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My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the season of Advent begins, we journey with the Blessed Virgin Mary, an expectant mother who faced many challenges, toward the celebration of her only begotten Son. Although many in our Diocese were discouraged by the vote this past November, our commitment to accompanying women and their children continues. In these days that have followed the ballot initiative, some women have contemplated terminating their pregnancies. With renewed effort, we need to make abortion unthinkable, and the birth of a child not to be seen as a burden but a blessing.

Outside the realm of politics, the true victory will come by winning hearts through our unconditional and relentless love for women and their children. Following the November issue, Archbishop Dennis Schnurr of Cincinnati stated that the result was a sign that our society needed deeper conversion. Sharing the sentiments of Archbishop Schnurr, I began to think of what the Diocese of Columbus could do to continue to build a culture of life and a civilization of love.

First, I encourage all the faithful to a deeper life of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. I was grateful and moved by how many people committed themselves to prayer, the Rosary and Adoration, and Mass during the lead-up to the ballot initiative. It is not that your prayers were ineffective or in vain; rather, God was trying to teach us something according to His time and His plan. Nevertheless, we must not lose our commitment, but rather renew and strengthen it.

To that end, I wish to encourage all pastors, priests and deacons to make a serious commitment to offering a Holy Hour in the parish church(es), especially on the Thursday before First Friday (or on the First Friday itself) in preparation for sins against human life and dignity, praying also for the building of a civilization of love. The People of God in the Diocese of Columbus, which has been consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, can console the Heart of Jesus and can be inspired to love more generously through this sacred time. The upcoming Jubilee Year, in honor of the 350th anniversary of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart to St. Margaret Mary, is a fitting occasion to begin this initiative.

I also want to encourage all Catholics in the Diocese, at the conclusion of the Christmas season, to resume the traditional practice of abstinence from meat on Fridays. Catholics are already obliged to either abstain from meat or do some other form of penance every Friday throughout the year. In 2009, the Diocese of Steubenville encouraged the faithful there to abstain from meat on Fridays and to donate what was saved on meals to pro-life charities.

Almsgiving could be tied to this practice. The need to support organizations like the Women’s Care Center, Pregnancy Decision Health Centers, Heartbeat International, Birthright, Bottoms Up and Mommies Matter has never been greater. Our support of these and like organizations demonstrates our commitment to the good of human life and the care of the least of our brothers and sisters.

The idea behind abstinence from meat on Fridays is not merely external, that is, to keep a rule; rather, it is a form of Christian asceticism. Simply trying to circumvent the discipline by having an extravagant shrimp dinner, for example, defeats the purpose. We ought to do penance as a means of encountering Christ in the hope of deeper conversion to Him. We can be intentional in our abstinance and penitential practices, mindful of unborn children, their mothers and fathers, and the men and women in the trenches working to support them. Our Catholic institutions in the Diocese can and should take this discipline into account.

What is demanded is not the external form of a rule, but our desire to cooperate with the calling of Christ and His Church, and to be mindful of the child in the womb. In 2011, the Bishops of England and Wales resumed the practice of Friday abstinence from meat; this resumed practice has shown that abstinence from meat is not only beneficial to an individual’s health but also is environmentally more friendly. If we abstained from meat on Fridays, we could also raise awareness of our need to care for our “common home.”

In addition to these spiritual practices (prayer, abstinance, and almsgiving), the Diocese of Columbus, in the coming year, will be more intentional in its support of pro-life apostolates. Building upon the good works of the Office for Social Concerns, which cares for a wide spectrum of issues to advance the social mission of the Church, a new Respect Life Office will be dedicated to helping build the culture of life in a sustainable and lasting way, including through formational conferences for pro-life leaders and healthcare workers.

In the coming year, a summit of Respect Life leaders will convene to discover what the many organizations are presently doing, what the true needs are, and how the Diocese can respond to those needs in support of structures that are currently in place. The Holy Father continues to call us to be a Church that listens, and the Diocese of Columbus wants to listen to the experiences of those who work with mothers in need and their families, and to collaborate with Catholic Social Services and other like-minded organizations in meeting the practical needs of families.

The Church must also listen to women, particularly those who have experienced the pain of abortion and who need healing. Beginning an apostolate like Project Rachel for healing and reconciliation could help remind people of the Pope’s call for us to be a Church of Mercy.

The call to put our faith into action also falls within the realm of evangelization. To proclaim the Good News of salvation is also to proclaim the Gospel of Life. The Office of Evangelization will seek out means to proclaim boldly the entirety of the Gospel message, and the Office of Catholic Schools will continue to promote and foster Catholic academic integration — weaving the Truths of our Faith into all content areas throughout the school program to build a strong culture of life and to form in each student the spirit of radical solidarity that our times demand. For example, in science classes, our students will come to a greater appreciation for the gift of human life at conception and the development of life as a gift in the image and likeness of God.

The Diocese of Columbus will organize a pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., for the annual March for Life in January and will engage our young people in the Vigil for Life and in pro-life events to form them as missionaries, advancing the culture of life. Students from all of the Catholic high schools in the Diocese will participate.

God has called us to be a People of Life. The need to build a Culture of Life will take time and patience. It will encounter resistance; nevertheless, we cannot abandon unborn children and their mothers.

Law may refuse to recognize the dignity and right to life of the child in the womb, but we cannot be indifferent to the reality. When Mary visited Elizabeth, the child in her womb recognized the Presence of the Savior and leaped for joy. The Church wishes to acknowledge and defend the rights of the unborn child, while accompanying mothers in their time of need and during what should be a joyful time of their lives. May we rise to meet our responsibility, grateful for the gift of life we have received.

Entrusting all of you and these efforts to the intercession of the Mother of God, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, the patroness of the United States, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

Clergy assignments announced

The Diocese of Columbus announced the following clergy assignments:

Reverend Matthew Morris, from Pastor, St. Catharine Church, Columbus, to Sabbatical Leave, effective December 31, 2023.

Reverend Patrick Toner, from retirement, to Administrator Pro Tem, St. Catherine Church, Columbus, effective December 31, 2023.

Reverend Veevin Richard Pitchaisvary, SAC, from pastoral service at Holy Spirit Church and St. Philip the Apostle Church, Columbus, to Pastor, Holy Spirit Church, Columbus, effective December 1, 2023.
## Schedule for diocesan Christmas Masses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish Name</th>
<th>Christmas Eve Times</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Andrew Kim Taegon Korean Community</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 8 p.m.; Christmas Day, noon (both at Columbus St. John the Baptist Church)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus Sts. Augustine &amp; Gabriel</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 6 p.m. (English); Christmas Day, 11 a.m. (Vietnamese)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Catharine of Siena</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4, 6:30 and 10 p.m.; Christmas Day, 11 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Catechism</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 5 p.m. (Spanish); Christmas Day, 10 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Dominic</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 6 p.m. (Joint Mass for St. Dominicus and Columbus Holy Rosary-St. John parishioners)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Elizabeth</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4 and 10 p.m.; Christmas Day, 9 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Francis of Assisi</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 6:30 p.m.; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. James the Less</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4:30 p.m. (English), 6 and 8 p.m. (Spanish); Christmas Day, 10 a.m. (English), noon (Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 10 p.m., followed by blessing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4 and 6:30 p.m., midnight (cathedral choir and brass 11 p.m.); Christmas Day, 10 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Margaret of Cortona</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (children's Mass), midnight; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Mary German Village</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4 and 9 p.m. (music 8:20); Christmas Day, 10 a.m. (English), 12:30 p.m. (Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Mary Magdalene</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (bilingual children's Mass), midnight; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Matthias</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 5 and 10 p.m.; Christmas Day, 11 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Peter</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (children's Mass, crib blessing), 6:30 p.m., midnight; Christmas Day, 7 (no music) and 10 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus St. Thomas the Apostle</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 5 p.m. (English), 7:30 p.m. (Spanish), midnight (English); Christmas Day, 9 a.m. (English), 11 a.m. (Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coshcton Sacred Heart</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, midnight (music 11:30); Christmas Day, 9 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danville St. Luke</td>
<td>Christmas Eve, 4:30 p.m. (children's pageant 4); Christmas Day, 9 and 11 a.m.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Columbus protomartyrs

- **Eve, 5 p.m.; Christmas Day, 9 a.m.** (Ghanaian, noon)

- **Cardington Sacred Hearts** – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (church and parish hall), 6 and 10 p.m.; Christmas Day, 9 and 11 a.m.

- **Ada Our Lady of Lourdes** – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m., midnight

- **Buckeye Lake Our Lady of Mount Carmel** – Christmas Eve, 6 p.m. (children's Mass), midnight; Christmas Day, 9 a.m.

- **Zanesville St. Thomas Aquinas** – Christmas Eve, 9 a.m. (English), 11 a.m. (Spanish)

- **New Albany Church of the Resurrection** – Christmas Eve, 4, 7 and 10 p.m.; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.

- **New Lexington St. Rose of Lima** – Christmas Eve, 4 and 6 p.m.; Christmas Day, 9 a.m. (Spanish)

- **New Philadelphia Sacred Heart** – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m.; Christmas Day, 9 a.m.

- **Newark Blessed Sacrament** – Christmas Eve, 4, 6:30 and 10 p.m.; Christmas Day, 9 a.m. (English), 11 a.m. (Spanish)

- **Newark St. Francis de Sales** – Christmas Eve, 4, 6:30 and 10:30 p.m.; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.

- **Pickerington St. Elizabeth Ann Seton** – Christmas Eve, 4 and 6 p.m., midnight; Christmas Day, 9:30 a.m.

- **Plain City St. Joseph** – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (children's Mass, activity center), 4 p.m. (church), 7 p.m. (activity center), midnight (church); Christmas Day, 9 a.m. (church)

- **Pond Creek Holy Trinity** – Christmas Day, 10 a.m.

- **Portsmouth Holy Redeemer** – Christmas Eve, 6 p.m. (English), 8 p.m. (Spanish); Christmas Day, 9 a.m.

- **Portsmouth St. Mary** – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m., midnight

- **Powell St. Joan of Arc** – Christmas Eve, 4, 6:30 and 10 p.m.; Christmas Day, 9 a.m. (English), 11 a.m. (Spanish); Christmas Eve, 4, 6 and 9 p.m.; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.

- **Somerset Holy Trinity** – Christmas Eve, 3 p.m.; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.

- **Somerset St. Joseph** – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m.; Christmas Day, 8 a.m.

- **Sugar Grove St. Joseph** – Christmas Eve, 8 p.m.; Christmas Day, 9 a.m.

- **Sunbury St. John Neumann** – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (praise ensemble, contemporary), 6:30 p.m. (string trio, carols), midnight (choir, traditional); Christmas Day, 10 a.m. (choir, carols)

- **Washington Court House St. Colman of Clonfert** – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m., midnight; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.

