

The CATHOLIC TIMES

THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS' INFORMATION SOURCE

DECEMBER 14, 2025 | THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT | VOLUME 74:25

Inside this issue



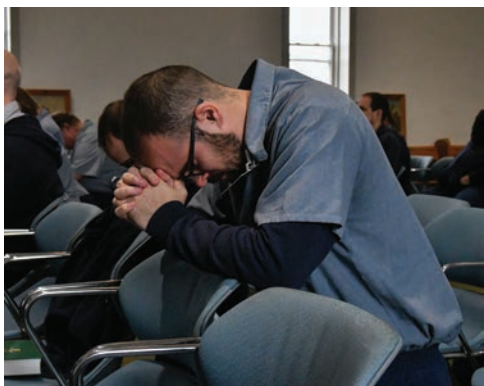
Nativity blessing

A blessing of the Nativity scene outside St. Joseph Cathedral, which was held Nov. 28, was led by Bishop Earl Fernandes and included sung Evening Prayer, part of the Church's Liturgy of the Hours, as the faithful prepare for Christmas, Page 4



Acutis windows

A stained-glass window of St. Carlo Acutis was installed at Sacred Hearts Church in Morrow County weeks after the saint's canonization by Pope Leo XIV and is one of the first to be made of the recently canonized saint, Page 13



Jubilee of Prisoners

The Jubilee of Prisoners, observed Dec. 14 as part of the Church's 2025 Jubilee Year, was observed in the diocese as Bishop Earl Fernandes encouraged support and prayers for the incarcerated in Ohio, Page 7



Christmas Mass times

A Nativity scene at Columbus St. Patrick Church commemorates Christ's birth that diocesan parishes will celebrate at Christmas Masses on Dec. 24-25, Page 3

BISHOP EARL K. FERNANDES

Christmas 2025

My Dear Friends in Christ,

I want to wish you and your families, peace and joy at Christmastime and throughout the New Year. During this past year, we have been celebrating a Jubilee Year. Together, we are pilgrims of hope. The People of Israel hoped, with an expectant waiting, the coming of the Messiah, the One who would set them free, the One who would be the fulfillment of all desire. The hopes of the nation, indeed, of all the nations, rested upon the Yes of a lowly handmaiden, a virgin, named Mary, who was betrothed to Joseph, a simple carpenter but who was of the House of David.

Creation waited expectantly for the Virgin's consent, and when she offered her Fiat to the Archangel Gabriel, God's plan for our salvation could come to fruition. In the fulness of time, born under the law, born of woman, the grace of God appeared to us, not in power or majesty. He came as a Child. The Word was made Flesh and made His dwelling among us. This is the Mystery we celebrate at Christmas – the Mystery of the Incarnation, which fills our hearts with wonder and joy, which makes the angels and the whole world cry out with joy.

The hopes of the People of Israel, from the powerful to the lowly shepherds, were fulfilled. The hopes of the foreigners, of all

the nations, represented by the magi who came from the East, found their realization in the Christ Child. Christ is our Hope. Many people put their trust in power, influence, career, and wealth to realize their dreams, but our hope is in the Lord.

This year we have also been celebrating the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, which declared that Jesus was consubstantial, of the same substance as the Father. The One who came down from heaven and who was born of the Virgin was not a mere creature or intermediary but was truly God. He was true God and true man, consubstantial with the Father. By His power as God, He could save us and forgive our sins and reconcile us to the Father, but He would save us through the weakness of human flesh.

Interestingly, the Second Council of Nicaea, held in 787, dealt with the issue of iconoclasm. It permitted the use of icons and images of Christ, our Lady, and the saints, because Jesus, the image of the Father, had appeared. Saint Paul put it this way, in writing to Titus: When the kindness and generous love of God our Savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of His mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

Christ is the Father's gift to us. What better gift could we ask for or receive?!! During this season of giving, God's immense love for us should warm our hearts to give of ourselves to others, especially to those in need. Christ offers us the gift of peace and forgiveness; this is a season to be reconciled, especially to family members from whom we have been distant or those who have hurt us. Instead of raging over injury, Christmas allows us to seek out new paths for peace. In an angry, war-ravaged and polarized world, Christ alone offers true and lasting peace.

The hymn "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" contains these lyrics: "Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, born that man no more may die, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give us second birth. Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

May these words of praise be on your lips during this Holy Season.

Commending you to the Most Holy Virgin, the Mother of God, I wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas!

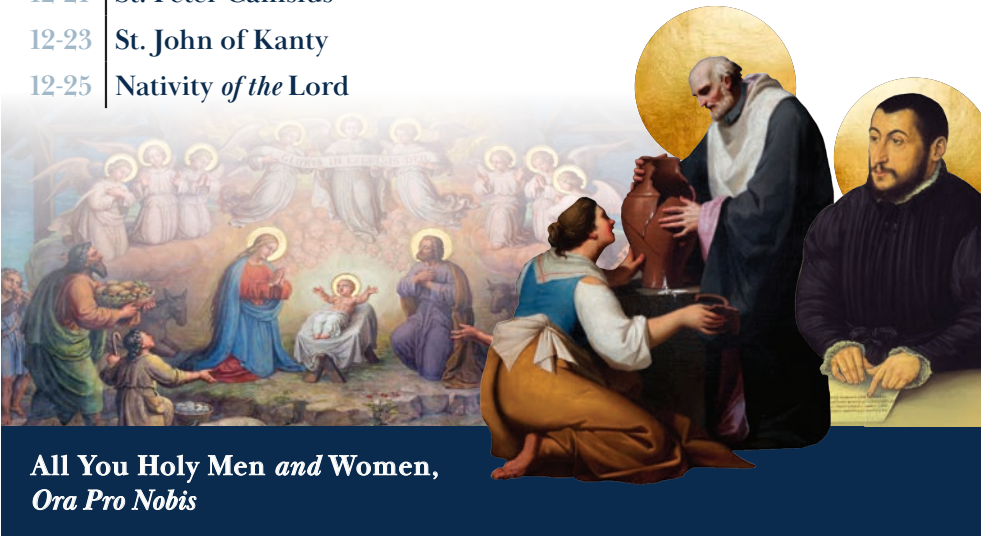
Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus



Bishop Earl K. Fernandes

Upcoming Feast Days

- 12-21 | St. Peter Canisius
- 12-23 | St. John of Kanty
- 12-25 | Nativity of the Lord



All You Holy Men and Women,
Ora Pro Nobis

Merry Christmas

From all of us at
THE CATHOLIC TIMES
and the
DIOCESAN OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Jason, Andrew, Jess, Doug, Hannah, Sarah, Meredith, Kaitlyn,
and all of our contributors

Nativity of the Lord
DECEMBER 25

Check individual parishes for schedule of Holy Day Mass times

2025 schedule for Christmas Masses at diocesan parishes

The following is a list of Mass times for the vigil of Christmas, Wednesday, Dec. 24 and Christmas Day, Thursday, Dec. 25, as provided by parishes to The Catholic Times:

Ada/Kenton Our Lady, the Immaculate Conception Parish – Ada Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. and midnight; Kenton Immaculate Conception Church, Christmas Eve, 6:30 p.m.; Christmas, 9 a.m.

Buckeye Lake Our Lady of Mount Carmel – Christmas Eve, 6 and 10 p.m. (music 9:30); Christmas, 10 a.m.

Canal Winchester Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Christmas Eve, 4, 6 and 10 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Cardington Sacred Hearts – Christmas Eve, 4:30 p.m.; Christmas, 9 a.m.

Chillicothe/Waverly Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Parish – Chillicothe St. Peter Church, Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. and midnight; Waverly St. Mary, Queen of the Missions Church, Christmas Eve, 8 p.m.; Chillicothe St. Mary Church, Christmas, 10 a.m.

Circleville St. Joseph – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m. (music 4:30), 10 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Columbus Christ the King and St. Thomas the Apostle – Christ the King, Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (English), 6 p.m. (Spanish); Christmas, 10 a.m. (English), 12:30 p.m. (Spanish); St. Thomas, Christmas Eve, 6 p.m. (bilingual); Christmas, 9 a.m. (English), 11 a.m. (Spanish)

Columbus Holy Cross – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Columbus Holy Family – Christmas Eve, 4 and 7 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 9 and 11 a.m.

Columbus Holy Spirit – Christmas Eve, 4 and 8 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Columbus Immaculate Conception – Christmas Eve, 4, 7 and 10 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Columbus Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelization – Christmas Eve, 7:30 p.m.; Christmas, 11 a.m. (both in Spanish)

Columbus Our Lady of Peace – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m., 6:30 p.m. (music 6), 10 p.m.; Christmas, 9 a.m.

Columbus Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal – Christmas, 10 a.m.

Columbus Our Lady of Victory – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (children's choir, music 3:45), 6 p.m. (brass quartet, cantor, music 5:45), 9 p.m. (choir, orchestra, music 8:30); Christmas Day, 10 a.m. (organ, flute, cantor, music 9:45), 11:30 a.m. (Maronite Divine Liturgy)

Columbus Sacred Heart and St. John the Baptist – Sacred Heart, Christmas Eve, 5:30 p.m.; Christmas, 11 a.m.; St. John the Baptist, Christmas Eve, 4 p.m.; Christmas, 9:30 a.m.

Columbus St. Agatha – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (Nativity blessing 3:40), 6 p.m., 10 p.m. (music 9:30); Christmas, 10 a.m.

Columbus St. Agnes – Christmas Eve, 7 p.m.; Christmas, noon (both Spanish)

Columbus St. Aloysius – Christmas Eve, 7 p.m.; Christmas, 9 a.m. (English), 10:30 a.m. (Ghanian)

Columbus St. Andrew – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (church and hall), 6 and 10 p.m.; Christmas, 9 and 11 a.m.

Columbus St. Andrew Kim Taegon Korean Community – Christmas Eve, 7 p.m.; Christmas, 11 a.m. (both at Columbus St. Anthony Church)

Columbus Ss. Augustine & Gabriel – Christmas Eve, 7 p.m. (English); Christmas, 11 a.m. (Vietnamese)

Columbus St. Catharine of Siena – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m., (church, incense), 4 p.m. (parish hall, no incense), 10 p.m. (church); Christmas, 10 a.m. (church)

Columbus St. Cecilia – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m. (English), 8 p.m. (Spanish), midnight (English, Office of Readings 11:30 p.m.); Christmas, 10:30 a.m.

Columbus St. Christopher – Christmas Eve, 4 and 6 p.m. (English), 10 p.m. (Polish);



Nativity at Grove City Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church Photo courtesy Our Lady of Perpetual Help



Nativity outside Sunbury St. John Neumann Church Photo courtesy Sarah Lightle

Christmas, 10 a.m. (English)

Columbus St. Dominic – Christmas Eve, 6 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m., noon (Cameroon community), 2 p.m. (French-speaking community)

Columbus St. Francis of Assisi – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Columbus St. James the Less – Christmas Eve, 5:30 p.m. (English), 7:30 p.m. (Spanish); Christmas, 9 a.m. (English), 11 a.m. (Spanish)

Columbus St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic – Christmas Eve, 9 a.m., Royal Hours; 9 p.m., Divine Liturgy, followed by blessing of Myrovanije oils; Christmas, noon, Divine Liturgy, followed by blessing of oils

Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral – Christmas Eve, 4 and 6:30 p.m., midnight (Cathedral choir 11); Christmas, 10 a.m.

Columbus St. Josephine Bakhita – St. Elizabeth Church, 4 and 7 p.m. (English). 11 p.m. (English and Haitian); Christmas, 10 a.m. (English), 1 p.m. (Haitian); St. Matthias Chapel, Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (English); Christmas, 4 p.m. (Nigerian)

Columbus St. Leo the Great Oratory – Christmas Eve, midnight; Christmas, 7:30 and 9:30 a.m. (all in Latin)

Columbus St. Margaret of Cortona – Christmas Eve, 4 and 10 p.m. (music 9:30); Christmas, 10:30 a.m.

Columbus St. Mary German Village – Christmas Eve, 4 and 9 p.m. (English), 6 p.m. (Spanish); Christmas, 10 a.m. (English)

Columbus St. Mary Magdalene – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Columbus St. Patrick – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (incense, children's choir), 6:30 p.m. (no incense, schola and brass), midnight (incense, music 11:15 p.m.); Christmas, 7 a.m. (no incense), 10 a.m. (no incense, cantor and brass), noon, ad orientem, incense, choir and brass)

Columbus/Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc – St. Peter: Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (English), 7 p.m. (Spanish), midnight (English); Christmas, 11 a.m. (English), 1 p.m. (Spanish); St. Joan of Arc: Christmas Eve, 4, 6 and 10 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.



Nativity scene in front of Columbus Our Lady of Peace Church Photo courtesy Sarah Lightle



Nativity at Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare Church Photo courtesy St. Brigid of Kildare

Columbus St. Stephen the Martyr – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m. (English), 7 and 9 p.m. (Spanish); Christmas, 10 a.m. (English), 11:30 a.m. (Spanish)

Coshocton Sacred Heart – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 9 a.m.

Danville/Mount Vernon St. John the Baptist Parish – Danville St. Luke Church, Christmas Eve, 4:30 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m. Mount Vernon St. Vincent de Paul Church, Christmas Eve, 4 and 6 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 10:30 a.m.

Delaware St. Mary – Christmas Eve, 4, 7 and 11:30 p.m.; Christmas, 9 and 11 a.m.

Dennison Immaculate Conception – Christmas Eve, 4 and 9 p.m.; Christmas, 11 a.m.

Dover St. Joseph – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m. (English), 7:30 p.m. (Spanish), 11:30 p.m. (English); Christmas, 9 a.m. (English). Music 30 minutes before each Mass

Dresden St. Ann/Mattingly Settlement St. Mary – Christmas Eve, 4:30 p.m., St. Mary; 7 p.m., St. Ann; Christmas, 9 a.m., St. Ann

Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (children's choir), 6:30 p.m. (cantors and instruments), 9 p.m. (adult choir); Christmas, 9 and 11 a.m. (cantors and instruments)

Gahanna St. Matthew the Apostle – Christmas Eve, 4, 6:30 and 9 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Granville St. Edward the Confessor – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m., 9 p.m. (music 8:30); Christmas, 8 a.m., 10 a.m. (music 9:45)

Grove City Our Lady of Perpetual Help – Christmas Eve, 4, 7 and 10 p.m.; Christmas, 10:30 a.m.

Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator – Christmas Eve, 4, 6:30 and 10 p.m.; Christmas, 8:45 and 10:45 a.m.

Jackson/Vinton Divine Mary Parish – Wellston Ss. Peter & Paul Church, Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (music 3:30); Zaleski St. Sylvester Church, Christmas Eve, 6:30 p.m., Jackson Holy Trinity Church, Christmas Eve, 10 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Johnstown Church of the Ascension –

Christmas Eve, 4 and 6:30 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Lancaster Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption – Christmas Eve, 4, 6:30 and 9 p.m.; Christmas, 9 a.m.

Lancaster St. Bernadette – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m., midnight (carols 11:30); Christmas, 10 a.m.

Logan St. John the Evangelist – Christmas Eve, 4 and 6 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 10 a.m.

London St. Patrick – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 10:30 a.m.

Marion St. Mary – Christmas Eve, 5 and 8 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 9 a.m.

Marysville Our Lady of Lourdes – Christmas Eve, 4 and 7 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Millersburg St. Peter – Christmas Eve, midnight; Christmas, 10 a.m.

New Albany Church of the Resurrection – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (church), 4:15 p.m. (social hall), 7 and 10 p.m. (church); Christmas, 10 a.m. (church)

New Philadelphia Sacred Heart – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (music 3:30), 9 p.m. (music 8:30); Christmas, 8:30 a.m.

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

Newark St. Francis de Sales – Christmas Eve, 4 and 6:30 p.m., midnight (preceded by candlelight Eucharistic Adoration at 11); Christmas, 10 a.m.

Perry County Catholic Consortium – New Lexington St. Rose of Lima Church, Christmas Eve, 4 and 6 p.m., Christmas, 9 a.m.; Junction City St. Patrick Church, Christmas Eve, 8 p.m.

Pickerington St. Elizabeth Seton – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (church and activity center), 6 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 9:30 a.m.

Plain City St. Joseph – Christmas Eve, 4 and 7 p.m. (activity center), 4 p.m. and midnight (church); Christmas, 9 a.m. (church)

Portsmouth St. John Paul II Scioto Catholic Community – Portsmouth St. Mary, Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. and midnight; Portsmouth Holy Redeemer, Christmas Eve, 6 p.m. (English) and 8 p.m. (Spanish), Christmas, 10 a.m.; Wheelersburg St. Peter in Chains, Christmas Eve, 8 p.m.; Pond Creek Holy Trinity, Christmas, 10 a.m.

Reynoldsburg St. Pius X – Christmas Eve, 4, 6:30 and 9 p.m.; Christmas, 9 a.m.

Somerset Holy Trinity and St. Joseph – Holy Trinity, Christmas Eve, 3 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.; St. Joseph, Christmas Eve, 5:30 p.m.; Christmas, 8 a.m.

