In Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Lays Out Vision for an Evangelical Church

By Francis X. Rocca
Catholic News Service

In his first extensive piece of writing as pope, Pope Francis lays out a vision of the Catholic Church dedicated to evangelization, with a focus on society’s poorest and most vulnerable, including the aged and unborn.

Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), released by the Vatican Nov. 26, is an apostolic exhortation, one of the most authoritative categories of papal documents. Pope Francis’ first encyclical, Lumen Fidei, published in July, was mostly the work of his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI.

The pope wrote the new document in response to the October 2012 Synod of Bishops on the new evangelization, but declined to work from a draft provided by synod officials.

Pope Francis’ voice is unmistakable in the 50,000-word document’s relatively relaxed style – he writes that an “evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral!” – and its emphasis on some of his signature themes, including the dangers of economic globalization and “spiritual worldliness.”

The Church’s message “has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary,” he writes. “In this basic core, what shines forth is the beauty of the saving love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ who died and rose from the dead.”

Inspired by Jesus’ poverty and concern for the dispossessed during his earthly ministry, Pope Francis calls for a “Church which is poor and for the poor.”

The poor “have much to teach us,” he writes. “We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voices to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.”

Charity is more than mere handouts, “it means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor,” the pope writes. “This means education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free creative, participatory and mutually supportive labor that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives.”

Yet he adds that the “worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care... They need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith.”

Pope Francis reiterates his earlier criticisms of “ideologies that defend the absolute autonomy of the market.”

More POPE EXHORTATION, page 2
Diocese Solemnly Closes Year of Faith

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

On Oct. 11 of last year, Pope Benedict XVI ushered in a great gift for Catholic Church with the Year of the Faith. The period of grace, he said in his Apostolic Letter Porta Fidei, was to summon the faithful “to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world.”

The year called Catholics to turn toward Jesus Christ and enter into a deeper relationship with him in the Sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. It also encouraged people to a study of the documents of the Second Vatican Council and of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, since the year took place during the 50th anniversary of Vatican II and the 20th anniversary of the release of the Catechism.

In the Diocese of Harrisburg, the year was marked by a number of special offerings under the theme, “Wonderful Indeed is the Mystery of Our Faith.” Special observations included a pilgrimage to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.; an opening Mass celebrated by the late Bishop Joseph P. McFadden at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Harrisburg for diocesan high school students; the Expressions of Faith art show at the Cardinal Keeler Center in Harrisburg; and numerous conferences, workshops and retreats focusing on the Year of Faith.

To bring the Year of Faith to a conclusion on Nov. 24, the Feast of Christ the King, faithful gathered at the Holy Name of Jesus Church for the solemn closing, which included Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, musical recitation of the Rosary, the Sacrament of Penance, the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Solemn Vespers.

The evening prayer service was led by Father Robert M. Gillilan, Jr., Diocesan Administrator, who, in his homily, recounted a litany of events and experiences that marked the Year of Faith in the Church.

He encouraged the congregation to give thanks for the past year, reflect on the present, and look with hope to the future, all while focusing on the light of Christ.

“As we move out of the Year of Faith, we want to remember that Jesus Christ is our light – the light illuminating intellect, imagination, will and all the other virtues,” Father Gillilan said. “When the light of faith dies out, our humanity dims.”

“Today, we are reminded that, already in baptism, we were enlightened by Christ,” he said. “More recently walking through the door of faith and having experienced the manifold graces of this Year of Faith, that flame of faith now burns brighter, stronger.”

Pope Exhortation

Continued from 1

Elevating the monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament, Father Robert M. Gillilan, Jr., Diocesan Administrator, gives a final blessing at the conclusion of Solemn Vespers for the Closing of the Year of Faith Nov. 24. The diocese marked the conclusion of the special year with a Solemn Mass, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, recitation of the Rosary, the Sacrament of Penance, the Divine Mercy Chaplet and Solemn Vespers at Holy Name of Jesus Church in Harrisburg.

Since “authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Quran are opposed to every form of violence,” Pope Francis characteristically directs some of his strongest criticism at his fellow clergy, among other things, for what he describes as largely inadequate preaching.

The faithful and “their ordained ministers suffer because of homilies,” he writes: “the laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them!”

The pope devotes several pages to suggestions for better homilies, based on careful study of the Scriptures and respect for the principle of brevity.

Pope Francis reaffirms Church teaching that only “authentic power must not be too closely identified with power in general,” nor understood as domination; and he allows for the “possible role of women in decision-making in different areas of the Church’s life.”

As he has done in a number of his homilies and public statements, the pope stresses the importance of mercy, particularly with regard to the Church’s moral teaching. While lamenting “moral relativism” that paints the Church’s teaching on sexuality as unjustly discriminatory, he also warns against overemphizing certain teachings out of the context of more essential Christian truths.

In words very close to those he used in an oft-quoted interview with a Jesuit journalist in August, Pope Francis writes that “pastoral ministry in a missionary style is not obsessed with the disjointed transmission of a multitude of doctrines to be insensibly imposed,” lest they distract from the Gospel’s primary invitation to “respond to the God of love who saves us.”

Returning to a theme of earlier statements, the pope also warns against “spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, [but] consists in seeking not the Lord’s glory but human gain and personal well-being,” either through embrace of a “purely subjective faith” or a “narcissistic and authoritarian elitism” that overemphasizes certain rules or a “particular Catholic style from the past.”

Despite his censures and warnings, the pope ends on a hopeful note true to his well-attested devotion to Mary, whom he invokes as the mother of evangelization and “wellspring of happiness for God’s little ones.”

ELEVATING THE MONSTRANCE CONTAINING THE BLESSED SACRAMENT, FATHER ROBERT M. GILILAN, JR., DIOCESAN ADMINISTRATOR, HOMILY CONCLUDING THE YEAR OF FAITH, QUOTING FRENCH JESUIT PIerre Teilhard de Chardin

EMILY M. ALBRET, THE CATHOLIC WITNESS
Diocese Passes Onsite Audit

Compliant with Youth Protection Standards

The Diocese of Harrisburg has been found to be compliant with the United States Bishops’ Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. This is an aggressive safe environment program with a comprehensive set of procedures established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June 2002 that addresses allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy and gives guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability and prevention of future acts of abuse.

The Very Reverend Robert M. Gillilan, Jr., Diocesan Administrator, received the letter confirming the compliance from Stonebridge Business Partners who conducted the onsite audit which covered the 2012-2013 period. They are an independent audit firm engaged by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The diocese’s voluntary participation in this annual audit demonstrates the ongoing commitment of the Diocese of Harrisburg to the protection of children and youth from sexual abuse by clergy, employees and volunteers in the Church. The tragic issue of the sexual abuse of minors affects every part of society and every profession. We know that there are many in our society who have been hurt deeply by this tragedy. If anyone has ever been or is currently a victim of the sexual misconduct of any priest, deacon, seminarian, employee or volunteer of the Catholic Church, the Diocese of Harrisburg would like to know about such abuse, so we can help the healing process and, if necessary, remove the offender from all public ministry. To make such a report, call the toll-free Pennsylvania Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-932-0313. To contact the diocese, call the diocesan toll-free hotline at 1-800-626-1608.

You Can Help Your Marriage

Twenty-five percent of surveyed couples say they are “Happily Married.” For everyone else, there is Retrouvaille.

Are you frustrated or angry with each other? Do you argue, or have you just stopped talking to each other? Does talking about it make it even worse? Retrouvaille helps couples rebuild their marriages. For information, or to register for the Harrisburg program beginning with a weekend on January 17-19, 2014, call 1-800-470-2230 or visit the Website at www.HelpOurMarriage.com.

Retrouvaille is a ministry of the Diocesan Office of Family Ministries.

Youth Protection Program

To report suspected abuse of a minor, call the toll free PA Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-932-0313.

To report suspected abuse of a minor by a church official, employee or volunteer, also please call the diocesan toll free hotline: 1-800-626-1608.

Catholic Perspective

Upcoming feature segments on the Catholic Perspective radio program by correspondent Rose Atkinson will look at the following topics:

Dec. 15-16: Launa Snyder of Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill will talk about holiday stress, coping techniques during this hectic season and how to better enjoy the Christmas festivities.

Dec. 22-23: Christine Wittman is an image relationships therapist and counselor. She will discuss family relationships during the Advent season and ways to nurture yourself and others.

Dec. 29-30: Deacon Michael Oles is a former military colonel. In an in-depth conversation, he shares with listeners on homelessness and his solutions to help others.

