Advent: A Season of Expectation

The season of Advent, which began on Dec. 3 this year, ushers in a period of spiritual preparation for the birth of Christ. The word Advent is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, or “coming.”

In Advent, we prepare for the coming of Christ in a twofold manner: his arrival on Christmas Day and his coming at the end of time. The liturgical color for Advent is purple, just as it is during Lent, since both seasons prepare us for great feast days and include elements of penance as part of our preparation.

Advent is a season of conversion of the heart, as we quiet ourselves for the joy of Christmas. We are called to spend time in prayer and preparation for the coming of Christ.

You can find a variety of Advent resources – including blessings for a Nativity scene and Christmas tree, information on feast days, Advent penance services in the diocese and recommended Christmas movies – online at http://www.hbgdiocese.org/advent/.

The Christmas artwork pictured here was created by two of the four winners of Bishop Ronald Gainer’s 2017 Christmas Card Contest. The contest allowed students to portray an interpretation of the birth of Jesus Christ as seen through their eyes. A total of 53 entries were submitted from 27 schools this year, and four winners were selected from contest entries among four age categories. Two of the winning pieces, shown here, are by students from St. Anne School in Lancaster. The image at the top is by fifth-grader Abby Klein, and the image at the bottom is by second-grader Annie Verrelli. The other two winning images will be featured on the cover of the December 22 edition of The Catholic Witness. The four winning pieces will be used as illustrations on Bishop Gainer’s Christmas cards this year.
On the first Sunday of Advent, Bishop Ronald Gainer, making a pastoral visit to St. Peter Parish in Columbia, told the congregation that “Advent is more than a date on the calendar. It’s a choice; it’s a decision I must make, and you must make.”

“Advent helps us look to the past in the prophecies of the Old Testament, and it makes us look to the future and the coming of Christ,” Bishop Gainer said. “But the real challenge is to live in the present. The only time we have is here and now…. We must live with our eyes open and ears alert for signs of Christ… It is Advent, but it is reality that we must have the resolve to look for the Savior at every moment. Be watchful, vigilant, as told to us in the Gospel.”

Founded in 1829 to minister to a dozen Catholic families, St. Peter’s, supported by the faith and dedication of its parishioners, is active in its support of the needs of the larger community. The parish’s St. Vincent de Paul Society reaches out to those in need. Parishioners volunteer and donate to a food bank and a winter shelter for the homeless.

“The people of the parish have such good hearts, a willingness to give, and an appreciation for the parish and its history of supporting our brothers and sisters,” said Father Anthony Swamy Anthappa, MSFS, pastor. “All of the people here are warm and caring, and we celebrate our warmth and faith,” he said.

He noted that the parish is currently in the process of establishing an evangelization team to invite people back to the Catholic Church. “We want to share our parish community and bring people back to the faith,” Father Anthappa said.
Faith Shapes Leadership Role of Kyle Snyder, Chief Administrative Officer for Geisinger Holy Spirit

Kyle Snyder is appreciative of the opportunities afforded him as chief administrative officer (CAO) for Geisinger Holy Spirit. He is pleased to partner with a team of dedicated peers and devoted physicians, nurses and staff who care for the needs of others with compassion and competence.

“Geisinger Holy Spirit is a Catholic institution, but it is important people understand that it is a ‘community’ Catholic health system,” says Snyder. “Every person who enters our doors seeking health care, regardless of their faith denomination, is welcome. The notion of acceptance is inherent in our Catholic faith because we value the sacredness of life and the dignity of each person.”

Kyle Snyder joined Holy Spirit in 2014 when it entered an affiliation agreement with Geisinger. Originally serving as vice president of operations and integration, he accepted the position of CAO following the retirement of Sister Mary Joseph Albright, SCC, who had served as the health system CEO for 26 years.

Following in Sister Romaine’s footsteps has a unique set of challenges, Snyder admits.

“Sister Romaine could lead with her presence very effectively. She was a fantastic business person, but her presence at times was leadership enough,” he says. “It requires much more from a lay person to lead an organization like this. That is why I believe my partnership with Sister Mary Joseph Albright, SCC, our mission integration officer, is so important. Her presence reminds people that we are still a Catholic institution and that influences the decisions we are making and the way we treat people.”

A lifelong Catholic, Snyder grew up in Shamokin, the oldest of three children in a family that was very active in their church. “We walked to church; went to all the holy days of obligation and never missed Mass,” he remembers.

He also served as a church organist, first in his home parish and then while in college and early in his career. “It was a very rewarding and enjoyable role and I met a lot of wonderful people,” says Snyder, who studied piano and organ for about 15 years.

When he is not at work, Snyder leads a busy family life with his wife Beth and three children, Benjamin, Aidan and Marin. Active members of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, they are strong supporters of Catholic education and St. Joseph School, Mechanicsburg, where their children attend.

“Catholic school is very important to us,” says Snyder, who graduated with his wife from Our Lady of Lourdes Regional High School in Coal Township. “My wife and I are grateful for the solid academic foundation and moral character formation that we received both in grade school and high school.”

These essential building blocks continue to serve us well as we raise our family and contribute to the community as professionals.

After high school, Snyder enrolled in Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island, to pursue a career in healthcare. “My mom is a pediatric oncology nurse at Geisinger in Danville, so I grew up around healthcare and I knew that I shared her passion for taking care of people,” he explains.

After completing his bachelor’s degree in health policy and management/business administration, Snyder entered graduate school at Cornell University. Required to complete an internship as part of his studies toward a master’s degree in health administration, he returned to Geisinger, the organization that employed both of his parents for more than 30 years. After successfully completing his internship at Geisinger and earning his master’s degree, he served at The Cleveland Clinic as an administrative fellow and then as an administrator for the Division of Nursing. This was followed by two years as administrative director of the Emergency Service Line at Wellspan York Hospital, before Geisinger recruited him back.

“Both The Cleveland Clinic and Geisinger are physician-led organizations. I always felt that was a good model for healthcare,” says Snyder. “I was drawn back to Geisinger because of its approach to coordination of care.”

Snyder spent the next eight years working in positions of increasing responsibility and gaining extensive experience that would serve him well when Geisinger announced it was looking to affiliate with Holy Spirit Health System. Snyder said, “I wanted to be part of a character-driven hospital – not just another organization. As I spent more time here, I felt that was a good model for healthcare.”

Snyder entered the position of CAO at Geisinger Holy Spirit, having known the system since high school when he served on the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) for three years, after which he became a member.

Now, little more than a year since he was named Geisinger Holy Spirit’s first lay leader, Snyder is quick to point to his faith as a driving factor in how he tackles the job. “I think my faith has shaped me a lot as a leader. I approach people, relationships and opportunities by always thinking about two things: one is service to the community, and the other is treating people the way I want to be treated or the way I want the people I care about to be treated. The intersection is a natural one.”

Lancaster Families Receive Scholarship through EITC and OSTC Programs

Bridge Educational Foundation and its donors – Covanta, M&T Bank, Maladý & Wooten, UnitedHealthcare Community Plan and Waste Management – recently announced scholarships in the amount of $34,500 for families of Lancaster County at an event hosted by Resurrection Catholic School.

The businesses participate in Pennsylvania’s Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) Programs by working with the Bridge Educational Foundation. Through the EITC and OSTC programs, businesses receive tax credits for donations made to Commonwealth-approved, non-profit scholarship organizations, like Bridge, and families in need are able to choose the best education for their children.

School officials and families attended the event to thank the people involved with the EITC and OSTC Programs. Approved students attending the host school, Lancaster Catholic High School, Linville Hill Christian School, Our Lady of the Angels School, Our Mother of Perpetual Help School and S. June Smith Center have each received a portion of the tuition scholarships.

Clergy Appointments

Bishop Ronald W. Gainer has made the following appointments:

Effective January 11, 2018:
- Father Michael Rothan, from personal leave, to Campus Minister at Bucknell University.

Diocese of Harrisburg 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 Diocese of Harrisburg Youth Protection Hotline: 1-800-626-1608 or email: ReportAbuse@hbgdiocese.org
The Idol of “I”

By Sister Geralyn Schmidt, SCC
Special to The Witness

Recently, I had a great privilege of going on a road trip through three states in New England during the summer months. On such trips, I always marvel over the nuances of the shades of green, the various textures of the leaves on the different species of trees, as well as the beauty of topology of the landscapes on which I spend my time.