Sugar Grove St. Joseph – Christmas Eve, 8 p.m.; Christmas, 8 a.m.

Sunbury St. John Neumann – Christmas Eve, 4 and 6:30 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Washington Court House St. Colman of Cloyne – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m., midnight; Christmas, 10 a.m.

West Jefferson Ss. Simon & Jude – Christmas Eve, 4 and 6 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Westerville St. Paul – Christmas Eve, 4 p.m. (Westerville North High School), 4 and 6:30 p.m. and midnight (music 11:30 p.m.); Christmas, 8 and 10 a.m. and noon

Worthington St. Michael the Archangel – Christmas Eve, 4, 6 and 10 p.m. and midnight; Christmas, 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

Zanesville St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas – St. Nicholas, Christmas Eve, 6 and 10 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.; St. Thomas Aquinas, Christmas Eve, 5 and 9 p.m. (music 8:30), Christmas, 9 a.m.

Zoar Holy Trinity – Christmas Eve, 5 p.m.; Christmas, 10 a.m.

Bishop leads blessing of Nativity at the Cathedral

As a precursor to the beginning of Advent, Bishop Earl Fernandes presided over an Evening Prayer service and Solemn Blessing of the Creche at St. Joseph Cathedral on Friday, Nov. 28.

Evening Prayer inside the Cathedral preceded the outdoor blessing in Cathedral Square of the Nativity, which is on display throughout Advent and the Christmas season for the third year since the diocese acquired the life-size depiction of scenes surrounding Jesus' birth from the former State Auto Insurance Group.

Hymns, sung prayers and psalms during Evening Prayer in the Cathedral were led by the diocese's recently formed *Vox Iuvenum* choristers directed by Dr. Nicole Simental, the director of sacred music for Buckeye Catholic at the St. Thomas More Newman Center in Columbus, with organ accompaniment from Stephen Smith, director of music ministry at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church.

Vox Iuvenum is made up of approximately 20 students in grades 4-12 from multiple parishes, schools and homeschools that will provide sacred music at eight liturgies

in the diocese throughout the year.

Bishop Fernandes acknowledged in his homily the iconic outdoor Nativity has been a source of much joy for many decades in Columbus. He reflected on the significance of the Savior's birth while emphasizing that Advent is a season of preparation to meditate on Christ's arrival into the world and to repent of sins to remain in a good relationship with the Lord.

He pointed out that St. Francis of Assisi is credited with establishing the first Nativity scene in order to reflect on the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Recalling the writings of St. Alphonsus Liguori, the bishop said, "And in one place he says, 'Try to imagine the most beautiful thing you can imagine and the mystery of the Incarnation is at least 1,000 times greater than that. Really, he means infinitely greater.'"

Reflecting on Christ's humanity, Bishop Fernandes said, "How beautiful is God's love for us that He would come down from heaven to share his life with us. But He did not come in power and majesty in order to

frighten us. He came as a child to embrace us with love and mercy.

"And when we think about the characters in the Nativity scene and in all the scenes outside, we think first of Mary," he continued. "She describes herself as the lowly handmaid of the Lord. And she says let it be done to me according to your word."

Speaking about the role of St. Joseph, the bishop shared that the foster father of Jesus, a simple carpenter, became the guardian of the Redeemer "who would teach us to do our work with greater love.

"We might not see the importance of our work, but God sees not just the work that we do but the love for which we do it. Carrying out even menial tasks with great love can be a beautiful offering to God during the Advent season."

Bishop Fernandes challenged the faithful "to stop, to be still, to gaze and to wonder -- that the beauty of God's love for us came down from heaven and made its home in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

The beauty of Advent, he reminded,

is that it leads to Jesus and provides encouragement when the world seems dark and there is no hope.

"God sent his Son to be born holy, to fulfill all of His promises. How beautiful it is to be loved by a God who keeps His promises," he said.

The service continued with a Gospel canticle, intercessory prayer and the Lord's Prayer before concluding with a final blessing. *Vox Iuvenum* led the singing of the hymn "Lo, He Comes, On Clouds Descending" as the congregation filed out of the cathedral into the darkness of the early evening to gather on the sidewalk in front of the Nativity for the Blessing of the Creche with holy water by Bishop Fernandes.

After the blessing, the faithful in attendance were invited to the Museum of Catholic Art and History for a reception and an opportunity to view more than 1,000 Nativity scenes, which have doubled in number since last year.



Lights illuminate the Nativity at Cathedral Square during a Blessing of the Creche on Nov. 28.



Bishop Earl Fernandes leads prayers during the Nativity blessing outside St. Joseph Cathedral.



Bishop Earl Fernandes is assisted by Father Paul Keller, OP at the blessing. Photos/Anna Lincoln



Dr. Nicole Simental directs a schola during Evening Prayer that preceded the creche blessing.

Setting the scene involves heavy lifting, knowledgeable volunteer

By Doug Bean

Catholic Times Editor

The Nativity at Cathedral Square doesn't just appear out of nowhere. It takes a lot of work to set up the giant display. No one knows that better than Dan Hueckel.

In fact, there might not be anyone in Columbus today who knows the intricacies of the iconic figures that make up the scene better than Hueckel.

Thanks to Hueckel, Pat Foley, his brother, Joe, of Foley Contractors and a group of dedicated volunteers, the Nativity next to St. Joseph Cathedral will be seen by thousands of people – Catholics and non-Catholics – through early January.

Three years ago, Liberty Mutual Insurance acquired State Auto Group and donated what had become a Christmas landmark in Columbus to the diocese, ensuring that a holiday tradition that has brought generations of families and visitors to downtown Columbus annually would continue.

When Shawn Kenney, the director of the Museum of Catholic Art and History who oversees the Nativity, went to look at it in storage before the acquisition in 2022, Hueckel came along with him.

"And he's been a superman since the beginning," Kenney said.

Hueckel possesses firsthand knowledge of the more than 65 pieces that comprise the Nativity and surrounding scenes. He was around when they were created more than 60 years ago.

"The entire scene was made by Gordon Keith Originals," Hueckel said of the Columbus-based artist and businessman. "And when I was in high school and college, I worked for Gordon Keith in the retail portion of the business called Decorative Supply and I saw a lot of the material that went into it being made here."

Most of the figures were configured from mannequins used in department stores, he said.

"They would take spackling and water it down and take the fabric and dip it into the spackling and then shape the fabric on the mannequins," he said. "And then they would paint the fabric and so forth, and put layers and layers of lacquer over that to preserve them."

Hueckel also was involved in the setup of a Nativity in front of the Statehouse during the 1960s and helped with other Gordon Keith projects, including the construction of floats for the annual parades that once took place in downtown Columbus the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

He also recalled decorating light posts on High Street and animated displays. He even traveled once with Keith to stores in New York City that had Christmas window displays built and supplied by Gordon Keith Originals.

"His business was building displays," Hueckel said. "I remember when I was a little kid Gordon Keith decorated the entire State Auto building. State Auto used to spend over \$100,000 a year decorating that building."

Hueckel went on to work as a manager

of sales for a five-state area at Diocesan Publications, which prints parish bulletins, but he remained involved in the Nativity setup at State Auto and several parishes in Columbus, including his parish of his youth, Columbus St. John the Evangelist and later Columbus Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal and for the past 20 years at his current parish, Columbus Holy Family.

So when the diocese was presented with the opportunity to inherit the Nativity, Hueckel was willing to offer his insider knowledge.

It's no small undertaking to put the Nativity in place at the Cathedral.

The process starts in October when the pieces are transported to the Cathedral lawn on East Broad Street from a south Columbus warehouse, where space is donated by a generous benefactor, to begin the setup.

Each of the camels and the wise men weigh more than 400 pounds. The camels sit on steel frames fitted with handles to help the minimum of four men to pick up each piece. They're so large that a trailer is needed to move them.

"Joe and Pat and usually two additional fellows that they have working with them for their company will come and do the basic setting up of the scaffolding, putting the boards on the scaffolding and surrounding it with all of the material that covers the scaffolding – and all of the stonework that you see below the Nativity that's made of Styrofoam."

Now 77, Hueckel said he isn't able to be involved with the physical setup as he once

was but knows where everything goes and "I can tell them to put this here, put that there."

"I put the spotlights in place, cover the mountings with burlap and do all of the decorating beyond setting up the major stuff with the greenery and straw and covering up the extension cords from the lights," he said.

There are more than 125 spotlights to illuminate the scenes. Most of the light fixtures are old. Some are in need of replacement each year.

Replacing the fixtures is just part of the expense of maintaining the set. The figures are constantly in need of maintenance. Age and outside exposure in harsh winter weather take their toll.

"We've got some that have been damaged just in moving them from year to year," Hueckel said. "So we need to have them repaired, but for the person who doesn't know anything about them, you would never notice. They still look amazing."

Because of space limitations outside the Cathedral, there is not enough room to display the scene with King Herod, several shepherds and a number of animals. But many of the public's favorites are still in place, including the Annunciation.

Kenney said Christmas Eve brings the largest crowds to view the Nativity each year. Many of the visitors are not Catholic – and that provides an opportunity for the

Faithful encouraged to participate in diocese's Disciple Maker Index

Pastoral planning is important work of the Church. Through pastoral planning a diocesan bishop identifies needs in his diocese, consults with the Christian faithful about addressing them and makes decisions for accomplishing goals surrounding them. Bishop Earl Fernandes has engaged Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI) to assist him in consulting the Christian faithful in the formation of a pastoral plan for the growing needs of the Diocese of Columbus. Our diocese is increasing in population, is more diverse than ever and has more opportunities to support Catholic education and works of charity and evangelization.

The Disciple Maker Index (DMI) is one tool for the development of our complete and effective pastoral plan. The pastors of the diocese have been asked to support and promote the use of this instrument as a part of our diocesan pastoral planning. The entire diocese had an opportunity to participate in this during Lent 2021 for a previous period of pastoral planning. That initiative was focused on investigating support for evangelization efforts and better understanding the necessary structural footprint of the Diocese. For example, the changes at Buckeye Catholic on the campus of Ohio State University and the Parish Evangelization Toolkit were significant focal points of



Disciple Maker Index Survey QR code

that renewal of and support for evangelization efforts. The structural footprint of the diocese has changed by going from 105 to 78 parishes in our diocese as a result of the extensive feedback from parishioners. This difficult but necessary pruning of the vine has enabled us to send priests for further studies and to place priests in additional pastoral leadership roles such as hospital chaplaincy and high school chaplaincy that before we were unable to address. As we engage once again in pastoral planning, the DMI can assist parish leadership and diocesan leadership with understanding the needs of the Christian faithful in the diocese.

Four years ago, 21,462 people took the survey. That represented 30% of Mass-going Catholics at that time. Seventy-four percent of those who responded indicated that they "strongly agreed"

that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ. Fifty-seven percent "agreed or strongly agreed" that they needed more support from their parish in supporting their confidence in understanding Church teachings. These two brief examples out of the 95 questions are indications of where parishioners are in their growth as disciples, and this information can assist in identifying areas of focus to pastors. Pastors and their teams will review the DMI results and make determinations of areas of strengths and opportunities for their parishes. Diocesan offices can assist pastors and their own leadership and catechetical teams with addressing those needs and desires of parishioners.

The Envisioning Team for this pastoral planning effort has received nearly 2,000 responses to the online survey, which was open for two months over the summer and fall, and which is currently being reviewed. The results of the DMI will be another excellent data point for assisting the Envisioning Team in eventually recommending to Bishop Fernandes some actionable goals for the four pastoral priorities of vocations, evangelization, Catholic education and formation, and social outreach.

The DMI is open from Nov. 26 through Jan. 5. Please use the QR Code found here to find your parish and take the DMI today.

NATIVITY: Setting the scenes, *Continued from Page 4*

diocese to evangelize.

"I'll never forget one of the coolest experiences three years ago when I was standing out there on Christmas Eve and Bishop Fernandes came out, walked around and greeted people for 45 minutes to an hour. It was amazing," Kenney said.

In addition to the Nativity at Cathedral Square, visitors have the opportunity to go across the street to 257 E. Broad St. to the Museum of Catholic Art of History, where over 1,000 Nativity sets are on display. Kenney expects more than 2,000 visitors to pass through the Museum of Catholic Art and History during the holiday season to view 1,000 Nativity sets from around the world that are on display through Friday, Jan. 9. The centerpiece is a 4,000-piece Fontanini collection believed to be the largest in the country.

The Museum of Catholic Art and History is located on the first floor of The Catholic Foundation building and open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with the last tour of the day beginning at 2:30 p.m. Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for ages 4 to 18 or 65 and older, and \$30 for a family of four or more.

There is no cost to view the Nativity at Cathedral Square, but Kenney said donor support is needed to help preserve this treasured Columbus tradition.

"It was costing State Auto \$200,000 a year to maintain it and we've knocked down the cost," Kenney said. "But there are constantly things that need to be done."

"We have a fund that takes care of the Nativity scene. If it's something that we want to keep for generations to come, we rely on the community to help us. We're solely funded by donors."

Hueckel has seen and heard firsthand how much the Nativity means to generations of families.

"It's so nice to hear people come by when we're setting everything up and say they're so happy we're putting this up again," he said. "They'll say, 'I remember when I was a kid, we used to go down to State Auto and see this, and it just brings back so many memories, and now I'm bringing my kids here and they like to see it.'"

"It's just another opportunity to grow the faith and get people to come down here to the Cathedral at Christmas time."

Anyone interested in making a donation to the Nativity at Cathedral Square can do so at <https://checkout.square.site/merchant/MLWWMXBKHZMMT/ccheckout/YE2ZSKLT42234PYPEDD36LIL>.

For more information on the museum, call (614) 618-4030 or go to <https://columbuscatholic.org/ministry-office/museum-of-catholic-art-history>.



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BISHOP EARL K. FERNANDES

Take time to pray, remember the imprisoned

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

The third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday. The Entrance Antiphon for the Mass is "Rejoice in the Lord. Always, I say it again, Rejoice, the Lord is near." It also marks the Jubilee for Prisoners.

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus unfurled the scroll of the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue in Capernaum and said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, to restore sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, and to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord."

More than three years ago, all new bishops had an audience with Pope Francis. One of the things he told us was to go into the prisons and to visit with prisoners and



An altar server leads the entrance procession as several inmates gather for Mass at the Southeastern Correctional Institution on Nov. 7.



Bishop Earl Fernandes offers a final blessing at the conclusion of Mass at Southeastern Correctional Institution on Nov. 7.

get in touch with the reality of life in prison. He said, "You will understand how God's grace works."

I took his words to heart. Since I began my episcopal ministry here in the Diocese of Columbus, I have tried to visit the different prisons and jails and to spend time with those who are incarcerated.

I see beautiful things happening in the prisons. I meet men and women who have had time to think about what they have done, who have accepted responsibility, who have been converted by God's grace, who are on fire with the faith, and who, unfortunately, are attacked frequently for their Catholic faith.

I visited with those on death row and offered Mass there. I have seen people who have been completely rejected by their families but who have been received into the Church and who are loved by the Lord.

I have seen women for whom Christmas is a very difficult time, because they are away



Bishop Earl Fernandes elevates the host during the Liturgy of the Eucharist at Mass that was part of the Jubilee of Prisoners.

CT photos by Ken Snow

from their children and their grandchildren. By going to them at Christmastime and offering Mass for them, they know that the Lord is near and they know that the Church is close to them – you are close to them.

To visit the imprisoned is a Corporal Work of Mercy and to pray for them is also a Spiritual Work of Mercy. We all have a role to play. I go as the Bishop of this Diocese to affirm those men and women who are incarcerated of their own dignity as children of God. All of us do things wrong, all of us sin, but I assure them of God's mercy, that they are still members of our flock, that they are not forgotten, especially not during this Jubilee Year.

On December 14, the Jubilee for Prisoners, in a special way, I ask that you and your family members pray for all those who are incarcerated, to pray that others learn to forgive them, and that we ourselves forgive them, that we not judge them too harshly. They must pay a debt to society; nevertheless, we hope for their conversion, rehabilitation, and, one day, their reintegration into society. We do not simply want them to be punished and to be severe and unmerciful, for that is not how God deals with us.

We also want to remember to not only pray but also to fast. Perhaps as a family, you could make a pilgrimage to one of our four Jubilee churches on this occasion and pray for all those who are incarcerated and their family members.

I often get letters from children asking prayers for their parents who are jailed or who are in a detention camp or are going to be deported, asking, "Please, is there anything you can do? I know my father did wrong, but I want to see him again." We do not want families to be broken up forever because that has traumatic effects on children.

Of course, the Jubilee for Prisoners isn't just for those who have committed crimes and are paying their just debt to society. There are also those, both in our country and around the world, who are unjustly imprisoned. Sometimes they are unjustly

imprisoned and persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ. This day is also a day for them.

During the Jubilee Year for Mercy, there was also a Jubilee for Prisoners. It was one of those days that had no tickets available for the Mass with the Pope. But I knew someone who worked in the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, and they needed some representation from the English-speaking world. At that time, I was a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, and so I put the pilgrims from Cincinnati in touch with this person at the office. One woman became the representative of all the English-speaking people, and she came with a bunch of rosaries and cards for the Pope to bless. And the Pope actually blessed those rosaries and received those cards.