- **Waverly St. Mary, Queen of the Missions** – Christmas Day, 9 a.m.

- **Wellston Sts. Peter & Paul** – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m.

- **West Jefferson Sts. Simon & Jude** – Christmas Eve, 4 and 6 p.m.; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.

- **Westerville St. Paul** – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (church, Westerville North High School), 6:30 p.m. (youth choir 6), midnight (adult choir 11:30); Christmas Day, 8 and 10 a.m., noon

- **Wheelersburg St. Peter in Chains** – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m.

- **Worthington St. Michael** – Christmas Eve, 4, 6 and 10 p.m. (last Mass followed by reception); Christmas Day, 10:30 a.m.

- **Zaleski St. Sylvester** – Christmas Eve, 5:30 p.m.

- **Zanesville St. Nicholas** – Christmas Eve, 5:15 and 7:30 p.m.; Christmas Day, 8 a.m.

- **Zanesville St. Thomas Aquinas** – Christmas Eve, 6 p.m. (carols 8:30); Christmas Day, 10 a.m. (all in activity center)

- **Zoar Holy Trinity** – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m.; Christmas Day, 10 a.m.
Bishops issue joint statement on potential merger of dioceses

Leadership teams from the Diocese of Columbus and Steubenville met last week to resume discussions that began more than a year ago regarding a potential merger between the two dioceses. Both dioceses emphasized that no decision has been made and that there is no timetable on when a final determination will be issued by Pope Francis.

The Vatican’s Apostolic Nunciature in the United States asked Bishop Earl Fernandes of Columbus and Bishop Paul Bradley, the apostolic administrator for Steubenville, to lead their respective diocesan leadership teams to compile data to be presented to Pope Francis in order to discern a path forward.

A joint statement was issued Monday, Dec. 11 to update the respective dioceses on the process.

December 11, 2023

The Diocese of Columbus
197 E Gay St,
Columbus, OH 43215

Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

The Diocese of Steubenville
422 Washington Street
Steubenville, OH 43952

Most Reverend Paul J. Bradley
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville

Bishops Issue Joint Statement on Dioceses Potential Merger

Bishop Paul J. Bradley, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville, and Bishop Earl K. Fernandes of the Diocese of Columbus, along with their staffs, have begun very preliminary discussions regarding the potential merger of the dioceses.

The Apostolic Nunciature has asked the dioceses to work together to consider how different dimensions of the dioceses, including the temporal aspects of life, might be affected by such a proposal.

While no decision has been made, due diligence is needed so an educated and responsible decision can be discerned in a timely manner. Ultimately the decision is up to the Holy Father.

The work has begun, and as the work continues, updates will be provided.

Bishops Bradley and Fernandes ask the clergy and the laity to pray that the unified work may be fruitful.

+ Earl K. Fernandes
Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

+ Paul J. Bradley
Paul J. Bradley
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville
Is Friday penance still required?

Dear Father: My son just entered the seminary, and now he is telling our family that we’re supposed to be eating fish on Fridays. I told him that Vatican II got rid of all that stuff. Can you please help me find information to show him that he’s wrong? — Sydney

Dear Sydney:

Oh, those pesky seminarians! Why can’t they just leave us alone?

Actually, you should be thanking your son, although he’s not entirely correct about the necessity of eating only fish on Fridays. We must do some penance on most Fridays, one form of which is to abstain from meat. Vatican II did not get rid of that.

Vatican II did not say that we must absolutely eat fish on Fridays, or, to my knowledge, did the Church ever say that we had to eat fish. In the history of the Church, fish was the protein substitute for meat. But it was always perfectly fine to eat a vegetarian meal in place of meat, especially on Fridays of Lent.

The Church, our venerable Mother, like all mothers, has continually urged her children to eat carefully. Sometimes that means she has told us how to eat on certain days: less on some and to feel free to have a party on other days.

Her insistence on guiding our diets is because she knows that our true end is to gain the prize of heaven. It’s a long journey that we are making together to heaven, and journeys require proper nutrition. Consider the athlete. Every athlete knows that there are times to eat certain foods and times to avoid certain foods to be fit to win an earthly prize.

Some days require a party, such as our Lord’s birthday (Christmas) and His resurrection from the dead (Easter). Other days require that we hold back. Each week we limit our diets by abstaining from meat, and sometimes we fast by limiting the amount of food.

We use bodily abstentions and fasting to train our souls, lest they become bloated (like our bodies) with excessive concerns about earthly things. Just as getting to heaven is both pre- and post-Vatican II, so is abstinence and fasting.

In fact, it was a post-Vatican II teaching from Pope St. Paul VI (1966) that deals with the importance of fasting and abstinence. Titled Paenitentia (Be Converted), the pope used the image of our pilgrimage from this earthly city to our heavenly homeland. Our pilgrimage means that we turn our faces upward toward our goal and away from our downward focus on affairs of this world.

That’s what conversion means: to change, and this change involves a “leeting go” of what keeps us earthbound. That’s the joy of penance. We let go of a lesser good to attain a greater good. Like good spiritual athletes, we watch our diet by fasting and abstinence; we build spiritual muscle by exercising with prayer and spiritual reading; we become spiritually lean and fit by caring for the poor.

Perhaps you thought that Vatican II got rid of abstinence from meat on Fridays on account of the relaxation that Pope St. Paul VI allowed. He never, however, abolished the necessity of doing penance on Fridays of the entire year.

In the United States, our bishops have insisted that we do penance of some sort on Fridays, even outside of Lent. While it used to be sinful to eat meat on Fridays (prior to 1966), that is no longer the case. The sin was not a matter of merely forgetting about abstaining. A person committed a sin by eating meat on Fridays out of contempt for the regulation. Contempt for holy things is always evil.

Did removing the strict requirement go too far? Some might argue that the pope and bishops gave us too much freedom. But I think everyone recognizes that it’s better to offer up sufferings out of love rather than being forced by law. When your seminarian son comes home for vacation, wouldn’t you rather that he offers to take out the garbage voluntarily and with love rather than by force?

It seems that the majority of Catholics have forgotten that we are still supposed to offer up some form of penance every Friday, whether by abstaining from meat or by mortifying ourselves in some other way. On Fridays that are solemnities or great feasts, we suspend our penance for that day. If, for example, when the Immaculate Conception falls on a Friday, we celebrate and put aside our special mortifications. Catholic calendars usually indicate these days.

Perhaps I will be accused of “turning back the clock,” but I really believe that we need penance now more than ever. The world isn’t getting any better, but we might help turn things around if we beseech heaven with works of mortification. The call to fasting is a constant throughout the Scriptures. Our Lord Jesus especially calls us to repent and to conform our lives to His cross.

I think that’s what your seminarian son is probably wanting for you and your family.

German Catholicism: on the brink or at the cutting edge?

On November 10, a “Synodal Committee” created by the recently completed German “Synodal Way” met for the first time. The committee’s mandate is to prepare the foundations for a “Synodal Council” of laity, clergy, and bishops to govern the Catholic Church in Germany from 2026 on. The idea of such a “Synodal Council” has already been rejected by the Holy See. And in a recent letter to four German laywomen who had resigned from the “Synodal Way” to protest deviations from settled Catholic truths and practices, Pope Francis reiterated that the “Synodal Council” cannot be reconciled “with the sacramental structure of the Catholic Church.”

The Pope also said this about the current state of Catholic affairs in Germany:

“Instead of seeking ‘salvation’ in ever new committees and discussing the same topics with a certain self-absorption, in my Letter to the People of God in Germany I wanted to recall the need for prayer, penance, and adoration, and invite people to open up and go out to meet our brothers and sisters, especially those who are abandoned on the steps of our churches, on the streets, in prisons and hospitals, squares and cities.” I am convinced that this is where the Lord will show us the way.

About which, perhaps a few things may be observed:

Doesn’t “seeking ‘salvation’ in ever new committees and discussing the same topics with a certain self-absorption” describe precisely what Synod-2023 did for four agonizingly long weeks two months ago — and what the preparatory local, national, and continental “phases” of the Synod on Synodality were doing, at a great cost in time and money, for the past two years?

Why is “salvation” in quotation marks in the Pope’s letter? Is it because he’s referring to “saving” the institution of the German Church, which is hemorrhaging congregants and thus losing revenue, because fewer self-identified Catholic congregants means the institution gets less of a cut of the German Church tax? Given the German context, that suggests why “salvation” was put in quotation marks. But it might also be noted that the theme of salvation in its full biblical and theological sense — and the corollary notion of the Lord Jesus as the unique and sole savior of humanity — was not explored in any great depth during Synod-2023, or during the German “Synodal Path.”

Which leads to a third point: The Pope suggests that institutional confusion in German Catholicism will save itself by opening itself up, to the poor, displaced, and marginalized in society. The German Church already does that, however, maintaining (with the help of the Church tax) a considerable network of social service agencies and programs. If the meeting marginalized were the answer to contemporary German Catholicism’s religious ennui and evangelical anemia, the German Church would have become a powerful engine of the New Evangelization decades ago.

But it didn’t, and it isn’t. The reason why has little or nothing to do with a failure to meet the marginalized, and everything to do with that loss of faith in Jesus as Lord, and in the Church as his sacramental Body in the world, which turns local churches into non-governmental organizations doing good works. Meeting the Lord Jesus in Word and Sacrament is (to borrow from the Pope’s letter) “what will show us the way.”

It was interesting that, at Synod-2023, the “hot-button” issues beloved of the German Synodal Way were, in the main, not pressed by Germans, but by others. The president of the German bishops’ conference, Bishop Georg Bätzing, oozed gemütlichkeit throughout, a smile constantly on his face. Perhaps this deliberately low profile reflected a recognition by the German bishops’ leadership that it would be inadvisable to inflame things in Rome, given their fractious situation at home. But another reading of those tea leaves is possible.

As suggested in this space before, some of those in charge of the “Synod on Synodality” may have regarded the German “Synodal Path” as a useful instrument in clearing the path for a dramatic reconfiguration of Catholic self-understanding and governance, moving the goalsposts so far to the left that the old 50-yard line of the Catholic Vital Center would now be the old left end zone. Those of that cast of mind may not have wanted the Germans to get so far out front as to give the whole game away before Synod-2024 meets next October; so the German walking horse was advised to trot, not gallop.

Which might suggest that German Catholicism is not regarded in certain Roman circles as being “on the brink” so much as “at the cutting edge.”
During Advent, we must watch as we wait

By Thomas Storck

The Gospel reading for Christmas Midnight Mass, from St. Luke Chapter 2, is the beautiful account of Jesus’ birth at Bethlehem, a story familiar to all Catholics.