During my sojourn, every once and a while, to my chagrin, a bug would splat on my windshield. During one section of my trip through Vermont, my windshield quickly became a bug cemetery! I discovered that unless I used my windshield wipers shortly after a bug’s fatality, its splat was practically a permanent part of the glass! Once I even pulled over, with my water bottle in hand, and tried to clean off their remains. The “splats” that had already dried had to be scrubbed with lots of elbow grease. I am reminded of this as I begin to write about the first of the modern-day idols: The Idol of Self. In the book, Strange gods: Unmasking the Idols in Everyday Life, Elizabeth Scalia writes, “[When we put ourselves before God, we] thereby clutter up the true vision of ourselves and our relationships with God and with others. It takes real intention by God (and real willingness on our part) to break through this clutter, such that the lines of communication between God and us become clear.”

When we allow ourselves to focus upon ourselves, our lives soon become all about ME! What should I do to make MYSELF happy? What gives ME the most pleasure, power, prestige…? the list goes on and on! When you boil this notion down, one is left with a kernel of truth also known as the root of our sin. Any act of violence, either verbal or physical, directed against another is not the idol, but as Scalia writes, “is an offering to an idol.”

The idol of I is a lived self-righteousness: “Who does she think she is?” “I have a right about being angry because of the disrespect that I have experienced.” “I have a right to resent him because of his success after all that I have done!” “I have an obligation to avenge a wrongdoing because she has hurt someone I love.” “I… ” “I… “I… ”

When an individual begins to actually live in this manner, one could readily frame a picture of that individual and light a vigil before him or her! Really? Is this what Jesus calls us, by our baptism? Is this a true model of what discipleship actually is? “I…” “I… “I… “I… 

Jesus gave them power to do in their being. Their authority and power to cure and proclaim the word of God was rooted in their being a servant to others. They went out on their own steam! This is why they had nothing with them. In Luke 9, we read, “Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey: no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’”

When one’s world and perspective of life is rooted in self, in the “I,” true servant-hood is impossible. By his very life, Jesus gave us an example of how to live as a human. We are called to a life that echoes his. We are called to pour out ourselves in love as he did for us.

So, strive not to allow personal self-righteousness to be the bug splat on the windshield of your heart that prevents you from seeing God within your life and the lives of others!

\[2\] Ibid. p. 31.

(Sister of Christian Charity, Geralyn Schmidt, is the Wide Area Network Coordinator at the Diocese of Harrisburg and the Director of Formation for Wives in the Diaconate Program. An educator for 30 years, she is responsible for Professional Development Programs for every age learner. Through her presentations, she challenges her audiences to be the individual God has called them to be.)
Confession is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ in his love and mercy. It is here that we meet the loving Jesus, who offers sinners forgiveness for offenses committed against God and neighbor. At the same time, Confession permits sinners to be reconciled with the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, which also is wounded by our sins. As you prepare for Confession, you want to ask God’s forgiveness for any ways in which you have offended him in thought, word, and deed, particularly for any serious sin. If you are not certain what you should bring to the priest in Confession, do not be afraid to ask him for help. The priest is there to assist you and to share with you God’s love and mercy.

The Catholic Witness offers several helpful resources as parishes hold Advent Penance Services this month. Find additional resources for Advent and for the Sacrament of Reconciliation at http://www.hbgdiocese.org/advent/.

Advent Penance Services in the Diocese

Churches in the Diocese of Harrisburg will hold Penance Services during the season of Advent. These services typically include an opening hymn, Scripture readings, and time for an examination of conscience prior to going to confession. The following is a list of services, arranged alphabetically by town, which were submitted to The Catholic Witness from the parishes. Advent resources can also be found on the Diocese of Harrisburg’s Web site, www.hbgdiocese.org/advent.

Abbottstown, Immaculate Heart of Mary Church
Tuesday, December 19 at 7 p.m.

Annville, St. Paul the Apostle Church
Thursday, December 14 at 7 p.m.

Berwick, Immaculate Conception BVM Church
Thursday, December 14 at 7 p.m.

Berwick, St. Joseph Church
Monday, December 18 at 7 p.m.

Bloomsburg, St. Columba Church
Tuesday, December 12 at 7 p.m.

Conewago, Sacred Heart of Mary Church
Saturday, December 9 at 10 a.m.

Cornwall, Sacred Heart of Jesus Church
Tuesday, December 19 at 7 p.m.

Danville, St. Joseph Church
Monday, December 11 at 7 p.m.

Ephrata, Our Mother of Perpetual Help Church
Wednesday, December 20 at 7 p.m.

Gettysburg, St. Francis Xavier Church
Monday, December 18 at 7 p.m.

Hanover, St. Joseph Church
Wednesday, December 20 at 7 p.m.

Hanover, St. Vincent de Paul Church
Sunday, December 10 at 2 p.m.

Harrisburg, St. Catherine Labouré Church
Thursday, December 14 at 7 p.m.

Harrisburg, St. Margaret Mary Church
Wednesday, December 20 at 7 p.m.

Lancaster, Sacred Heart of Jesus Church
Monday, December 11 at 7 p.m.

Lancaster, St. John Neumann Church
Thursday, December 14 at 7 p.m.

Lebanon, Assumption BVM Church
Sunday, December 17 at 2 p.m.

Lewisburg, Sacred Heart of Jesus Church
Friday, December 15 at 7 p.m.

Lititz, St. James Church
Tuesday, December 12 at 7 p.m.

McSherrystown, Annunciation BVM Church
Saturday, December 9 at 10 a.m.

Milton, St. Joseph Church
Thursday, December 14 at 7 p.m.

Myerstown, Mary, Gate of Heaven Church
Monday, December 11 at 7 p.m.

New Cumberland, St. Theresa Church
Sunday, December 10 at 7 p.m.

Rohrerstown, St. Leo the Great Church
Tuesday, December 12 at 7 p.m.

Selinsgrove, St. Pius X Church
Wednesday, December 13 at 7 p.m.

Shippensburg, Our Lady of the Visitation Church
Wednesday, December 13 at 6:30 p.m.

Sunbury, St. Monica Church
Tuesday, December 12 at 7 p.m.

Waynesboro, St. Andrew the Apostle Church
Sunday, December 17 at 6:30 p.m.

York, St. Rose of Lima Church
Tuesday, December 19 at 7 p.m.

GREETING: The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS: Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give days, months, or years] since my last confession.”

CONFESION: Confess all your sins to the priest. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.”

PENANCE: The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.

Go in peace.

Rite of Penance, no. 93

PREPARATION: Before going to confession, take some time to prepare. Begin with prayer, and reflect on your life since your last confession. How have you—in your thoughts, words, and actions—neglected to love God’s commandments to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37, 39)? As a help with this “examination of conscience,” you might review the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes (Ex 20:2-17; Dt 5:6-21; Mt 5:3-10; Lk 6:20-21).

GREETING: The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS: Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give days, months, or years] since my last confession.”

CONFESION: Confess all your sins to the priest. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.”

PENANCE: The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.

ACT OF CONTRITION: After the priest has confessed your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more. A suggested Act of Contrition is:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.

In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.

I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.

Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.

In his name, my God, have mercy.

(Rite of Penance, no. 45)

PRAISE: The priest will usually praise the mercy of God and will invite you to do the same. For example, the priest may say, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” And your response would be, “His mercy endures for ever” (Rite of Penance, no. 47).

DISMISSAL: The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, “Go in peace.”

How to Go to Confession...
A good talk with your mother every day could improve your health. At least, that’s what’s happened for immigrants in one community.

A study out of the University of Alabama exploring the link between faith and health demonstrated that those with a devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe had fewer negative health issues related to stress.

“This drives home how important faith is. In the study results, I found that people who are exposed to stress — their well-being goes down over time. Those who were Guadalupe devotees broke that pattern,” explained Rebecca Read-Wahidi, the study’s author.

She grew up in Forest, Miss., where the state’s largest concentration of Latinos works in poultry plants. They worship at St. Michael or at its mission San Martin.

A community of religious sisters, Guadalupan Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, ministers to the mix of Mexicans, Guatemalans and other Latin Americans. The sisters teach English, host consulates and even offer workshops in what to do if people are stopped by police or immigration agents.

Constant worry about immigration raids can wear down an already poor population. Read-Wahidi has told stories of a 2012 road-block that led to the deportation of 40 people, sending a wave of fear through the rest of the community.

Having a patroness, a protector and a surrogate mother helps ease that physical and mental stress.

Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego at dawn Dec. 9, 1531, on Tepeyac Hill, in what is now northern Mexico City. She appeared to Juan Diego twice more, and the last time, on Dec. 12, filled his “tilma,” or cloak, with roses. When he emptied his cloak of the roses, he found that it bore her image. The cloak is still on display at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe built on the site where Mary appeared.

In the image, she is dark skinned, pregnant and surrounded by stars. She stands in front of the sun’s rays, a commonly known symbol of an Aztec god, symbolically eclipsed by stars. She stands in front of the sun's rays, a common symbol of an Aztec god, symbolically eclipsed by stars. She stands in front of the sun’s rays, a common symbol of an Aztec god, symbolically eclipsed by stars. She stands in front of the sun’s rays, a common symbol of an Aztec god, symbolically eclipsed by stars.

Read-Wahidi studied at Mississippi State University. Her Spanish studies took her to Mexico where she was exposed to the pervasive devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose feast day is Dec. 12.

“When I was there, I became interested in Mexican Catholicism because it was different than what I was familiar with,” she told the Mississippi Catholic, newspaper of the Diocese of Jackson. When she returned home, she began to see the Virgin of Guadalupe in her own hometown.

“It is really fascinating to me because it really is a contrast in Mississippi — which is very Protestant. Here is this Mexican feast being carried out in the streets of a Mississippi town,” she said.

Read-Wahidi wrote her master’s thesis about Our Lady of Guadalupe and migrant communities in Mississippi. She expanded upon her earlier thesis while studying for a doctorate in bio-cultural medical anthropology at the University of Alabama.

“I liked going there because I could continue working with the same community,” Read-Wahidi said. "I went from [looking at] the celebration itself into how they use it to deal with stress, specifically immigration stress."

The sisters in Morton welcomed her, introducing her to the community and facilitating meetings. Read-Wahidi developed a survey to gauge the impact of their faith on their health.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is more than just a mother figure to her people, she is their mother. Read-Wahidi said most of the devotees she interviewed have conversations with her throughout the day.

Mary “listens to their worries,” said Sister Lourdes Gonzalez, a member of the Guadalupan Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, who helped with the study. “It’s a way to pray. People talk to her as if she is alive and in the room. She has a special place in the family.”

Father Tim Murphy, pastor at St. James Parish in Tupelo, calls the relationship profound and inspiring. “She is their mother in faith, in heaven and is present to them,” he said.

This connection to the poor may be why people see Mary as the perfect intercessor. “They may not feel comfortable talking to God — but they can speak to the Virgin. She is the mother figure. When they are so far from home, they need a mother figure,” Read-Wahidi said.

Redemptorist Father Michael McAndrew has been working in Hispanic ministry for many years and gives presentations on St. Juan Diego’s experience. “When Juan Diego does not want to go to the bishop, Mary tells him ‘Am I not here? Am I not your mother? Would your mother not protect you on your journey? I am with you.’”

Read-Wahidi wrote in a journal article that immigrants place their stress in Mary’s hands: “When I asked what people petition the Virgin to help them with, they mentioned: finding work and keeping their jobs, not getting deported or arrested, the health of their family back in Mexico and here in the United States, the safety of family members who were making the journey across the border, and their own safe return back home.”

These prayers offer relief from the stress of their every day lives. “They are seen as outsiders. They are not equal here. They have the experience of racism. It is a way to remind themselves that in the eyes of the Virgin, all people are equal,” said Read-Wahidi. This idea has spread to other immigrants through public celebrations surrounding the feast.

Every year on or around the Dec. 12 feast day, immigrants across Mississippi leave the safety of their homes and churches to take their mother to the streets and celebrate her love and protection.

Celebrations include processions, hours-long traditional Aztec dances, meals and liturgy. Everyone, especially other immigrants are welcome. In this way, the celebration in America is unique. Instead of being only a Mexican feast, it is a feast for all.

“They make the celebration public — it is taken out into the streets. It gives the Mexican community a chance to share her [the Virgin] with others,” said Sister Gonzalez.

The celebrations are a sharp contrast to daily life for immigrants. They spend most of their lives trying to avoid attention. But for the feast, they come out in droves. Father Murphy said 300 people attended one procession in northeast Mississippi.

“They will come straight from the fields. This will be the end of the sweet potato harvest so they will come with the dust still on them, but they will come and celebrate,” said Father Murphy.

“The best of liturgy does not represent, it represents the truth,” said Father Murphy. "This celebration is good liturgy. Who does [Our Lady of] Guadalupe appear to? The lowest of the low," he said. Asking Mary to intercede offers a powerful conduit to Jesus since, as Our Lady of Guadalupe, “the mother of our savior is the mother of the poor.”
Advent Wreath Tradition

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

While most Catholics know the season of Advent is roughly four weeks before Christmas, they might not know it has two parts.

Technically, Advent, the time of preparation before Christmas, begins on the Sunday that falls on or closest to Nov. 30 — which this year is Dec. 3 — and ends on Christmas Eve.

But right in the middle, Dec. 17, Advent changes gears.

Jesus Father Bruce Morrill, the Edward A. Malloy professor of Catholic studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School in Nashville, Tenn., said that until Dec. 17, the tone of Advent is anticipating Christ’s second coming, which is particularly reflected in the Mass readings from the Old and New Testaments. Other prayers in the Mass those weeks also are about the second coming.

But by Dec. 17, the emphasis shifts to Jesus’ birth, which is why Father Morrill said when he was young, his family began their Christmas decorating at this time. This also is when people start singing or listening to Christmas carols.

Timothy Brunk, an associate professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University, outside of Philadelphia, explains the breakdown of Advent this way: “Christ who has come is also coming. Advent, like Christmas, looks back but also looks forward.”

Mass; Gaudete Sunday is the Sunday of rejoicing, because the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent, when their preparation is now half over and they are close to Christmas.

The progressive lighting of the candles symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord’s first coming into the world and the anticipation of his second coming to judge the living and the dead.

Nathan Holt joins fellow musicians at the Advent prayer service.

By Father Joshua R. Brommer
Special to The Witness

We begin a new Year of Grace as we restart the liturgical calendar of the Church. We will encounter the same saving events accomplished by Jesus Christ. We will meet the same figures who have inspired, challenged, and startled us in the past. We will enact the same rituals and speak the same words, signs and symbols and words that have been used for generations to give us access to the grace which transforms us and gives us strength.

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, “You are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What he writes to them is no less true for us today! Our journey in time, marked by the days of the liturgical calendar, allow us to be opened up to those eternal spiritual gifts which we need at the present moment. Regarding the Eucharist, Jesus commanded us, “Do this in memory of me.”

One spiritual author remarked that we could easily translate this, “Make me present in your now.” This memory which unfolds day by day through our calendar year makes Christ present to us here and now: a Presence that is far from static, a Presence that carries with it every spiritual gift we need to be the Catholic Christians we claim to be.

As accustomed as we are to make “New Year’s resolutions” on Jan. 1, even more so for us Catholics in this New Year of Grace would spiritual resolutions benefit us. St. Paul’s words from today’s second reading (1 Cor. 1:3-9) might do well to guide us in fashioning these resolutions:

Give thanks to God always: A heart filled with gratitude does not have room for envy, jealousy, anger, frustration, discontent. Find a way each day to name the blessings which God has given you and thank God for those gifts. Learn to thank God for the trials as well as the consolations. Write them down. Keep them near and refer to them throughout the day.

Be enriched by knowledge: Study what you believe! Read the Sacred Scriptures — the Bible is not a decorative piece to be kept on a shelf. Take time each day for spiritual reading. The lives of the saints and their writings are a good place to start for inspiration.

Wait: Stop demanding that you have everything at your whim and pleasure. Maybe Advent is the time for you to click off “On Demand,” either on the television or those other aspects of your life at work and at home when you think you don’t have to wait. It is good for us to remember that we are not the center of the universe, we are not the master of all things, we are not in charge. Intentionally make yourself wait.

Spiritual Resolutions for a New Year of Grace

By Father Joshua R. Brommer

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Wait: Stop demanding that you have everything at your whim and pleasure. Maybe Advent is the time for you to click off “On Demand,” either on the television or those other aspects of your life at work and at home when you think you don’t have to wait. It is good for us to remember that we are not the center of the universe, we are not the master of all things, we are not in charge. Intentionally make yourself wait.

This is also where fasting is a great help!