What a tremendous difference to know that the Holy Father, the bishop, the people of God in our diocese are close to those who are in prison and jails. Like you and like me, they are fragile, they are weak. Some are justly imprisoned, some unjustly imprisoned, but they are people who have dignity. This is a special day for them.

Jesus came to proclaim liberty to captives. He came to set the oppressed free. He came to declare a year of favor, a year of grace. Let us join in the mission of Jesus in one way or another, by praying for those who are incarcerated in their families, by not judging them too severely, but instead praying for their conversion, and, for ourselves, that when they get out of prison or jail, we might welcome them again without skepticism, but as someone who is truly reformed.

We all are too eager to cast judgment. Jesus makes a judgment, but His is one of mercy and grace. May this year of favor from the Lord be profitable for them and for us. May God bless you and your families.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

Prison ministry impacts inmates' lives in profound ways

By Michele Williams
For The Catholic Times

I thank God every day for prison ministry! Taken separately, the words prison and ministry might seem incongruous, but together, they are an indispensable part of incarcerated life. Honestly, without these volunteers, prisons would be the coldest, most inhumane places on earth. I can't speak for all the 30,000+ inmates in Ohio when I say "I (we) need and dearly appreciate you," but I'm quite certain they would agree. Volunteers bring God's nonjudgmental and unconditional love into a place where judgment, angst and loneliness run amok. Their energy, dedication, compassion and deep faith make lasting impacts on our lives.

To illustrate how my life has been changed by prison ministry, I have two stories that are interwoven the way only God can weave.

My first interaction with a volunteer from America (that's prison-speak for society) was at Catholic Mass in early fall 1994. I'd only been here a few months and had not found my footing. I was grieving, traumatized, overwhelmed and clueless about how prison life was going to be.

Our chaplain, Father Barry Bentz, had brought in a musician from his team at Our Lady of Lourdes in Marysville; this guy had been here many times before, was friendly, kind and chatting with all the girls. But in my broken, brand-new inmate state

of mind, I was too ashamed, embarrassed, guilty and felt unworthy of his time. So I wouldn't, couldn't and didn't speak to him.

He set up his guitar and started singing and, wow, he was great! The songs were easily familiar and all the girls were singing along, making a joyful noise. I wanted to, but my heart got stuck in my throat and no words would come out. I made it through Mass, but, sadly, the disgrace and self-reproach won the battle in my mind that night and I left without saying thank you, goodnight or God bless. I just wasn't ready or able to receive God's unconditional love through a stranger. Sigh.

Father Bentz quickly figured out the issue and obviously had a talk with his prison ministry music team. From that Mass forward, he personally introduced us and stood there until I talked to them in order to break through my mental block. Because his musicians were sensitive and patient, over time, his method was successful. They went out of their way to help me feel comfortable, safe and find my voice. In their dedication and faithfulness, they proved I was worthy of their time. I emerged from my trauma-imposed shell as we connected over music.

My life was impacted so strongly that I grew into the musician and soloist role for Mass; I have been leading our congregation in song for many years. I'll also talk to anybody who walks in the door!

Three Christmas Masses in a row with Bishop Earl Fernandes have been special

blessings. Last year, he brought Governor Mike DeWine and First Lady Fran DeWine, and I really wanted to say hello. Alas, inmates were not allowed to approach, so I just smiled a lot.

For my second interaction, we have to set the time machine for 1995. I'd been incarcerated one year and was selected as a participant in Kairos 3. Kairos is a worldwide prison ministry program that takes inmates on a 3 1/2-day "retreat" inside the prison. We form a new relationship and walk more confidently with God and one another under their guidance and encouragement.

By that time, I'd become quasi-comfortable with Father Bentz's "one guest at a time" for Mass. I was wholly unprepared for the tidal wave of 75 cheering, clapping volunteers welcoming me on opening night! Each participant was announced individually and it was holy madness. Unfortunately, that same ugly, guilty, shame-laden inmate part of my brain kicked in again and it was very difficult for me to engage. I wasn't sure I'd make it through the first night, let alone three more days. I couldn't wrap my head around the fact that they already knew I was an inmate ... that's exactly why they were here!

Kairos volunteers are genuinely understanding, patient and open to the Holy Spirit's prompting. They are bringing God's unconditional love into the prison and nothing is going to stop them. They end up staying involved far beyond the initial one-

year commitment.

As a testament to the volunteer's dedicated longevity, all the other 41 participants in my retreat weekend have left prison and are living their lives elsewhere (a few even became part of the outside ministry and return as volunteers!). When I attended the Kairos 57 closing ceremony a few weeks ago, I saw some of the Kairos 3 volunteers in the audience who were as happy and humble as they were 30 years ago when we met.

They helped us not only get closer with God but build a community of faith in here so we can lean on one another. Prison ministry expands because of conversation starters like this: "So, what did you do this weekend?" "Well, I went to prison and it was amazing." Experiences are shared. People's perspectives shift. God opens hearts and minds and calls more people to action.

I believe volunteers are proof that God has not forgotten us. They are proof that we matter and are worthy of love. He sees us, forgives us and wants us to believe it! I have discovered courage and found my voice. I shed the alien skin I was in and allowed God to create me anew. I learned to accept love, give love, be authentic and vulnerable because people listened to God's call.

Thank you for being the embodiment of Matthew 25:36 and 40, "I was in prison and you visited me ... Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for Me."

Michele Williams is incarcerated at the Ohio Reformatory for Women in Marysville.

OHIO BISHOPS

Ohio dioceses enact matching policies on sale or raffle of firearms

Recent acts of unthinkable violence toward houses of worship in the U.S. and across the world grieve us deeply. As believers in the Lord’s promise that He hears our cries and pleas, we turn to Him first upon learning of these horrific acts of terror. May Christ lead the souls of those who have perished to paradise, heal the wounded, and comfort the brokenhearted. As Shepherds of God’s people, we must continuously evaluate our security measures to ensure that Catholics throughout Ohio can worship God in peace.

We wish to assure the faithful and all visitors to Catholic churches, schools, and diocesan facilities across Ohio that security remains a high priority. Each diocese collaborates with parishes and schools to encourage safety protocols that are up to date. Additionally, we

promote cooperation with local law enforcement agencies to audit procedures, provide safety training, or supply additional security support as needed. We all seek a welcoming environment where parishioners or visitors can enter a Church facility confident that they will encounter a peaceful space to encounter the Lord Jesus Christ.

In responding to the attack on Annunciation Parish in Minnesota, Pope Leo XIV exhorted the faithful, “Let us plead God to stop the pandemic of arms, large and small, which infects our world.” We understand the need for law enforcement and qualified security personnel to carry weapons and acknowledge that most firearm owners in Ohio and across the country are responsible and law-abiding. We also know that members of the faithful own various firearms for hunting and self-defense, and want to assure them that neither we nor the Church condemn this practice. Still, we cannot ignore the fact that the United States is a clear outlier from other countries in the number of firearm deaths plaguing communities through mass shootings, random or targeted acts of gun violence, and instances of suicide and accidental firings. The Holy Father, along with decades of guidance from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, laments that the number of arms continues to grow without widespread policies or comprehensive solutions for the common good. (Gun Violence; USCCB Committee on Domestic

Justice and Human Development – *A Mercy and Peacebuilding Approach to Gun Violence (updated background, 2025)*. In Ohio, a good start would be enacting background checks for private firearm sales or transfers and adding red flag laws to help safeguard persons experiencing mental health crises who may pose a risk to themselves or others, while supporting families and communities in identifying those risks.

For these reasons, it is prudent for the Church in Ohio to ensure that her ministries do not become associated with any proliferation of firearms. Therefore, in the exercise of our prudential judgment, each of us as bishop is implementing a new policy in our own respective dioceses prohibiting any Catholic parish or diocesan-affiliated organization or facility from (i) hosting a sale or raffle involving firearms or other weapons and (ii) accepting contributions directly or indirectly from a sale or raffle of firearms. The latter prohibition applies to indirect situations that could occur when an organization hosts a gun sale or raffle and then seeks to donate funds from the sale or raffle to a parish or Church ministry.

Questions regarding each diocese’s policy may be directed to the local diocesan chancery. As your bishops, we will continue to “work for private action and public policy which helps curb the violence in our land” and we call upon our parishes, affiliated organizations, and all the faithful to unite as “a community of faith reaching out to affirm and protect life, teaching right from wrong,


educating the young, serving the hurting, healing the wounds, building community, praying and working for peace” (*Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action, USCCB*).

Our response to violence must start with prayer and the proclamation of the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ. We must then put into action sound principles and policies to protect our faith communities and to promote authentic human flourishing. There are no easy fixes, and Catholics of good faith can disagree about solutions, but we are called to lead our society toward comprehensive responses to the violence around us. We believe this policy is one way we can work toward that goal.

Mother Mary, Queen of Peace – *Pray for Us*.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

Most Rev. Robert G. Casey
Archdiocese of Cincinnati
Most Rev. David J. Bonnar
Diocese of Youngstown
Most Rev. John Michael Botean
St. George Byzantine Catholic Diocese
Most Rev. Bohdan J. Danylo
Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St. Josaphat in Parma
Most Rev. Earl K. Fernandes
Diocese of Columbus
Most Rev. Edward M. Lohse
Diocese of Steubenville
Most Rev. Edward C. Malesic
Diocese of Cleveland
Most Rev. Robert M. Pipta
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Parma
Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas
Diocese of Toledo
Most Rev. Michael Woost
Diocese of Cleveland



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of COLUMBUS
OFFICE of the BISHOP

GENERAL DECREE

SPONSORING THE SALE OF FIREARMS

AND THE ACQUISITION OF GOODS FROM FIREARM SALES

The Bishops of the Ohio Catholic Conference (OCC) desire to promote a unified response to, in the words of Pope Leo XIV, the “pandemic of arms, large and small, which affects our world.”

As one concrete response to this, the Bishops of the OCC issued a joint statement of 5 November 2025, in which it was agreed that the Bishops would enact matching policies each in his own diocese prohibiting the acceptance of funds directly or indirectly related to the sale of firearms.

Canon 1262 §1 states, “Christ’s faithful have the right to donate temporal goods for the benefit of the Church.” Not every donation must be accepted, and some can be lawfully refused.

Canon 1267 §2 states in part, “If there is question of a public juridical person the offering mentioned in §1 cannot be refused except for a just reason and, in matters of greater importance, with the permission of the Ordinary.” Notwithstanding the lawful use of firearms by many in the community for hunting and self-defense, the necessity to ensure that the ministries of the Church are not associated with the proliferation of firearms is a just reason and a matter of greater importance for lawful refusal of such donations due to the nature of and representation of firearms in today’s society.


This policy is meant to promote and further aid in the safety of the faithful and all visitors to Catholic Churches, schools and diocesan facilities in the Diocese of Columbus.

Therefore, I decree the following:

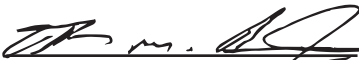
- The hosting of a sale or a raffle involving firearms or other weapons by any Catholic parish or diocesan entity of the Diocese of Columbus is prohibited;
- The accepting of contributions directly or indirectly from the sale or raffle of firearms by any Catholic parish or diocesan entity of the Diocese of Columbus is prohibited.

This decree is effective upon promulgation by publication in the electronic Clergy Bulletin, in *The Catholic Times*, and on the Diocesan website.

Given at the Diocese of Columbus Chancery Office on this 14th day of November 2025.



Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus



Deacon Thomas M. Berg, Jr.
Chancellor

Clergy assignments announced

The Diocese of Columbus announced the following clergy assignments on Dec. 6-7.

Reverend Donald Chinomso Abii, from service outside of the diocese to Chaplain, Genesis Hospital, Zanesville, in residence at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Zanesville, effective November 6, 2025.

Confirming the appointment by the Provincial of the Theatine Fathers in the United States, **Reverend Héctor Del Río Piña, CR**, from service outside the diocese, to Parochial Vicar,

St. Mary Magdalene Parish, Columbus and St. Agnes Parish, Columbus, effective December 1, 2025.

Reverend Msgr. Frank Lane from Administrator, Our Lady Queen of the Apostles Parish, Chillicothe and Waverly, to Retirement, continuing as Spiritual Guardian of Priests, effective February 13, 2026.

Reverend Sean M. Dooley from Pastor, St. Brendan the Navigator Parish, Hilliard, to Pastor, Our Lady Queen of the Apostles Parish, Chillicothe and

Waverly, effective February 13, 2026.

Reverend Michael J. Lumpe from Chaplain, Mother Angeline McCrory Manor and Villas at St. Therese, Columbus, to Pastor, St. Brendan the Navigator Parish, Hilliard, continuing as Vicar for Senior and Infirm Priests and Vicar for Hospital Ministry, effective February 13, 2026.

Reverend Jacob Stinnett, to Coordinator of Hospital Chaplains, continuing Hospital and Pastoral Ministry, effective February 13, 2026.

BISHOP EARL K. FERNANDES

Decree updates ethical, religious directives for healthcare providers

My Dear Friends in Christ,

In this issue of *The Columbus Catholic Times*, you will find a decree that I issued on November 18, 2025, immediately following the gathering of the Bishops of the United States in Baltimore, regarding the 7th Edition of the Ethical and Religious Directives, which govern Catholic healthcare facilities – hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, etc. With this degree, I have made those directives particular law for the Diocese of Columbus, which means they are binding on all Catholic hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, and the like within our 23 counties.

The Bishops of the United States overwhelmingly adopted the modest changes to the previous edition of the Ethical and Religious Directives. In fact, 206 voted in favor, 8 abstained, and 7 voted against the changes, after wide consultation with experts, including the Catholic Medical Association, National Catholic Bioethics Center, Catholic Health Association, and the Alliance of Catholic Health Care.

Principally, the changes wanted to incorporate the 2023 Doctrinal Note of the USCCB Committee on Doctrine, which prohibited surgical or chemical interventions seeking to exchange or simulate the sex characteristics of a patient's body for those of the opposite sex. Other changes also strengthened the Church's teaching regarding the dignity of human life and the dignity of the human person, incorporating insights from Dignitas Infinita. There is also greater emphasis on the need for palliative care and pastoral accompaniment of those who are suffering.

Of course, there are many procedures which are

prohibited in Catholic facilities – abortion, sterilization, distribution of contraceptives, euthanasia, physician assisted suicide, gender reassignment surgery. This will lead some to accuse Catholic hospitals and healthcare facilities of not being “full service” hospitals. Behind our “No” to these immoral actions is a great “Yes” to the goodness of human life and to the God of Life, Whom we serve. Of course, many of these actions are not really healthcare at all, and our Catholic facilities offer high quality, compassionate care, prioritizing the person over profit.

Additionally, while a handful of directives prohibit certain actions, the vast majority of the 77 directives are positive, helping to guide the actions of Catholic hospitals and caregivers to minister to the sick as part of the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. They assist in establishing a culture of care, which reflects the compassion of the heart of Christ. They incarnate within the Catholic facilities authentic Catholic Social Doctrine and the Gospel of Life.

I am grateful for all those who make Catholic healthcare possible in the Diocese of Columbus and for their efforts in helping to build a Culture of Life in which every person is valued, cared for and loved. As we prepare to celebrate the Birth of the Savior, I commend all of you to Christ the Divine Physician. May He bring you the healing and peace you desire.

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



DECREE GENERAL DECREE ESTABLISHING THE 7TH EDITION OF THE ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS DIRECTIVES FOR CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE SERVICES AS PARTICULAR LAW IN THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

Mindful of my responsibility as diocesan bishop to safeguard the integrity and unity of the truths of the faith, moral principles, and ecclesiastical discipline in the works of the apostolate pertaining to health care in the Diocese of Columbus (cf. canons 392, 394, 678, and 747);

I, Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes, by the grace of God and the Apostolic See Bishop of Columbus, hereby issue this General Decree in accord with canon 29 establishing the 7th edition of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* as particular law in the Diocese of Columbus.