But have you ever wondered why it begins by mentioning the current Roman emperor, Augustus, and even one of the governors of Syria, Quirinius? Why are these persons, obscure to most of us, part of the touching story of the Holy Family, the stable, the shepherds and the angels?

On one level, the reason is obvious. In the ancient world, there was no one system of dating, and events were frequently dated by reference to the reign of the current monarch. But there is a second and more important reason: By situating the birth of Jesus in the broader events of history, St. Luke is telling us that the Catholic faith is a historical religion, a religion based on real events, things that really happened.

In Evelyn Waugh’s historical novel about St. Helena, the mother of the Emperor Constantine, Helena, before her conversion to Catholicism, is told by her husband about his initiation into the pagan cult of Mithras. He explains the story of Mithras, and she replies, well, when did this all happen?

That’s a silly question, he says, don’t you know this is a myth? It’s symbolic. Helena is not much interested. Then, much later in the story, Helena encounters a Catholic, Lactantius, who recounts to her the story of Jesus Christ, His crucifixion and resurrection.

Again, she asks, when did this all happen? But this time the answer is different: Lactantius tells her that “he died two years ago in the town now called Aelia Capitolina in Palestine.” She is impressed — no more mythic stories, this really happened.

And so it is with our Catholic faith and the Gospels themselves. At the beginning of Chapter 3 of his Gospel, St. Luke gives us another chronological marker by fixing the date for the beginning of John the Baptist’s ministry by the reigns of no fewer than six secular and religious rulers. Luke wants to make clear to his readers that what he is writing is something true, something that really happened — and therefore something important.

And that is why every week when we Catholics say the Nicene Creed at Mass, we include the phrase “crucified under Pontius Pilate” — not to commemorate a rather second-rate Roman bureaucrat, but to witness that we are dealing here with real events.

The Church makes a tremendous claim to us. She is telling us about things that really happened, that happened whether we like it or not, whether we find them appealing or not. Jesus Christ did come during the reign of Caesar Augustus; He really was crucified and rose again during the reign of Tiberius.

Today there is frequently talk about being “spiritual but not religious.” Often that means attracted by a vague belief in some higher power or powers. What those might be, what they have done, what they will do in the future is seldom asked. Each person is free to imagine them in any way that is personally pleasing. This is a made-to-order spirituality. But Catholicism is something different, a religion that makes historical truth claims, that stands or falls with assertions about God acting in history, during the reigns of real, live emperors, kings and governors. And, of course, that is why it is so important, why, in fact, it is the most important thing there is. Something which, when we embrace it, we must adhere to it with our whole heart and life as well as our whole mind.

So, these little historical markers that, on account of their familiarity, we are apt to overlook, are vital to our faith and are guarantees that our religion is true. Both true and important, and, in fact, if we are faithful, the gateway to eternal life.

Thomas Storck is the author, editor or translator of 10 books and numerous print and online articles. His latest book is “The Prosperity Gospel: How Greed and Bad Philosophy Distorted Christ’s Teaching” (TAN Books, 2023). He is a contributing editor of “New Oxford Review” and a member of the editorial board of “The Chesterton Review.” Storck and his wife, Inez, are members of Westervile St. Paul Church.

Keep the candle lit: pouring out the greatest gift

By Christina Capecchi

Twenty Something

Oprah Winfrey looks regal in a purple pleated skirt and matching sweater, beaming on the cover of the magazine that delivers her much-anticipated Favorite Things — “112 crowd-pleasing gifts for everyone on your list.”

Now in her ninth year partnering with Amazon, Oprah vouches for each product with her trademark hype: a $22 silk eye mask she calls “life-changing,” $350 Beats headphones that are “the best of the best,” a $600 True-Brew Drip Coffee Maker she lauds as “a dream for per-snickety coffee drinkers.” Not to mention her new book, which will help you “be happier in 2024.”

It’s commerce with a spiritual bent. “What I know for sure,” Oprah writes, “is that what you give comes back to you.”

I’ve always been intrigued by the television queen’s shopping list, but what strikes me most is how much company she now has. These days, everyone has a holiday gift guide — from high-profile peddlers to micro-influencers and suburban moms.

You can follow them in real time, linking every item. The wreaths they’re hanging. The bows they’re hanging on the wreaths they’re hanging. The joggers they’re wearing while they’re hanging the bows on the wreaths they’re hanging.

’Tis the season to spend money. It’s never been easier to do, requiring the kind of deliberation that vanishes in the blink of an eye, the tap of a button. It can almost feel like play money — no paper trail, no accountability, just an invisible Venmo transaction.

What we lack in time, we try to make up for in money, throwing it at people and problems who actually need minutes and hours. The kindergartner doesn’t need a fancy new baseball glove but an adult to play catch with.
In spirit of St. Nicholas, collection aids poor, needy

As I write this, it is the feast day of St. Nicholas, patron saint of occupations too numerous to mention and a special patron saint of children, young people and of charity in the fullest and richest sense.

Nicholas grew up in Turkey, was orphaned at a young age and used his inheritance to assist the needy, the sick and the poor. He was elected bishop of Myra, and stories abounded about his Christ-like love for his people in the direst of circumstances.

His legendary charity and patronage of the young gave rise to the tradition of giving gifts on his feast day, Dec. 6, in the Low Countries and throughout Germanic lands. He was known as Sint Nikolaas in the Netherlands, later shortened to Sint Nicolaas, precursor to the figure of Santa Claus.

To read more about his life, go to https://www.vaticannews.va/en/saints/12/06/saint-nicholas-of-bari--bishop-of-myra.html.

This month, you can emulate the charity of St. Nicholas in assisting the needy and the poor. Christmas Day has typically been the date when the Catholic Charities collection is taken up. Originally a second collection with a specific envelope in your collection envelope pack, but now in the day of electronic funds transfers it is often a designation you would apply to a gift through your parish’s electronic giving portal.

The Catholic Charities collection supports diocesan and diocesan-sponsored charities including the Joint Organization for Inner-City Needs (J.O.I.N.), the

Faith in Action | Mark Hudy

Mark Hudy is the Episcopal Moderator for Catholic Charities and the Office for Social Concerns in the Diocese of Columbus.

Church’s own assistance organization helping individuals and families with emergency needs of basic items such as food, prescriptions, birth certificates, utility assistance and shelter-related needs.

J.O.I.N. works with St. Vincent de Paul parish conferences for those shelter-related needs. The collection also supports the St. Francis Evangelization Center in McArthur by helping residents in Vinton County (one of the poorest counties in Ohio) obtain food and clothing.

The Catholic Charities collection also assists our three major diocesan-sponsored charitable agencies – Catholic Social Services, St. Stephen’s Community House and St. Vincent Family Services.

Catholic Social Services (CSS) is a multi-faceted social services agency offering a variety of services and programs for seniors, including money management, payee services, transportation for medical purposes in Licking County, a senior companion program, a foster grandparent program, service coordination at the Seton Square properties and other supportive services.

CSS also operates the Our Lady of Guadalupe Center meeting multiple needs of the growing Hispanic population in central Ohio and the Stay the Course program helping students at Columbus State Community College navigate unexpected challenges on the way to graduation.

St. Stephen’s Community House (SSCH) is also a multi-faceted social service agency largely focused on the needs of Columbus’ Linden area, however its reach in providing for basic needs such as food extends throughout Franklin County.

By providing programs such as the Early Learning Center, summer STEM programs, Achieve More and Prosper, Family to Family, the Nutrition Center and Senior Programming, SSCH addresses the needs of the Linden community throughout the life cycle.

St. Vincent Family Services (SVFS) provides behavioral health-care services to children and their families from the preschool years through middle school. St. Vincent’s offers outpatient and community-based services, day treatment programs through a pairing of education and mental health treatment in their Prep Academy, up to full residential care, when necessary, with an opportunity to step down into foster care until family reunification can take place.

All of these agencies and organizations extend help and hope to low-income individuals and families. Your donation to the Catholic Charities collection is a way of participating in the good work and loving response to need that was modeled so well by the bishop of Myra, St. Nicholas. Please consider giving generously on Dec. 25.

In diocese, charity abounds in quiet but impactful ways

As Advent comes to a conclusion in preparation for the celebration of the Savior’s birth, take a moment to reflect on the countless individuals and groups who do so much good for so many people without any hint of recognition.

The parish and Catholic organizations that collect toys and gifts this time of year should be commended, but don’t forget that so many people have such great needs after Christmas and throughout the year that tend to be ignored.

For the poor and downtrodden who are struggling with the burdens of life, a Christmas gift is a wonderful gesture, particularly for the children. More important to them, though, are things that most of us take for granted — paying the rent and utilities, owning a car, buying groceries, having adequate clothing, staying warm.

Mary and Joseph knew what it was like to be transient and poor. When they searched for a place where Our Lady could give birth to the Child Jesus, they ended up in a smelly, dirty barn.

Manger scenes help create an image in our minds of the Holy Family’s surroundings in Bethlehem. However, creches are a sanitized version of what really took place on the day that changed the world more than 2,000 years ago.

Most barns or stables where animals are kept reek of manure and are filled with dust and flies. They’re nothing like the sterilized, sanitized hospital delivery rooms where most babies today see the light of day for the first time.

Keep this image in mind — that the infant Jesus was laid in a livestock feeding trough after His entrance into the world — to provide a perspective on the type of humility that humanity needs to one day, God willing, reach heaven.

Servant of God Father John Hardon, S.J., often said that no one can be humble without being humiliated. One would think that Mary and Joseph might have felt humiliated when they were turned away from the inn at their hour of need, but they realized that they were carrying out God’s plan in His kingdom on earth.

Humble service might not bring earthly recognition or rewards, but God sees everything, and He must be pleased when He sees volunteers serving the needy.

“...And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’” (Matthew 25:40)

The members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul conference at Cornings St. Bernard Church, which was closed by the diocese in October, serve as a shining example of individuals humbly doing their part to serve the less fortunate.

Their weekly food distribution impacts countless lives in Perry County, where poverty is evident and the people are struggling to find gainful employment.

Most of the St. Vincent de Paul conference members in Cornings are retired and could be home taking it easy. They could have suspended their outreach when the church was closed as part of the Real Presence Real Future initiative.

Instead, they use their time once a week to prepare and bag groceries and carry them to the vehicles of appreciative recipients waiting in a pickup line while kindly interacting with the people as if they see the face of Christ in everyone.

This faithful group, like countless others throughout the diocese, carries out God’s work in relative obscurity.

No monetary rewards. No commendations. No pats on the back. Just the satisfaction of trying to practice the corporal works of mercy.

Not everyone is physically capable or has the financial blessings to perform public acts of generosity. Powerful graces also flow from the spiritual works of mercy, especially praying for the poor, the incarcerated, the sick and the dying.