Catholic Perspective is produced in cooperation with the Office of Communications of the Diocese and WHYF AM 720. It can be heard Mondays at noon and Sundays at 3 p.m. on WHYF AM 720 and on Sunday mornings on WALM-AM 1390, Lancaster at 7:30 a.m.; WWHL-AM 960, Carlisle, at 8 a.m.; WKOK-AM 1280, Hanover, at 8 a.m.; WOOG-AM 1070, Sunbury, at 6:30 a.m.; WIEZ-AM 670, Lewistown, at 8 a.m.; WWSM-AM 1510, Lebanon, at 7 a.m.; and WWEC-FM 88.3, Elizabethtown, at 9:30 a.m. It is also available online at www.OldiesRadio1620.com at 6:30 a.m. and at www.WISL1480.com on Sunday at 11 a.m. or for download at www.hbgdiocese.org.

Do you have your WHYF Bumper Sticker? You can get one free at area Catholic Churches. Show your support for AM 720. Bumper stickers are also available at the station studio, 8 West Main Street, Shiremanstown.

Clergy Assignments

The Very Reverend Robert M. Gillilan, Jr., Diocesan Administrator, has made the following appointments:

Effective Nov. 30, 2013:

- The Reverend Keith M. Carroll, from Parochial Vicar, Saint Patrick Parish, York, to Administrator, Saint Patrick Parish, York.

Effective Dec. 16, 2013:

- The Reverend Samuel E. Houser, from Pastor, Saint Patrick Parish, York, to Senior Priest, Saint Margaret Mary Parish, Harrisburg.
Enjoying Christmas to Its Fullest

By Father Eugene Heinrich
Catholic News Service

After experiencing Christmas for so many years, it’s easy for it to become “just another” Christmas. It makes me think of a quote by A.J. Couey in his book, “The Listening Heart: Vocation and the Crisis of Modern Culture.”

To be modern is to exist increasingly in a state of distraction. Our attention is drawn away from those things that have been placed in our care, away from the center of our apparent concern to something abstractly related to that concern, and thus away from God himself who is the center of all things.

What exactly is Couey’s point? He tells the story of his wife’s father, a skilled cabinet maker, taking him to his shop to see a desk he completed. Its unvarnished wood is beautiful white oak and its drawers are made to perfection: “no steel tracks or ball bearings; no gimmicks; they fit perfectly in place.”

In contrast to this proud cabinet maker, a furniture factory not far from his father-in-law’s shop. Its main object, however, is bottom-line profit. Unlike his father-in-law, whose eyes are focused on perfection and beauty, it is focused on making money, which in turn distracts it from the time needed to produce perfection.

It’s no exaggeration to say Christmas is filled with distractions that encourage us to focus on everything but what it truly means. Sales abound, the latest gadgets are touted, and there are the devilish marketing ploys, “Your best products are touted, and there it truly means.”

Sales abound, the latest age us to focus on everything but what

distracts it from the time needed to produce perfection.

The burning question is: do we allow anything to distract us from its true meaning.

In the book, “Advent and Christmas Wisdom From St. Augustine,” author Agnes Cunningham has a meditation for each day of Advent leading up to Christmas. On the first day, she quotes St. Augustine, who invites us to reflect on our body and how God endowed it with senses, coordinated its limbs and gave it a beautiful form.

At the end of the meditation is an Advent action: “Take time today, in gratitude for the gift of life and the grace of life in Christ, to pray for your parents and for the priest who baptized you.”

These thoughts are what Christmas is about, a time when we don’t allow anything to distract us from its true meaning.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) continues the tradition of providing online resources for the Advent and Christmas seasons with daily suggestions for prayer, reflection and action beginning on the first Sunday of Advent, December 1. The content is presented in a clickable calendar format, with each date opening a page of suggestions and links.

The calendars feature audio retreats in English and Spanish for the four Sundays of Advent and the three Sundays of the Christmas season. The retreats were produced by Franciscan Media and made possible by the bishops’ Catholic Come to Christ Campaign. The half-hour audio retreats feature music, a Scripture reflection and Q&A from a different bishop each week.

The bishops hosting the retreats are Auxiliary Bishop Alberto Rojas of Chicago, Bishop Anthony B. Taylor of Little Rock, Archbishop David J. Wackoika of Grand Rapids, Michigan, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, and Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Illinois. Bishops Rojas, Taylor and Malloy recorded their contributions in both English and Spanish for the first, second and fourth Sundays of Advent, respectively. Bishop Wackoika is featured in the English retreat for the third Sunday and Archbishop Broglio is the guest for the Spanish retreat for that week.

The Advent retreats are available for the three day Sundays in the brief Christmas season. The retreats for the feast of the Holy Family (December 29) feature Bishop John M. Quinn of Winton, Minnesota (English) and Auxiliary Bishop Octavio Cisneros of Brooklyn, New York (Spanish). Auxiliary Bishop Christopher J. Coyne of Indianapolis is the guest for the English retreat on Epiphany (January 5) and Auxiliary Bishop Eusebio Elizondo of Seattle (Spanish) for the Spanish retreat for Epiphany. For the final Sunday of Christmas, the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, Bishop Richard J. Malone of Buffalo, New York, is featured in the English program and Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, the Spanish. The calendar is interspersed with excerpts from Pope Francis’ audiences and homilies from the first year of his papacy and observations on Catholic doctrine and practices from the For Your Marriage website’s “Catholic 101” series. Other resources highlighted on the calendars include the Festival of Lection and Carols podcast, a list of recommended holiday-themed movies from USCBB, and prayers and blessings from the USCBB publication Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers.

Advent, a season of joyful expectation before Christmas, began Dec. 1. The Advent wreath, with a candle marking each week of the season, is a traditional symbol of the period. (CNS/NANCY WIECHEC)

Best Gift Is Encountering Christ, Pope Says at Start of Advent

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

The best present in life is encountering Jesus — an encounter that will last a lifetime, Pope Francis said.

A Christmas is an encounter with Jesus: “in prayer, when we go to Mass, when we do good works, when we visit the sick, when we help the poor, when we think of others, when we’re not self-centered, when we are amiable,” he said in a homily the poor, when we think of others, when we visit the sick, when we help

Christians talk about the “sacrament of adieu” because it’s often the last time people go to Church.

He added: “Do you want to meet Jesus in your life?” he asked the young men he was about to confirm. With the help of the Holy Spirit and the sacraments, “you will have more strength for this journey,” he said.

Don’t be afraid, he told them, because “the most beautiful present is encountering Jesus.”

The evening before, Pope Francis continued the papal tradition of celebrating vespers on the vigil of the first Sunday of Advent with students and priests from St. John’s University in Rome.

He urged young people not to be swayed by public opinion, but to go against the tide by remaining faithful to their Christian values.

“Don’t watch life go by from the balcony,” he also said, but be where the challenges of the modern day world are. “Whoever doesn’t respond to challenges are not living,” he said, pinpointing the problems of development, human dignity, poverty and life.

The Catholic Witness
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Advent Message Finds its Way to Hollywood in ‘The Christmas Candle’

By Emily M. Albert
The Catholic Witness

Have you seen the film “The Christmas Candle” in the theaters? You might have missed its release date on Nov. 22, which happened to be the same release date as the Hollywood blockbuster “The Hunger Games: Catching Fire.”

“The Christmas Candle” is worth a look this Advent. The film is based on a novel written by popular Christian author Max Lucado, and features a few top Hollywood names, such as Samantha Barks, who you might recognize from her portrayal as Éponine the 2012 film, “Les Misérables.” It also includes brief screen time of the big voice of Susan Boyle, breakout star of “Britain’s Got Talent.”

A familiar “Hobbit” face can be seen too, in Sylvester McCoy (Radagast in “The Hobbit” film series), who plays the town’s popular and a bit wacky candlemaker.

“The Christmas Candle” is set in the heart of the English countryside. Legend says that every 25 years an angel visits the village candlemaker and touches a single candle. Whosever lights this candle receives a miracle on Christmas Eve. But in 1890, at the start of the age of electricity, this legend is threatened when a young minister comes to town to modernize it.

A sneak preview of “The Christmas Candle” was held Nov. 20 at New Covenant Fellowship in Mechanicsburg, hosted by Senator Rick Santorum. At the preview, the Senator, CEO of the faith-based Echolight Studios, spoke about his involvement in the movie. He mentioned that when he was asked to come on board with Echolight Studios he agreed, but wanted to make a religious film that stood out from others.

I agree with Senator Santorum in that the movie looks like a big-budget Hollywood film, which was shot in Gloucestershire, England. The music is good, though not as memorable as I had hoped it would be. The movie lacks fine, detailed plot lines that leave the viewer a little confused as to why the town is full of grief – though eventually that is revealed close to the end.

There is an interlude of the town’s pastor creating “miracles” to preach to the people a lesson about putting all their faith into the Christmas candle. I thought this was one of the most important messages of the film: that we each have Christ in us, and through him we can do good unto others.

The most impressive part of the film, especially for a Christian viewer, was the understanding and emphasis on Advent, not on Christmas. So few Christmas movies touch upon the Church’s preparation leading up to Christmas Day. Not only do viewers see an Advent wreath, but it is lit and used – and that is what sets this story apart from other Christmas movies. In the film, the pastor lights the Advent candle each Sunday, and says aloud the representation of the candle.