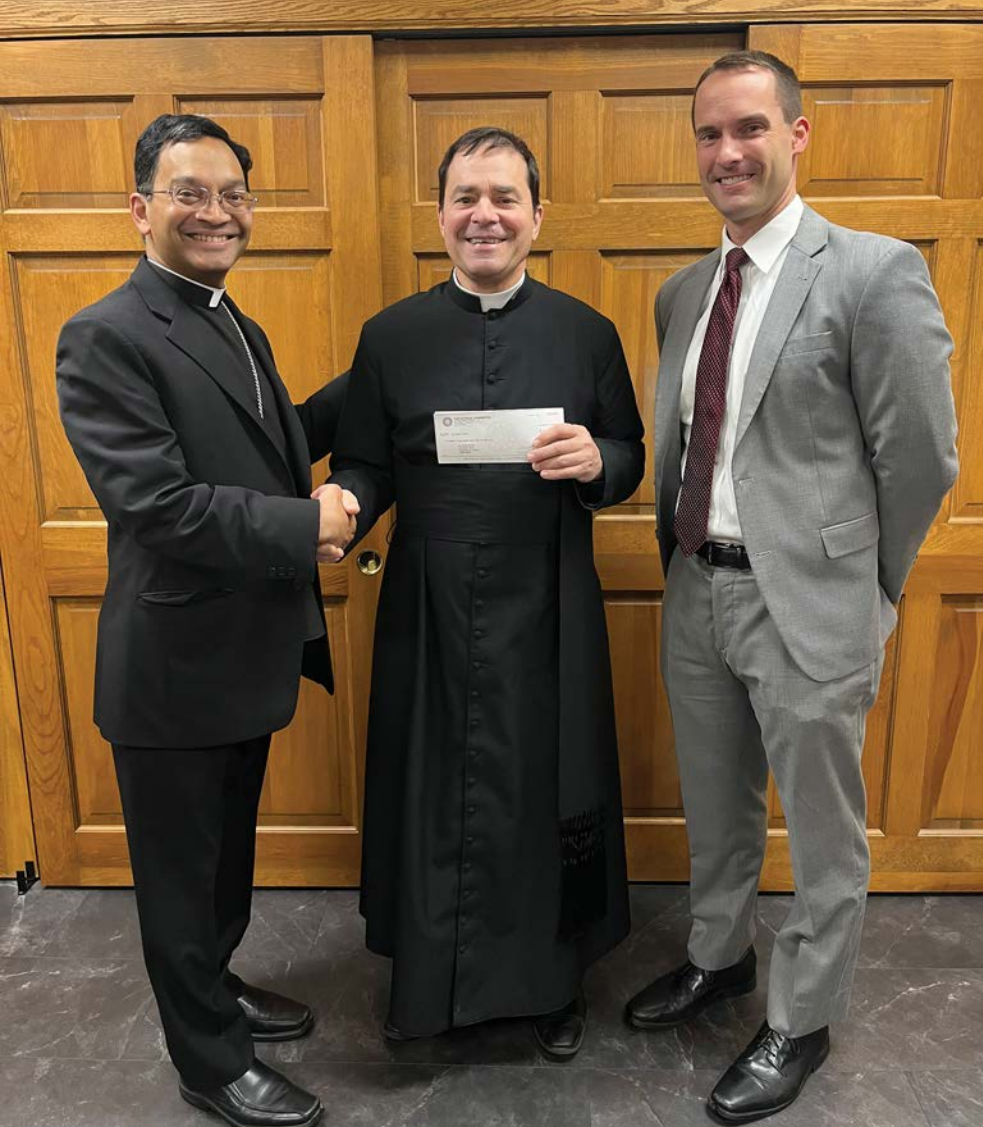
The 7th Edition of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* is to be promulgated in accord with canon 9, §2 by publication of the text on the Internet Website for the Diocese of Columbus (www.columbuscatholic.org) and by delivering a copy of same and a copy of this decree to the chief executive officer and the sponsors of all Catholic health care institutions located in the Diocese of Columbus. The provisions of the 7th Edition of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* shall become effective and binding within the Diocese of Columbus on November 18, 2025, any particular legislation, directives, or instructions to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given this 18th day of November, 2025 at the Chancery, 198 East Broad Street, Columbus, Ohio.

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

Rev. Mr. Thomas M. Berg, Jr.
Rev. Mr. Thomas M. Berg, Jr.
Chancellor & Notary

St. Cecilia awarded grant for school upgrades



Bishop Earl Fernandes presents an \$20,000 grant from Challenge in Changing Times funds to Father Thomas Buffer, pastor of Columbus St. Cecilia Church, for safety and security upgrades at St. Cecilia School. The Challenge in Changing Times Campaign was the most recent Diocesan Capital Campaign held in 2000. Pictured are Bishop Fernandes, Father Thomas Buffer and Dan Kurth, vice president of grants for The Catholic Foundation.

Photo courtesy The Catholic Foundation

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The colors of our faith: living unity in diversity

By Father Tesfaye Petros Botachew
Director, Multicultural Ministry Office

It was a moment to pause and reflect a time to meet brothers laboring in the same vineyard of the Lord. The 2025 Convocation marked the first time in my 20 years of priestly life that I gathered with

such a large number of priests. The days were filled with grace and deep spiritual experiences, not only through inspiring presentations and communal prayers but also through personal encounters with priests of different ages, cultures and pastoral backgrounds. I felt especially blessed to spend time

with senior priests whose lives overflow with wisdom and pastoral insight. After learning about my ministry in the Diocese of Columbus, several of them offered valuable advice for the work of the Multicultural Ministry Office. Their words reminded me that our Catholic identity has always been marked by both

diversity and universality. From her very beginning, the Church has embraced peoples from every nation and culture, each bringing their own gifts to enrich the Body of Christ.

Living portrait of universal church

The Diocese of Columbus beautifully reflects this universal character. Indeed, if anyone wishes to witness the universality of the Catholic Church, they need to come to Columbus.

As director of the Multicultural Ministry Office, I take great joy in introducing the many ethnic communities that make up our diocese. Each community lives its faith and worships God in its own unique and beautiful way. While most are integrated into local parishes, some gather monthly or weekly for Mass and prayer in their own languages and cultural expressions, hosted by different parishes. These celebrations are a living testimony of the Church's diversity within unity.

Among the vibrant communities present in our diocese are the South Korean, Haitian, Indian (Tamil), Filipino, Vietnamese, Brazilian, Nigerian, Cameroonian, Ghanaian, African-American, East African (Swahili-speaking, Kenyan, Tanzanian, Rwandan, and Congolese Catholics), as well as French-speaking communities from various countries. Each group enriches our Church through its songs, language and witness of faith.

What many Catholics do not realize is that our diversity is not only cultural but also liturgical. The Catholic Church is composed of 24 autonomous ("sui iuris") Churches -- one Western (the Latin or Roman Rite) and 23 Eastern Catholic churches, each with its own liturgical traditions, spiritual heritage and disciplines. All are fully in communion with the Pope, the Bishop of Rome.

The Eastern Catholic Churches enrich the universal Church with their deep spirituality, ancient traditions and symbolic beauty. Here are some of those represented in our diocese: Ge'ez (Eritrean and Ethiopian), Syro-Malabar (from India), Maronite Catholic Church (from Lebanon), Melkite (mainly from Syria and Jordan and other countries) and the Byzantine Catholic Church, which is represented by faithful from Slovenia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, Croatia and other regions and celebrates the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.

All of these rites share the same faith, the same sacraments and the same communion with the Pope. Their diversity shows that the Gospel transcends language, race, and culture, uniting all believers in Christ.

Church learns, grows through diversity

The Second Vatican Council expressed this truth beautifully in *Lumen Gentium* (no. 13):

"All men are called to be part of this catholic unity of the People of God ... In virtue of this catholicity, each individual part brings its own gifts to the other parts and to the whole Church, so that the whole and each of the parts receive increase."

Likewise, *Gaudium et Spes* (no. 44) reminds us that the Church learns from the diversity of peoples and cultures, enriching her mission through them. Pope Francis continues this vision in *Evangelii Gaudium* (no. 117): "The unity brought by

NO	MASS	SCHEDULE	CHURCH	TIME
1	Brazilian	Each Sunday	Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelization Parish 143 E. Patterson Ave. Columbus, OH 43202	7:15 p.m.
2	Haitian	Second, third, fourth Sunday	St. Josphine Bakhita Parish 6077 Sharon Woods Blvd. Columbus, OH 43229	1:00 p.m.
3	Ghanaian	Each Sunday	St. Aloysius Parish 2165 W. Broad St. Columbus, OH 43223	10:30 a.m.
4	Korean	Each Sunday	Korean Catholic Community 1300 Urban Dr. Columbus, OH 43229	11:00 a.m.
5	Vietnamese	Each Sunday	SS Augustine & Gabriel Parish 1550 E Hudson St. Columbus, OH 43211	12:00 p.m.
6	Indian Tamil	Third Sunday	St. Brigid Kildare Parish 7179 Avery Rd. Dublin, OH 43017	5:00 p.m.
7	East African	First Sunday	St. Josphine Bakhita Parish 6077 Sharon Woods Blvd. Columbus, OH 43229	1:00 p.m.
8	Nigerian	First, third Sunday	St. Matthias Church 1582 Ferris Road Columbus, OH 43224	4:00 p.m.
9	Cameroon	First, third Sunday	St. Dominic Parish 455 N. 20th St. Columbus, OH 43203	1:00 p.m.
10	French Community	Second, fourth Sunday	St. Dominic Parish 455 N. 20th St. Columbus, OH 43203	1:30 p.m.
11	Diverse community	Monthly	St. Josphine Bakhita Parish 6077 Sharon Woods Blvd. Columbus, OH 43229	11:00 a.m.
12	Filipino	First Saturday, First Wednesday, novena	St. Josphine Bakhita Parish 6077 Sharon Woods Blvd. Columbus, OH 43229	7:00 p.m.
13	African-American	Each Sunday	St. Dominic Parish 455 N. 20th St. Columbus, OH 43203	10:00 a.m.
14	Melkite	Each Sunday	Holy Resurrection Church 4611 Glenmawr Ave. Columbus, Ohio 43224	11:00 a.m.
15	Syro-Malabar/Indian	Each Sunday	Sacred Heart Catholic Church 893 Hamlet St. Columbus, OH 43201	12:00 p.m.
16	Eritrean Ge'ez	Each Sunday	St. John Chrysostom Church 5858 Cleveland Ave. Columbus, OH 43231	12:00 p.m.
17	Byzantine	Each Sunday	St. John Chrysostom Church 5858 Cleveland Ave. Columbus, OH 43231	10:00 a.m.
18	Maronite	Each Sunday	Our Lady of Victory Church 1559 Roxbury Rd. Columbus, OH 43212	11:30 a.m.

St. Dominic's two campuses continue outreach to community

By Tim Puet

For The Catholic Times

The past year has been a time for changes and continued outreach to the community at Columbus St. Dominic Church's two campuses.

The church, at 455 N. 20th St., has added Masses for the area's Cameroonian and French-speaking communities and has a new pastor, Father Jude Esau Fongouck. Its parish center continues to serve meals three days a week to as many as 240 people and its religious education program has become more family-oriented.

The church's St. John Community Center at 640 S. Ohio Ave. continues to be the home for several social service and adult education activities and to serve as a meal site daily except Sunday, as well as continuing a weekly food distribution program.

It's located in the former Columbus St. John School, next to the Holy Rosary-St. John Church building, which has not served as a worship site since mid-2024, when its congregation and that of St. Dominic were merged.

Father Fongouck, known familiarly by St. Dominic parishioners as Father Jude, a priest for 15 years, comes from Cameroon, a central African nation where Catholics make up about 40 percent of the population, giving it one of the strongest Catholic presences on the continent.

He replaced Father Antony Varghese, CFIC, as pastor in July. Father Varghese remains pastoral administrator of Columbus St. Francis of Assisi Church.

Father Fongouck said he was recruited by Bishop Earl Fernandes through the bishop's friend, Bishop Jerome Feudjio of the U.S. Virgin Islands, specifically to serve Cameroonian and French-speaking Catholics of central Ohio at St. Dominic, which has been primarily a community of African American Catholics for about 60 years.

The church has Masses every Sunday at 10 a.m. featuring its long-established Gospel choir, with Masses for the Cameroonian community in English at 1 p.m. on the first and third Sundays of each month and in French at the same time on the second and fourth Sundays. The schedule changes for solemnities such as the feasts of Corpus Christi and the Holy Family, with one bilingual Mass at 11 a.m.

"Those Masses have become a real treat and something to look forward to because of how they unite the various smaller communities within our larger parish community," said Sheila Jones, who volunteers for the St. Dominic breakfast and lunch program. "I'd like to see more of them."

The church hosted a Mass for all African ethnic groups on Sunday, Dec. 7 with Bishop Fernandes celebrating.

Father Esua said 125 to 150 people generally come to the Cameroonian Masses, with attendance as high as 240 on Christmas and Easter. About 60 people



Portia Syverson (left), Mandy Nwogu (center) and Chloe Wharton sort a few of the 600 baskets of food St. Dominic Church distributed to those in need at Thanksgiving.

Photo courtesy Charlene Brown

attend the Masses in French, which formerly took place at Columbus Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church. He said that because it involves driving a greater distance for most of the French-speaking Catholics, fewer people go to those Masses since they were moved.

"It's a necessity for most every one to speak English if they want to have a job, but being able to have a Mass where they can identify with the culture familiar to them is extremely important to the Cameroonian and French-speaking populations," Father Fongouck said. "Having those Masses plus our regular Sunday Masses provides an example of unity in diversity."

He said St. Dominic has about 240 registered parishioners, with people coming to the parish from throughout Franklin County and from as far away as Lancaster and Chillicothe because of the type of Masses celebrated there.

Father Fongouck also is a chaplain at Ohio State University's Wexner Medical Center and University Hospital East, where he serves on Tuesdays and Thursdays and in cases of sacramental emergency.

"I work at the parish office, which is at the St. John Center, on Wednesdays and Fridays, so I'm able to keep an eye on happenings there. On Saturdays, I check with the choir and prepare the liturgy and homilies. Sunday of course is for Masses and Mondays are my off days. The variety of activities has quickly gotten me busy and very involved in Columbus in my short time here," he said.

"Father Jude is very sociable and wants to come to people's houses," Jones said. "It's great to have someone willing to do that. He's only been here a short time, but makes you feel so comfortable you can talk to him about anything. I've been seeing new people coming to Mass every Sunday, so he seems to be having a positive impact."

Jones, her aunt, Bunny Neal, and Patrice

Smith, a resident of the parish neighborhood, have been doing most of the cooking since the parish center began serving home-cooked meals in July 2023. The meal program is known as Cecil's Café in honor of longtime parish employee Cecil Douglas. It serves breakfast from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. and lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

"We don't have a web page or anything else to promote what we do, but it doesn't seem to matter," she said. "It's all word of mouth. People just hear about us and they keep coming. We feed 175 to 240 people for lunch and 50 to 75 for breakfast."

"Many of the ones at breakfast are school kids. They can get school breakfasts but say they'd rather come here because what they get at school doesn't taste as good as we make, probably because we do all our cooking from scratch."

"I don't even like cooking that much, but I love the smiles on those kids' faces and on the people who are our regulars."

Jones said that for Thanksgiving, Cecil's Café provided 667 baskets with turkeys donated by parishioners from Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church and the New Albany Church of the Resurrection, plus other holiday food. She said about 275 baskets went to people who regularly come to the weekday meals, with the rest to neighborhood residents.

Meals at the St. John Center campus have been served since 1979 by the Community Kitchen, Inc., an organization that began as a nonprofit ministry in 1979 and since 1985 has been a federal 501-c-3 nonprofit operating independently of the church, with a board of directors representing the community.

The kitchen is open from 8 to 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on weekdays and 8:30 to 2 p.m. Saturdays. Its president and chief executive officer, MJ McCleskey, said it serves about 150,000 meals annually and delivers meals to other locations.

It shares space in the St. John Center



Three generations of family members (from left) grandmother Tina Moody, mother Jessica Wharton and daughter Chloe Wharton honor deceased relatives by decorating ofrendas (altars) as part of St. Dominic Church Parish School of Religion's Family Ministry. Photo courtesy Charlene Brown

basement with the St. John Food Pantry, which remains a program of the parish and has been open since the 1980s. Its hours are 9 to 10:30 a.m. Thursdays.

"We've given out about 3,500 food packages this year. With three meals per package, that makes about 10,500 individual meals," said Rose Moses, pantry volunteer coordinator, who has been involved with the pantry for more than 20 years. Packages include one bag of perishable foods (meat, milk, fruit, etc.), mostly from the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, and two bags of nonperishables from churches and other organizations.

"This summer, the numbers started to increase and that was to be expected with the cutbacks to several federal programs. Yesterday (Dec. 4) we had 10 new families. The cuts haven't affected us too much because of the support we get from parishes and from volunteers who help us maintain the Catholic presence at the pantry and in the neighborhood."

"Deacon Dave (Bezusko, diocesan director of charities) is working on forming a network of all the Catholic food pantries in the diocese and we look forward to being a part of that."

Moses said her pantry received Thanksgiving turkeys from St. Paul and Christ the King churches this year and was assisted throughout the year by Columbus St. Catharine, Dublin St. Joan of Arc and Columbus-Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Church, as well as the Knights of St. Peter Claver auxiliary, the River House apartments and others.

During the Christmas season, the pantry distributes hats, gloves and blankets from the Gahanna St. Matthew the Apostle Church knitting ministry.

Charlene Brown, parish religious education director, said there has been much

See OUTREACH, Page 21

COLORS: Living unity in diversity, Continued from Page 10

the Spirit can harmonize every diversity." And the early Church Fathers affirmed the same truth. St. Irenaeus wrote:

"Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace" (Against Heresies, III, 24, 1).

The diversity of peoples, rites and tradi-

tions has never divided the Church — it has revealed the power of the Holy Spirit, who binds all things together in love and truth. Our diversity is not a threat but a gift, a reflection of God's own beauty within His Church. It is a living witness that the Gospel belongs to every nation, every culture and every tongue (Revelation 7:9).