If you’re a shut-in or dealing with an ailment that keeps you at home, take consolation in knowing your prayers and fasting will bring unimaginable benefits to many souls. The Lord hears your prayers.
**Plenary indulgence opportunities available**

*By Hannah Heil  
Catholic Times Reporter*

Two opportunities to receive a plenary indulgence, which removes the temporal punishment due for sin, will be offered for the faithful beginning in December.

From Dec. 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, through Feb. 2, the feast of the Presentation in the Temple of Our Lord Jesus Christ, a plenary indulgence can be obtained by visiting a church run by the Franciscan order and praying in front of the church’s Nativity scene.

In the Diocese of Columbus, Columbusthe King and St. Thomas the Apostle churches are run by the Capuchin Franciscan Friars. The faithful can receive the plenary indulgence by praying in front of the Nativity scene at either church.

The usual conditions to receive an indulgence also must be met: detachment from all sin, including venial sin (sins pertaining to a less serious matter); sacramental confession and Holy Communion within a reasonable time period; and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father.

The plenary indulgence for praying in front of a Nativity scene at a Franciscan-run church was granted by Pope Francis to commemorate the 800th anniversary of Christmas in Greccio, Italy. St. Francis of Assisi created the first live Nativity scene in Greccio in 1223.

People who are ill or unable to participate physically can receive the plenary indulgence by offering their sufferings to the Lord or through practices of piety, such as prayers and hymns.

A plenary indulgence can also be obtained during the Jubilee Year lasting December 2023–June 2025. The Jubilee commemorates the 530th anniversary of the apparitions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, which took place in Paray-le-Monial, France.

During the Jubilee Year, which begins Dec. 27, the anniversary of the first apparition, and concludes June 27, 2025, the date of the solemnity of the feast of the Sacred Heart, an indulgence can be obtained by making a pilgrimage to any church where the Jubilee Door is opened, known as the City of the Eucharist.

Bishop Earl Ferreira will lead a diocesan pilgrimage to France, including a visit to Paray-le-Monial, from May 31 to June 9, 2024 for the Jubilee.

For people who cannot make the diocesan pilgrimage, a plenary indulgence can be obtained locally.

Four sites in the diocese will be places of pilgrimage during the Sacred Heart Jubilee year: Cardington Sacred Hearts Church, Columbus Sacred Heart Church, Coshocton Sacred Heart Church and New Philadelphia Sacred Heart Church.

The faithful can receive the plenary indulgence during the Jubilee Year after meeting the following conditions: visiting one of the local pilgrimage sites; assisting at Mass; reciting prayers, such as the Litany of the Sacred Heart; making a Holy Hour of reparation; and praying for the intentions of the Holy Father.

To receive the plenary indulgence, the usual conditions – detachment from sin, sacramental confession and Holy Communion within a reasonable time period and prayer for the Holy Father’s intentions – also must be met.

An indulgence is a grace granted by the Catholic Church through the merits of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints.

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**High-end or homemade, Nativity set recalls God’s love for us**

*By Sharon Mech*

Years ago, when I worked in an office, I had a tiny glass Nativity set that I kept in a desk drawer. I’d set my Wise Men “on the road” after Thanksgiving. Mary, Joseph, the animals and the molded glass baby-in-the-manger came out in late December.

I’m hardly alone. Nativity sets, from the simplest printed silhouette to the most expensive, jewel-encrusted porcelain, start appearing in stores by September every year. Nativity sets are a multimillion-dollar business.

But how and when did they start and why? The original Nativity scene was created by St. Francis of Assisi exactly 800 years ago in the Italian mountain village of Greccio.

St. Bonaventure’s “Life of St. Francis” tells us: “It happened in the third year before his death, that God moved his heart towards the barnyard of the peasants of Greccio in the guise of familiar things.

A certain valiant and veracious soldier, Master John of Grecio, who, for the love of Christ, had left the warfare of this world, and become a dear friend of this holy man, affirmed that he beheld an Infant so marvelous in his nature, that it might be called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.”

The man of God (St. Francis) stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis, the Levite of Christ. Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.

“Then he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sorrowful psalms of praise.”

“...Francis restored ‘flesh and blood’ to the mysteries of Christianity, which were often ‘disincarnate’ and reduced to concepts in syllogisms in theological schools and books.”

Francis was heartbroken at the poverty of the newborn Savior and his parents, who were forced to travel, to stay in a cave that housed animals and later to run for their lives.

My little glass figurines and all those beautiful, expensive, collectible Nativity sets are just fancy dust collectors unless they call us to remember – as St. Francis did, 800 years ago - that God loves us so much that He sent His beloved Son to be cold, hungry and poor with us, and that we need to act with great love in response.

Sharon Mech, OSF, is a member of St. Pio of Pietrelcina Franciscan Fraternity in Columbus.

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**GIFT, continued from Page 7**

obliged, even though she was frustrated. Eventually, something shifted. Her depression lifted, and, in its place, a sense of self emerged.

This will be our first Christmas without my paternal grandma, who showered us with loving attention. She and my grandpa bought a modest cabin on a little lake up north where we all squeezed in countless hours and memories.

The porch was the gathering place where Grandma was always perched, catching all the comings and goings, the fishing reports, the sunscreen applications. We played 500 at the long dining room table where Grandma placed the centerpiece: a chianti straw bottle holding a taper candle. She lit it every day, letting the wax from candle after candle drip down the straw, lumpy strands of mauve and violet, sage and cream.

It was a visual of our time together, hour after hour, a work of art that could not be rushed. Our layered family, ever expanding yet bound together. The sum, greater than the parts.

It will not make Oprah’s Favorite Things list. But it was, indeed, “life-changing,” “the best of the best.” Time together – the ultimate Christmas gift.

Christina Cappecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn.
Bishop Earl Fernandes took part in the annual Thanksgiving Day community dinner at Columbus St. Aloysius Church on Thursday, Nov. 23. The bishop served food and chatted with people enjoying the special holiday meal that is open to anyone as part of the community’s outreach to the poor. Joining them this year were members of the Ghanaian Catholic community, which now celebrates Masses in its native language at St. Aloysius. Photos courtesy Sandy Bonneville and Ghanaian Catholic Community

From all of us at THE CATHOLIC TIMES!

Doug, Emma, Hannah, and all of our contributors

Nativity of the Lord
DECEMBER 25

Check individual parishes for schedule of Holy Day Mass times
By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

For signs of physical dehydration, a person might check a medical book. For symptoms of spiritual dehydration, however, where should one look?

Lisa Brenninkmeyer says the symptoms are listed in the Book of Isaiah.

Brenninkmeyer, the founder and CEO of Walking with Purpose, a Catholic woman’s Bible study ministry, spoke about spiritual dehydration to more than 600 women gathered Dec. 6 at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church.

Walking with Purpose was founded in 2008 and is present at nearly 600 parishes across the United States, Canada and Europe, including at 19 parishes in the Diocese of Columbus. More than 70,000 women have participated in the ministry, in which women hold each other accountable and lift up one another.

“This gathering is off-the-charts powerful,” Father Jonathan Wilson, pastor of St. Paul, said in his opening remarks about Walking with Purpose.

In her talk, “Hope for Right Now,” Brenninkmeyer shared that women today are under attack, and they need to take back ground from the enemy.

Using the Book of Isaiah, Brenninkmeyer said there is a “spiritual dehydration of the heart.” Unlike spiritual dryness, which might entail a lack of enthusiasm or zeal for prayer or the sacraments, there are symptoms specific to spiritual dehydration.

In Isaiah 58:9, Brenninkmeyer said, symptoms include: “the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil”; compassion fatigue; and emotional overheating, such as anger.

Each symptom corresponds to a symptom of bodily dehydration: dry mouth or stale breath, a symptom of dehydration, is the counterpart of speaking evil. Compassion fatigue, when “we know we’re supposed to be loving but feel we have nothing to give,” is similar to bodily fatigue, another symptom of dehydration.

When the body is dehydrated, it overheats, just as emotional overheating is a symptom of spiritual dehydration, Brenninkmeyer said.

In Isaiah 58:11, the prophet Isaiah writes that the Lord promises to satisfy a person’s needs in parched places, and they will be like a watered garden, a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Brenninkmeyer said it is important that a woman is a well-watered garden, a source of comfort and strength, because her family needs that. She said the Book of Isaiah shows three stages: rugged ruins, response and a rewarding restoration.

In attending to and healing the hearts of others, she said, “our own hearts will be restored.”

She said that every prayer and cry is heard by the Father. In the “Catechism” states that the Father accepts every cry and answers them by raising His Son. Prayer is brought to completion in salvation.

Brenninkmeyer said that the life, death and resurrection of Jesus make anything and everything possible.

Even in anger or heartache, she said, “God calls us to be more than something we feel capable of.” He helps the brokenhearted to heal others’ hearts because “God wants to do the work in and through us.”

She recalled the words of St. Therese of Lisieux, who is the patron of Walking with Purpose. The 19th-century French saint wrote, “The elevator which must raise me to the heavens is Your arms, O Jesus! For that I do not need to grow; on the contrary, I must necessarily remain small, become smaller.”

Brenninkmeyer acknowledged that people are little, weak and fail often.

“If the garden of our lives is in ruin, we turn to the gardener,” she said.

Brenninkmeyer reminded women not to come to God thinking they can earn His favor, mercy or their identity as a

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Hospitals share Christmas joy with patients

By Tim Puet
For The Catholic Times

Christmas and the period surrounding it is always a difficult time to be in a hospital for patients who are away from family and friends. Hospital staff members recognize this and make special efforts to bring cheer to those patients.

“Mount Carmel has multiple locations providing primary, urgent or emergency care in the Columbus area, and you’ll find them all showing the holiday spirit with trees, tinsel and other decorations,” said Mellissa Gallagher, communications manager for the Mount Carmel Health System.

“All the locations have ‘ugly holiday sweater’ days for employees, and our hospitals serve special meals to patients for Christmas and New Year’s days and have free meals for employees choosing to work on those days. Infants born in the hospitals during the holiday season are given a special outer garment reading ‘Best Gift Ever.’

“Several sites have holiday parties at which employees donate items for those in need. One good example is an event at our Franklinton Healthy Living Center on Columbus’ west side at the site of the original Mount Carmel Hospital.

“Employees there, participants in our pre-medicine program and Mount Carmel College of Nursing students have a celebration at which all bring pairs of gloves for our street medicine program which serves the homeless.

“They also have a Giving Tree from which they select the name of a child from within the Mount Carmel staff community for whom they will purchase a gift, and they sign Christmas cards for the people the street medicine team serves.”

“The gloves are part of gift bags that are presented to residents of homeless encampments and people living on the streets to those who have recently found housing and are adjusting to their new situation. The bags include gloves, socks, toiletries, coffee mugs, cocoa packets, dish towels and other useful items, said Kathleen Buchen-Barbara, a nurse for 50 years, about 20 of them with the street medicine program.