I would suggest the film to families with children ages six and older. It has a 100-minute run time, and though parts of the film seem slow, it is still an enjoyable movie. You will laugh as you get to know the eccentric townspeople; you will smile and feel warmth as the movie relays a deep message of doing for others and allowing miracles to happen every day.

As you continue your Advent journey and look for things to do as a family, leave your big, special-effects Hollywood film expectations at home and let this beautifully filmed, simple Christian movie lift you further into the Advent season.

“The Christmas Candle” is playing at Regal Great Escape Harrisburg Mall Stadium 16, Harrisburg Mall, 3501 Paxton St., Harrisburg; Regal Manor Stadium 16, 1246 Millersville Pike, Lancaster; and Regal West Manchester Stadium 13, 1800 Loucks Road, York. Visit the official movie Web site at www.thechristmascandlemovie.com.

Our Lady of Guadalupe
16th century
December 12

Under this title, Our Lady is the patron of Mexico, the United States and all of the Americas, as well as the protector of unborn children. In 1531, she appeared in a vision to the peasant Juan Diego, on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City, and charged him with asking the bishop to build a church on that spot. But the bishop demanded a sign, so Our Lady had Juan gather flowers in his cloak, in December, to take to the bishop. When Juan opened his cloak, the colorful image of Guadalupe was emblazoned on the cactus-cloth. That icon is preserved in the most famous shrine in the Western Hemisphere and Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to inspire poor and oppressed people worldwide.

Lucy
circa 284-304
December 13

This saint, venerated by Christians since her own time, likely was martyred in Sicily, probably during the persecutions of Roman Emperor Diocletian, who ruled 284-305. However, legends about Lucy include a rejected suitor denouncing her as a Christian and miracles that saved her from life in a brothel, from being burned at the stake and from having her eyes plucked out. Another legend says she bled to death after her throat was cut. Lucy, whose name suggests light, is among the saints listed in the canon of the Mass; she is the patron saint of electricians and ophthalmologists and Christians pray for her intercession regarding diseases of the eyes.
By James Gontis  
Special to The Witness

On the Solemnity of Christ the King on Nov. 24, we celebrated the Year of Faith. This completion, however, is really a leaping off point for us to engage in the faith on a deeper level, while seeking to grow constantly in the virtue of faith. Our going to Jesus through Mary is key to this.

At our recent Diocesan Catechetical Conference, I could not help thinking what a tremendous outpouring of faith was taking place. The enthusiasm of the 500 catechists and catechetical leaders, as well as devout Catholics from throughout the Diocese of Harrisburg, who filled our Diocesan Center was a testimony to the fact that the faith is strong in south central Pennsylvania. It was also a testament to the fact that these dedicated persons each want to do their part to spread this Catholic faith so we love. Our faith is in Jesus and in His Mystical Body, the Church. Faith in Jesus and His Church are both articles of faith that we profess each time we recite the Creed. Our faith also has a distinctly Marian character to it. As we heard in the eloquent keynote address by Father Frederick Miller at the Catechetical Conference, Mary is the great exemplar of faith. Thus, to bear the good fruit that God wants us to bear, let us go to Jesus through Mary.

Mary might ask, perhaps even not a few Catholics: Why is Mary so important? The chief reasons are:

1. Mary always leads us to Jesus, and, as St. Louis de Montfort eloquently points out in his classic True Devotion to Mary, she does so by the most direct route possible.

2. Mary is the model disciple of Jesus and intercedes for us constantly that we learn to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and follow Him. She shows us how to know Jesus, how to love Him, how to serve Him, and how to follow Him. She is the one who teaches us, as she did at the wedding at Cana, to do whatever He tells us.

3. We cannot love on a personal level one whom we do not first know. Mary helps us to save us from an abstract conception of Jesus. He took His human nature from her – He took flesh from her. He was the only Person who has ever lived, or who ever will live, who was able to choose (from all eternity) His mother. In short, knowing the truth about Mary helps us to know the truth about Jesus. Knowing the truth about Jesus helps us to love Jesus. It is through Jesus, the one Mediator between God and man, that one can get to Heaven and experience eternal joy with the Holy Trinity and all the blessed.

One of the key points that Father Miller made in his address at the Catechetical Conference was that the Lord Jesus, because He is God Incarnate, did not have faith, nor did He need it. Why not? Because faith is belief in things unseen. Jesus, being God and of grace. She did not acquire this grace by her own initiative, but by God's. While always God, Jesus became man and from that point on would remain truly human. Hence, from the first moment of her conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary at the moment that Mary gave her complete consent to God's plan for her and for humanity. Mary's womb is the bridal chamber in the marriage between God and man, and Mary teaches us to say “Yes” to God, to learn from Him, to follow His will. She most certainly did not completely understand the full ramifications of what she was saying yes to when she gave her consent, her fiat, at the Annunciation. But she acts with complete faith, trusting that God would aid her even amongst the difficulties and vicissitudes of life.

Through her absolute consent to God's plan, Mary becomes the Mother of God. That title, Mother of God, is striking to many and in many ways is her greatest title. It is also one that we should use often when speaking about her. Did she give Jesus His divine nature? No. He always possessed that. Jesus was always God…the second Person of the Trinity. So how is she the Mother of God? Because in the wonderful union of His divine and human natures, Jesus' two natures, while distinct, are also inseparable in the one divine Person of Jesus, the Eternal Word of the Father. So while He is divine and she is not, Mary did conceive in her womb Jesus, who is the God-man; she gave birth to Him; she raised Him; she laughed with Him; she wept with Him; she watched Him preach, and heal, and convert, and drive demons out of people, and raise the dead; she suffered as only a mother can suffer when she saw Him crucified; she witnessed His resplendent glory after the Resurrection; and she led His disciples in prayer as they were filled with power from on high at Pentecost. When the Ever-Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, she would not have said, “Look at this nature in my arms.” She may well have said, as mothers of newborns so frequently do, “Look at this little person in my arms.” Put simply: Jesus is God. Mary is His mother. Therefore, Mary is the Mother of God.

Some may ask: If Mary was without sin, did she need to be saved? Answer: Yes, she did. While, as the saying goes, “All analogies limp,” analogies can be very useful teaching devices nonetheless. Jesus used analogies often in His teaching. Let's use an analogy here regarding how Mary, too, chose to bequeath to us the powers of sin and death and hell. Picture sin being quicksand. There are two ways of saving people from quicksand. Either you can pull them out of it when they are already sinking, or you can keep them from going into the quicksand in the first place. The first is us. The second is Mary. The Immaculate Conception is why the great 19th century poet, William Wordsworth, himself a Protestant, said about Mary that she is “our tainted nature's solitary boast.”

But Mary always perfectly cooperated with God's grace. Our meeting with His grace is something that we, all too often, do not do. But His grace is available for us to draw upon if we so choose. The Immaculate Conception is the key to this. It is through Jesus, the one Mediator between God and man, that one can get to Heaven and experience eternal joy with the Holy Trinity and all the blessed. He is telling us that the faith is belief in things unseen. Jesus, being God and of grace. Cooperating with God's grace sometimes, when people sin, they will say, “Oh well, I'm only human.” This is an untrue statement. Sin does not make us human, rather, it makes us unhappy. It makes us less human. And yet we fall just the same. But our Mother in Heaven, the Blessed Virgin Mary, always intercedes for us with her Son. She perfectly cooperated with His grace. Sometimes, when people sin, they will say, “Oh well, I'm only human.” This is an untrue statement. Sin does not make us human, rather, it makes us unhappy. It makes us less happy. She was, in her humanity, what God had intended for Adam and Eve, and what He intended for us as members of His divine people. She completely cooperated with His grace. Sometimes, when people sin, they will say, “Oh well, I'm only human.” This is an untrue statement. Sin does not make us human, rather, it makes us unhappy. It makes us less human.

Let us recognize that the season is greatly pregnant with some of our greatest Marian Feasts. We would be kidding ourselves if we thought that God and His Church intended to end or diminish the celebration of the Immaculate Conception (this year celebrated on December 9) and three days later the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Under the first title, Mary is Patroness of all the Americas and of the Unborn. Under the second, she is Patroness of these United States. Under the second, she is Patroness of all of the Americas and of the Unborn. To Jesus, Through Mary, This Advent, let us recognize that the season is greatly pregnant with some of our greatest Marian Feasts. We would be kidding ourselves if we thought that God and His Church intended to end or diminish the celebration of the Immaculate Conception (this year celebrated on December 9) and three days later the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Under the first title, Mary is Patroness of all of the Americas and of the Unborn. Under the second, she is Patroness of these United States. Under the second, she is Patroness of all of the Americas and of the Unborn.

To Jesus, Through Mary, This Advent.

Venerable Mary, the Catholic Witness in Harrisburg.