You are warmly invited to visit these

Catholic communities and experience for yourself the richness of worship and faith that together reveal the universal face of the Church. In our diversity, we see the colors of God's grace different, yet beautifully united in Christ.

Let us continue to celebrate our unity in diversity, walking together as one family of faith, enriched by the many colors that

make up the living mosaic of the Church of Columbus.

On the previous page is a schedule of non-Spanish ethnic Masses in the diocese as of Dec. 14. Mass schedules are subject to change. Check parish websites or bulletins for updates.

St. Paul turns gym into St. Carlo Acutis Discipleship Center

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

Recently canonized millennial St. Carlo Acutis (1991-2006) is often depicted wearing Nike shoes and dubbed the “saint in sneakers.”

Students at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle School will take after the young saint as they run in their tennis shoes across a newly renovated gym named in his honor.

The school recently transformed its “old gym” into the St. Carlo Acutis Discipleship Center.

“It’ll be a long-lasting legacy of St. Carlo looking over our school,” principal Andrea Pore said.

The Church’s first millennial saint, who died of leukemia at age 15, was canonized by Pope Leo IX in September. The devout Italian Catholic is not unlike teenagers today. He enjoyed video games and was buried in his Nikes and jeans.

Renovations to St. Paul’s old gym, which is used for sports and physical education classes for children in grades kindergarten through fourth grade, were completed earlier this school year.

A planning process began two years ago to remodel the space. It entailed a make-over complete with fresh flooring, wall paint, lighting and basketball hoops.

The school also has a “new” gym, the Klinger Center, used by students in upper grade levels.

Once renovations were complete in the old gym, the name “old” no longer fit. Pore said she and the parish’s pastor, Father Jonathan Wilson, agreed parishioners and school families should have a say in naming the facility.

A Google survey was sent to the St. Paul community during the summer. Participants were asked to vote on a name – whether a saint or virtue – reflecting St. Paul’s mission to call, form and send disciples of Jesus Christ.

By the beginning of September, the school was ready to move forward with a decision.



A relic of St. Carlo Acutis was displayed at St. Paul School next to a photo and prayer cards, part of the traveling “Eucharistic Miracles of the Word” exhibit that visited St. Paul in September. Photos courtesy St. Paul the Apostle School



St. Paul students pray in front of a relic of St. Carlo Acutis on Sept. 5, two days before he was canonized a saint.



The St. Carlo Acutis Discipleship Center, formerly the old gym, was renamed following an overwhelming vote from school families and parishioners.

“It was absolutely overwhelming how many of our parents and our parishioners said that it should be named after St. Carlo Acutis,” Pore recalled.

Perhaps by divine providence, the first

event to be held in the renovated gym the first weekend of September was a relic of Carlo and a Eucharistic miracles exhibit, coinciding with his canonization. The exhibit showcased Eucharistic miracles doc-

umented on a website the millennial saint created.

“What was very interesting and providential, definitely with the Holy Spirit,” Pore added, “is the weekend that we were looking at the votes – because of the canonization of Carlo (on Sunday, Sept. 7) – we were having the ‘Miracles of the Eucharist’ exhibit on Friday for our school kids.”

The name for the new center was announced by Father Wilson on Friday, Sept. 5 during an all-school Mass. About 1,000 students and staff were present.

The pastor shared that not only would they venerate a relic of soon-to-be St. Carlo Acutis – their gym would bear his name.

“Our kids went crazy. They were so excited,” Pore recalled. “The fact that his relic was there that weekend was just beautiful – it was absolutely beautiful.”

For the announcement, students were asked to wear red with their uniforms. St. Carlo is often depicted wearing a polo shirt of the color.

Students were also given a prayer card that could be used while venerating Carlo’s relic.

The St. Carlo Acutis Discipleship Center opened its doors for parishioners to visit the exhibit and venerate the saint’s relic the weekend of Sept. 6-7.

The school’s principal estimated that approximately 3,500 individuals passed through the center that weekend.

“Our parents really were saying, our kids got so involved in this beautiful canonization of a saint that they could relate to, and it made our kids feel like they were part of the Universal Church,” she noted.

The discipleship center features the school’s new mission statement, rolled out at the beginning of the 2025-26 school year: St. Paul the Apostle exists to call, form and send disciples of Jesus Christ.

The school is currently working with a company to design various banners and signage for the center. It plans to incorporate a banner of St. Carlo and signs featuring a few of his quotes, estimated to be finished by January.

Thousands of holy hours logged at St. Paul’s Adoration chapel since September opening

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

As the foster father of Christ, St. Joseph regularly spent time Adoring the Lord. Faithful are invited to do likewise in a chapel at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church bearing his name.

The St. Joseph Adoration Chapel inside St. Paul Church opened earlier this fall to parishioners, visitors and anyone seeking a quiet space to come and adore Christ in the Eucharist.

With the addition of the chapel, Eucharistic exposition at St. Paul was expanded from one to five days a week. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in the sacred space from Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. each day.

As of Dec. 3, 2,400 holy hours had been prayed in the chapel since its opening less than three months earlier. The number did not include individuals who spent time in Adoration in the chapel without signing up for a holy hour.

An estimated 40 to 50 individuals daily sign up for an hour of Adoration in the chapel, which seats 22 people. Several stop by for five or 10 minutes before or after work, or while dropping their children off at St. Paul School.

“It’s been thousands of people in and out,” the parish’s parochial vicar, Father Kevin Girardi, said.

“That speaks to the fact that people here at St. Paul’s are hungry for the Eucharist, they’re hungry for Adoration, they’re hungry to spend time before the Lord. There’s not many places where you could go from one day of Adoration to five immediately.”

Father Jonathan Wilson, who was installed as the church’s pastor in 2019, emphasized Adoration as being central to the parish. The pious practice grew during the past six years of his pastorate, ultimately presenting a need for extended Adoration hours.

Expanding time for Eucharistic exposition created an additional need.

If Adoration were to increase from one day per week – offered Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the church – to multiple times weekly, a space would be needed for adorers.

Planning for a chapel was set in motion last spring. Construction in the lower level of the church began in August.

“Within about a month, it went from a normal meeting room into a chapel,” Father Girardi remarked.

An opening Mass was celebrated by Father Wilson on Wednesday, Sept. 10 in the chapel. The pastor blessed and consecrated the altar and tabernacle in the space.

A member of the parish handcrafted linens and a veil for the tabernacle. Another parishioner donated time and talent to construct the altar.



Individuals gather for prayer and an opening Mass on Sept. 10 in Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church’s St. Joseph Adoration Chapel, which seats up to 22 people. Photo/St. Paul the Apostle Church

Statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph are stationed on each side. Adorers often place flowers at their feet.

The chapel’s name was inspired by the foster father of Christ and universal patron of the Church.

“This parish has a wonderful devotion to Our Lady and the rosary,” Father Girardi explained. “Filling out the (Holy) Family and dedicating this to St. Joseph – especially that masculine heart that he has to be able to form a lot of the fathers here – I think it’s something that’s really important to entrust.”

As the Church looks ahead to the New Year, the parish will urge individuals – from St. Paul and the surrounding area – to commit to spend an hour weekly in the chapel in 2026.

Father Girardi spoke to many benefits from spending time with Jesus in the Eucharist that people experience.

“It’s the one hour of true peace, of quiet, of serenity with the Lord that they don’t get anywhere else,” he reflected. “It mysteriously becomes the center of their week, the center of their hearts – the center of their life.”

Sacred Hearts Church installs St. Carlo Acutis window

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

Three weeks after Pope Leo XIV canonized St. Carlo Acutis, Cardington Sacred Hearts Church installed a stained-glass window with his image.

The stained glass, designed by Mellini, was the first that the Italian company made of the new saint. The 15-year-old, who died of leukemia in 2006, lived his less than two decades of life with a special devotion to the Eucharist, creating a website documenting Eucharistic miracles.

While other stained-glass windows of the young boy have been designed, few exist worldwide.

Sacred Hearts Church, located in Morrow County, holds the title as one of the first parishes to feature a window of the Church's newest saint.

Bishop Earl Fernandes blessed new stained-glass windows, including of St. Carlo Acutis, at Sacred Hearts Church this year following a Thanksgiving Day Mass commemorating the 10th anniversary of the church's dedication.

Sacred Hearts was rebuilt a decade ago and dedicated in 2015. Its previous church building burned to the ground in a fire on Thanksgiving Day 2013.

On the holiday two years later, a new church was dedicated in its place. It included several windows, but none were stained-glass.

Parishioners discussed the possibility of upgrading their windows. In February 2024, they proposed an idea to move forward with the project. Sacred Hearts raised the necessary funds and partnered with the Italian window company, which designed each of the images.

Father Ed Shikina submitted a list of saints to Mellini in November 2024. The parish chose stained-glass windows de-

picting men and women devoted to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary – the church's namesake.

Coincidentally, the Vatican announced the same month that Carlo Acutis was to be canonized a saint in April 2025.

The announcement coincided with the Cardington church's decision of which saints to feature in the stained-glass windows.

Father Shikina was eager to add the young soon-to-be saint to the list. Carlo's image would show the teenager in his blue jeans, tennis shoes and carrying a laptop computer by his side.

The church's pastor said he wanted parishioners to know that they, too, can be saints. The youth, he suspected, could especially relate to Carlo as a millennial saint of their time.

However, when Pope Francis died on Easter Monday in April, Carlo's canonization was postponed.

"I got a little nervous because the window would say 'St. Carlo Acutis,' and even though I was confident that he would be declared a saint, it still wasn't a sure thing," Father Shikina recalled.

"It was sort of a running joke that, well, we hope that a new date is set for Carlo Acutis to be canonized so that we can have a saint that actually matches what is ... on the window."

Much to the parish's relief, the Vatican announced in June that Pope Leo would canonize Carlo alongside St. Pier Giorgio Frassati on Sept. 7, 2025.

Weeks after the canonization, the stained-glass windows were installed in Sacred Hearts Church. The five-day installation project was completed on Oct. 3.

Each window features a male and female saint in tandem. St. Carlo Acutis is pictured alongside St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, who received apparitions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the 17th century.

Other saints with devotion to the Sacred Heart on windows in Sacred Hearts Church include St. John Eudes, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, St. Gertrude the Great and St. Maria Faustina Kowalska.

Stained-glass windows of St. Gregory the Great and St. Cecilia were installed in the church's choir loft.

Other stained-glass windows in the nave, or central part of the church where Mass is celebrated, include men and women with a devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary or a special love for the Blessed Mother.

The saints featured include St. Pio of Pietrelcina, St. Teresa of Calcutta, St. Francis de Sales and St. Maximilian Kolbe.

The church also has windows depicting the Nativity of Christ and Jesus' Resurrection from the dead.

Saints are depicted in what was likely their daily attire, so most are shown wearing religious habits. Symbolism, such as saints in religious orders, is also incorporated in the stained glass.

St. Carlo Acutis' image is quite different from the others.

Father Shikina said he wasn't concerned about the young boy's attire not matching images of saints in traditional garb.

"We want people to know that you don't have to look a certain way in order to be a saint," the pastor explained.

"He's relatable to the youth of today, where they could see him wearing blue jeans and carrying a laptop," Father Shikina said of St. Carlo. "I think that might only inspire them to realize that they, too, can be saints, even if they seem like they're just living normal lives."

The youth are not the only individuals who appreciate the image of the modern-day saint.

"I'm receiving comments from even the older generation of how they love the stained-glass window of St. Carlo Acutis," Father Shikina noted.



A stained-glass window shows St. Carlo Acutis with the Sacred Heart of Jesus and a laptop in hand next to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, who received apparitions of Christ's heart, one of several stained-glass windows recently installed at Sacred Hearts Church.

Photo courtesy Sacred Hearts

Each window features a yellow-tinted background.

The church's pastor said he was "concerned that people would miss the sunlight because, a lot of times, people would comment about how they love the sunlight."

As a precaution, "we decided to make (the background) yellow. It looks sort of like the sun is behind them," he explained of the saint images.

"When the sun comes in, it's still giving this yellow glow in the church."

St. Catharine parishioner writes saint-inspired book on Eucharistic miracles

By Elizabeth Pardi
For the Catholic Times

Dan Green, a parishioner at Columbus St. Catharine of Siena Church, has recently written and published a book on the science, history and theology of Eucharistic miracles.

Flesh, Blood and Wonder: Discovering the Heart of Jesus in Eucharistic Miracles was inspired by the newly canonized St. Carlo Acutis and his zeal for spreading awareness of Eucharistic miracles. Green wanted to use his own career experience as an emergency data analyst to educate readers on these supernatural phenomena.

"My goal wasn't just to compile stories," Green said, "but to explore how these miracles reveal God's personality and intention and how he meets us physically with love, even today."

Green, a husband and father of five, is donating all proceeds from the book to the Eucharistic Miracles of the World exhibition started by St. Carlo Acutis. The exhibit consists of enlarged photographs, documents and artwork pertaining to more than 140 Eucharistic miracles.

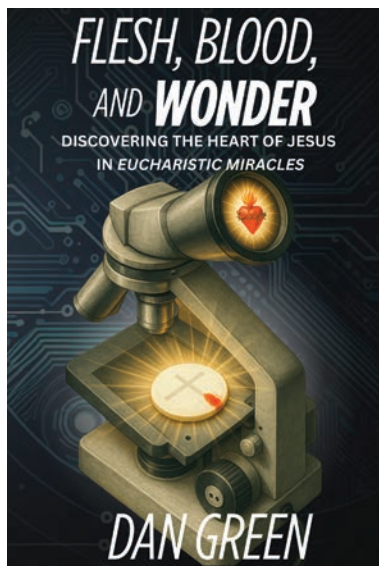
The large panels were designed to travel and be set up in various venues such as schools



Dan Green is the author of a new book "Flesh, Blood and Wonder."

or churches to be perused and studied by viewers. The saint also developed a website, miracolieucaristici.org, to complement the exhibit and make all the information accessible virtually.

"My hope ... is that the book may be a companion to the exhibit and encourage the world to spend more time with the accounts of these miracles," Green said. "In doing so, I hope that the world could be reminded of the immense gift we have in the Eucharist and that the wonder readers may have while contem-



plating (the miracles) would increase devotion to Jesus during this Eucharistic revival."

Green said through process of writing the book he has formed a friendship with St. Carlo Acutis, who would have been around the same age as him now.

"(We) had similar interests, and seeing pictures of him, even wore some of the same clothes," Green said.

After months of researching for the book, the saint's relics were brought to a church near Green's home. Shortly thereafter, his canonization was an-

nounced.

"It was special to see him elevated," Green said. "It felt a little like seeing a friend honored."

Flesh, Blood, and Wonder consists not only of multiple narrations of Eucharistic miracles but in-depth analyses of the times, places, witnesses and circumstances surrounding the events. Green includes graphs throughout the book to show the amount and frequency of various details, such as types of individuals involved (priests, desecrators or others).

"Each account is so deliberate and precise," Green said. "Studying the 'who,' 'what,' 'when,' 'where' and 'how' (helps) to understand 'why' God acted in these ways. Like a detective, by studying the circumstances surrounding an event, we can better understand the motives of a person."

For example, Green recounts in the book a miracle that took place in 1231 in Spain where not only angels but also the Christ Child appeared during a Mass being said outside a church in a royal court. As a result, many unbelieving witnesses, including the king and his family, converted to the faith. "The king's conversion reminds us that the Lord, in his mercy, seeks even

the distant and skeptical," Green wrote.

In providing so many details about each miracle, Green's intent is to show the deliberateness of God and refute any belief that these events are random or happenstance.

"My hope is to further convict the world about how purposeful God seeks us," he said. "Christ acts in the fullness of time in the exact circumstance that is necessary to reach (a) person and ... anyone else who studies the account of the miracle."

Through his research, Green has realized the biological consistencies throughout the miracles, such as the blood type identified from bleeding Hosts.

"Considering the scientific testing, not only can we conclude that it has been and continues to be the same person throughout history," Green said, "but also that he lives and the bread that he gives for the life of the world is his heart. A heart that loves us through pursuit and ... at Calvary was pierced and has flowed with so many miracles and graces through time since."

Flesh, Blood and Wonder is available for purchase on Amazon.



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Watterson wins third state sports title in five weeks

By Tim Puet

For The Catholic Times

Columbus Bishop Watterson High School completed a remarkable run of athletic achievement by defeating Toledo Central Catholic 30-0 on Friday, Dec. 5 to win the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) Division III football championship at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton.

It was the third state title in five weeks for teams representing the school. The Eagles won the OHSAA Division II girls cross country championship on Nov. 1 and the boys Division II soccer crown eight days later.

The football victory was the second in a row for Watterson over Central Catholic in a state title game and allowed the Eagles to finish 14-0 for the season and to extend their two-year winning streak to 30 games. The state championship was the fourth for Watterson, its others coming in 2002, 2010 and last year. Watterson and Central Catholic also met for the 2023 state crown with the Irish winning that game.

"I felt pretty good going into tonight because we had a great week of practice," Watterson coach Brian Kennedy said on the field immediately after the game. "They were prepared and worked very hard and it was great to see it come together.