Keep firm: Buoy yourself up by making your resolutions concrete, known, and written down. We tend to waffle on those choices which demand real change in us. To help yourself keep firm, write them down and put them around your workspace, on your bathroom mirror, in the refrigerator, wherever you will see and be reminded of them.

Answer the call to fellowship: If every spiritual gift comes to us by our closeness to Christ, then we need to make sure we are seeking those opportunities which put us in proximity to Him! Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, either in its formal way or just simply by making a visit to the tabernacle, allows for the physical proximity we need to answer the call to be in communion. When was the last time you simply spent time with Christ in adoration and prayer?

(Father Joshua R. Brommer is the pastor of the Cathedral Parish of St. Patrick in Harrisburg and Director of the Diocesan Office of Divine Worship. This reflection appeared in the parish bulletin for Dec. 3, and is reprinted here with permission.)
National Catholic Youth Conference: ‘Future of Church in Good Hands,’ Archbishop Says at Closing Mass

By Natalie Hoefer
Catholic News Service

When Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson thanked Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez for celebrating the Nov. 18 closing Mass of the National Catholic Youth Conference, a cheer broke out from the Los Angeles youths in attendance.

And when he mentioned the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ meeting held in Baltimore some days before the youth gathering, that archdiocese’s contingent of teens shouted and clapped.

He proceeded to standing ovations when he thanked the National Federation of Catholic Youth Ministers, and then when he thanked the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, and then when he thanked all of the religious, deacons, priests and bishops who helped with NCYC, and then when he wished everyone safe travels.

Archbishop Thompson just shook his head and laughed.

“A guy going to a Catholic wedding told me he didn’t know if he should wear a dress suit or a warmup suit because Catholics stand up and sit down so much!” he joked. And that line too received a thunderous standing ovation.

It was the kind of spirited joy that only 20,000 youths could exude at the end of the three-day NCYC gathering.

Not long before the revelry, the very same youths had knelt in solemn prayer after receiving the most holy Eucharist during the convention’s closing Mass in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis.

Thirteen bishops, including Archbishop Thompson, consecrated the Mass with its primary celebrant, Archbishop Gomez, who wove into his homily another auspicious Catholic event that happened earlier that day.

“Blessed Solanus Casey was just beatified today in Detroit,” he said. “[God] gave him many gifts. He is in good hands with you. ‘You give us hope. The future of the Church is in good hands with you.’ Archbishop Gomez said was a main point during his closing Mass.

“Try to do little things for God. Try to be a little miracle in someone’s life. Give hope. Yes, we can strive for holiness because it is doing God’s will in the little things of daily life.”

Such was the message of the day’s Gospel reading from Matthew, he said of the parable of the servants and the talents.

“The parable of the talents is a plan for life,” Archbishop Gomez said. “Jesus is talking to us about our relationship with God. How are we using the gifts God gives us?

“The words we hear in the Gospel from Matthew is what God wants for each of us: ‘Well done, my faithf ul servant. … Come, share your master’s joy.’” he said.

The archbishop gave specific advice to help the youths do God’s will and to become holy: “The most important thing… is to pray.”

“When I was your age, I made a decision…to spend some time in prayer daily, and it has made an extra difference in my life,” Archbishop Gomez continued.

“If you make time for prayer every day, you will see a difference. … Listen to [Jesus], even for just a few minutes. … Be consistent. Do it every day. I promise you, if you spend time in prayer every day…you will start to see that Jesus is with you and how much he loves you.”

Several youths cited the time adoring the Blessed Sacrament as a group of 20,000 teens Nov. 17 in the stadium as the NCYC moment that had the most impact.

“I’ve been to adoration before many times at different retreats,” said Elisha Mix of the Orlando Diocese. “But to see [20,000] youths adoring the Lord is something amazing.”

Daniel Linn of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Indianapolis agreed.

“I’ve never celebrated it that way before, with so many people being so sacred,” he said.

Overall, said Daniel, NCYC was “just mind blowing. It was very powerful to see all these people come together and celebrate their faith together. The Church is a lot stronger than it seems in the world.”

Based on a comment he made in his homily, it would seem that Archbishop Gomez agrees.

“You inspire us bishops,” he told the 20,000 youths. “You give us hope. The future of the Church is in good hands with you.”

Sister Shares Heartbreaking Story to Lead Youths Closer to God

By John Shaughnessy
Catholic News Service

It wasn’t the story that the 20,000 Catholic youths were expecting to hear from a religious sister.

And the audience of young people inside Lucas Oil Stadium on the morning of Nov. 17 became more quiet and riveted as Sister Miriam James Heiland shared the hard, heartbreaking chapters of her story.

She told participants at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis that she was sexually assaulted when she was 11. She began drinking alcohol on her 13th birthday. She was raped when she was 13 and she was an alcoholic by the age of 21.

“I woke up one morning when I was 21, and I remembered two things,” recalled Sister Miriam, a member of the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity. “Number one, I remembered what I had done the night before, and it was awful. Second-ly, I remember thinking that was so much deeper in the area of shame.

“I remembered I had promised myself that I wasn’t going to do that anymore. At that moment, I realized I couldn’t stop, that I was sick. I crawled up in a ball on the floor of my room in college, and I just wished for death. And I didn’t know what to do.”

God did, she told the crowd of young people.

“He started sending people into my life to speak the truth to me,” she said as walked across the stage set up in the middle of the stadium floor.

One of the people God sent to her was a priest who challenged her to change her life.

“He would say, ‘You’re called for more. What are you doing with your life? I know you want more. You have a great destiny for your life. Have you thought about saying ‘yes’ to it?’

“That man loved Christ, and he let Christ try to re-form him to the core of his being. And one of the reasons I’m here before you is because of the power of one person who said ‘yes’ to Christ. And how often do you and I think we can’t make a difference? But your ‘yes’ matters. Your life matters. When you say ‘yes,’ the world is changed.”

So has life the Sister Miriam.

“I’ve been sober for many years now, through a lot of people’s love for me and a lot of grace,” she said, adding that wherever young people in the audience are today: “It’s not the end of the story. Jesus is already waiting for you. He’s waiting for you in the areas that are incredibly painful for you. He’s waiting for you in the areas of your deepest dreams and your deepest desires.”

She also told the story of two choices that continue to define her life.

“My biological parents were high school students, 17 years old, obviously not married,” she said. “To this day, I’ve never seen her face, but I have a deep intuition that at one point my mother thought of aborting me, but she didn’t. And I stand here before you today because a scared 17-year-old girl said ‘yes’ to life and to the child in her womb.”

Then there was the choice of the couple who became her mother and father when they adopted her.

“One of the first pictures my parents have of me was at Christmas time. My mom put me under the Christmas tree and said I was the gift to the family that year.”

She told the audience that God also offers people the gift of his love.

“We don’t understand his heart for us. We don’t understand his love for us,” she said, emphasizing that “God longs to heal you because you are made for more. He looks at you, and he just loves you.”

“God has no other ulterior motive,” she told the youth. “‘Then for you to share in his own beautiful life.’”

After the closing Mass for the National Catholic Youth Conference at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, many young people received absolution and standing ovations for a dance they learned during conference. The biennial conference draws some 20,000 Catholic teenagers from across the country.
Harrisburg Pilgrims Revel in Faith-Deepening Experience

By Marybeth Ulrich

Special to The Witness

On Nov. 15, two buses filled with 71 pilgrims from the Diocese of Harrisburg made the nine-hour, 550-mile trek to Indianapolis to participate in the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC). Rob Williams, Diocesan Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, led the delegation of 52 youth and 19 chaperones representing 13 parishes. Father Peter DiTomasso, MSSCC, pastor of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Fairfield and St. Rita Parish in Blue Ridge Summit, and Father John Foote, OSB, pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Annville, were among the chaperones.

Continuing a partnership begun in 2011, a group of 10 youth and three adult chaperones from Mary Queen of Peace Parish on the Carlisle Barracks, which belongs to the Archdiocese for the Military Services, also traveled with the Harrisburg delegation.

A Mass for the participants from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware kicked off the four-day pilgrimage on Monday afternoon. Archbishop James Tobin of Newark was the principal celebrant. The pilgrims also had the opportunity to select five workshops to explore various topics in the Catholic faith, along with plenary sessions in the Lucas Oil Stadium with 25,000 participants in attendance. These sessions included well-known Christian artists such as Toby Mac, Sarah Koger and Matt Maher, Chris Stefanick, Sister Miriam James Heidland, and Dr. Roy Pettifis were among the leading Catholic speakers addressing the youth. The monks of St. Meinrad Archab- bey led the stadium in sung prayer as part of Eucharistic Adoration on Friday evening. The stadium, packed with youth, fell completely silent for 15 minutes as the pilgrims knelt before the Eucharist.