Stained-glass window of the Annunciation, from St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg.
DEACONS: Living Icons of Christ the Servant

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

Deacon Grella, who now serves at Prince of Peace Parish in Steelton, is one of a number of deacons in the Diocese of Harrisburg celebrating the 30th and 35th anniversaries of their ordination this year, and pausing to reflect on their order as “a living icon of Christ the Servant within the Church” (Basic Norms for the Formation of Permanent Deacons).

“Deacon” comes from the Greek word diakonos, meaning “servant” or “minister.”

The ancient Church had established the permanent order of deacons as those who tended to the economic, social and spiritual welfare of the people.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) reestablished the permanent diaconate as “a driving force for the Church’s service or diakonia toward the local Christian communities, and as a sign or sacrament of the Lord Christ himself, who ‘came not to be served but to serve’” (Pope Paul VI, apostolic letter on the diaconate, Ad Pascendum).

In the spring of 1968, the bishops of the United States petitioned the Holy See for permission to establish the permanent diaconate, and Pope Paul VI affirmed the request.

Bishop Joseph Daley instituted the permanent diaconate in the Diocese of Harrisburg in 1972, setting out with a committee to recruit candidates for the first class of human, spiritual, theological and pastoral formation.

Although a complete understanding of the diaconate was not yet fully realized and the men entering the program had no previous pioneers to look to, dozens of candidates applied to the first formation program. Among them was Richard Wentzel of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Lebanon, who had discerned the priesthood earlier in life.

“I prayed and thought about the diaconate long and hard before applying,” he said. “I didn’t want it to be a substitute for the priesthood for me. But, in the process of training, reading, praying and discerning, I began to understand that this was a totally different vocation.”

His wife Shirley gave her full support, and the Wentzels balanced the formation program while raising their children; their third child was born just a few months after ordination in 1978.

“The Church has always been so much a part of who he is,” Mrs. Wentzel said of her husband and her support of his vocation. “Even when we were dating, we would go to Mass together. He was always active in the Church and teaching in Catholic school, so his entering the formation program seemed to be just another step in his work for the Church.”

Fran Gorman was also accepted into the first formation class. He said he thought he would “give it a try” after seeing a notice in the bulletin at Good Shepherd Parish in Camp Hill and receiving encouragement from his pastor, Msgr. Vincent Smith.

“I had no idea what I was getting into, so I asked Msgr. Smith, ‘What exactly does a deacon do?’ And he said to me, ‘Well, I do know that you would be a good one,’” Deacon Gorman recalled with a laugh.

“He found support too from his wife, Alice, who was confident that he could fulfill the role.”

“I really pushed him to do it,” Mrs. Gorman said. “We grew up together, and I always saw the kind and caring person he was outside of the Church, so why not do it for the Church?”

The formation program was intense. Applicants were interviewed and tested on their aptitude and their writing abilities. From there, those who were accepted attended classes twice a week in the evenings, all day every Saturday and one Sunday a month for a few years.

Throughout the process, their wives were at their side.

From the outset, the diocese stressed the importance of the wives’ support of their husbands’ entrance into the program and eventual ordination.

“Without her ‘Yes,’ I wouldn’t have become a deacon,” Deacon Catalino Gonzalez said of his wife, Antonia.

“It was one of the main things the program stressed. You are a husband and a father first. You have to balance family, your job and your work in the Church,” said Deacon Gonzalez, who serves at Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in York.

He was entering his 30s when he entered the formation program, and he and his wife welcomed two of their four children into the world during that time.

“It was tough sometimes to balance family and the classes – and later ministry – but I figured that if the
Deacons

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Lord wanted me to become a deacon, he was going to give me the grace to do it," Deacon Gonzalez said.

As the formation program unfolded, the wives were encouraged to attend the classes, Masses and retreats with their husbands. Even babysitting services were provided from time to time.

"I think it was good that the diocese involved the wives," said Kathleen Grella, whose husband, Michael, entered the diaconate through the diocese's second program. "We knew what they were studying, what was expected of them."

"The support from the wives was critical and reassuring," Deacon Grella remarked. "We had a sense that they were learning with us."

Alice Gorman attended as many of the classes as possible.

"After a few weeks, you could see that we were all learning more about the faith," she said.

"Sometimes it was a sacrifice because of the time commitment, but I knew I had to support Fran if he was going to be a deacon," Mrs. Gorman continued. "He wasn't going to be the deacon that I knew he could be if I didn't give him all of my support. It was his vocation, but I attended the classes and absorbed as much as I could."

The 42 men in that first program were ordained by Bishop Joseph Duley at St. Patrick Cathedral in Harrisburg in June 1978. A second class of classes and absorbed as much as I was his vocation, but I attended the

Deacon Fran Gorman prays with a patient at Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill. In his ministry in pastoral care, he visits 30-40 patients a day, and is regularly on call for the Intensive Care Unit.

28 was ordained by Bishop William Keeler in June 1983. They were sent to minister in parishes, schools, prisons, hospitals and other places where they would give Christ-like service to the Church and her people.

Ministries of a Deacon

In an address to deacons of the United States in 1987, Blessed John Paul II remarked that their ministry "is the Church's service sacramentalized."

Their service in the Church's Ministry of the Word, the Liturgy and Charity are "inseparably joined together in one reality [that] shows the important nature of the ministry which is yours by ordination," the pope told them.

In the Ministry of the Word, the deacon provides catechetical instruction, religious formation for those preparing to receive the sacraments, counseling and spiritual direction.

In the Ministry of the Liturgy, he serves at Mass by proclaiming the Gospel, preaching the homily, offering the General Intercessions, assisting with the preparation of the gifts and distributing Holy Communion. In other liturgical roles, the deacon may perform baptisms, witness marriages and preside over funerals and burials.

In the Ministry of Charity, the deacon expresses the needs of the community, works for justice and offers charity to the poor.

The Ministry of Charity is integral to the Ministry of the Word and the Ministry of the Liturgy, as noted in the Directory for the Ministry and Life for Permanent Deacons.

"The three contexts of the diaconal ministry...represent a unity in service at the level of Divine Revelation: the Ministry of the Word leads to ministry at the altar, which in turn prompts the transformation of life by the liturgy, resulting in charity."

Church documents at the time of the restoration of the permanent diaconate and the many disciplines and directories written in the past three decades give clear direction regarding the ministry of the deacon. Yet, when the diocese’s diaconate class of 1978 set out to serve the Church and her people, there was still some uncertainty about the new order of clergy, though they were readily embraced by the people.

"In the early years, we had to battle our way through what the diaconate meant to ourselves personally and what it meant to a community in the diocese," said Deacon Richard Wenzel.

"The parishioners generally didn’t
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have an idea of what a deacon was about. They knew we weren’t priests, but they knew we were no longer laymen either,” he said.

Even upon the ordination of the diocese’s second group of permanent deacons five years after the first group, the practicality of the diaconate had yet to be fully grasped, noted Deacon Michael Grella, who was ordained in 1983. Only with time and ministry did that understanding evolve.

Deacon Wentzel recalls the foresight of the late Father John Greeney, who told him in those early days, “Your greatest contribution will be that you are going to help forge a meaning of what the diaconate is for the next generation.”

“I laughed when he said that, but, looking back, his words were true,” Deacon Wentzel said. “We have walked the path of what it means to be a deacon, ministering and working in and through the Church.”

Living Icons of Christ

Deacon Catalino Gonzalez, in his assignment at Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Parish in York, is engaged in every aspect of the Hispanic community. With 400 registered families of Hispanic background and a growing Hispanic population in York, he visits homes, facilitates the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults process, meets with families during the death of loved ones, conducts a Charismatic prayer group and offers counsel.

“In his office at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Lebanon, Deacon Richard Wentzel meets with local parishioners Jim and Debbie Todd. In his 35 years of service to the Lebanon community, Deacon Wentzel has ministered in the parish and at St. Mary’s School and Lebanon Catholic High School.

Deacon Gonzalez said. “Where the need is, that’s where Deacon Catalino is.”

He pursued the permanent diaconate at the urging of a priest, and because of his prior involvement in the Hispanic community.

“Initially, I thought his role as a deacon would just be liturgically, but I realized that understanding evolve. It’s part of his continuing formation.

“To me, what I do is service. What I do is not work,” he said. “If someone calls me at three or four in the morning, I get out of bed and go to them because they need me.”

“A deacon is a servant, and we are called to be servants like Christ,” he added.

Deacon Fran Gorman

In his office at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Lebanon, Deacon Richard Wentzel meets with local parishioners Jim and Debbie Todd. In his 35 years of service to the Lebanon community, Deacon Wentzel has ministered in the parish and at St. Mary’s School and Lebanon Catholic High School.

Deacon Fran Gorman imitates Jesus Christ, and another man with those same initials: Johnny Carson.