“Whenever possible, we also try to include something with personal meaning to the recipient,” she said. “I remember one man who had found housing and was a big Ohio State fan and was thrilled to receive a Buckeye shirt last year.

“I visited about 40 people over the holidays in 2022 and expect to do the same this year. We go in pairs to talk with people, sing carols with them, see how they’re doing, lay hands on them, tell them what assistance is available to them, especially any new resources, and just see how well-connected they are.

“This is important not just to the homeless, but to many who have found housing but can’t yet afford a phone and don’t realize everything that’s out there for them. One year, we even had Christmas trees donated to us and were able to delight some people with their very own tree.

“I absolutely love what I do, especially at this time of year when I’m able to touch people, share their wisdom, sadness and sorrows and embrace them with love,” Buchen-Barbara said.

“I also attend the annual Christmas memorial service at Trinity Episcopal Church downtown for the homeless who have died in the past year. We read their names and say prayers, and everyone is given a lit candle. It offers a mixture of both sadness for their loss and hope that as children of God, they have gone on to something better.”

“Sunlight, evergreens, lights and a Christmas sweater and came to see a patient,” she said. “I remember one case where I wore the sweater. The patient didn’t seem to contrast my outfit must have made in the dark.

“Many have had visitors once a week, and some have reported seeing their visitors twice a week, which is wonderful. I’ve found that for people of faith, it’s always good for friends and family to reach out to those in hospitals and stay connected and for hospital chaplains to provide their services, both at these times and throughout the year.”

“I’ve found that for people of faith, it’s especially crushing to not have visitors around the holidays,” said Barb Martin of Reynoldsburg St. Pius X Church, an extraordinary minister of the Eucharist who has distributed communion once a week to Mount Carmel East Hospital patients since 2010.

“There are a lot of good, faithful hospitalized Catholics who want communion especially on Sundays and holy days, and it’s been harder to get people to distribute the Eucharist since the start of the COVID epidemic.

“I’ve found that people of faith generally deal with illnesses much better than others do. They seem to be more grateful for being alive, and their faith helps them pull through. This is true whether they’re churchgoers or not. They find comfort in prayer and are just happy to have someone who will come to pray with them.”

“At Christmas, in addition to the gift of time that we give of ourselves to others is the greatest of all gifts — the gift of the Eucharist,” Father Lumpe said. “On Christmas Day, or on a Sunday, if you are an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion and have the permission of your pastor, consider bringing the Eucharist to a family member or loved one who is hospitalized, in a nursing or care facility or who is homebound.

“Jesus’ great gift of the Eucharist is the best gift that we can bring to someone who cannot make it to church. It keeps them connected to the mystical body of Christ through this greatest of all sacraments.”

Father Lumpe cautions that anyone who provides the Eucharist to someone in a medical or care situation should first make certain that the patient or resident is not under an “NPO” restriction. NPO means “nothing by mouth,” from the Latin nil per os. The acronym is medical shorthand indicating a person may not eat or drink anything for a period of time because of swallowing difficulties or other reasons.

WOMEN, continued from Page 10
daughter of God. The Father loves His children as they are and desires to work through them to His purpose. She told the women that God’s answer to their grief, heartache and disappointments is Himself, His presence. After a person recognizes that God is the answer, they are called to a complete surrender of self to Him. “He comes as the breaker of chains.” Bremninkmeyer said.

She recalled the words in Isaiah 58:9-10 about God’s promise: “If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness.”

In the toughest, darkest moments, Bremninkmeyer reminded women that God’s light will rise in the darkness. His promises to them will be fulfilled. His glory will come.
We Are Friends ministry of Logan St. John Church has received a $5,000 grant from The Catholic Foundation to cover short-term needs.

We Are Friends was founded three years ago by Deacon Don Robers of the parish and several community representatives, including Hocking County Municipal and Common Pleas Court judges, to help the area’s needy, especially those recovering from drug addiction.

The foundation’s grant will enable the organization to continue providing furniture, bedding and household items and helping people with groceries and clothing, funeral expenses and rent and utility payments.

Deacon Robers said continued recent increases in the cost of nearly everything have resulted in more requests for assistance. More than 200 individuals and families have been helped by We Are Friends in 2023.

The organization receives new bedframes and mattresses at a discount but needs other bedroom furniture and bedding: small couches, small chairs or small recliners and end tables and lamps for living areas; bath towels, washcloths and personal hygiene items; small microwaves, small kitchen tables and chairs, dishes, silverware, dishwashing items and kitchen utensils.

The ministry does not accept knick-knacks, picture frames, clothes, yard sale items or heavy furniture.

Besides the recent grant, We Are Friends has set up a donor-advised fund for long-term financing with the foundation that has increased from a $5,000 starting amount to about $35,000 through support from generous donors.

“This fund goes on forever,” Deacon Robers said. “By donating to this fund, your gift will keep on giving.”

To help We Are Friends with its immediate needs, send a check payable to We Are Friends to the organization in care of St. John Catholic Church, 351 N. Market St., Logan, Ohio 43138.

To donate to the ministry’s Catholic Foundation fund, write a check to The Catholic Foundation, We Are Friends (noting Fund ID #325KJ in the memo section) and mail it to The Catholic Foundation, 257 E. Broad St., Columbus, Ohio 43215.

To give online, go to www.catholic-foundation.org and find the Giving tab, select Existing Funds from the menu, type “We Are Friends” in the search box and click the link to “We Are Friends Donor Advised Fund” to complete your donation.

Additional information about the fund is available from the foundation’s Dan Kurth at (614) 443-8893. All donations are tax-deductible.

Logan church ministry receives foundation grant

By Tim Puet

For The Catholic Times

We are Friends is a ministry of Logan St. John Church.
Shortly before 10 on a chilly November morning, a line of cars has formed on the driveway in front of the old school next to Corning St. Bernard Church, extending onto Chestnut Street and snaking down a hill and around a corner onto Adams Street.

The occupants of those vehicles have come to pick up groceries mostly but also some household goods, diapers and miscellaneous items that will get them through another week.

In southeast Ohio, many individuals and families struggle to make ends meet in an economically depressed area of the state. The goods they receive in shopping bags from the Perry County Catholic Consortium’s Society of St. Vincent de Paul conference might not seem like much, but they are a godsend to the patrons.

The nine active members and nine associates who volunteer with the St. Vincent de Paul Society haven’t let the closing of the historic church stop them from fulfilling their missionary outreach to the poor.

“What amazes me with the size of this conference is what gets accomplished,” said Cathie McClary, the conference’s president, “with the client aid and being able to help with needs and the pantry and the clothing we have. We’re not a huge group, but we have a great group of volunteers.”

In October, Corning St. Bernard in the southern Perry County town of about 500 was closed as part of the Real Presence Real Future initiative. On Oct. 14, Bishop Earl Fernandes celebrated a final Mass in the church that had served the community for more than 100 years.

St. Bernard was part of the Perry County Catholic Consortium with New Lexington St. Rose of Lima Church, Junction City St. Patrick Church and Crooksville Church of the Atonement, all served by one priest, Father TJ Lehig.

The Church of the Atonement also was closed in October, leaving St. Rose and St. Patrick as well as two churches in Somerset as the remaining active parishes in the county.

There’s a rich Catholic history in Perry County that’s still evident today. The first Mass in Ohio was celebrated near Somerset in 1808 by Bishop Edward Fenwick. Somerset St. Joseph Church became the first Catholic church to be built in Ohio in 1818. That parish still exists today and is staffed by Dominican priests, who have maintained a presence there for 200 years.

In the Corning area, a Catholic community emerged in the 1830s. Into the late 1800s and the early 1900s, Corning not only developed a strong Catholic presence, but its population (peaking at 1,628 according to the 1920 U.S. Census) and reputation also grew with the arrival of the railroad and coal mining.

Corning became notorious as a violent mining town that witnessed several strikes by workers and a battle with bloodshed between white and African-American miners that needed intervention from the Ohio National Guard.

The parish grew enough to build a new church, rectory and convent in the early 1900s. In the 1940s, St. Bernard swelled to 965 parishioners and 200 children in the school, but coal mines began to suspend operations, and the convent and school were closed in 1969-70.

The mining industry has long since dried up in the state, and jobs with good wages are hard to come by nowadays. The poverty rate in Perry County is estimated at 20%, similar to most of the counties in southern Ohio.

With inflation driving up prices, the economic impact is more deeply felt in places such as Corning. That’s evident in the number of people served by the local St. Vincent de Paul Society.

The number of weekly visitors has
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columbuscatholicwomen.com
More priests, nuns from orders serving diocese

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

The Diocese of Columbus welcomed members of four religious congregations in 2023.

The new congregations include two orders of priests: the Capuchin Franciscan Friars and the Pallottine Fathers from India.

The Pallottine Fathers are from the Province of Our Lady of Good Health in Salem, Tamil Nadu, India. The order, known formally as the Society of the Catholic Apostolate (SAC), was founded by St. Vincent Pallotti and is based in Rome.

The Indian Pallottine Fathers are serving at Columbus Holy Spirit Church. They also served at Columbus St. Philip the Apostle Church, which closed in November.

Father Sesu Maria Crescensis Panguraj, SAC is serving as the chaplain of Columbus St. Francis de Sales High School.

There are also Pallottine Fathers from Poland serving in the diocese. The Polish Pallottine Fathers first came to the diocese in 2020.

The Capuchin Franciscan Friars returned to the diocese in July. The order previously served in the diocese decades ago in Tuscarawas County and at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church.

The Capuchins are now serving at Columbus Christ the King and St. Thomas the Apostle churches.

Father Stephen Fernandes, OFM, Cap. (Order of Friars Minor, Capuchin) serves as the pastor. Fathers Rafael Anguiano, OFM, Cap. and Anthony Baetzold, CFR (Franciscan Friars of the Renewal) serve as parochial vicars.

Father Anthony Essien, OFM, Cap. is the chaplain at Columbus Bishop Hartley High School, and Brother Michael Herlihey, OFM, Cap., who is a deacon and is anticipating ordination to the priesthood next year, serves as the parish youth evangelization director.

The friars belong to the Province of St. Augustine, which is based in Pittsburgh.

The Order of Friars Minor, Capuchin was founded in Italy in 1536. The order has expanded throughout the world and has provinces on six continents.

Father Fernandes said the friars came to the Diocese of Columbus at the invitation of Bishop Earl Fernandes to serve the two east side parishes, which have a growing Hispanic population. About 65% of parishioners at Christ the King are Hispanic, he said.

In the Province of St. Augustine alone, Brother Herlihey said, men who are in formation to become friars have many different cultural backgrounds. With such a diverse population, he said, the friars have a strong understanding of the Universal Church and how to serve interculturally.