Throughout the conference, priests were available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and many religious orders and organizations were on hand to explain their ministries. For example, many youth and adults from the Harrisburg delegation helped to pack meals for Catholic Relief Services to be distributed in Burkina Faso. Father Joseph Gomez of Los Angeles was the principal celebrant for the closing liturgy Saturday evening. Hundreds of priests, who accompanied the students, reflected, concelebrated.

The opportunities for fellowship, prayer, faith exploration, and new impressions on the youth from the Harrisburg area. For Bill Cantwell of Carlisle, the most memorable aspect of NCYC was the speakers. He added, “NCYC changed me by exposing me to the stories of other teens that shared my faith. I learned to be more outgoing and to brant with my faith to others.”

For Joseph Lynch of Boiling Springs, the most memorable experience was the time he spent meeting other teenagers who shared the same beliefs. Joseph said that the NCYC made him more confident in expressing his morals and values in public.

Meg Ulrich of Carlisle highlighted the time in the stadium after the closing liturgy concluded. “Everyone was so happy. We were singing and dancing to Church music and you could just feel the good vibes in the room,” she said. “It was an incredible moment that I will never forget.”

William Settle of Mary Queen of Peace Parish was impressed by the procession of the young people filling the stadium. He remarked that NCYC opened his eyes to the many ways God works in our lives and the importance of living the fullest life that God has given us. He also shared that NCYC has changed him in a way that has turned him more towards God. The conference helped him realize that “God really is EVERYWHERE and that we are never alone,” he stressed.

Hanna Manning of St. Rita Parish in Blue Ridge Summit said that she was also drawn to the “amazing” key speakers and their inspirational stories of how God changed their lives without them realizing it. She added, “They each had an insightful story of love and how they had faith in God’s plan for them!” Hanna also said that NCYC has changed her perspective on failure and unexpected events.

“Everything that happens is supposed to happen, and each event pushes you closer to God’s plan for you, even if you may not understand it at the moment. Have faith in God and His plans for you.”

Hanna said that she learned that “faith is saying ‘Yes’ to God’s plan, even if you may not know or understand what it is. God is the true definition of love and does everything out of unconditional love. God works in mysterious ways, and we have to have faith and say ‘Yes’ to His plans.”

For the adults traveling with the teens, the pilgrimage also boosted their faith. There were many breakout sessions that focused on parenting and ministering to youth. Maureen Cantwell of Carlisle, whose daughter Lanie had to share in our faith and grow,” she said. Several parents shared their appreciation of the impact that NCYC had on their children. Matt Lissner was impressed by the scale of the event and the opportunity his daughter Lanie had to share in our faith and grow spiritually with so many Catholic teens. He also shared that he thought that “Lanie came back with a greater sense of understanding and compassion.”

Machelle Lynch was grateful that her son Joseph “had a chance to worship with 20,000+ youth from around the U.S. It showed him that many of his peers share his faith and gave him a sense of the universal Church.”

Sue Cattle sensed her son William’s excitement upon his return from Indianapolis. “It was really enjoyable for him when he came home, William told me that ‘Being Catholic is the best!’” She said that the pilgrimage changed him in a way that deepened his faith and that NCYC continues to be his favorite of all he has participated in.”

Rob Williams is the veteran of 14 NCYC’s. Yet he still focuses on the privilege of organizing and traveling with the teens and chaperones of the Diocese of Harris- burg to Indianapolis. “I feel truly blessed and enriched by the experience,” he said. “In any pilgrimage experience, the teens, pastors and chaperones who travel with us to NCYC were there by God’s invitation. I pray that God will continue the good work that was begun and through this conference and the efforts of so many.”

The theme of NCYC was, “Called.” Each day was a variation of the theme beginning with “Called to Be More.” Friday’s focus was “Called to Listen,” and Saturday’s theme was “Called to Service.” The 71 pilgrims upon their return from Indianapolis “feel truly blessed and enriched by the experience.” NCYC has definitely delivered on its theme. It took good kids and challenged them to be great. Thanks to all who helped make the biennial trek to Indianapolis possible!”

(Dec. 8, 2017) • The Catholic Witness - 9
After dominating the District 3 Class 4A football championships for the past decade, the Crusaders of Bishop McDevitt have found in recent years the competition rising to the challenge of competing against their great program.

On a mild, perfect day for football at Hersheypark Stadium on Black Friday, the Saints of Berks Catholic brought their perfect record to the championship game. Berks Catholic, which had been averaging 42-plus points a game throughout the last part of the season, played to their strength, rushing the ball for 435 yards to ease past the Crusaders, 45-24.

Never could the McDevitt defense contain the outside running game of the Saints’ Cooper Lutz, a Syracuse-bound recruit, who gained the edge repeatedly for sizable gains that kept the Crusader defense on the field way too long. It’s not that the Saints ran a complex offense or called a diversity of plays, rather it was their flawless execution sealing the corners of the McDevitt defense that lead them to victory.

The Crusaders were able to move the ball both on the ground behind Qualik Davis’ 100-yard game and junior quarterback Chase Diehl, who generated more than 200 yards of offense via the air and by scrambling for big gains. The Crusaders finished their fine season at 10-3. Berks Catholic lost to perennial power Erie Cathedral Prep, 42-24, in the state semi-final game.
Sisters of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Present Servant Leadership Awards to Recognize Students and Adults for their Service and Compassion

From the Sisters of Sts. Cyril and Methodius

The Sisters of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Danville presented their annual Servant Leadership Awards recently to 31 outstanding high school juniors and seniors from the dioceses of Harrisburg, Scranton, Trenton and Bridgeport. The ceremony took place at the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Danville.

Over the past 15 years, the congregation has honored more than 990 teens with the Servant Leadership Award, which recognizes distinguished high school juniors and seniors who are joyful witnesses, compassionate proclaimers, and enthusiastic builders of the Kingdom of God. The focus of the award is on teens who remain active in their faith and parish beyond Confirmation, and who actively serve in their parish, school and community.

Receiving the award this year were: Katherine Arway, Robert Beck, Samuel Bellis, Heather Beveridge, Sarah Castellan, Lawrence Czeponis III, Michaela Elsen, Erin Evans, Lydia Gould, Stephen Gresh, Elijah Hoffman, Phillip Hutnick-Kenenitz, Justin Ickowitz, Francesca Kalie, Aaron Keehan, John Kerris, Brooklyn Kuijpers, Katelynn Kuijpers, Benjamin Lowitz, Erin Magdalen Benish, Joseph Neitz, Robert Beck, Samuel Bellis, Heather Beveridge, Samuel, and Sufficiently Radical 1 Mile Walk on Dec. 16. We are delighted to announce the recent addition of a 10K walk to the event.

The race and walk will begin and end at St. Francis Xavier School, Xavier Center at 465 Table Rock Road, Gettysburg.

Noreen Neitz was the spiritual leader of the St. Francis Xavier School families in need of financial assistance. She was an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion both within a mile of her house. With Noreen’s tenacious spirit and dedication, the parish and its youth group continued to stay active by walking wherever she could. The remainder of the proceeds will be used to provide assistance to St. Francis Xavier School families in need of tuition cost.

Suffice it to say, Noreen’s tenacity has had a profound impact on the lives of those she has served, and her legacy will live on through the work of Father Matthew Jankola Lifetime Servant Leadership Award for Education. Sister Donna Marie Ivanko has also served on numerous Boards in the Danville area. Besides being a teacher and administrator, through the years she has been a drama and musical director, and artist.

Receiving Lifetime Servant Leadership Awards from Sister Michael Ann Orlik, SS.C.M., left, General Superior of the Sisters of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, are Father Matthew Jankola, recipient of the Father Matthew Jankola Lifetime Servant Leadership Award for Evangelization. Father Heintzleman was the first full-time Catholic Chaplain at Geisinger Medical Center from 1964-1970, which began 42 years of service in the health care ministry. He also served as Chaplain at Hershey Medical Center, Chaplain and Director of Spiritual Care at Queen of the Valley Medical Center in Napa, Calif., and currently serves as Chaplain at Marra Hall in Danville.