“Carson would always open his show with a joke, and that’s how I start my homilies,” said Deacon Gorman, who serves at Good Shepherd Parish in Camp Hill and in pastoral care at Holy Spirit Hospital.

He is a people person, and has a knack for putting them at ease, making them smile, or getting them to open up about their troubles.

In the early days after his ordination in 1978, he visited the sick and people in nursing homes. Then he spent time as chaplain at the Harrisburg State Hospital, which cared for more than 600 patients with mental health needs.

When the State Hospital closed, he was asked by Holy Spirit Hospital administration to work there in pastoral care. It’s a ministry he happily provides, along with the home visits, baptismal preparation classes and liturgical ministry he offers at Good Shepherd.

“People ask me why I don’t retire. I love what I’m doing,” said Deacon Gorman, who visits 30-40 hospital patients a day, and is regularly on call with the Intensive Care Unit.

“The patients appreciate your presence, because you never want to feel like you’re alone when you’re in the hospital,” he said.

“Sometimes I’ll come in even when I’m not on call,” he noted. “Ultimately, we are ordained to serve the people at their convenience, not ours. If someone is in need, I don’t ask them if they can wait until tomorrow. If someone calls, I will come.”

Deacon Richard Wentzel, like most of his fellow deacons, has worn many hats in his 35 years of service: on the staff at Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Lebanon, as teacher at the former St. Mary’s School and later as teacher and principal at Lebanon Catholic High School, and as a Boy Scout leader, active member of the Knights of Columbus, assessor for the Lebanonesan Tribunal, and chaplain for one of Lebanon’s fire companies.

“I’ve had a uniquely rich experience in ministry,” he said. “As I look back on my ministry and consider the disappointment I felt in not being accepted as a candidate for priesthood, I realize that this is what God wanted me to do, and it unfolded when he wanted it to.”

His wife, Shirley, said she feels blessed to have watched his ministry unfold.

“Initially, I thought his role as a deacon would just be liturgically, but there have been so many stepping stones to everything he does today – performing marriages and baptisms, counseling people, presiding at funerals.”

“He is so well thought of as a deacon,” Mrs. Wentzel remarked. “Seeing the connections he has made with people makes me realize the difference one person can make for a large
On an afternoon at Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in York, Deacon Catalino Gonzalez stops to talk with Mollie Luginski, the parish’s Director of Religious Education. “Whenever there is a need in the parish, Deacon Catalino is there. We are blessed to have him here. He builds bridges between the English- and Spanish-speaking communities,” said Ms. Luginski.

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amount of people.”

The joy of bringing Christ to people is a blessing Deacon Wentzel receives every day.

“This ministry is a vocation. It’s not something you turn off and turn on,” he said. “Whether you are at home, in the parish or in public, you are always a deacon. It’s just like how I am married, even though I’m not always in the presence of my wife, or how I am a father, but not always in the presence of my children.”

“As a deacon, we are always witnessing by our lives,” he said.

Deacon Michael Grella entered the diocese’s second diaconate formation class shortly after moving to the diocese from West Virginia with his wife, Kathleen, and their children. He had been in seminary earlier in life, and though he left, the desire to do something for the Church had always stayed with him.

“It’s clear that God’s grace led me to the diaconate,” he said.

His first assignment was at the former St. Peter Parish in Steelton. Following the parish mergers in 1995, he continued his ministry in Steelton at Prince of Peace.

In parish ministry, Deacon Grella has facilitated the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, taught classes for marriage and baptismal preparation, visited the sick and met with bereaved families to arrange funerals.

In 2006, then-Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades appointed Deacon Grella as the Director of Formation for the permanent diaconate program upon its re-institution in the diocese – the first since the class of 1983.

“That offer from Bishop Rhoades became such an incredible gift, though I had an initial fear of taking on something like that,” Deacon Grella said. “I had a very definite ministry to the men in formation.”

During the four years of formation classes, “there was a very powerful sense of the Holy Spirit at work,” Deacon Grella said. “We had a much better understanding of what the diaconate is, who we are to be, and what we are called to do, and the men went through that same kind of self discovery.”

The 23 deacons from the diocese’s third class were ordained in May 2010. Deacon Grella has since returned to parish ministry.

He often thinks back to the day, 30 years ago, when he sang the Slovenian hymn to the elderly woman in the hospital.

“When I think of what deacons mean to the Church, I think of the response of the people,” he said.

“They are a real aid in helping us realize that Christ uses us as his instruments,” he said. “They call us to fidelity to what we were ordained to do as servants in the Church.”

Deacon Catalino Gonzalez and his wife Antonia give honor to a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe inside the front doors of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church in York, where Deacon Gonzalez ministers to the Hispanic community.

Permanent Deacon Ministry Growing;
Almost 15,000 Active in United States

The number of permanent deacons in the United States continues to increase, according to a national survey recently released by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The Georgetown University-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) conducted the survey of 193 of the 195 U.S. dioceses last spring. This marks the seventh CARA survey of the permanent diaconate, an ancient ministry reinstituted by the Second Vatican Council.

The bishops began to ordain permanent deacons for the United States in the early seventies. The ministry emphasizes roles in liturgy, preaching and service. Currently there are more than 18,000 deacons, about 3,000 of them retired.

The most recent survey found that the largest numbers of deacons were reported by the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (414), Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey (383), Archdiocese of Los Angeles (344) and Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut (300).

Considering Catholic population in an area, the Latin-rite diocese with the highest concentration of permanent deacons is Fairbanks, Alaska, with 482 Catholics to every deacon. Other high concentrations are found in Lexington, Ky., 657 Catholics for each permanent deacon; Amarillo, Texas, 773 Catholics per deacon; and Rapid City, S.D., 803 Catholics per deacon.

Ninety-three percent of active deacons are currently married; four percent are widowers, and two percent never married.

“The statistics are encouraging,” said Archbishop Robert J. Carlson, chair of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations. “But they also alert us to the fact many of the deacons will soon reach retirement age. This suggests a need for bishops to recruit a greater number of men to join the ranks of the permanent diaconate.

Ninety-five percent of active deacons are at least 50 years old. About a quarter are in their fifties; 43 percent are in their sixties; and 25 percent are 70 or older. Almost 90 percent of dioceses have a minimum age for deacon candidacy and half have a mandatory retirement age. In the U.S. the minimum age for ordination to the permanent diaconate is 35. The average minimum age for acceptance into a diaconate program is 33. Thirteen percent of dioceses have a mandatory retirement age of 70. Eighty percent mandate retirement at 75.

Seventy-eight percent of active deacons are white. Fifteen percent are Hispanic or Latino, three percent are African American and three percent are Asian.

Many permanent deacons hold jobs outside of the ministry in such areas as sales, law or other work. An estimated 21 percent of active permanent deacons are also compensated for ministry. Some serve in full-time ministry, for example in parishes or diocesan positions. Others are compensated for hospital or prison ministry. A small percentage of deacons are entrusted with full-time pastoral care of a parish and others work in a social services agency.

Almost 30 percent of permanent deacons hold a graduate degree, about two-thirds of them in a field not related to the diaconate. Three in ten (31 percent) have a bachelor’s degree as their highest level of education. Almost 20 percent have some college education and another fifth have a high school degree. Eighty-five percent of deacons are required to undergo post-ordination formation. The median number of hours is 20 per year. About 74 percent of dioceses also provide formation opportunities for wives of deacons.

The full report and additional information on permanent deacons can be found at www.usccb.org/diaconate.
‘Cooking Priest’ Offers Encore Performance at Catholic Charities’ Annual Fund-Raiser

By Jen Reed
The Catholic Witness

Stirring up a concoction of practical advice, theology and comedy – while wielding a skillet full of bacon, butternut squash and pasta – Father Leo Patalinghug returned to the diocese Nov. 26 to share his culinary expertise and recipes for strong marriages during the eighth annual Come and See Dinner hosted by Catholic Charities. A priest of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, where he serves at Our Lady of the Fields Parish in Millersville, Md., Father Patalinghug is the host and founder of Grace Before Meals, an apostolate that aims to strengthen families around the dinner table.

Author of “Grace Before Meals” and host of the EWTN show “Savoring Our Faith,” the priest offered insights into his newest book, “Spicing Up Married Life,” while offering a cooking demonstration during the Come and See dinner at the Cardinal Keeler Center in Harrisburg.

The idea for the latest book – which spans from “love at first sight” to “until death do us part” – came to him through prayer, he said.

“The prayer was simple. If you really want to strengthen family life, you have to begin with the first link: mom and dad,” Father Patalinghug said.

“The institution of marriage is under a lot of suspect. It’s in the midst of being redefined in our Catholic faith and in our world,” he said. “I’m not here to say who can love someone or who can commit marriage. My argument is, if we had better marriages, we wouldn’t want to redefine it.”

Marriage, he said, should be the union of three people: man, woman and God.

“Take God out of any relationship, and you have something that’s going to look like marriage, but isn’t,” he remarked.