"We try to put our kids in position to succeed. They don't play crazy or very complex, but they play fast and that's what they did tonight."

Watterson dominated as it did for most of the season. It was the Eagles' 12th straight game played with a continuously running clock for at least part of the second half once the margin reached 30 points.

Watterson opened with a 1-yard touchdown run by Jack McCoy and a scoring pass of 5 yards from Drew Bellisari to Joe Hayes in the first quarter. Eli Eagan added a 28-yard field goal in the second quarter, McCoy scored his second touchdown in the third quarter with a 13-yard run and Carter Bellisari, Drew's cousin, ran back an interception 35 yards in the fourth quarter.

Drew Bellisari had an off night, throwing four interceptions, but a strong defense led by linebacker Michael Boyle, selected the game's most valuable player, kept the Irish (11-5) out of the end zone, holding Central Catholic to 24 rushing yards and 179 yards overall. Bellisari completed 13 of 22 passes for 250 yards.

Watterson began the year by coming back from a 15-0 deficit to defeat Sunbury Big Walnut, which reached the Division II semifinals, 37-15, then played its only close game of the regular season, edging Middletown, Delaware, 14-13 as part of a three-game invitational program at Ironton featuring teams from Ohio, Illinois, Delaware and Virginia.

"Middletown was a big, physical team similar to Toledo Central, with a bunch of Division I commits. That was a good game for us and it was good to see that type of team because beating them showed we could play well the rest of the way," Kennedy said.

No one got within 30 points of the Eagles after that until the state championship game. Watterson finished with a 9-0 regular season, defeating Westerville North 38-0, Tiffin Columbian 81-7, Columbus Harvest Prep 36-6, Columbus St. Francis DeSales 42-7, Columbus Bishop Hartley 57-7, Canal Fulton Northwest 49-12 and Columbus St. Charles 65-7.

The Eagles had a first-round postseason bye, then posted playoff victories of 56-0 over Granville, 48-6 over Dresden Tri-Valley, 43-0 over Steubenville and 41-9



Columbus Bishop Watterson players and coaches enjoy their second consecutive Division III state football championship on the field at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton after defeating Toledo Central Catholic 30-0 on Friday, Dec. 5.

Photo courtesy Bishop Watterson High School

Faith is one of the things that binds this team. We talk about faith, family and community as being the three pillars of the team and of the school. The players know that in any tough situation, God is with them to support them. He has their backs.

— Brian Kennedy

Bishop Watterson High School football coach

over Tipp City Tippecanoe on their way to Canton.

Kennedy said the success of the previous two seasons bred a feeling going into this year of "not arrogance, but confidence. We're at the point where the program is now that we can talk about having goals of first, winning the Central Catholic League championship, then attempting a deep run in the postseason.

"Going for a third state championship game was a realistic goal because we had a lot of guys coming back, including two first-team all-state players in Bellisari at quarterback and Pete Eglitis on the offensive line, plus six sophomore starters returning on defense.

"The loss of 22 seniors left some leadership voids, but we had plenty of kids ready to step up and fill those spots. I've always believed in our kids and I wasn't worried about them feeling pressure to come back and not have a bad season," he said. "I just wanted to make sure we were ready for the season with guys who believed 100 percent in our goals, and the rest would take care of itself."

Bellisari, who will be going to Oxford, Ohio next fall to play for Miami University, has been the starting quarterback since the first game of his junior season and finished with a 30-0 record in that position. He was the Central District's offensive player of the year for 2025 and was considered a strong possibility for first-team All-Ohio honors again. This year's all-state team had not been announced when this issue of The Catholic Times went to press.

"Everything started with Drew," Kennedy said. "He's a tremendous leader on and off

the field. Everybody recognized he was 'the man' and gave him the respect you get when you keep showing leadership. He had full control of the team in the huddle and it showed in the way they played together."

Bellisari comes from a family with a strong football heritage. His father, Greg Bellisari, is a former Ohio State linebacker and now an assistant coach at Watterson. His uncle, Steve Bellisari, played quarterback for the Buckeyes from 1998 to 2001.

Drew Bellisari, Eglitis and McCoy were the Eagles' tri-captains for 2025. Eglitis, who committed to Iowa State as a junior, and Bellisari are the Eagles' only seniors planning to play Division I football in college. Junior free safety Nate Henderson is an Ohio State commitment in baseball as a left-handed pitcher. "He chose baseball but could make a lot of Division I football teams," the coach said.

"Eglitis is a three-year starter and his talent was so obvious that it was no surprise when he got recruited by Power Four schools as a junior," Kennedy said. "His leadership developed steadily over the course of three years. McCoy played running back and is a great comeback story. He tore up his knee badly as a sophomore and wasn't 100 percent last year. Now as a senior he was our leading rusher and showed a great example of persistence.

"Our defensive front seven was led by Ben Uhlenhake, a junior who has started in three state championship games in three years – at running back as a freshman and at middle linebacker the last two years, where he has been our leading tackler. He's another once with great football sense that probably comes from his family

background." His father, Jeff, is a Watterson assistant, played center at Ohio State and had a nine-year NFL career with Miami, New Orleans and Washington.

"Boyle is a two-time state wrestling champion who was this year's district defensive player of the year. He has a focus and an attitude you don't often see in kids that age. I'd also describe him as the team's spiritual leader. He prays the rosary before every game and his prayerful example is something many other kids have modeled.

"Faith is one of the things that binds this team," Kennedy said. "We talk about faith, family and community as being the three pillars of the team and of the school. The players know that in any tough situation, God is with them to support them. He has their backs.

"On Fridays before games, we always have a communion service as a team in the school chapel. It's important because the players go in with the excitement of having another game in a few hours, but the prayers and service calm them down and focus their minds on what's really important. Prayer right before and right after games is a must."

Toledo Central Catholic was in its fourth consecutive championship game and eighth overall under Greg Dempsey, who has been head coach of the Irish for 26 years and led the team to championships in 2005, 2012, 2014, 2022 and 2023.

"You can't help but respect a program like that. It's been a great privilege to have them as an opponent for the last three years," Kennedy said. "Every year, they're one of the top teams in the state. They bring in a lot of talent, but some coaches don't do a great job with that kind of talent. Greg does. His program and ours are very much the same in that winning seems to breed winning for both teams. It's a lot easier for kids to buy in to what you ask when they see it produces results."

This was Kennedy's ninth season at Watterson, where he is 80-30 overall. He's a 1992 graduate of the school, played defensive tackle at SMU, worked and coached in Dallas for a few years, then came back to his hometown, where he works at the Defense Supply Center Columbus. He joined the Watterson coaching staff as a volunteer assistant in 2004, rose in the coaching ranks and became head coach in 2017.

"I always had a desire for coaching, which I started to fulfill in Texas," he said. "But I'm not a teacher and had a hard time finding other work there, so I moved back home, found a wife, got a job and have been here ever since.

"Being successful is good, but the best thing about coaching is seeing guys mature from sort of goofy kids to intelligent and respectful young men. As with this year's team, for most of them, this is as far as they will go playing football, so my real job besides helping them grow as a team is helping with the life skills they need outside of sports.

"It's great to see my old players come back for games and tell me what they've accomplished and how football helped them. It's something coaches say all the time, but it's true that the satisfaction in coaching comes from making a difference in kids' lives."

Kennedy's 2026 team will have seven returning starters on offense and 10 on defense, and he anticipates entering the season with the same quiet confidence as this year's Eagles. "Our goal is to be back in Canton next year. With what we have coming back, it's not an unreasonable one," he said.

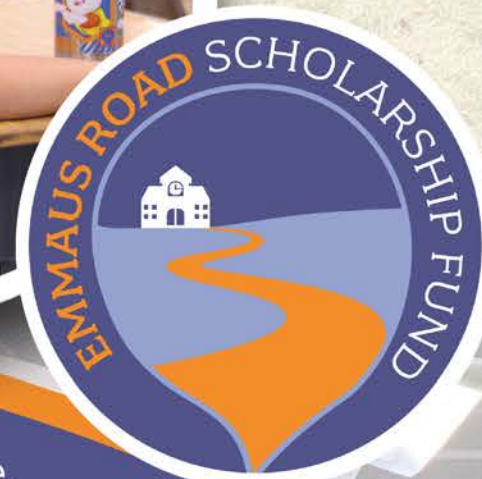
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Ready students put faith into action during season of service

At Columbus Bishop Ready High School, service is not simply a requirement but a lived expression of faith.

Rooted in the Gospel call to love our neighbors, Ready students consistently demonstrate what it means to lead with servant hearts. In recent weeks, the school community has rallied together to support local families through a series of donation drives.

The school held a peanut butter, jelly, ketchup and mustard drive after a local organization shared an urgent need for these staples. What began as a simple request quickly grew into a spirited class competition, resulting in 441 pounds of condiments collected. When students understand the “why” behind service, they respond with enthusiasm, generosity and joy.

Shortly after, Bishop Ready launched its

annual diaper drive, collecting 8,200 diapers for Bottoms Up Diaper Bank. These essentials will directly support families who often struggle to afford basic necessities. Initiatives like this allow students to uphold the dignity of the human person, especially the youngest and most vulnerable.

The school is now wrapping up a creative “Ritz vs. Saltines” cracker drive to support the Madison County Food Pantry. After learning that crackers were in desperate need, students once again stepped up. The friendly grade-level competition not only helped fill pantry shelves but taught students that service can be joyful and community-building.

And the momentum continues. Bishop Ready began its annual Angel Tree Toy Drive, providing Christmas gifts to children who might otherwise go without. This tra-



Columbus Bishop Ready High School students collected 441 pounds of condiments to support a local organization in need of food staples.
Photo courtesy Bishop Ready High School

dition reminds students that faith becomes real when we choose to act — especially during Advent, a season of hope and giving.

Through each effort, Bishop Ready students show that living their faith means tak-

ing responsibility for the needs of others. These young people understand that the world is changed not by grand gestures but by simple acts of love — one jar of peanut butter, one pack of diapers, one toy at a time.

Lancaster schools' staff members attend leadership conference

Staff from Lancaster St. Bernadette and St. Mary schools and Fisher Catholic High School traveled to South Bend, Indiana, for the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE) Leadership Conference at the University of Notre Dame held Nov. 9-11.

St. Bernadette principal Rachel Cavello and teachers Betsy Loy and Robin Sanders spoke at the conference. They presented “Building a Resilient School Culture: Aligning Valued Families, Students and Staff.”

“Building a positive, faith-filled and mission-centered school culture is something I am incredibly passionate about,” Cavello said. “It was the focus of my research while earning my master’s degree at the University of Notre Dame.”

“Culture truly drives everything we do,

and as we expand into a full middle school, we have been very intentional in cultivating a shared identity rooted in our faith, belonging, joy and purpose.”

The fourth annual ACE Leadership Conference offered sessions on instructional practices, artificial intelligence from a Catholic lens and Catholic Social Teaching.

Attendees learned from Catholic school leaders across the country. The conference offered insight into common challenges.

“We believe that our purpose is to make Jesus known, loved and served,” Cavello said of St. Bernadette School. “Our time at Notre Dame reinforced those beliefs and gave us new tools to live them out.”

“What we experienced there is exactly what we hope to model for our students

each day: a community united in faith, growing in virtue, supporting one another and becoming more like Christ in all that we do.”

Cavello, a St. Bernadette graduate, became principal in 2024. The growing school is currently raising money for an estimated \$2.5 million addition.

St. Bernadette added a sixth grade last year and a seventh grade this year. An eighth grade is set to be added next year.

Notre Dame’s ACE program sustains and strengthens under-resourced Catholic schools through leadership formation, research and professional service. ACE exists to ensure children, especially from low-income families, experience an excellent Catholic education.



Staff members from Lancaster St. Bernadette and St. Mary schools and Fisher Catholic High School took part in the Alliance for Catholic Education Leadership conference in South Bend, Indiana. Photo courtesy St. Bernadette School

DeSales student-athletes sign with colleges

Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School senior Jonathan Brown, joined by Stallions head coach Ryan Wiggins, signed with the University of Michigan during college football’s early signing day in December.

Photo courtesy DeSales High School



Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School seniors participated in a fall signing day in November. Student-athletes who will continue their academic and athletic careers at the collegiate level next year are (from left) Anna Bogan (lacrosse, Clemson University), Caroline Cross (lacrosse, Butler University), Lexie Whorton (lacrosse, University of Cincinnati), Campbell Heald (lacrosse, Brown University), Ryan Lee (lacrosse, Quinnipiac University), Weston Hewit (rowing, Iona University), Lyla Stewart (volleyball, Wake Forest University) and Gwen Stein (volleyball, Francis Marion University). Photo courtesy DeSales High School

Christ Our Light: A Christmas message for our Catholic schools

By Dr. Adam J. Dufault
Superintendent of Catholic Schools

As we move through the Advent season and prepare once again to celebrate the birth of Our Lord, I want to extend warm Christmas greetings to all the families, educators, staff members, and students of our Catholic schools. Each year, the mystery of the Incarnation invites us to pause and remember why our work matters: the eternal God enters our world as a child, drawing near to us so that we may draw near to Him. Everything we do in Catholic education—every lesson taught, every challenge met, every joy shared—is ultimately ordered toward helping young people encounter that same Christ who came to dwell among us.

This year in particular, I am grateful for the strong and vibrant Catholic culture continuing to grow across our schools. From the dedicated teachers who daily form students in mind and spirit, to the pastors and administrators who lead with faith and courage, to the families who entrust their children to our care, our schools continue to show what it means to educate in the light of the Gospel.

This fall, a group of school leaders from the diocese, accompanied by Bishop Fernandes, traveled to Rome for the Jubilee for Educators. Their experience, as many shared, renewed their sense of purpose and reminded them that Catholic education is not simply a profession but a vocation rooted in the life of the Church. Hearing the Holy Father speak about in-

teriority, unity, love, and joy offered a powerful affirmation of what we strive for in our schools. The lessons that we brought home, especially the call to cultivate an interior life that sustains our work, continue to bear fruit across our diocese.

Christmas is a season of light, and it comes to us each year precisely when the days are shortest. It is the Church’s way of reminding us that Christ shines most clearly in our moments of need, uncertainty, and longing. As we look toward the end of this year and the beginning of the next, I am hopeful. I see signs of growth, renewal, and grace throughout our school system. Enrollment continues to rise, families are embracing Catholic education in new ways, and our educators are leading with conviction and joy.

On behalf of the Office of Catholic Schools, I wish you and your families a blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year. May the light of Christ, born in Bethlehem, guide your homes and your hearts, and may He continue to bless the good work happening in Our Catholic Schools.



Dr. Adam J. Dufault

Third Sunday of Advent Year A

Advent requires patience, persistence, participation

Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10
Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

The desert and the parched land will exult (...) they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendor of our God. Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you. Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the mute will sing. (Is 35:1-6a)

Advent literally means “arrival,” and the Christian Advent is essentially connected with “waiting” and “waiting patiently” for the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah. This is what we hear from Isaiah, who announces the arrival of God, who comes to save! (v. 4) The Hebrew verb “to save” echoes the name of Jesus: *yasha’* – *Yeshua*. In Jesus, God saves us.

The annual recurrence of the feast of the Nativity has a special function. One of the Church Fathers said that if Christ is not born in your life, your celebration is in vain. Living Advent means to prepare ourselves and open ourselves so Christ may be born anew in our lives. In other words, he may become a more integral part of my daily

living and thus transform me into his likeness!

We hear the words of the prophet Isaiah encouraging us to wait patiently and without fear. If we do so, we shall see the glory of the Lord – healing of our hearts, opening of our eyes and ears. We will recognize his presence in our lives! (cf. Is 35:2.4-5)

Therefore, preparation is necessary! The key word in this preparation is “patience.” Patience is primarily expressed through the Greek word *hypomonē*, which means not merely “waiting” but remaining steadfast under trial. It is a form of spiritual endurance — a willingness to suffer, to wait and to persist in faithfulness without losing hope.

This virtue is not passive. Rather, it is a dynamic perseverance in love, rooted in trust in God’s providence and animated by the grace of the Holy Spirit. St. Maximos the Confessor (*Centuries on Love*, I.14.) calls *patience* “the queen of virtues,” because it preserves all others in times of trial. The Byzantine tradition reads patience as participation in the suffering love of Christ, not resignation to fate.

Thinking of Advent, *patience* becomes a very practical exercise! Our culture “assaults” with Christmas celebrations, urging us to give up any fasting or waiting, already after Thanksgiving. It bombs us with jingling entertainments, pooling our attention from the essentials such as prayer,



SCRIPTURE READINGS

Father Robert Jager, Ph.D

Father Robert Jager, Ph.D., is pastor of Columbus St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church.

Word of God, repentance and charity.

The Fathers of the Desert teach that when we are assaulted by such “distractions,” *patient endurance* refuses dialogue and returns to the Lord, crying out *Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me!* Patience does not denote passive waiting, stoic suppression of emotion or generic tolerance. Rather, it signifies the **active**, voluntary acceptance and endurance of trials – in our case the trials of cultural distractions – in union with Christ, who comes in silence to the intimacy of heart. Patience is the interior steadfastness, the refusal to abandon the remembrance of

God for superficial, short-lasting, Santa-like entertainments. It purifies the human heart and heals it. It makes it sensitive to the voice of the Savior.