Sister Donna Marie Ivanko, SS.C.M., was the recipient of the Father Matthew Jankola Lifetime Servant Leadership Award for Education. Sister Donna Marie Ivanko has been an educator for more than 60 years, serving from preschool through high school. She served as Principal at St. Cyril Academy in Danville, and for the past 15 years served and continues to serve as Principal of St. Cyril Preschool and Kindergarten in Danville, where she transforms education as she welcomes young children and their parents into a new world of learning. Sister Donna Marie has also served on numerous Boards in the Danville area. Besides being a teacher and administrator, through the years she has been a drama and musical director, and artist.

Dr. Magdalen Benish was the recipient of the Father Matthew Jankola Lifetime Servant Leadership Award for Ecumenism. Dr. Benish has been a lifetime volunteer. At her parish of St. Andre Bessette in Wilkes-Barre, she serves in a variety of capacities. She is an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion both in her parish and at Geisinger Medical Center South, as well as a home visitor to the elderly. She is active in social concerns, and is active in many organizations. She was also instrumental in establishing a museum at King’s College in Wilkes-Barre, honoring the scientific contributions of Rev. Joseph Murgas.

Dr. Greg Burke was the recipient of the Father Matthew Jankola Lifetime Servant Leadership Award for Elder Care. Dr. Burke has been practicing medicine for 29 years and is Medical Director of Emmanuel Center in Danville. He is a member of the Catholic Medical Association and authored a comprehensive examination of conscience for physicians, which he previously published, and about which he gave a presentation at the 2016 CMA annual conference in Washington, D.C. At Geisinger Medical Center, Dr. Burke is the lead patient experience director.

St. Francis Xavier School in Gettysburg will be holding its Fifth Annual Noreen Neitz Memorial Run and Walk to others when she lost her battle with cancer on July 10, 2013. During her last months, Noreen spent much of her time writing on her blog titled “Sufficiently Radical” and continued to stay active by walking wherever she could within a mile of her house. With Noreen’s tenacious spirit in mind, a scholarship fund was developed in her name, encouraging youth to dedicate their time and service and be active members of the church and community.

Proceeds from this event will be divided equally between the St. Francis Xavier School Development Fund and the Noreen Neitz Scholarship Fund. The Noreen Neitz Scholarship Fund will award a portion of their funds to 8th grade students attending St. Francis Xavier Catholic School who show service to the community and are active members of the parish and its youth group. The remainder of the proceeds will be used to provide assistance to St. Francis Xavier School families in need with tuition cost. Those interested in more information or sponsorship opportunities should call St. Francis Xavier Catholic School at 717.334.4221, visit the school website https://www.sfxcs-pa.org/ or e-mail music@sfxc.org.

All 10K finishers will receive a medal. This year’s 5K race will again award pies to the three top winners in each age category. The overall top finishers (male and female) of the 10K and 5K will receive pies and cash prizes. The awards will be distributed at approximately 11:15 a.m.
To Experience One of the Holiest Christian Sites, Head to Washington

By Rhina Guidos
Catholic News Service

In the nation's capital, a $15 museum ticket and pair of 3-D glasses is the passport Christian pilgrims and others need to experience—what may be the holiest site in Christianity.

Employing state-of-the-art technology, the National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C., opened an exhibit that virtually transports visitors to the streets of Jerusalem and through the doors of a small church that protects what is believed to be the very grave of Christ's burial and, to Christians, the site of his resurrection.

“We're in the Old City, we talk to you a little about the walls of the city, how they move over time and where the Gospels say that the Crucifixion and Resurrection took place,” said Kathleen Keane, vice president of exhibitions for National Geographic Magazine.

An introductory video explains some of the factors surrounding the tomb of Christ site, where structures above have been built and torn down repeatedly over the centuries, visitors walk toward a spot where a village guide projected on a wall provides a guide to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

It’s a visual appetizer to get them ready for the experience of not just entering via 3-D through its doors, but also flying over it and witnessing, from a bird’s eye view, a time-lapse of the structure’s physical history.

“Watching only one part of this small site for six months, then replaced by other artifacts in the exhibit area, one for the museum from the Vatican Museums and one for the library.”

The exhibit showcases this endeavor, which is sacred and historic, and we’re about to embark on an epic adventure,” said Hiebert.

The exhibit space touting this endeavor is stocked with Bibles and New Testaments in various languages. Hardcover books with hardcover way that leads to the tomb, a space that accommodates no more than three or four people, and at least visual representation of the tomb, without the real-life inconveniences.

“The exhibit is an endeavor that will be able to share with the world through the National Geographic Museum. It is that we can let the public in as long as they want in the tomb. You can go in there and have your own personal experience and be able to see it in all its glory without the interruptions and bustle of the crowd around.”

The exhibit explains some of the technology and restoration team from the National Technical University of Athens used, as well as what National Geographic could do to scan the images that made the visual aspect of the exhibit possible.

“We can tell a story about great science and there’s a great story about faith to it, too,” said Hiebert.

The exhibit also as well as a TV show about the restoration of the tomb of Christ that National Geographic documented, debuting Nov. 16. The Dec. cover story of National Geographic magazine also focuses on archaeology and the Bible. It will reveal a look at the tomb of Christ, which is the one for the library.

It shows that science and faith can go hand in hand, Hiebert said.

“People, we look back on the history of exploration and the history of National Geographic, we realize that this idea that science is divorced from faith is not true,” he said.

“It seems to me natural that National Geographic would be in a position of, here’s a site, which is sacred and historic, and we’re about to embark on an epic adventure.”
Don’t Wait to be Perfect to Answer Vocational Call, Pope Says

By Junno Arocho Esteves Catholic News Service

Men and women contemplating a vocation to the priesthood, consecrated life or marriage should not be afraid because God wants only for them to experience the joy that comes from serving others, Pope Francis said.

In his message for World Mission Day, which is scheduled for Sept. 2018, Pope Francis urged people to continue working on the U.N. Global Compact on Migration.

Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Pope Francis urged the international community not to surrender “to cynicism and disconnectedness,” which impedes progress toward peace. The papal message was released Dec. 4 at the Vatican.

Pope Francis stressed that basic human decency requires sheltering and protecting, promoting and integrating those whose dignity is at risk.

The pope said the U.N. pact calls for welcoming migrants and refugees “not as in the past, but with new eyes and a new heart.”

Pope Francis said in his message for World Peace Day 2018 that “listening, discerning and living the Lord's call.”

As work continues on the U.N. Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Pope Francis urged the international community not to surrender “to cynicism and disconnectedness,” which impedes progress toward peace.

Presenting the message to the media, Father Bruno Marie Duffe, secretary of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said, “It is clear peace begins with saving lives and taking care of people who are trying to escape wars, discrimination, persecution, poverty and climate disasters.” As work continues on the U.N. Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Pope Francis urged the international community not to surrender “to cynicism and disconnectedness,” which impedes progress toward peace.
Obituaries

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.

BLOOMSBURG — St. Columba: Joseph J. Keszkowski, Sharon P. Consolation of their loved ones. These recently departed souls and the benefit of their souls and the intentions of their families and friends.

BONNEAUVILLE — St. Joseph the Worker: Benedikt J. Strasbaugh.

CHAMBERSBURG — Corpus Christi: Robert J. Maloney, Sigmund Salentino, Andrena Tarquino Isenberger.

COLUMBIA — Holy Trinity: Joseph Willy.

CONEWAGO — Sacred Heart of Jesus: Martin N. Storm.

FAIRFIED — Immaculate Conception BVM: Edward V. Delboer.

GETTYSBURG — St. Francis Xavier: Arthur Cunningham, Jr., Dennis J. Hebert, Antonio Morales.

HANOVER — St. Vincent de Paul: Richard Crouse, Kathleen Rohrbough, Frances Rosensteel, Burnell “Barney” Small.

HARRISBURG — Holy Name of Jesus: Tony “Tony” D’Agostino, Betty Gorse, Aaron David Vargo, St. Margaret Mary: Mitchell Bernard, Martha Cope, Margaret Reardon, Mary Sebastian.

HERSHEY — St. Joan of Arc: Michael Hugendubler, Gina Pasquin.

KULPMONT — Holy Angels: Jennie Dallazia, Jannis F. Valania.


LEBANON — Assumption BVM: Lourdes Laura, Mildred Winter; St. Cecilia: David Mielkoys, Chessa Zimolzak.