He asked the married couples in attendance to recall the day they first met.

“Was it love at first sight?” he asked. “If it was love at first sight when you first saw your spouse, then you saw more than a pretty face. You saw the presence of God in them.”

“If God is love, then you see God in that person and you’re going to give God to that person,” he added. “If all you give is hu-man, then when you get old, it’s going to get fat and it’s going to get wrinkly. But if you give God’s love, it’s ever ancient, and at the same time, ever new.”

Father Patalinghug said society should look at marriage through the logic of God, instead of through the logic of sociology, where television shows like “Di-vorce Court” and “Bridezillas” seem to offer society’s definition of marriage.

“We have to look at what God says about marriage. That’s why I do what I do. We have to bring God back, and encourage couples to have conversations, and to make sure that God is part those conversations,” he said.

“We need to get people to turn back to the dinner table,” and remind each other “of the great gift of food that God has given to us,” Father Patalinghug remarked.

“Our objective with Grace Before Meals is to make sure that our children are being fed – body, mind and soul. But all too often, we are confused about what to eat because we have bought into a fast food mentality, which says, ‘I’m too busy to spend time with people I love,’” he said.

“If you don’t get together and just dine, there are forces that will pull your love apart,” he offered. “How, then, can we become one in our family if mom and dad aren’t one in their love for each other?”

The annual dinner is a major fund-raiser for Catholic Charities’ Homes for Healing, which are located at the St. Samuel Center in Harrisburg.

The Interfaith Shelter for Homeless Families is the only program of its kind providing help and creating hope for homeless families in Dauphin, Cumberland and Perry counties. Services include assistance in finding and securing permanent housing; a supply of food, clothing and baby items; and case management to address issues that perpetuate poverty and homelessness.

Lourdes House Maternity Home provides specialized, comprehensive maternity care and residential services to women and their babies. Services include child-birth education, parenting classes, transportation to medical appointments, and assistance in securing housing and employment.

Evergreen House is a specialized residence providing a safe, secure and nurturing environment for women in recovery from addiction. The program assists residents in attaining long-term recovery, locating stable housing and participating in job-readiness training and/or education.

(For additional information on Father Leo Patalinghug and his ministry, visit www.gracebeforemeals.com.)

Continuing the Works of Mercy

By Chris Meehan
Special to The Witness

The 2012-2013 year was full of great excitement as well as great loss. Two specific events immediately come to mind. In March, I (along with millions of others around the world) watched the white smoke coming from Rome when Pope Francis was introduced. A week later, I vividly remember Bishop Joseph McFadden speaking at our Soup, Salad and Sermon Lenten Luncheon about his new Holy Father’s message of helping the poor. It was an affirmation of the work we do at Catholic Charities each day.

Less than two months later, in May, I shared the grief of many when Bishop McFadden suddenly passed away. Seven months later, it is still hard for me to believe. But even though Bishop McFadden is gone, I know and I appreciate how supportive he was of Catholic Charities.

For more than 74 years, our agency has been one of the leading human service organizations in South Central Pennsylvania. It is with great pride that we “Provide Help and Create Hope” for those in need. We serve all who come to us for help, regardless of age, race, religion or ability to pay.

The 2013-2014 year marks 75 years of service for our local agency. As a national organization, Catholic Charities USA has been around for over 100 years. Our staff likes to say that we will be here for at least 75 more years. I certainly hope that is true.

But there are challenges. The cost of the services we provide far exceeds the amount of reimbursements we receive from government funding sources. When government agencies are developing their annual budgets, social services are often the first to be cut. In addition, many of the clients we serve do not have the means to pay for our services. However, no one is ever denied help because of finances.

Our staff continues to work diligently, and our agency continues to be grateful recipients of the support and generosity of many individuals. The reality is that neither is sufficient to meet the needs of all who are coming to us seeking assistance. In short, we need your help in order to continue these works of mercy.

I ask that you prayerfully remember those less fortunate. While many of us are blessed with good health, loving families, a warm home, steady employment and the like, others are faced with illness, dysfunctional families, homelessness, unemployment and other challenges. Our organization remains committed to doing everything we can to address these challenges.

I also ask that you continue to support the work of Catholic Charities. This Christmas season, please consider making a donation to help make a difference. With your assistance, Catholic Charities will continue to provide help and create hope for those in need – just as we have for nearly 75 years.

For more information about Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Harrisburg, please visit our website, www.cchbg.org. I wish you a Merry Christmas and God’s blessings for 2014.

(Chris Meehan is the Director of Development for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Harrisburg.)
Obituaries

The names of the following deceased persons have been submitted by their parishes:

ANNVILLE — St. Paul the Apostle: Lillian Meade.

BERWICK — Immaculate Conception BVM: Irene E. Ewashko, Mary Emma Fischer.


BLOOMSBURG — St. Columba: Ann DeFinis.

BLOOMSBURG — St. John the Baptist: Louis Burton, Patrick Downey, Barbara Hebel.

BOYERTOWN — Sacred Heart of Jesus: Catherine “Jim” Devine.

BREINIGSVILLE — Our Lady of Lourdes: Zedack.

CHAMBERSBURG — Jesus: Catherine “Jim” Devine.

CHAMBERSBURG — Sacred Heart of Christi: Joseph Messinger, Bernadette Ford, Viola Thompson.

CHAMBERSBURG — St. Anne: John H. Smyjewski.

CHAMBERSBURG — St. Catherine of Siena: Jim Angeline, Helen McKelvey, Jim Moores, Mary Urbano.


CAMP HILL — Good Shepherd: James Albert, Elizabeth Bangs, John Ford, Viola Thompson.

CONEWAGO — Sacred Heart of Jesus: Catherine “Jim” Devine.

DECEMBER 6, 2013

NEW CUMBERLAND — St. Theresa: Frank Kempf, Emmanuel Paul, Albert Schaffhauser, Steven Tobias.

NEW CUMBERLAND — Our Lady of Guadalupe: Irene E. Ewashko, Mary Emma Fischer.

NEW CUMBERLAND — Sacred Heart of Jesus: Catherine “Jim” Devine.

NEW CUMBERLAND — Our Lady of Guadalupe: Irene E. Ewashko, Mary Emma Fischer.

NEW Freedom Parishioners Contemplate Our Lady of Guadalupe on Pilgrimage with Retired Pastor

By Tracy Noll
Special to The Witness

On a cloudy Saturday morning this fall, a group of parishioners from St. John the Baptist Parish in New Freedom gathered to begin our pilgrimage to Mexico. We stood in a circle as our pastor, Father Sylvan Capitani, blessed us and our pilgrimage. Among the pilgrims stood our formerly pastor, Father Sylvan Capitani, who is a few months into his retirement. This trip was in honor of Father Capitani’s retirement and more than three decades of his service to our parish. Deacon Michael Solomon organized the trip, which included visits to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Shrine of Blessed Miguel Pro, the Shrine of Our Lady of Ocotlan and the Shrine of San Miguel del Milagro, just to name a few.

One of the many highlights of our pilgrimage was the Mass celebrated by Father Capitani in a private chapel on the mezzanine level overlooking the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The chapel was in the middle of the Basilica and in direct sight of the treasure which all come to see: Juan Diego’s tilma. As Mass was being celebrated on the ground floor in Spanish, our Mass was celebrated by our beloved Catholic Church.

As the Year of Faith wound down, I couldn’t help but to contemplate the timeless messages from Our Lady of Guadalupe. One of the messages is centered on the sanctity of life. Centuries have gone by since this apparition, and yet the pro-life message is still very relevant. The apparitions and miracles resulted in the conversion of nine million indigenous people, once pagans, to Catholicism. The act of human sacrifice was outlawed and life was pronounced as sacred. Our Lady showed the people that Jesus’ death was the only sacrifice of life that mankind would need. In recent years, the Church’s pro-life imagery includes Our Lady of Guadalupe and refers to her as the “Protectress of the Unborn.” The respect life message is relevant in so many aspects of our human experience with others. It applies to how we care for the elderly, the disabled, the poor, the disenfranchised, and so on. In a nutshell, respecting life encompasses how we love thy neighbor.

It was beautiful to witness how Mexico venerates its Mother. It is not unusual to see people crawling across the plaza slowly as they pray their way to one of the many entrances. The Blessed Mother loved them all before they even knew her. Prior to the apparition in 1531, only a few thousand indigenous were baptized Catholic by the Spanish missionary priests. After a wonderful Italian dinner in Father Capitani’s honor, atop an outdoor terrace overlooking San Miguel de Allende, our group shared its thoughts on the pilgrimage. We all felt so blessed to be able to visit so many sanctified places and offer prayers for our families, friends, parish, diocese and our beloved Catholic Church.

Many on the pilgrimage have known Father Capitani for nearly his entire tenure at our parish. I felt it was divinely fitting to celebrate his retirement in this manner. As the Blessed Mother is always pointing to the cross and leading people to Jesus, reminding of repentance, love and prayer, so has Father Capitani’s life and priesthood.

