far deeper than losing on the big stage of high school football games, and make no mistake, loss is loss no matter how minute or large. It is felt. In the depth of his loss, Job tells a friend:

But he knows the way that I take; When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.
My feet have closely followed his steps.

(NIV JOB 23:10-11)

Wideout Bryce Hall tacks on yards after a catch in the first half. Hall had 209 yards receiving in the semifinal. He will be attending the University of Virginia to continue his career.

CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

Wideout Bryce Hall tacks on yards after a catch in the first half. Hall had 209 yards receiving in the semifinal. He will be attending the University of Virginia to continue his career.

CHRIS HEISEY, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS

Kobay White hauls in a catch. The wideout will be attending Boston College next fall.

Above: Mallory Mathias consoles Vinny Salomone after the game.
Left: Senior linemen Jaelon Mitchell and Braden Weachter share the loss together.
Below: McDevitt’s Kyree Calli feels the pain of losing.