LEWISBURG — Sacred Heart of Jesus: Michael Joseph Poremsky.

LEWISTOWN — Sacred Heart of Jesus: Mary Conti, Dr. Frank Grill.

LITTLESTOWN — St. Aloysius: Theresa F. Redding.


MILLERSVILLE — St. Philip the Apostle: Anna Constantine, Charles Hill, George Klett, Jonathan McDonald, Werner Ortmann.

NEW CUMBERLAND — St. Theresa: Mina Baxter.

NEW FREEDOM — St. John the Baptist: Robert Hamilton.

NEW OXFORD — immaculate Conception BVM: Earl Topper.


STEELTON — Prince of Peace: Irene Watts.

YORK — St. Joseph: Dorothy Kitching, Charles S. Hersh.

Sister M. Angelica Bove

Sister M. Angelica Bove, a member of the Daughters of Our Lady of Mercy, Villa Rossello, Newfield, N.J., went to her eternal rest on Nov. 11. She entered Merc ericia ndia Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, York. She was 87.

Born Gloria Bove in Hazleton, Pa., Sister Angelica entered the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of Mercy, in York in 1947. She earned a degree from College Misericordia in Dallas, Pa., and continued further studies at the University of Scranton and Marywood College in Scranton, Pa., and at Fordham University.

As an educator, Sister Angelica taught in elementary schools administered by the religious order in Milford, Mass.; Millville and Vineland, N.J.; and Steel ton, Hershey, Old Forge and Hazleton, Pa. She served as school principal at St. Mary’s Old Forge and as principal at Msgr. Molino Elementary School (previously Most Precious Blood) in Hazleton. While serving as principal at Msgr. Molino, she was appointed by Scranton diocesan officials to serve as assistant superintendent of parochial schools in the Hazleton area (1990-1992). On the high school level, Sister Angelica taught and served as secretary at the order’s Our Lady of Mercy Academy, Newfield, N.J.

In addition to teaching, Sister Angelica also served her religious community in many roles of service. From 1978-1983, she served as Provincial Superior of the order in Newfield. Prior to that, she served as Directress of Novices, and also, for six years, as an external member of the order’s General Council seated in Savona, Italy.

Having completed her ministry in education, Sister Angelica then served as parish minister and coordinator of Most Precious Blood Parish Outreach program for a number of years before being assigned to Mercy Residence, York, as Superior in 2005. Overtaken by illness, she spent her last two years as a resident of Misericordia Nursing Center, York, which is owned by her religious order.

The Mass of Christian burial was celebrated at Most Precious Blood Church, Hazleton, Pa., on Nov. 17. Interment was at Most Precious Blood Cemetery, Hazleton.

Resurrection School Sets New Fundraising Goal for Laptops

Resurrection Catholic School in Lancaster has announced a goal to start a one-to-one laptop program for 5th to 8th grade students by the beginning of 2018. The school was part of the community-wide Extraordinary Give, Lancaster’s day of giving to nonprofit organizations, held prior to Thanksgiving. Most of the money raised for the school on that day went toward the new initiative.

“When we were denied a grant to kick start our program, we decided to continue the march for the sake of our students. Some of them have no home computers, and the devices are essential these days for research and writing, both at home and in school,” said principal Brenda Weaver.

For about $500, the school can purchase one device, a 3-year warranty and accidental damage protection. One-to-one programs have become more necessary in education as the ability to instantly access research has become possible through technological advances. The Resurrection program will cost about $41,000, a figure beyond the technology fund’s ability to satisfy.

“We have repair and maintenance on our current system to pay for, and we’re replacing teacher computers and aging Smart Boards,” Mrs. Weaver said. She has high hopes for the effort, and she thanks those who support the school.

“We gratefully acknowledge the many people who support us through the year. They are our light and the inspiration for our theme this year, Family of Faith — Let Our Light Shine,” she said. “Our students benefit from this generosity every day.”

St. Joan of Arc Parish Donates Pounds of Care for Prisoners

Through the generous donations of parishioners, the Living Our Faith Ministry at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Parish in Hershey recently collected 10 boxes (336 pounds) of new and unused Christmas and all-occasion cards and 2018 wall calendars. All materials will be distributed at Pennsylvania prisons. Now in its third year at St. Joan’s, the collection, held Oct. 14 and 15, called Caring Cards and Calendars, allows parishioners to drop off next year’s wall calendars as well as new or excess cards from previous years.

Dr. Charles (Buz) Myers, Department of Religious Studies, Gettysburg College, and volunteer at the Camp Hill Prison, expressed his thanks, saying, “I cannot tell you how much the inmates at the Camp Hill State Prison appreciate all the time and effort that you put into this project. Please know that your work will truly bring joy into the lives of many incarcerated people and their families this Christmas and all year long.”

The donated items remind our brothers and sisters that they are not forgotten and offer inmates the opportunity to send holiday greetings all year long to family and friends. The colorful cards and calendars, which are items that most of us take for granted, are not usually available to those who are incarcerated.

Statistics consistently show that the majority of inmates are incarcerated for non-violent crimes and will soon return to our communities. This simple gesture reminds them that love and forgiveness can be found at home when their debt to society is paid.

Shown in the submitted photo, from left, are Jeanne Curry, Kathy Lewis, Dr. Charles Myers, Marie Bowman, Chris Baker and Deb Andrews with ten big boxes of cheer.

Inspired by the children’s book Only One You, the students of St. Joseph School in York, grades PreK through 6, enhance their school with garden art. The book Only One You, written by Linda Kranz, emphasizes that we are all unique. The project, coordinated by teacher Anne Smith and Director of Development Lisa Lindeman, encouraged every student to paint a rock in his or her own style. The beautiful rocks create a walkway of student artwork between the beds of the school garden. Each rock, special in its own way, represents our very blessed and unique school. Sixth-grader Madalene Dietrich is shown planning her artwork.
**Diocesan News**

Compiled by Jen Reed

**Spiritual Offerings**

An Ecumenical, Inter-Religious Candle-light Remembrance Service will be held for anyone who has experienced the death of a loved friend, family member, or loved one to suicide. It will be held on Sunday, Dec. 10 at 6 p.m. at Sacred Heart Basilica, Concepcion. Please let us know. All events will be served in the parish hall following the service. For more information, contact Sue Post at 717-232-1003 or sjpost@stmmparish.org.

**Parishes & Events**

St. Patrick Church and School have a long history in downtown York. As we prepare to celebrate our 120th anniversary, it is our wish to share this wonderful history with our people and students of St. Patrick Church, School and Youth Education Program. The “Then and Now Project” is reaching out to you – the priests, nuns, parishioners, lay teachers, staff, and alumni of the past, to share your thoughts and memories of your time at St. Patrick Church or School. Your stories, pictures or other memories you wish to share are greatly appreciated. Consider a special Mass, a funny moment in the classroom, your First Holy Communion, sports, weddings, holidays or anything else that comes to mind. Please submit pictures/stories to Joe Stein at jsstein550@comcast.net or mail to St. Patrick Church, Attn: Joe Stein, at 219 South Beaver St. York, PA 17401 by Jan. 15, 2018. See more information about the event at St. Patrick’s Web site, www.jspatrickyork.org.

**Good Shepherd School’s 2nd Annual Car Raffle** is now underway! Enter to win a 2018 Alfa Romeo Giulia Sedan for only $35,000 cash! The proceeds from this exciting fund raiser will once again go directly to the school for the benefit of students and families. Tickets are available for $5 or $10. Only 4,000 tickets are available for sale, so don’t wait, get yours today! The winner will be announced at the GSS Car Raffle Drawing Party on Feb. 10, 2018, at the Good Shepherd Parish Hall in Camp Hill.

St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Harrisburg is hosting a car raffle. First prize is a 2017 Honda Civic Sedan (color determined by stock) or $15,000 cash. Second prize, $500. Third prize, $300. Fourth prize, $200. Prizes for fifth through 10th places will also be available. Tickets are $10 each, or three for $20. Drawing is Dec. 25 at noon in the church basement. Need not be present to win. Visit the parish office or call 717-232-1003 to purchase tickets.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish Council of Catholic Women in Williamsport is having a Holiday Cheer Raffle. Tickets are $2 each and the grand prize is a 2018 Stelvio or Giulia Sedan from Broad Mountain Winery, 2nd Prize $50 Broad Mountain Winery, 3rd Prize $50 Armstrong Wineyard, 25$ Nelson’s Beer Bistro and $25 Ashley’s Therapy Spa. Ticket numbers available. Call Dawn at 717-647-9182 or Anne at 717-647-9182 or any member of the PCCW to get your chances.