The prophet says that there will be a cure for the deaf, sight for the blind, yes, even healing for the lame and tongue-tied, and this was fulfilled only at the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ, by whom the eyes of the blind were opened, and the deaf regained their hearing. Why need I say, how many palsied and deaf and lame also received physical cure by the hands of his disciples? And how many others, afflicted with various diseases and maladies, received from him healing and salvation, according to the inspired prediction of prophecy and according to the unimpeachable testimony of the holy Gospels? This prophecy before us, therefore, teaches that by God’s presence with men the glory of Lebanon will be given to that which is called “desert.” (Eusebius of Caesarea, Proof of the Gospels 6.21)

And where shall we place that oracle of Isaiah, which cries to the wilderness, “Be glad, O thirsty wilderness. Let the desert rejoice and blossom as a lily, and the desolate places of Jordan shall blossom and shall rejoice”? For it is clear that it is not to places without soul or sense that he proclaims the good tidings of joy, but he speaks, by the figure of the desert, of the soul that is parched and unadorned. (Gregory of Nyssa, On the Baptism of Christ)

Fourth Sunday of Advent Year A

Reflect on coming of Messiah during last Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-24

Since Christmas falls on a Thursday this year, we have an opportunity to enjoy Advent just a bit longer. Often, the Fourth Sunday of Advent begins the ecclesial rush for Christmas decoration and so Advent gets short shrift. At times, parishes have succumbed to the external culture’s pressure and have all the Christmas decorations already on full display. The readings of the Fourth Sunday of Advent invite us to recognize that some interior preparation is still necessary, and the days before the Vigil of Christmas can serve us well in this regard.

Matthew’s account of the Birth of the Messiah presents a perspective that we might miss if we go to quickly toward the Nativity itself. Joseph, son of David, is the man entrusted with receiving the mother of the Messiah and her Divine Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit, into his own home. Although he did not understand fully, Joseph was sensitive to the voice of God’s Angel,

telling him in a dream (recalling Joseph the dreamer, the son of Jacob) not to be afraid to claim Mary as his wife and to see the Child to be born as fulfillment of Jewish expectation. “*Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*”

Salvation is given by God through the action of His own Spirit, and human beings are called to play a role in accepting the gift of salvation into the world. Joseph gives a home to the Messiah and His mother, whom he takes as his wife. He names the Child in fulfillment of the prophecy that He will be the Savior of His people.

In nativity displays, it is to be noted that Joseph’s measurements are the ones given to identify the size of the figures. He stands tall, and whatever his height, that is the size by which the whole display is advertised. If Joseph is 12 inches, then it is a “12-inch Christmas Creche,” even though the other figurines are sitting or kneeling below that height. This is a fitting reminder to all of us



SCRIPTURE READINGS

Father Timothy Hayes

Father Timothy M. Hayes is pastor of St. Edward The Confessor, Granville.

that we also must open our hearts to the gift of the Incarnation by standing tall in faith.

Joseph was not a mere bystander. Heaven made a special point to invite him to accept his indispensable role as the one who bestowed on Jesus the messianic title “Son of David” and who gave his “foster” Child a place in the world. As the story of the First Christmas unfolds, we see that at every

step Joseph was a provider, a protector and guardian for the Holy Family. His actions speak loudly, even though we never hear a word from his lips in the Scriptures.

Ahaz, who receives the prophecy of the son to be conceived by the virgin, rejects God’s invitation to ask for a sign. He is unwilling to participate in the offer of salvation for his people. In response, God still gives the sign, and names the child to be born as Emmanuel, God-with-us.

The psalmist cries out, “*Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.*” May we be ready to respond to God’s invitation as He seeks to enter more deeply into our lives through the Child to be born. Let us, like Joseph, do what we are meant to do, opening our homes to the gift of salvation. Jesus is the Son of David, Son of Mary, and *God-with-us, Emmanuel*. Let us be ready to welcome Him and to share the Good News of Salvation with all the nations.

Like Paul, we are to continue to proclaim to all the world, “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*” A blessed Christmas to all!

THE WEEKDAY BIBLE READINGS

12-15/12-20 MONDAY Numbers 24:2-7,15-17a Psalm 25:4-5ab,6,7bc,8-9 Matthew 21:23-27	THURSDAY Jeremiah 23:5-8 Psalm 72:1-2,12-13,18-19 Matthew 1:18-25	12-22/12-27 MONDAY 1 Samuel 1:24-28 1 Samuel 2:1,4-5,6,7,8abcd (Ps) Luke 1:46-56	THURSDAY (Mass during the Night) Isaiah 9:1-6 Psalm 96:1-3,11-12,13 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14
TUESDAY Zephaniah 3:1-2,9-13 Psalm 34:2-3,6-7,17-18,19,23 Matthew 21:28-32	FRIDAY Judges 13:2-7,24-25a Psalm 71:3-4a,5-6ab,16-17 Luke 1:5-25	TUESDAY Malachi 3:1-4,23-24 Psalm 25:4-5ab,8-9,10,14 Luke 1:57-66	FRIDAY Acts 6:8-10;7:54-59 Psalm 31:3cd-4,6,8ab,16bc-17 Matthew 10:17-22
WEDNESDAY Genesis 49:2,8-10 Psalm 72:1-2,3-4ab,7-8,17 Matthew 1:1-17	SATURDAY Isaiah 7:10-14 Psalm 24:1-2,3-4ab,5-6 Luke 1:26-38	WEDNESDAY 2 Samuel 7:1-5,8b-12,14a,16 Psalm 89:2-3,4-27,29 Luke 1:67-69	SATURDAY 1 John 1:1-4 Psalm 97:1-2,5-6,11-12 John 20:1a,2-8

DIOCESAN WEEKLY RADIO AND TELEVISION: Mass Schedule: Weeks of November 30 and December 7

SUNDAY MASS
10:30am Mass from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on St. Gabriel Radio AM820, Columbus, FM88.3, Portsmouth, and FM106.7, Athens., and at www.stgabrielradio.com and diocesan website, www.columbuscatholic.org.

Mass from St. Francis de Sales Seminary, Milwaukee, at 7:30 and 10 a.m. on WWHO-TV (the CW), Channel 53, Columbus. Mass with the Passionist Fathers at 10:30 a.m. on WHIZ-TV, Channel 18, Zanesville. Check local cable system for cable channel listing.

Mass from Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, Birmingham, Ala., at 8 a.m. on EWTN (Spectrum Channel 385, Insight Channel 382, or Breezeline Channel 378). (Encores at noon, 7 p.m., and midnight).
Mass from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee at 6:30 a.m. on ION TV (AT&T U-verse Channel 195, Dish Network Channel 250, or DirecTV Channel 305).

Mass from Massillon St. Mary Church at 10:30 a.m. on WILB radio (AM 1060, FM 94.5 and 89.5), Canton, heard in Tuscarawas, Holmes, and Coshocton counties.

DAILY MASS
8 a.m., Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Birmingham, Ala. (Encores at noon, 7 p.m. and midnight). See EWTN above; and on i-Lifetv (Channel 113, Ada, Logan, Millersburg, Murray City, Washington C.H.; Channel 125, Marion, Newark, Newcomerstown and New Philadelphia; Channel 207, Zanesville); 8 p.m., St. Gabriel Radio (AM 820), Columbus, and at www.stgabrielradio.com.
12:05 p.m. weekdays, 8 a.m. Saturdays, Mass from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on St. Gabriel Radio (AM 820), Columbus, and at www.stgabrielradio.com and diocesan website, www.columbuscatholic.org. (Saturdays on radio only).

Videos of Masses are available at any time on the internet at these and many other parish websites: Mattingly Settlement St. Mary (www.stannstmary.org); Delaware St. Mary (www.delawarestmary.org); Sunbury St. John Neumann (www.saint-johnsunbury.org); and Columbus Immaculate Conception (www.iccols.org). Check your parish website for additional information.

We pray the propers for Weeks III (Dec. 14-20) and IV (Dec. 21-24) and the Christmas Season (Dec. 25-27) of the Liturgy of the Hours

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

The Word Made Flesh still dwells among us

Isaiah 52:7-10
Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6
Hebrews 1:1-6
John 1:1-18

In the Middle Ages, the Feast of the Annunciation was celebrated with more solemnity than Christmas; that was the first precise moment, as St. John's famous prologue to his Gospel recounts today, that "the word became flesh." Over time, the Church grew in her appreciation of and celebration of the second clause that follows it: "... and made his dwelling among us." It was only then "that we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." Immediately after his sweeping mystical reflection, invoking the verbiage of the Genesis creation account, all of a sudden the Evangelist brings in St. John Baptist announcing the Messiah's presence as an adult: "John testified to him and cried out, saying, 'This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'"

But wait: that divine logos, co-eternal with the Father, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, "God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God," did not just quietly and anonymously, abstractly or randomly, distantly nor briefly take on human likeness, but He "became flesh," and then further deign to make "his dwelling among us." Christ is the "heir of all things," "who sustains all things by his mighty word." The Father's Only Begotten Son, "through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being," has communicated and communed with us. Jesus "accomplished purification from sins" and then "took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as far superior to the angels, as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs." The mighty heavenly chorus, all the supernal host above, the throng of celestial beings innumerable, are prompted to bow down in adoration: "Let all the angels of God worship him."

We who are blessed to live in the age of the new and eternal covenant struggle to appreciate the profundity of the radical change in history that took place when the Lord came on His saving mission of revelation: "In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son." No longer in fragmentary and shadowy ways, or through imperfect intermediaries, but the Creator of the Universe has taken up personal identity as a member of our human race so as to be among us, be one of us, and be in direct contact with us. Indeed, "while the law was given through Moses,



SCRIPTURE READINGS

Father Tyron Tomson

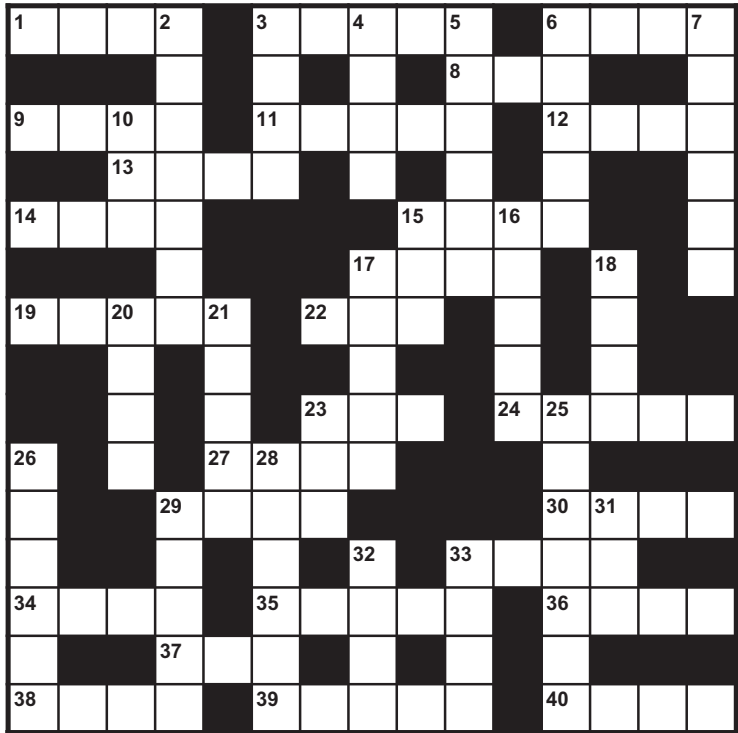
Father Tyron Tomson is a priest of the Diocese of Columbus pursuing a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture in Rome.

grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." The centuries of languishing came to an end, and our own personal desire to behold the Lord has been granted by a supremely humble act of sublime condescension: "No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him." The momentousness of this day cannot be overemphasized.

Jesus, whose holy name means "the Lord saves," in Himself fulfills Isaiah's prophecy that "all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God." No longer merely to the chosen people of Israel but "in the sight of the nations he has revealed." Therefore, the Psalmist further enjoins: "Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; break into song; sing praise." How could our response to this awesome stage in the long story of God's continual self-gift to us be otherwise, if we even glimpse a miniscule speck of its glorious import?

Catholics celebrate Christmas, Christ's Mass, every day. In the Holy Eucharist, the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ are truly present and offered to the faithful to continue this ongoing unification with Him in Holy Communion. He, in fact, makes His dwelling not just among us, but within us. He who "was in the beginning with God" remains to sustain us spiritually: "this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." The phrases "good news" and "glad tidings" or any other expression formed of inadequate human words all fail to do justice to the incredible mystery and grace that He embodies, literally, in the Blessed Sacrament. Not only has He come, He has come to stay, under sacramental signs. Our world is filled with joy today because each of our souls has been shown the purpose for its existence in abiding union with Him.

CATHOLIC CROSSWORD



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ACROSS

- 1 God, in ancient Rome
- 3 These art pieces have much symbolism
- 6 Genuflection joint
- 8 Agency headed by uncle of Cardinal Dulles
- 9 "Vaya con ____"
- 11 Dominican or Franciscan
- 12 The Fisherman's ____
- 13 Magi leader
- 14 "Light from light, ____ God from..."
- 15 Son of Eve
- 17 Catholic actor Wilson who did the voice for Marmaduke
- 19 "I will ____ up a righteous branch for David" (Jer 23:5)
- 22 Theology degree (abbr.)
- 23 Catholic actor Mineo
- 24 They blew these outside the walls of Jericho
- 27 Paul refers to these animals in 1 Corinthians
- 29 "Dies ____"
- 30 US state in which the Diocese of Nashville is found
- 33 The Mass is both a sacrifice and a ____
- 34 Catholic actor, Robert ____
- 35 Paul was upset because of the number of these in Athens
- 36 "...the ____ he has sent away empty" (Lk 1:53)
- 37 Med. Christian empire

- 38 The Diocese of Youngstown is found here
- 39 Catholic United States Chief Justice Taney
- 40 "Turn Back, ____" ("Godspell" song)

DOWN

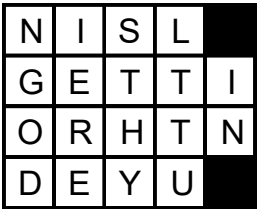
- 2 Rachel and Leah
- 3 It's after Rom
- 4 Book containing calendar of Masses
- 5 Biblical occupation
- 6 John Paul II's given name
- 7 "I will raise you up on ____ wings..."
- 10 Ursuline order letters
- 15 Fear of the Lord
- 16 In Genesis, he walked with God
- 17 Church instrument, sometimes
- 18 "I ____ no evil, for you are with me" (Ps 23:4)
- 20 The Garden of Eden might have been in this modern-day state
- 21 Where King Saul consulted a medium
- 23 Jurisdiction of a bishop
- 25 The Archdiocese of Toronto is here
- 26 Catholicism is the official religion of this tiny country
- 28 Priest and missionary to the Far East, St. Francis ____
- 29 The Diocese of Boise is here
- 31 Father of Hophni and Phinehas
- 32 "Sing a new ____ unto the Lord"
- 33 Title for a priest (abbr.)

Words of Wisdom

by Pat Battaglia, aka Dr. Fun

Draw a path from letter to letter to spell the words given in capital letters that completes the wisdom statement. Move one square at a time, up, down, right, left or diagonally until all letters are used once. Ignore any black squares.

Our hearts are restless ...



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PRAY FOR OUR DEAD

BABARCIK, Theresa (Krantz), 73, Nov. 7
Sacred Heart Church, New Philadelphia

BELCHER, Beverly A. (Guidry), 83, Nov. 21
Christ the King Church, Columbus

BIHARI, William, 99, Nov. 10
Sacred Heart Church, New Philadelphia

BRADY, Sharon M., 77, Dec. 3
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

BYRNS, Herbert F. "Chip," 66, formerly of Dublin, Nov. 25
St. Joseph Church, Verona, Pa.