(Tracy Noll is a parishioner at St. John the Baptist Parish in New Freedom.)
Jody Cole will be conducting two icon writing workshops this winter: Tuesday beginning Jan. 7 at St. Joseph’s in Mechanicsburg and Saturdays beginning Jan. 16 at St. Patrick’s in Carlisle. Each class will meet from 6-9 p.m. for a maximum of 10 weeks. The total cost is $140. The icons being written are a detail of Jesus and John from the Last Supper, and Our Lady of Sorrows. More information is available by contacting Jody at 717-919-8791 or jcoleman36@aol.com.

All Girls Social: This annual social will be a great opportunity to spend the day learning about the Blessed Virgin Mary. The event will be advertised in the parishes’ weekly have to volunteer, or if you want to learn about starting the program in your parish. Registration is open until Nov. 15 at www.tolancaster.com. A retreat of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for Children will take place every Tuesday in Advent from 4-5 p.m. in the lower level of St. Joseph Church in York. Childcare available in the St. Francis/Hill/New Cumberland/Enola area for faith and community building.

An interreligious candlelight service for those who have experienced the loss of a loved one, friend or family member to suicide will be Dec. 13 at 7:30 p.m. at the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Conewago. Light refreshments will be served in the Parish Hall following the service.

Joan A. Arciszewski will participate in the National Night of Prayer for Life Dec. 8 from 6 p.m.-1 p.m. The purpose is to unite our prayers with Catholicts throughout the country to pray for the end of abortion. In observance of Dec. 9 as a Day to abort and establish a culture of life in our country. Reflection and prayer will begin with a short Mass to promote liberty and protect the life of America. The hours are chosen to coincide with our Lady of Guadalupe’s appearance to St. Juan Diego. Join in praying the Rosary for the Blessing of the Missal. For information, call at 717-553-4864 or visit www.nationalnightofprayer.org.

The Diocesan Office of Respect Life Activities invites you to spend an hour with Our Lord and with Our Lady of Guadalupe in Eucharistic Adoration Dec. 12 at the Cardinal Keeler Center in Harrisburg, across from York Catholic High School. The Blessed Sacrament will be exposed from 12:40 p.m. to 1 p.m. and the Divine Mercy Chaplet will be recited for the intentions of the Missal. For information or to be added to our prayer list, please send an email to spsbowers@holynamepa.org with your name and the name of your4. For more information, contact Rylee Simmons at 717-657-4504, ext. 253, or jcmirn@bigcatholic.org.

The Office of Evangelization and Support will be celebrated by Father Walter Sempolcz Dec. 15 at 4 p.m. at St. Catherine Laboure Church in Harrisburg. Confessions will be heard in English and Polish after Mass.

Italian Mass for the Christmas Season, La Santa Messa per le Feste Natalizie, will be celebrated Dec. 29 at 9 a.m. at St. Leo the Great Parish, Bishopman Ave., Manheim, PA 17545, Attn: Father Menei. The price of the tour is $3,998 and includes roundtrip airfare from Reading to Rome to Kiev to Kennedy Airport, including all taxes, sightseeing fees, accommodations and breakfast and dinner daily. For further information, or to receive a brochure and application for the trip, contact Janet Quigley, Director of Development, at jqmcc@stleo.org or call 717-761-2228. A deposit of $300 is requested before Dec. 31.

St. Rita Shrine will be the celebrant. The Italian Mass Committee will provide Polish after Mass.

A pilgrimage to Italy to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Trinity High School in Camp Hill will be held June 12-20, 2014. Travel will include visits to Venice, Florence, Assisi and Rome, and accommodations will be at the Papal Apostolic Guest House. The price of the tour is $3,998 and includes roundtrip airfare from Reading to Rome to Kiev to Kennedy Airport, including all taxes, sightseeing fees, accommodations and breakfast and dinner daily. For further information, or to receive a brochure and application for the trip, contact Janet Quigley, Director of Development, at jqmcc@stleo.org or call 717-761-2228. A deposit of $300 is requested before Dec. 31.

Father Louis Ogden and parishioners of the St. Peter Parish in Mechanicsburg, Pa., are planning a pilgrimage to Rome, for the canonization of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II in April. For information, call St. Joseph parish office at 717-259-0611. There will be an informational meeting Dec. 18 at 12:30 p.m. in the church social hall.

Canonization Pilgrimage — Join Father Louis Ogden and parishioners of the St. Peter Parish in Mechanicsburg, Pa., for a pilgrimage to Rome for the canonization of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II on April 4, 2014. For information, call St. Joseph parish office at 717-259-0611. There will be an informational meeting Dec. 18 at 12:30 p.m. in the church social hall.

Catholic Singles Ministry New Year’s Eve Party: All Catholic singles ages 30-59 are welcome to join the ministry group, supported by St. Joseph Parish in Danville, for its New Year’s Eve party at front Street Station in Northerdale. Purchase tickets by Dec. 22. Cost is $35 per person and includes dinner, beverages and snacks. Second prize is a wine basket with snacks and an Olive Garden gift card. Third prize is a margarita basket and round trip transfer from motel to front Street Station. Cost for “Into the Spin Party” is $25 per person. For more information, contact Sheryl Emerick at 717-441-9307. The Catholic Singles Ministry on Facebook at: https://www.facebook.com/catholicsinglesministry.

Parishes & Organizations

Richard Parish in Mechanicsburg is seeking a CRE/ DRG Ministries Coordinator. For more information, contact Valerie Spangler at 717-679-7937 or vspangler@stmarys.org.

Shining Light Thrift Shop is a clothing ministry of the Cathedral Parish of St. Patrick in Harrisburg, urgently needs men’s clothing (jeans, pants, sweaters, shoes, belts, coats, etc.) and blankets. The shop is located at 1301 St. Mary’s St., across from the Broad Street Market. If you cannot find parking out front, there is a back parking lot next to the church and an entrance next to the door.
High Court to Hear Two Cases on HHS Mandate; Declines Employer Case

Catholic News Service

The U.S. Supreme Court agreed Nov. 26 to take up two cases that challenge provisions of the Affordable Care Act requiring employers to provide contraceptive coverage on behalf of for-profit companies whose owners object to the mandate for religious reasons.

On Dec. 2, the court announced it had declined to hear the appeal of Liberty University of the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that the Christian university must adhere to the health care law’s employer mandate when the Supreme Court ruled on the constitutionality of parts of the health care law in 2012, it didn’t address the employer mandate to provide coverage.

 Probably in March, the court will take up the cases of Hobby Lobby, an Oklahoma-based, family-run arts-and-crafts chain, and Conestoga Wood Specialties, a Pennsylvania family-run company that makes cabinets.

These cases will be combined for the arguments. A decision is likely by late June.

At issue in both cases will be First Amendment arguments that a federal requirement that the owners of the companies provide insurance coverage they morally oppose violates the owners’ Free Exercise rights as well as their rights under a 1993 law, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

In the Liberty University case, which the court without comment declined to consider, the institution argued the mandate for employers to provide government-defined health insurance violates the school’s rights, and the individual rights of employees.

The law requires all employers—with 50 or more workers—to provide health insurance. This is the second unsuccessful attempt to challenge the mandate in the Supreme Court. Other cases are still working through lower courts. The deadline for the requirement to take effect has been postponed until Jan. 1, 2015. It was to have taken effect Jan. 1, 2014, but the deadline was delayed to give employers more time to adjust.

In a Nov. 26 statement, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Freedom, said the court’s decision to take up the private employer cases:

“...highlights the importance of this conflict between the federal government and people seeking to practice their faith in daily life.”

“We pray that the Supreme Court will find that the Constitution and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act protect everyone’s right to religious freedom. We are encouraged by the advances in the lower federal courts so far in cases involving family-owned companies as well as nonprofit religious organizations.”

Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores, the Green family won a ruling by the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that said their Hobby Lobby chain of more than 500 stores and Mardel, a chain of 35 Christian bookstores, could proceed with seeking an injunction protecting the companies from meeting parts of the contraceptive mandate issued by the Department of Health and Human Services as part of the health care law.

Both the Justice Department and the Greens asked the Supreme Court to review the case. The government requires most employers’ health plans to include free coverage of contraceptives, sterilizations and some abortion-inducing drugs.

The Greens say they object to that part of the Affordable Care Act employer mandate because they provide emergency contraceptive coverage—such as the morning-after pill or Plan B—saying it violates their religious freedom. The family has no moral objection to covering “preventive contraceptives” and will continue to cover those for employees, they have said.

The court agreeing to hear their case is “a major step for the Greens and their family businesses in an important fight for Americans’ religious liberty,” said Kyl Duncan, general counsel of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and lead lawyer for Hobby Lobby.