“When you live with people from different cultures, then you can serve people from different cultures just because your worldview starts to expand, which is helpful in the Church in the United States and then the Church here in Columbus,” Brother Herlihey said.

“I understand, as the bishop here has described it, our diocese here is growing, and it’s growing largely because of the immigrant population. So, I think that one large reason that Bishop (Robert) Brennan and now Bishop Fernandes were wanting us to come is because this is a strength of our province.”

While walking with the Hispanic community they serve, Father Fernandes said, it will be important for the friars to learn to speak the language – Spanish – and understand their culture.

Father Baetzold, who has served Hispanic communities for years, said that children of immigrants often feel “stuck between two worlds.”

Father Baetzold is eager to minister to children of immigrants who are growing up in the United States but are born of a different culture. He believes the Franciscans are well equipped to serve the immigrant population at the parish, especially the children.

“The great opportunity that we have, and then – the Capuchins – it’s very international, so we understand culture really well, and living together, you have to get to know other cultures and take them to heart,” Father Baetzold said.

“And so, how is it that we can help them assimilate into America while keeping their faith and the best parts of their culture? So, that’s a great opportunity that we have in the diocese, not just to create another Mexico at Christ the King, but especially for the kids: How do we pass on something for them that will assimilate?”

Following Jesus’ example in the Incarnation, when Christ became man and dwelt among His people, the Capuchins seek to be part of the lives of the people they serve. That aspect of Capuchin spirituality, Brother Herlihey said, is something people at his former parishes recognized.

“They often will tell us that they feel like we understand family, which makes sense; we’re a community, down to earth, roots on the ground,” he said.

“And then, the incarnational quality, that really goes back to Francis being so fascinated by the Crèche and the cross, having his conversion through the San Damiano cross, being the one to popularize the Nativity scene, this fascination and just real draw to God becoming man, and then, God really entering into the mess – the mess of a broken world, of a sinful world, of a world that is not perfect.”

Brother Herlihey said he believes the friars at Christ the King and St. Thomas the Apostle will “pick up the Capuchin spirituality.” Having served at various parishes, he said parishioners often notice the “incarnational quality” of the Capuchin order.

“In my experience with the Capuchins, I think we’ve emulated that we’re not afraid to go into the mess, sometimes into the chaos and into the difficult situations,” he said. “In my experience, I think we tend to do a lot of spending time with the people, even beyond the parish, in their homes, in their communities, in their gatherings.”

St. Francis of Assisi emphasized that his followers, the Franciscans, should be servants, Father Fernandes said.

“Jesus calls us in Scripture,” Father Fernandes said. “He said, ‘I didn’t come to be served but to serve.’ So, taking that Scripture passage, Francis emphasized that, for his followers, his brothers, we

See ORDERS, Page 17
ODU appoints interim president

Dr. Michael Grandillo, retired president of Madonna University in Livonia, Michigan, has been appointed interim president of Ohio Dominican University by ODU’s board of trustees. He became president-designate on Wednesday, Dec. 6, five days after the appointment was made, and will assume the presidency on Saturday, Dec. 16.

He succeeds Connie Gallaher, who was appointed as ODU president in 2021. “Due to some family health issues and challenges that have arisen recently, Connie actually announced her retirement to the campus community a little less than a month ago” ODU spokesman Tom Brockman said. “The process of the board identifying an interim president has been taking place of the course of a number of weeks.”

Grandillo brings more than 43 years of higher education experience to ODU, including seven years as president at Madonna from 2015 until his retirement in 2022. He has been living since then in Tiffin, where he led a consulting firm specializing in higher education, government and public policy.

At Madonna, he was in charge of a financial and academic transformation that erased a multimillion-dollar operations deficit while transforming the university from a largely commuter to a residential campus, with three new residence halls built and a former high school campus transformed into an arts, academic and athletic center during that time. While he was its president, Madonna’s endowment increased 20 percent, surpassing $54 million.

Grandillo also has served as president of Lakeland College in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He spent 17 years as vice president for development and public affairs at Tiffin University and nine years as director of development at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, where he has been a member of St. Joseph Catholic Church for 42 years and held a number of volunteer leadership positions. He also was a City Council member in Tiffin for four terms and was consultant for ODU’s last presidential search.

He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Ohio Northern University, a Master of Science degree in education from the University of Dayton and his doctorate of philosophy in higher education and Italian Renaissance history from the University of Toledo. He has published many articles in academic journals on subjects including the Renaissance, the American Presidency, student success, and how colleges serve veterans.

He and his wife, Nancy, have been married for 39 years and have a son, a daughter and two grandchildren.

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.”

Luke 2:14

www.catholiccemeteriesofcolumbus.org
needy, continued from Page 13

climbed from 50-60 a year or so ago to 80 or more today. Before Thanksgiving, more than 90 individuals came to St. Bernard from various parts of Perry County for assistance.

“Think it’s just the poverty level in Perry County,” St. Vincent de Paul member Mary Dodd said.

“Both prices are just outrageous,” added McCray, a St. Patrick parishioner.

“SNAP (the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) only goes so far, and then they can cut those benefits.”

Donations enable the center to continue to provide for the needs of the less fortunate. Support for the center has come from government grants, the Hunger Relief Fund from the Joe Burrow Foundation, private donations, food banks, the Bottoms Up Diaper Bank, individuals and several companies, including Dollar General.

Most of the food and meat that’s distributed comes from the Southeast Ohio Foodbank, which serves Perry, Athens and Hocking counties.

What’s unique about the St. Vincent de Paul center in Corning is that it’s open weekly. Other food banks generally are open only biweekly or once a month.

“2 At least here they can come every week,” said Dodd, a St. Rose parishioner.

And the operation runs smoothly. The flow of traffic is relatively steady during the three hours the center is open on Tuesdays as each vehicle’s driver patiently waits in line for his or her turn.

As cars pull up, the associates and volunteers are waiting with bags containing an assortment of goods. Some clients stay in their cars as the bags are loaded; others get out of their vehicles to choose miscellaneous offerings from boxes.

Many of the faces are familiar. Friendly hugs and greetings are often exchanged between the members and appreciative clients.

Inside the former school, the members and associates bag and organize the products for distribution and maintain the pantry’s inventory.

On the group’s wish list is a walk-in freezer in which meats and frozen items could be stored. A grant will cover part of the cost, but more funds are needed to purchase and install a unit.

In addition to the weekly food distribution, the group provides utility and rental assistance and help with prescriptions and gasoline to about 20 people per month.

Across the driveway in the former convent next to the church, the group operates a free store that’s neatly arranged, utilizing upstairs and downstairs rooms for gently used men’s, women’s, children’s and teen clothing, shoes, some household and personal items, and even some Christmas selections.

Member Ruth Ann Rose manages the clothing and household goods store, and Dixie Kaido volunteers at the store and helps shoppers.

Merchandise donations are accepted for the store, and patrons can make a freewill offering based on their ability to contribute.

Despite the hardships in the area and the uncertain future of St. Bernard Church, the group remains committed to its charitable efforts and the preservation of the parishes rich history in Perry County and the Corning community.

The church remains available for wedding, funerals, baptisms and special Masses. Father Pete Gideon, who retired in July as pastor at Lancaster St. Mark Church, moved into the St. Bernard rectory and had planned to offer occasional Masses there, but he was asked in November to become the administrator at the Scioto Catholic Consortium in the Portsmouth area until a replacement pastor is named.

Meanwhile, the St. Vincent de Paul conference will serve as the face of the Church and of Christ to the hungry who show up every week needing sustenance in their time of need.

“We’re blessed we can do it,” McClary said. “It’s truly our gift.”

Financial gifts may be made for the group’s work by sending a check to: Society of St. Vincent de Paul, P.O. Box 416, 425 Adams St., Corning, OH 43730-0416.

PONTIFICAL COLLEGE JOSEPHINUM | Assistant Professor of Literature (rank negotiable)

The Pontifical College Josephinum is seeking to hire a full-time Assistant Professor of Literature in the College of Liberal Arts, beginning in fall 2024. An ideal candidate will possess a completed doctorate (PhD) in literature or an associated area and exhibit a strong commitment to Catholic higher education. The candidate must be able to teach broad literature survey courses, writing and composition, and offer electives at the 300 to 400 course code level. The expected teaching load will be six courses annually. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to participate in the overall formation program through membership on various committees according to his/her interests and the needs of the seminary.

Applicants may respond via email by March 1, 2024, with a curriculum vitae listing three references from within their field. Recommendation may be obtained from current, undergraduate transcripts, student and peer evaluations of two classes, and a letter of interest to Cathi Ebling, Administrative Assistant to the Academic Dean, at cebling@pcj.edu.
The Weekday Bible Readings

**SUNDAY**
10:30 a.m. Mass from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on St. Gabriel Radio (AM 820), Columbus, and at www.stgabrielradio.com.

**MONDAY**
Psalm 96:1-2, 12-13, 15-16
Titus 1:21

**TUESDAY**
Psalm 25:4-5ab, 8-9, 10, 14
Psalm 96:7-8a, 8b, 9-10

**WEDNESDAY**
Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6
Luke 1:26-39

**THURSDAY**
Psalm 25:1-2, 3-4, 5-6a
Psalm 97:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13

**FRIDAY**
Psalm 97:5-6, 11-12
Psalm 100:1-2, 3-4

**SATURDAY**
Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12
Psalm 100:1-2, 3-4

The Weekday Bible Readings

**SUNDAY, December 17, 2023**

**12/17/12/23**

**MONDAY**
Jeremiah 23:5-8
Psalm 71:1-3, 4-5, 27, 29
Matthew 1:18-25

**TUESDAY**
Judges 13:2-7, 24a
Psalm 51:3-4a, 5ab, 16-17
Luke 1:15-25

**WEDNESDAY**
Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6
Luke 1:26-39

**THURSDAY**
Songs 2:6-14 or
Zephaniah 3:14-18
Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21
Matthew 1:39-45

**FRIDAY**
Samuel 1:24-28
Psalm 1:25-6, 7ab, c
Luke 1:46-56

**SATURDAY**
Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
Psalm 25:4-5ab, 9:10, 14

CATHOLIC TIMES

December 17, 2023

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Father Timothy Hayes**
Rev. Timothy M. Hayes is the pastor of Grandville St. Edward the Confessor Church.

*His coming gives us hope*

_In Mary, who is a daughter in David’s line betrothed to a husband in David’s House of David, and God dwells in them and we are members of the House of David, and God dwells in us._

Mary, who is a daughter in David’s line, was betrothed to Joseph, a Jewish carpenter. When Joseph learned of her pregnancy, he was about to divorce her quietly, according to the Mosaic Law. But when Mary appeared to him, he was reassured. She had something important to tell him, something good. Joseph was about to become a father, as Mary had been chosen as the mother of all the faithful. God had chosen them, through Mary, to carry the good news of His coming to the world.