St. Patrick Parish in York will hold a Cookie Walk in River View on Dec. 10 from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Parishioners are asked to make cookies for this event and drop them off the night before the day of the event, purchase a container for $10 (container will be provided), and choose which cookies you would like to fill your container with. St. Santa will be there to entertain children while parents are choosing their cookies.

Art contest for girls: The Harrisburg Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (HDCCW) invites girls in grades 9-12 in the Diocese of Harrisburg to enter an art contest to design the Christmas card of St. Rose of Lima Parish in York will begin Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible and you will receive a deeper relationship with God and begin to understand our faith from the book of the Bible. For those interested in Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible. You will not only benefit personally from being part of this study; you will also help to bring about a profound renewal in our faith and in our church closer to Christ. Children of St. Rose of Lima Parish in York will begin Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible on Jan. 1 at 7 p.m. For more information, or to register, please contact St. Rose Parish Office at 717-232-3771 or segan@hbgdiocese.org. Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible helps you uncover the story woven through Scripture with its clever narrative approach and ingenuity of the Bible. Then, a series of interactive and engaging half-hour videos presented by Jeff Cavins. Each video will be followed by a lively group discussion.

**Weekly Bible study and faith sharing –** Join the ongoing Bible study and Faith Sharing group that meets Monday mornings at St. Rose of Lima Parish in York 10 a.m. in the former convent dining room. Each week, we peek at the next week’s Scriptures to get a deeper understanding of what we learn at Mass. The Holy Spirit takes over from there and leads our discussions sometimes to surprising places. To find out more, contact Sharon Egan at 717-835-3043 or segan@hbgdiocese.org.

**Neighborhood Congress**

The Holy Spirit takes over from there and leads our discussions sometimes to surprising places. To find out more, contact Sharon Egan at 717-835-3043 or segan@hbgdiocese.org.

**St. Rita Parish in Blue Ridge Summit** will hold its annual Christmas Mart on Dec. 9 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Fresh green wreaths, swags, centerpieces and kissing balls will be available. Treasures and religious articles from a local shop, and icons and jewelry by local crafters will be available, as well as a raffle and home baked goods. Live music will be provided by local talent. The Mart is held in St. Rita’s Parish Hall at the back end of the property at 3219 Monterey Lane, Blue Ridge Summit.

**Lancaster Catholic High School, in partnership with the Catholic Community in Columbia, will be hosting Breakfast with Santa on Dec. 9 in the LCHS Cafeteria. Breakfast will be served from 8:30-10:30 a.m. with Live Christmas time festivities beginning at 9 a.m. Please contact Tony Brill for more information at tbrill@chses.org or 717-609-5310. Cost for adults and children 3 years or older is $15, children under 3 years are free. Price of ticket includes a buffet breakfast, Santa meet and greet and all children will receive gift bags.

As part of the Lancaster Catholic’s Fine and Performing Arts Outreach Series, The Janmaris Family Christmas Concert will be held in the Old Main Auditorium on Dec. 15 at 7:30 p.m. The Janmaris Family will present the Nelson Riddle arrangement of “The First Noel” and “Christmas on the Ocean,” with vocalists Dvorak and Schubert. Admission is free, but donations to the LCHS FPA will be accepted.

**Christmas Bake Sale - St. Ann Byzan- tine Catholic Church in Harrisburg will be selling delicious baked goods just in time for Christmas on Dec. 9 in the parish hall, 5408 Locust Lane, Harrisburg, from 9 a.m.-noon. The homemade rolls will be $2 each, $25 for a diet. Filling contest is open to poppy seed fillings. All sales are on a first-come, first-served basis. The potli will be sold frozen for $6 each. Fillo is $4 each. Fillings available will be cheese, cabbage, sausage, farmer cheese, prune and apple. The smoked kielbasa will be sold in rings for $6. Kiel- basa sticks will also be available. St. Ann Gift Shop will accept credit cards for purchases of religious and cultural merchandise. Visit www.stannbyz.org or call 717-652-0545 for more information.

Instruments and voices come together at York Catholic High School’s Christmas Concerts! The senior high concert is Dec. 10 at 6 p.m. and the junior high concert is Dec. 13 at 7 p.m. Celebrate the season and enjoy the sounds of holiday spirit! Admission is free.

**Festival of Lessons and Carols, presented by the St. Joseph Sanctuary Choir, the St. Joseph School Choir, the LCHS FPA and the St. Joseph School Liturgy Chor, will be held Dec. 10 at 6:30 p.m. at St. Joseph Church in Mechanicsburg. The Festival of Les-sons and Carols originated in 1818 at King’s College, in Cambridge. The blend of Scripture and carols draws in listeners, both young and old, to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

**Job Openings**

**St. Margaret Mary School in Harrisburg is looking for a preschool/grade 1 aide to begin work on Jan. 2, 2018. The hours are Monday-Friday from 7:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Duties include assisting teacher with supervision of children in the classroom, breakfast and lunch, assisting the teacher in lessons and centers, copying necessary materials for class, and other fun things throughout the day. Interested parties should contact Mrs. Fennessy via e-mail at mrs.fennessy@stmmparish.org or by calling the school office at 717-232-3771.

A Woman’s Concern is seeking a creative, dynamic and passionately pro-life Advancement Manager to work with the team to promote “life.” If you have at least 5 years’ experience in marketing, development, fund raising and writing, and a proven track record for a non-profit ministry that every day makes a difference in the lives of our clients, please apply. In your letter of interest, include your resume and contact Jill Hartman at jill@pregnancy lancaster.com with your resume and/or to receive a comprehensive job description.

**Submission Deadline**

The deadline for submissions for the December 22 edition is Wednesday, December 13 at 4:30 p.m. Submit all information via e-mail to witness@hbgdiocese.org. No ads, posters or PFSs, please.
**Catholic Liturgies Avoid Christmas Decorations, Carols in Advent**

By Carol Zimmermann  
**Catholic News Service**

During the weeks before Christmas, Catholic churches stand out for what they are missing.

Unlike stores, malls, public buildings and homes that start gearing up for Christmas at least by Thanksgiving, churches appear almost stark save for Advent wreaths and maybe some greenery or white lights.

“The chance for us to be a little out of sync or a little countercultural is not a bad thing,” said Paulist Father Larry Rice, director of the University Catholic Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

By the same token, he is not about to completely avoid listening to Christmas music until Dec. 24 either. The key is to experience that “being out of sync feeling in a way that is helpful and teaches us something about our faith,” he told Catholic News Service.

Others find with the frenetic pace of the Christmas season it is calming to go into an undecorated church and sing unaccompanied hymns like “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” But that shouldn’t be the only draw, noted Jesuit Father Bruce Morrill, who is the Edward A. Malloy professor of Catholic studies at Vanderbilt University associate professor in theology and religious studies.

“As Father Morrill sees it, decorating churches with white lights or greenery almost bridges the secular and religious celebrations of Christmas and that’s OK by him. It beats using blue instead of purple for Advent wreaths or liturgical vestments, which he said some parishes did in the 80s, until Church leaders came down on it. Liturgical notes for Advent posted online by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops — http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgy/liturgical-year/ advent — points out that the liturgical color for Advent is purple, just like Lent — as both are seasons that prepare us for great feast days.

It says Advent “includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas. This penitential dimension is expressed through the color purple, but also through the restrained manner of decorating the church and altar.”

It also points out that floral decorations should be “marked by a moderation” as should the use of the organ and other musical instruments during Advent Masses.

The way the Church celebrates Advent is nothing new. Timothy Brunck, a Villanova University associate professor in theology and religious studies, said it began in the fourth century in Europe but has never had the history or significance of Easter for the Church.

But even though Advent doesn’t have the penitential pull of Lent — where people give something up for 40 days or do something extra — that doesn’t mean the season should slip by without opportunities for spiritual growth.

Father Rice said it’s important for Catholics to engage in spiritual preparation for Christmas even in the middle of all the other preparations.

His advice: when you write a Christmas card, say a prayer for that person; while shopping, try to go about it in slow and thoughtful way not frantically running around and let someone take that parking space you were eyeing.

Those actions, he said, are modern works of mercy on a simple and immediate level. They also don’t require batteries or store coupons.

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