“We are hopeful that the Supreme Court will agree once and for all that religious freedom in our country should be protected for family business owners like the Greens,” he said in a statement.

In a statement on the Hobby Lobby case issued by the press secretary’s office, the White House said it doesn’t comment on specifics of any case pending before the high court, but “as a general matter” it said the HHS mandate is designed to “ensure that health care decisions are made between a woman and her doctor.”

President Barack Obama “believes that no one, including the government or for-profit corporations, should be able to dictate those decisions to women,” he said. The administration said it has already taken steps to “to ensure no church or similar religious organization” is forced to provide contraceptive coverage and allow women, not “corporate CEOs,” to make their own health decisions.

The second case, Conestoga Wood Specialties v. Sebelius, is an appeal by the Hahn family, the Mennonite owners, of a 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that they had to comply with the contraceptive coverage requirement. The circuit court ruled that as a for-profit, secular corporation, Conestoga Wood and its owners are not protected by the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment.

In its petition for the Supreme Court to review its case, Conestoga Wood argued that the 3rd Circuit’s decision is “the first and only instance where a federal court has concluded that federal courts lack jurisdiction over a suit brought by a corporation for a religious accommodation of the law.”

The company also raised the Free Exercise clause as a defense in arguing the mandate infringes on the employers’ right to be free from governmental interference with their religious beliefs. The argument cites the Supreme Court’s ruling in Citizens United that found a corporate free speech right to participate in the political process through campaign contributions.

The HHS mandate includes an exemption for some religious employers that fit its criteria and has an accommodation for others allowing some employers to use a third-party to provide the contraceptive coverage they find objectionable, but Catholic entities that have brought the lawsuits say the accommodation still does not solve their problem over being involved in providing coverage they reject for moral reasons.

The mandate does not include a conscience clause for employers who object to such coverage on moral grounds.

Neither of the Supreme Court’s orders lists from the Nov. 26 conference made reference to a fourth employer challenge of the health care law, Autocam v. Sebelius. The case was on the list for review at the same conference as the Hobby Lobby, Conestoga Wood and Liberty University appeals.

Cases the court accepted were announced Nov. 26. Those it denied were announced Dec. 2. Some of the cases will be argued until other cases that deal with the same legal issues are decided.

Sacred Heart Parish in Cornwall

To Host Screening of Mary of Nazareth

A screening of Mary of Nazareth, a motion picture, on the life of Mary of Nazareth, mother of Christ, is being held by the Sacred Heart Parish in Cornwall this Advent.

The movie will be shown on the Allen Theatre on Main Street in Annville Dec. 15 at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are $5 if purchased after Nov. 26. Details are available at SacredHeartParishinCornwall@gmail.com.

St. John Neumann Parish, Lancaster, first Sunday of the month at 9 a.m.

Parishes that provide interpreted Masses as available/needed are:

• Sacred Heart Parish in Cornwall
• Our Lady of the Assumption Parish in Lebanon
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• Northern/Northumberland Deaneries, contact Cindi Brown at annlee29@comcast.net.
• St. Thomas Parish, York, contact Teresa Gladfelter at laxnp9@yahoo.com.
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Catholic News Service

The Diocese of Harrisburg is committed to providing communication access to persons who are deaf and who use sign language. The following parishes provide regularly interpreted Masses:

• Cathedral Parish of St. Patrick, Harrisburg, every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Mass is signed by Father Thomas Rozman, pastor. Confessions are heard in ASL by appointment.
• Divine Redeemer Parish, Mount Carmel, second Sunday of the month at 10:30 a.m.
• St. John Neumann Parish, Lancaster, first Sunday of the month at 9 a.m.

For information about the services and ministries of the Diocesan Office of Ministry with People with Disabilities, contact Ginny Duncan, director, at 717-657-4804 or vduncan@hbgdiocese.org.

Masses in Sign Language

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Parishes that provide interpreted Masses as available/needed are:

• Sacred Heart Parish, York, contact Teresa Gladfelter at laxnp9@yahoo.com.
• St. Theresa Parish, New Cumberland, contact Sharon Thomas at shamas@comcast.net.
• St. Bernard Parish, New Bloomfield, contact Judy Rich at jjcarich@embarqmail.com.
• St. Patrick, Elizabethtown, contact LeeAnn Riegler at annlee29@comcast.net.
• St. Patrick Parish, Carlisle, contact Jennifer McLaughlin at mcdotie101@yahoo.com.
• Northern/Northumberland Deaneries, contact Cindi Brown at cindi@cbrownasl.com.

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For a time at Hersheypark Stadium, the Fighting Irish of York Catholic looked like they were relishing the role of the underdog against the Steel-High Rollers in the District 3 Class A football final on a brisk Saturday, Nov. 23.

With three first-half turnovers, the Rollers did their part to keep the Irish in the game as the teams were knotted 7-7 in the second quarter. But eventually, the speed of Steel-High’s backfield wore down the Irish defense as the Rollers scored 19 unanswered points in the second stanza to pull away for good after a pick six made the score 26-7.

The Irish only managed 41 yards on the ground on 29 carries and threw the ball for only 26 yards on 25 throws, proving that the Rollers’ defense is not only stout up front, but quick on the edges. Never could the Irish sustain possession as they were forced to punt 11 times.

But give credit to the Fighting Irish, who held the Rollers scoreless in the wind-blown second half and played a very good team tough throughout. The Irish finished the solid year at 8-4, and bringing home a district silver medal is a testament to their mettle.

Few schools in Pennsylvania can boast of more success on the football field than the Barons of Manheim Central. Winners of a state championship and 16 Class AAA District 3 championships, it once was that the road to winning the district title meant tangling with the Barons and their super successful head coach, Mike Williams. But these days, to win anything in Class AAA, a team must beat the Crusaders of Bishop McDevitt.

Behind the explosive running of junior running back Andre Robinson, who scampered for nearly 300 yards and now more than 2,000 for the season, the Crusaders blew out the Barons, 48-7, in a game that was supposed to be a game. While the Barons were undermanned by the injury bug somewhat, it’s hard to believe that even at 100%, the Barons could match the speed and quickness that is team juggernaut McDevitt.

Quarterback Nick Marsillo, also a junior, was spot-on in the passing game, throwing for 200 yards and two touchdowns while completing 12 of 15 bullets. And while it’s the playmakers that make McDevitt roll, up front these Crusaders are very good. It takes time to be able to throw, and it takes push to be able to run. In the trenches, the Crusaders seem sturdy.

One should also not forget that the Barons’ legendary run game – a unit that amassed nearly 400 yards a week earlier against Cocalico – was all but shut down by the Crusaders on a perfectly calm but cold night at Hersheypark Stadium.

The win marks McDevitt’s fourth straight Class AAA championship, and it sets up its usual state semifinal clash against Erie Cathedral Prep and then Archbishop Wood in the final on Dec. 13 again, if things play out.

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Pope Francis closed the Year of Faith by calling on people to keep Christ at the center of their lives, especially in times of trouble.

“When Jesus is at the center, light shines even the darkest moments of our lives; he gives us hope,” he said in his homily Nov. 24, the Feast of Christ the King.

The closing Mass in St. Peter’s Square also saw, for the first time, the exposition for the “relics” of St. Peter the Apostle, which are believed to be those of St. Peter. The apostle is believed to have been martyred on a hill over the Holy Land, Syria and the East, wishing “them the gift of peace and harmony.”

He expressed his appreciation for their fidelity to Christ, which comes “often at a high price.”

In his homily, the pope focused on “the centrality of Christ” and how the faithful are expected to recognize and accept “the centrality of Jesus Christ in our thoughts, words and works.”

“When this center is lost, because it is replaced with something else, only harm can result for everything around us and for ourselves,” he said.

Reflecting on the day’s Gospel reading of the good thief, who was crucified alongside Jesus, repents and asks Jesus to remember him in paradise, the pope said Jesus responds to the man with forgiveness, “not condemnation.”

“Whenever anyone finds the courage to ask for this forgiveness, the Lord does not let such a petition go unheard.”

The pope said everyone should ask the Lord to remember them because “each one of us has a history,” has made mistakes and sinned as well as experienced happy times and sad.

People need to say, “Jesus, remember me because I want to be good, I have the desire to become good, but I don’t have the strength. I can’t, I’m a sinner,” the pope said.

In response, “the Lord always grants more than what he has asked.”

With an estimated 60,000 people gathered in the square for the Mass, a special collection was taken up for victims of Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

At the end of the Mass and before reciting the Angelus prayer at noon, the pope formally presented his first apostolic exhortation to representatives of the Church community, including bishops, seminarians, catechists, Catholic journalists and a woman with a visual impairment, who received her copy as an audio file on a CD-ROM.

The document on evangelization, titled Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”), was released to the public Nov. 26.

People gather in St. Peter’s Square as Pope Francis venerates the relics of St. Peter the Apostle during Mass at the Vatican Nov. 24.