Mary’s visit to Elizabeth must have been a time of great excitement and anticipation. Her cousin would be the mother of a child who would be the Promised One, the Messiah. For Mary, this was a time of joy and hope. She knew that she was carrying the Son of God, the Savior of the world. She welcomed this responsibility and was willing to do whatever God asked of her.

Mary’s words to Elizabeth, “My soul magnifies the Lord,” express her deep love and devotion for God. She knew that God was working great things in her life. She was willing to serve Him and to do whatever He called her to do. Mary’s response to God’s call is an inspiration to us all.

As we close Advent and move into the Christmas celebrations, may each of us cry out with Mary, “Forever I will sing praise to the Lord. May your kindness endure forever, and your love be yours forever. May your kindness endure forever, and your love be yours forever. May your kindness endure forever, and your love be yours forever.”

Mary’s response to God’s call is a challenge to us all. We are called to be like Mary, to be willing to do whatever God asks of us. We are called to be like Mary, to be willing to serve Him and to do whatever He calls us to do. We are called to be like Mary, to be willing to give our lives to Him, to be willing to be instruments of His grace.

**God’s gift to us is unique to our needs, desires**

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The Christmas Mass at Dawn Year B

‘The Lord is born for us'; salvation is at hand

Isaiah 62:11-12
Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:15-20

The Christmas Liturgy offers four distinct Masses: The Vigil Mass, Mass During the Night (traditionally called “Midnight Mass”), Mass at Dawn and Mass During the Day.

The readings assigned to each of these express a movement from the promise of Jesus’ ancestry, through the events of Christmas night and daybreak, to the deep meaning of the Incarnation of the Word made flesh. Most parishes opt to use the readings of the Mass During the Night for most of the Christmas Masses. Often there are several Vigils and only one Mass on Christmas Day.

The readings of the Mass at Dawn have a wonderful message that is worth our reflection. We join the shepherds as they journey to Bethlehem to see what the angels had proclaimed. They seek the sign foretold and share the news they heard from the angels: “So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child.”

What is told to Mary and Joseph then becomes something that Mary ponders in her heart: “Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” The message becomes something that Mary ponders in her heart. The Incarnation and the Redemption are given to us in the Child born in Bethlehem. Although we often see Christmas as a feast for children, in truth, we are called to acknowledge that it holds a deep meaning for us at every age. “A light will shine on us this day: the Lord is born for us.”

We may see what occurs through the eyes of little ones, but when we ponder in our hearts what is being offered, something more happens in the depths of our spirit.

Even in a culture that sets aside religious faith and denies the existence of a benevolent God, this season is experienced as a time for human beings to acknowledge our solidarity with one another.

Men and women of every background can be caught up in the spirit of giving and of concern for those who are less fortunate. There is a light that shines on in the darkness, a truth that is received into hearts that we might not understand. All are called to ponder the reason for the season.

Christmas Day begins an Octave, observed on the Solemnity of Mary, the mother of God, eight days of reflection and prayer concerning the Mystery of the Incarnation. This continues with the “12 Days” of Christmas that carry us to Epiphany, traditionally Jan. 6, but observed on the Sunday after the Solemnity of Mary.

The formal end to the Christmas season is the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, this year on a Monday. For those who are strong, the spirit of Christmas may be kept along with many religious orders until Feb. 2, the Feast of the Presentation. Let us who do acknowledge the coming of Christ in the flesh live this season fully.
Sister Lorraine Marie Torres, OP

Funeral Mass for Sister Lorraine Marie Torres, OP, 90, who died Monday, Nov. 20, at the Mohun Health Care Center, was celebrated Wednesday, Nov. 29 at the Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Burial will be at Rosemary Cemetery, Ponchatoula, Louisiana.

She was born on Jan. 6, 1933 in Reserve, Louisiana to Edmond and Sylvia (Songy) Torres.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and Spanish in 1960 from St. Mary’s Dominican College in New Orleans and attended Louisiana State University.

She entered the congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary (New Orleans), now the Dominican Sisters of Peace, on July 2, 1949 and made her profession of vows on Jan. 6, 1951, taking the name Sister Mary Mark.

She taught at elementary and high schools in Louisiana and ministered for 24 years in pastoral care for the elderly at Chateau de Notre Dame in New Orleans and for 10 years in the congregation’s infirmary. In 1999, she received the Outstanding Religious Award from Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers, E.J. and Dean; and sisters, Marilyn Maurin and Sandra Duhe. She is survived by a brother, Bryan; and a sister, Barbara Hill.

Sister Jacqueline Baum, OP

Funeral Mass for Sister Jacqueline Baum, OP, 89, who died Monday, Nov. 20, was celebrated Friday, Dec. 1 at the Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Burial was at St. Joseph Cemetery, Columbus.

She was born on Sept. 20, 1934 in Cincinnati to John and Mildred (Tussey) Baum.

She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education in 1961 from St. Mary of the Springs College (now Ohio Dominican University), a Master of Education degree from Hunter College in New York City in 1972 and a certificate of advanced study in administration from Boston College in 1985.

She entered the congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs (now the Dominican Sisters of Peace) on Sept. 8, 1952 and professed her vows on July 9, 1954, taking the name Sister Joris.

In the Diocese of Columbus, she was a teacher at Lancaster St. Mary School (1956-1960) and principal at Columbus Christ the King (1975-1983), Delaware St. Mary (1983-1990), Columbus St. Cecilia (1990-1993) and Columbus St. Timothy (1993-1995) schools. She also was administrator of the Mohun Health Care Center (1996-2002), a member of her congregation’s ministry team, including time as its secretary general (2002-2009), and served at the Dominican Acres environmental ministry (2010-2013 and 2017).

She also taught at schools in Pennsylvania, Texas, New York and the Diocese of Steubenville and was administrator of the congregation’s Oxford, Michigan Motherhouse. She retired from active ministry in 2017.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Ronald, Milton, and Anthony; and sisters Mary Ellen Powell and Kathleen Keely. She is survived by brothers Thomas, John and Dominic.
Watterson finishes as state Division III football runner-up

By Tim Puet
For The Catholic Times

Columbus Bishop Watterson High School football coach Brian Kennedy knew he had the makings of a successful team even before the 2023 season started, and the Eagles wasted no time in backing up his confidence.

They outscored a pair of Division II teams 89-0 in the season’s first two games, followed that with four victories against strong opponents, finished with one loss in the regular season and added four playoff victories before losing to Toledo Central Catholic 27-7 in the Division III state championship game on Dec. 1 in Canton.

“We were 12-2 in 2022, made it to the regional finals and had enough players back who knew the experience of a playoff run that they felt they could take things a few steps more,” he said. “You could tell from the first two games when we beat Columbus Whetstone 47-0 and Dublin Scioto 42-0, two teams that were in the division above us, that the motivation was there.

“We want to schedule challenging opponents from other areas, and we had that in the next three games with Parma Padua Franciscan, a usually strong program; Tiffin Columbian, which made it to its regional finals; and Chardon, a regional finalist. Then came our annual CCL (Central Catholic League) battle with (Columbus Bishop) Hartley. Once we won that and were 6-0, the feeling really began to develop that this team was something special.”

The Eagles closed the regular season with victories over KIPP Columbus, Columbus St. Charles and Harrison (near Cincinnati) before losing to Columbus St. Francis DeSales, then posted playoff wins over Columbus South, Miami Trace, Bloom-Carroll, Bellefontaine and Celina to make it to the championship game, where they faced an opponent that was unbeaten, ranked No.1 in the Associated Press poll all season and had won 30 straight games, including the 2022 state championship in Division II.

“Central is a team with no deficiencies, no weaknesses,” Kennedy said. “I knew we would have to play practically a perfect game to beat them, but we gave them a few opportunities and they took advantage of them.”

Ben Uhlenhake’s 6-yard touchdown run for Watterson in the first quarter opened the scoring, but the Irish responded with touchdowns after an interception, a fumbled punt and a mishandled snap by Watterson to make it 21-7 after three quarters.

Central Catholic was led by Marquan Braszell, a member of the Ohio Prep Sports Writers Association’s All-Ohio Division III first team, who scored twice and had 169 yards rushing on 22 carries. Watterson appeared to get within 21-13 about halfway through the fourth quarter, but A.J. McNinch’s 12-yard pass to Jake Uhlenhake was ruled to have hit the ground.

The Eagles had three first-team All-Ohioans, led by senior linebacker Dominic Purcell, who also was selected as the division’s defensive co-player of the year. McNinch at quarterback and kicker Rudy Kessinger, both seniors, joined him as first-team members, with senior linebacker Braxton Rundio on the second team and junior wide receiver-tight end Jake Uhlenhake on the third team.

Purcell, who also was on last year’s All-Ohio first team, finished with 200 tackles, including a game-record 21 in the championship game, as well as 40 tackles for loss, eight sacks, five interceptions and two fumble recoveries. He

Kennedy is 51-28 at Watterson, which finished as state runner-up for the fourth time. The others were in 2001, 1999 and 1972. The Eagles won their only state title in 2002. Toledo Central Catholic’s state championship was its fifth, with the others in 2022, 2014, 2012 and 2005. The Irish were runners-up in 2015.

“I can’t say enough about Dominic and his work ethic,” Kennedy said. “You could tell that last year when he was elected a captain and was only a junior. You could see him grow into the epitome of leadership and be more comfortable as a leader in and out of the classroom all through this year. He’s the type of person that should do well at the academy in every way.

“And you can see the kind of football player he is from looking at the names of the guys whose record for championship-game tackles he surpassed — players like (former Ohio State and NFL star) Chris Spielman.”

McAninch, the starting quarterback since the middle of the 2022 season, finished with 249 pass completions in 390 attempts for 3,391 yards, with 38 touchdowns and 11 interceptions. Kennedy said McAninch’s best sport is baseball, and he will be attending Marshall on a baseball scholarship, joining two brothers who also played the sport at the Division I level.

“A.J. is another whose leadership you could see blossom as the year went on, more in a quiet way than Dominic. He wasn’t one for spectacular plays but was efficient and effective.”

His leading receivers, both juniors, were Jake Uhlenhake with 68 catches for 1,130 yards and 13 touchdowns and Cal Mangini with 61 receptions for 727 yards and four scores. The team’s leading rusher was Zack Weber, also a junior, with 826 yards and 13 touchdowns on 154 carries.

“Jake missed almost all of last year with an injury and worked really hard to make up for that lost time,” Kenne-

See WATTERSON, Page 23
English as a new language takes flight at Hilltop school

By Dr. Holly Peterson, Ph.D.

Since arriving in the Diocese of Columbus earlier this year, one of the highlights of my time has been visiting all 50 of Our Catholic Schools across 23 counties in Ohio.

During my recent travels, I happened upon a little gem nestled in the Hilltop neighborhood of Columbus: St. Mary Magdalene. The Hilltop community, known for its rich diversity, is reflected in the student body at St. Mary Magdalene, as evidenced by 40% of its students speaking Spanish as their primary language.

That is just the beginning, however. Upon entering the school, it is wholly evident that this is a special place. The halls are filled with statuey and pictures at student height level, while prayers are written in both Spanish and English. The daily morning gathering is bilingual, culminating with a final prayer prayed in both Spanish and English.

With nearly 50% of her fourth-graders speaking Spanish at home, Maschari recalled, “I realized that I didn’t have the tools to teach English language learners well.”

Doing what teachers do, she enrolled in the University of Notre Dame Alliance for Catholic Education’s Hernandez Fellows program to gain not only core instructional practices for her Spanish speakers but strategies for excellent pedagogy to assist all students.

“Because the majority of languages overlap, I’ve learned to use cognates, leveraging the Latin root of Spanish and English to assist with language acquisition,” she shared.

For example, Spanish speaking students use their knowledge of the word observación to understand the meaning of the English word observation. Maschari also learned to use sentence stems and pictures to help her students write.

“Kids are seeing words in their language throughout the classroom and it makes them proud of their culture, while English-speaking students are learning words in a new language,” Maschari said.

The Hernandez Fellows program has opened Maschari’s eyes in other ways, too. Because English is not necessarily the second language for her students, it is a new language, the acronym ENL (English as a New Language) rather than ESL (English as a Second Language) is used.

In addition, meeting and getting to know parents now is a regular part of her curricula.

“Family is very important to my students, and when I’m invited, I’ve found home to be places of pride and faith,” Maschari said.

She has parents who sew, do intricate tile work, garden, and one father plays rock and roll guitar! All these encounters she brings to the classroom, creating greater connection between learning and the home life of her students.

Principals in the Diocese of Columbus look for teachers to reflect the diversity of the student populations of their schools, but there is a national shortage of teachers from diverse backgrounds.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the number of Black, Hispanic and Asian American teachers has increased over the decades, but has not kept pace with the rapid growth in student diversity.

The most recent data from NCES showed 79% of teachers in the United States identify as non-Hispanic White. That said, programs like the Hernandez Fellows program are invaluable in equipping teachers with the tools needed to help ENL students acquire a new language.

“The Hernandez Fellows program has been invaluable for me as a teacher and advocate,” Maschari noted. “There is a fire in me to serve and serve well, and to follow the Church’s call to welcoming all.”

To learn more about the work being done in the Hernandez Fellows program, visit https://ace.nd.edu/programs/enl/enl-hernandez-fellows.

Dr. Holly Peterson, Ph.D., is the assistant superintendent for academics in the diocese’s Office of Catholic Schools.

Merry Christmas

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. – Isaiah 7:14

The Ohio Dominican University family sends you and your loved ones best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a wonderful 2024! May each day of the New Year be filled with abundant blessings, joy and peace.

Central Ohio’s Catholic University • Founded by the Dominican Sisters of Peace.

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Buffet Dinner and Dance $65.00
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9:00 PM to 12:00 AM Rick Brunetto Big Band
Includes Champagne at Midnight
Band Breaks DJ Spanky till 1:00 AM

For Tickets go to: Valleydaleballroom.com

OHIO DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY

Merry Christmas
St. Mary German Village students transform drywall into art

Columbus St. Mary School in the German Village area turned its temporary classrooms in the gym this fall into an ongoing art project.

During a construction project to add teaching and learning spaces that will include the latest technology and systems, students in grades two through five were moved into the gym. Pre-K and preschool classrooms were relocated in an area that will become Heritage Hall, a multipurpose space that will be open to the school and parish.

Before the start of classes in August, a discussion that started with the thought of creating a paper sign to welcome the 443 students in preschool through eighth grade back to school sparked an idea that led to an ongoing project under the direction of art teacher Yvette Hardy.

"In the absence of having a (permanent) classroom, I could paint the (temporary) walls, which would allow students to still participate in art recess without a designated art space," Hardy said.

After receiving the go-ahead from principal Gina Stull, Hardy began preparations for the students to turn the drywall separating the eight temporary classrooms in the gym into works of art.

She reached out to teachers for themes or lessons that they’d like to see on the walls outside their classrooms. Hardy decided on an alphabet theme to match letters with a word or idea that reflects the school’s identity and mission.

"As this project is in motion, there is no definitive master plan for what everything looks like," Hardy said. "Each wall has developed as it is being created. Often, students will share ideas in conversation that will inspire ideas for the wall. "Some ideas developed with experimental processes, and others evolved with respect to color or materials. Every wall carries a layer of meaning as designated by its respective letter."

The goal is to complete all letters of the alphabet before the walls are removed. She said the walls have transformed the gym into a unique and inviting space where students can interact with their art and one another in a different way.

"I hope students take away a new respect and love for art, whether as a participant or observer," Hardy said. "I hope students are inspired to think of new ideas and possibilities when they see the variety of abilities, materials and imagery."

"Students often ask, ‘Why are we painting the walls if they’re going to take them down?’ I explain that we are appreciating the walls while they are here. We talk about how artists often do not keep their art forever. They may sell it, give it away or create it with the intention that it will only exist for just a short time."

"This has been the best part of the project for me, the process of creating art with the students, not the planning or product. The process has created moments of dialogue, respect, creativity, gratitude, pride, connection, problem-solving and learning that can be hard to achieve in the regular classroom setting."

"This process has allowed for kids to get the attention that they sometimes need on a personal level."

The construction project, which began in the summer, is scheduled to be completed in January.

"Ms. Hardy is one of the purest and sweetest souls I have ever encountered," Stull said. "She is a blessing to our students and inspires so much creativity in them. The process of creating this gem from plain drywall has been so fun to see. The transformation has been miraculous."

**WATERTON, continued from Page 21**

dy said. "It seemed like whenever we needed a big play, he made it." He and his brother Ben, a freshman, are sons of former Ohio State and Newark Catholic star Jeff Uhlenhake, an assistant on Kennedy’s staff.

“Zack Weber is another player who stepped up and helped tremendously more and more as the season went on,” Kennedy said. "He’s also a wrestler and, as is so often the case, wrestlers seem to make good football players because of the discipline involved in both sports."

Kessinger joined Purcell as back-to-back first-team All-Ohio players. He scored 114 points this year on 66 of 67 extra point attempts and 16 field goals in 18 tries. "He’s going to Eastern Michigan on scholarship because he was so dependable," Kennedy said. "We’ll miss the feeling of assurance he brought to the kicking game."

With the number of players with recognized talent he has coming back in 2024, Kennedy hopes for another strong season and long playoff run.

"The schedule’s almost identical," he said. "We’re still looking for a first-week opponent and have Westerville North replacing Whetstone, but otherwise we play the same strong out-of-area teams and our CCL opponents Watterson, St. Charles and DeSales. Every one of those league games is like playing in a playoff atmosphere and is good preparation for the postseason."

"We have a strong tradition to uphold and look forward to adding to it."

**St. Brigid School plans open house on Jan. 28**

Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare School, 7775 Avery Road, will host an open house from 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 28. Representatives of the three-time Blue Ribbon Award-winning school will be on hand to answer questions.

Registration for preschool to eighth-grade students is underway through Friday, Feb. 2. To RSVP for the open house or for more information, go to stbridgofkildare.com/apply.
Catholic schools mark Advent with prayer, service to others

During Advent, schools across the Diocese of Columbus are helping students prepare their hearts for Jesus’ coming.

Columbus St. Andrew

For several years, students at the school, preschool and parish school of religion have hosted an Advent service project to benefit the Run the Race Center in Columbus, where inner city children can go after school and on weekends for tutoring, homework help, sports, activities and more.

Students collected items, packaged them and held a prayer service to bless the gifts before they were delivered to the center for Christmas.

Columbus St. Charles

Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School has been honoring the season of Advent with a number of special liturgies, activities and student initiatives.

Principal Jim Lower starts each school day by reading a special Advent Prayer over the intercom as the candle is lit on the large Advent wreath in main hallway's foyer.

On Dec. 5, priests from across the diocese helped conduct a daylong series of Advent penance services in the school’s Mother of Mercy Chapel attended by every student during their scheduled religion class period that included prayers, silent reflection time, and confessions.

The St. Charles Student Council is also sponsoring a Cardinal’s Spirit of Giving campaign that provides three opportunities for our students to “be our brother’s keeper” and help others who are in need: collecting gifts for the ‘Toys for Tots’ program, a “Giving Tree” with gloves, mittens, scarves, and hats donated to the families of Columbus Holy Spirit Church and a day of service at the Toys for Tots in Columbus.

Columbus Bishop Hartley

On Nov. 30, Columbus Bishop Hartley High School students participated in an Advent penance service with confessions heard by the school chaplain and priests from feeder parishes.

Also during Advent, students decorated the House System display cases with Nativity scenes using their artistic talents. On Dec. 1, students spent time after school decorating each doorway, locker and hallway to spread Christmas joy.

Chillicothe Bishop Flaget

In December, Mike and Joy Dattilo, parents of kindergarten teacher Jenna Yanko, brought 35 pieces of their 500-piece Fontanini Nativity collection from Cincinnati to share with the students. The Dattilos immersed the students in the story of Jesus’ birth through the pieces.

Columbus Bishop Watterson

The student council again coordinated two major giving drives for the holiday season in an annual event dubbed “Season of Giving.” A monetary collection raised more than $4,580 to benefit the St. Lawrence Haven toy drive, while a food drive collection generated 7,350 non-perishable items to be donated to the St. Francis Center in McArthur.

Columbus Our Lady of Bethlehem

On Nov. 30, Columbus Bishop Hartley High School students participated in an Advent penance service with confessions heard by the school chaplain and priests from feeder parishes.

Also during Advent, students decorated the House System display cases with Nativity scenes using their artistic talents. On Dec. 1, students spent time after school decorating each doorway, locker and hallway to spread Christmas joy.

Columbus St. Agatha

As part of the school’s year-long service to the community, fifth- and eighth-graders helped make “magical reindeer food” of oats and glitter to be distributed to sick children and their siblings at this year’s NC4K (Nellie’s Champions for Kids) Christmas party. NC4K supports kids fighting cancer so that “no kid fights cancer alone.” This project is near and dear to school principal Veronica Stemen because her son, Troy, battled and beat leukemia six years ago.

Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare

Following a morning visit on Dec. 6 from St. Nicholas on horseback, the school community made prayer bracelets for the children and families served by the Columbus-based non-profit A Kid Again. The service project was planned by the eighth-grade service committee.

Gahanna St. Matthew Pre-K

Students created Advent wreaths after learning about the meaning and colors of the season.