COOLIDGE, Larry, 77, Nov. 12
St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Parish, Columbus-Powell

ECKHART, Claudine (Lalli), 87, Nov. 28
Our Lady of Victory Church, Columbus

HEASLEY, Joan M., 76, Nov. 24
St. Brigid of Kildare Church, Dublin

HENSEL, Maria A. (Gibboney), 94, Nov. 21
St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Church, Columbus-Powell

HOFFINE, Marian "Mimi," 87, Nov. 30
Our Mother of Sorrows Chapel, Columbus

JONES, Tamara C., 47, Dec. 1
St. Andrew Church, Columbus

KINKOPF, Wendy, 58, Nov. 16
St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Church, Columbus-Powell

LEWIS, Rita (Welch), 93, Nov. 26
St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Church, Columbus-Powell

LINDNER, Dr. Lewis, 90, Nov. 30
St. Mary Magdalene Church, Columbus

MATHIAS, Margaret (Beresford), 89, Nov. 20
Sacred Heart Church, New Philadelphia

MAY, Donald B., 91, Nov.19
Our Lady of Victory Church, Columbus

MAY, Elizabeth (Boggs) "Betsy," 86, Nov. 11
Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Parish, Chillicothe

PALLAS, Mary, 81, Nov. 25
Sacred Heart Church, New Philadelphia

POSS, Nancy, 84, Nov. 25
St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Church, Columbus-Powell

REICHERT, Suzanne, 77, Nov. 18
St. Margaret of Cortona Church, Columbus

SCHIRNER, Kathleen M. (Gibboney), 76, Nov. 27
St. Catharine of Siena Church, Columbus

STOUT, Robert, 84, Oct. 21
St. Mary Magdalene Church, Columbus

THORNTON, Richard Thomas, 78, Nov. 22
St. Francis de Sales Church, Newark

TROST, Dolores F., 89, Nov. 28
St. Christopher Church, Columbus

VINCENT, Thomas E., 86, Oct. 30
St. Elizabeth Seton Parish, Pickerington

Sister Verone Leeman

Funeral Mass for Sister Verone Leeman, OSF, 86, who died Tuesday, Nov. 18, was celebrated Saturday, Nov. 22 at the Holy Family Convent Chapel in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Burial was at the sisters' cemetery.

She was born Geraldine Ann Leeman on June 30, 1939 in Green Bay, Wisconsin to Monroe and Veronica (Hendricks) Leeman.

She earned a Bachelor of Music degree from Holy Family College in Manitowoc. She entered the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity in 1955 and professed her vows in 1958.

She was a pastoral minister at Good Samaritan Medical Center in Zanesville

in 1976. She also was a musician at several schools and served in a variety of other capacities at locations in Wisconsin, Michigan, Hawaii and Nebraska. Since 2021, she had been a resident of the St. Rita Health Center in Manitowoc.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers, James, Tom and John; and sisters, Sister Elizabeth Marie Leeman, OSF, Mary Ann Brocker and Janet Van Bostel.

Survivors include brothers, William (Barbara), Joseph (Debbie), Peter (Anita) and Daniel (Marie); sisters, Sister Pauline Marie Leeman, OSF, Jeanne Zepnick, Betty Lou Ferron and Teresa (David) Rosenbaum.

Paulette Meagher

Funeral Mass for Paulette Meagher, 88, who died Thursday, Nov. 27, was celebrated Friday, Dec. 5 at Buckeye Lake Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. Burial was at St. Joseph Cemetery, Columbus.

She was a licensed practical nurse and retired from the Ohio Health Hospice.

She was also a former member of the Discalced Carmel Monastery and an active Third Order Carmelite.

She was preceded in death by her parents, John and Eleanor Meagher, and a brother, Msgr. Francis Meagher.

Elizabeth "Betsy" May

Funeral Mass for Elizabeth "Betsy" May, 86, who died Tuesday, Nov. 11, was celebrated Saturday, Nov. 22 at Chillicothe St. Mary Church.

She was born on Oct. 7, 1939 in Kingston to Howard and Catherine Boggs.

She graduated in 1961 with a Bachelor's degree in nursing from Loretto Heights College in Denver and worked

for 10 years as a public health nurse serving the Bronx and Harlem areas of New York City before moving to central Ohio, where she was a nurse in Columbus diocesan schools.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her husband, James. She is survived by two brothers, John and Ned (Marlene).

LOCAL NEWS AND EVENTS

Mother Cabrini League seeks members

Anyone with a devotion to St. Frances Xavier Cabrini who would like to share in her mission is invited to join the Mother Cabrini League, which fosters devotion to the woman who in 1946 became the first American citizen to be canonized and is the patron saint of immigrants.

Mother Cabrini, founder of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, came to the United States in 1889 at the request of Pope Leo XIII to help Italian immigrants to New York City. From then until her death in 1917, she and her order established missions, schools and orphanages for immigrants from coast to coast.

The Cabrini League was established in 1938 by Cardinal George Mundelein of Chicago. Membership is free.

The organization's magazine, *The Cabrini Messenger*, is published five times a year and includes stories about Mother Cabrini's life and how her mission continues to impact the Church and the world; letters of gratitude and thanksgiving from league members for prayers answered through her intercession, and news about her order's global mission and opportunities to support its work.

More information is available by sending an email to mothercabrinileague@gmail.com or by writing Mother Cabrini Messenger, 434 Darning Place, Chicago, IL 60614-1719.

Catholic museum displaying Nativity scenes

The Columbus Museum of Catholic Art and History's annual display of Nativity scenes from around the world is taking place through Friday, Jan. 9.

The museum, on the first floor of The Catholic Foundation building at 257 E. Broad St., has been recognized by the Vatican as having the largest collection of diversified Catholic art in the United States. It is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., with the last tour of the day beginning at 2:30 p.m.

Admission is \$10 for adults and \$5 for those ages 4 to 18 or 65 and older, and \$30 for a family of four or more.

For more information, call (614) 618-4030 or go to <https://columbuscatholic.org/ministry-office/museum-of-catholic-art-history>.

Holy Family Christian Mothers to host Advent morning program

The Christian Mothers organization of Columbus Holy Family Church, 584 W. Broad St., is sponsoring an Advent morning of reflection on Saturday, Dec. 13. The morning will begin with Mass at 9 a.m., followed by breakfast from 10 to 10:30, a talk by Daniel Markham, author of the book 52 Masses, and Eucharistic Adoration from 11 a.m. to noon.

The event is free, but donations are welcome. For more information, contact Kendy Troiano at holyfamilyccm@gmail.com.

Lessons and carols service planned at basilica

An Advent service of lessons and carols will take place at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 14 at the Lancaster Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, 132 S. High St.

The program will consist of an hour of Scripture readings and sung choral motets with congregational hymns. For more information, contact Brian McCauley at bmccauley@stmarylanaster.org.

Monthly vocations prayers to take place around diocese

Beginning Thursday, Jan. 1, different parishes around the diocese will be hosting a program of prayers for an increase in priestly vocations on the first Thursday of each month.

The first of these will be at Columbus St. Catharine Church, 500 S. Gould Road. It will begin with Mass at 10 a.m., followed by a Holy Hour of Eucharistic Adoration at 11.

Columbus priest, deacon plan pilgrimage to Assisi

For the first time in 800 years, the relics of St. Francis of Assisi will be on display in 2026 at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy. Deacon John Amedeo and Father Thomas Buffer of Columbus St. Cecilia Church are planning a pilgrimage from Rome to Assisi, in the footsteps of the popes, the martyrs and the saints from Sunday, March 8 to Tuesday, March 17.

The \$2,950 cost of the tour includes hotel accommodations, meals, tickets, ground transportation and gratuities, but does not include airfare. The pilgrimage is limited to 14 people.

For pictures of previous pilgrimages conducted by the same company, visit www.tivolitours.us. For more information, call Deacon Amedeo at (330) 310-1628.



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CATHOLIC WORD SEARCH

CHRISTMAS

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HOLY SPIRIT
HOMAGE
INCARNATION
MAGI
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WISE MEN

Father Kigozi installed at Delaware St. Mary



Father Denis Kigozi was formally installed as the pastor at Delaware St. Mary Church on Wednesday, Dec. 3 at a Mass attended by students from St. Mary School. Father Kigozi renewed his Oath of Fidelity and offered his signature as a testimony of his intentions with Bishop Earl Fernandes as a witness. Bishop Fernandes was the principal celebrant for the Mass. Father Kigozi came to Delaware from his previous assignment at New Albany Church of the Resurrection. Photos courtesy Sarah Lightle

OUTREACH: St. Dominic’s two communities continue outreach to community, Continued from Page 11

more parental involvement in the Parish School of Religion recently, in line with recommendations by Bishop Fernandes.

“We had parents come to the classes with their children once a month for the past couple of years while the children attended weekly. This year, we’ve changed and the parents and children both come every week.” Classes are from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays.

Brown said about 10 parents and 10 children come to the weekly classes. “It’s a hybrid,” she said. “We start as one large group, then break down into smaller units not by age but by the sacrament you’re preparing for – First Communion or Confirmation.”

“With the diocese in the process of changing the age for Confirmation, the age range for the current Confirmation group (which consists of five students) is between 10 and 15,” she said. “We don’t divide groups by age, but by what kind of faith formation a child has gone through.

“Many children don’t know the basics of being Catholic and need to understand that before preparing for a sacrament. For that reason, formation takes two years, the first to understand the faith and the second getting into more specific aspects of the sacrament.

“We don’t use a specific program because it’s more important to bring children to an experience of Jesus rather than follow a rigid format. We use the Bible, the Lectionary and prayers that are basic in some ways and specific in others. We also refer to a program called Blest Are We, mostly for guidelines rather than structure.”

Service projects are part of the pro-



Father Jude Esua Fongouck, pastor of Columbus St. Dominic Church, recites a prayer at an African Catholic Community Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes and other priests from Africa serving in the diocese on Dec. 7 at St. Dominic.

gram. Students and parents helped pack Thanksgiving bags last year and are sending cards to sick and homebound parishioners for Christmas.

The St. John Learning Center has been offering quarterly GED classes since the 1980s. Teresa Lee, its coordinator since 2022, said the next classes will begin Tuesday, Jan. 6.

Students in the classes take a placement test that positions them in one of two levels of study. The first level gives students enough general knowledge to go to the second level, which gets them ready to take the GED high school equivalency test.



Women from African communities participate in the Sunday Mass on Dec. 7 offered by Bishop Earl Fernandes and concelebrated by African priests in the diocese at Columbus St. Dominic Church. CT photos by Ken Snow

New classes start approximately every three months, but there’s no set term for when classes end for each student. That depends on the time it takes for an individual to complete each level.

Lee said the center in 2026 will continue to host a monthly series on mental health issues titled “Stop the Stigma,” as well as a job fair scheduled for Thursday, May 14, a resource fair in October and classes on starting and running a small business and how to clean up credit problems.

She’s also working with the city of Columbus to bring in a workforce planning program teaching skills related to obtain-

ing a job for students who have earned a GED diploma. A health management program in cooperation with city and state health agencies also is possible. Lee said more information on coming events will be available on the center’s website as plans are completed.

“The center is important because it’s a resource that’s available to anyone and all programs are free,” Lee said. “We don’t know how federal government changes might affect what we do, so I urge people to take advantage now of the things we offer.”

To learn more about the center and check its schedule of events, go to stjohnlearning.wordpress.com or call (614) 547- 2171.

The center also has been the site of a care center offered since 2017 by the Columbus region of the Order of Malta. The center is open Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., with a dental clinic twice a month.

It offers health screenings and basic medical, wound, burn, dental and foot care from volunteer physicians, podiatrists and dentists from the Catholic Medical Association, along with medical referrals for those needing advanced levels of care. It does not bill insurance or Medicare but operates solely on donations. It also provides packages of hygiene supplies, undergarments, socks, T-shirts, gloves and hats, when available.

Donations to St. Dominic are always welcome. Go to stdominic-church.org/ online-giving to give online. To donate by check, the address is St. Dominic Catholic Church, Box 83572, Columbus, OH 43203. For more information, call (614) 252-5926, extension 202.

New chaplain leads Courage

Courage International, Inc. is an apostolate of the Catholic Church that offers pastoral support to men and women experiencing same-sex attractions who have chosen to live a chaste life. Founded in 1980 by Father John Harvey, OSFS, at the request of the late Cardinal Terence Cooke, it has since expanded to over 175 Courage chapters worldwide.

On Nov. 28, 2016, Courage International received canonical status in the Roman Catholic Church as a diocesan clerical public association of the faithful, making it the only canonically approved apostolate of its kind.

There are five goals of Courage for all members to strive for:

- To live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality (chastity);

- To dedicate our entire lives to Christ through service to others, spiritual reading, prayer, meditation, individual spiritual

direction, frequent attendance at Mass, and the frequent reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist (prayer and dedication);

- To foster a spirit of fellowship in which we may share with one another our thoughts and experiences, and so ensure that no one will have to face the problems of homosexuality alone (fellowship);

- To be mindful of the truth that chaste friendships are not only possible but necessary in a chaste Christian life; and to encourage one another in forming and sustaining these friendships (support);

- To live lives that may serve as good examples to others (good example/role model).

To learn more about local Courage meetings, contact the new local chaplain of Courage, Father Vince Nguyen, at courage@columbuscatholic.org.

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Hallelujah Tour stops at Cathedral, Holy Cross



The annual Great Hallelujah Tour of downtown churches sponsored by the Columbus Landmarks Foundation made two of its six stops at St. Joseph Cathedral and Holy Cross Church on Saturday, Dec. 6. Father Jan Sullivan, the Cathedral rector, welcomes the visitors.



Dr. Richard Fitzgerald, director of music at St. Joseph Cathedral and for the diocese, leads a selection performed by the Cathedral choir and Ensemble Una Voce. The stops on the Hallelujah Tour included a brief concert and talks about the history of the churches.



(Above) The walking tour leaves St. Joseph Cathedral for its next stop at Trinity Episcopal Church.

(Right) Christopher Purdy, early morning host of WOSU Radio's Classical 101, gives a history about the pieces to be performed at Holy Cross Church by the Cathedral choir and Ensemble Una Voce.

(Far right) Participants leave Holy Cross Church. CT photos/Ken Snow



Architect Bill Hoyer provides a historical perspective of Holy Cross.



LIVE AND LOCAL!

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ATHENS

Silence is making the Mass too long?

Dear Father,

Mass at our parish seems to drag on because the priest has all these periods of silence. He claims that the Church wants silence. Most of us don't like it. He needs to move it along. Can the bishop tell him to stop, please?

-Tijana

I recall hearing some years ago that we are supposed to have certain times of silence at Mass. Our pastor zips through the Mass like the church is on fire. It's hard to pray. Even after Mass, the rosary begins immediately. Maybe if you write about this, my priest will see this and get the hint.

-Zed

Dear Tijana and Zed,

Time seems to drag on when we are bored or suffering. Time can also seem to slow down when we anticipate something enjoyable in the future. On the other hand, time speeds by when we are in the midst of friends or when delighting in the good things of earth and heaven.

Even the silent presence of a loved one makes time fly. I'm thinking of the stare of a mother or father holding their sleeping infant child. They are lost in wonder and contemplation.

If the Mass has become a weekly obligation to be dispensed with as soon as possible, it will seem to drag on interminably. Even priests may fall into

spiritual torpor and feel the need to hurry the Mass consistently. Holy reverence evaporates.

In spite of the dictates of liturgical law, which mandate silence at certain prayers of the Mass, consider what the Mass is and why silence is an essential ingredient.

Imagine the crucifixion of Jesus nearly 2,000 years ago. It's midday but dark because the sun is eclipsed.

Picture yourself standing in a cold wind on a hill with your sandaled feet wet with mud made of dirt and blood, blood flowing down the wood on which our Lord is nailed. Is there even a shred of human skin that is not ripped open after the brutal flogging? Is there any centimeter of flesh not shining with crimson? How ever did he survive that cap of 2-inch thorns covering his entire head, whose hair is matted with blood both new and dried?

Hear the wind and feel its moist chill. Hear the jeers of the religious leaders. Hear the moans of two men nailed similarly on either side of Jesus. Hear the soldiers' mocking voices, telling the three men to hurry up and die. "Let's get this over with!"

What would you say in the midst of this experience? See the two women and a man, sorrowfully staring up at Jesus. What words could you possibly utter to the Virgin Mother or to John? What could you possibly say to Jesus in the midst of the world's most incredible agony?

What is going through your mind? That your sins contributed to this? That no one, even the worst criminal, deserves this kind



SACRAMENTS 101

Father Paul Jerome Keller, OP, S.T.D.

Father Paul Jerome Keller, O.P., S.T.D., director of the diocese's Office of Divine Worship, is a priest of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph. His doctorate is from Rome in sacramental theology. He currently assists at Columbus St. Patrick Church.

of punishment? That it's impossible for anyone to survive this? That it's impossible for love to look like this? What did he ever do to deserve this? That healing on the Sabbath or protecting the holiness of God's temple could lead to this?

Are you thinking that if God became man to do this, maybe he will take note of my sorrow? That he might forgive you? That when he said, "This day you will be with me in paradise" to a thief, perhaps he might include you?

Are you thinking that, having heard that he rose from the dead, he might now be present here, even in this white-washed

church or that glorious cathedral? That he might show his power in your life?

That the bread and wine that he made into his God-body and God-blood might change your life? That if only you could get a morsel of that bread, that body, that maybe you would be eating divinity and become what you eat?

That if you could get close enough to that altar of sacrifice, maybe today will be different from the past? Maybe you, too, could forgive those who tried to crucify you? That maybe you could shed some of your wealth in the place of his blood? That maybe a few minutes of your time is nothing compared with the hours of agony back then, and still perpetuated in the least of his brothers? That maybe you could give more of your stingy self?

Silence is essential at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the re-presentation of Christ's Upper Room Supper and his Golgotha and his Resurrection. For both priest and layperson, the Mass is the one moment of the day when we must take our time, if we have the least shred of human decency.

At Mass, the priest and layperson stand at the pinpoint of the most critical moment in history. It is no museum piece, no new rendition of some theatrical acting, no replaying of a hit song or famous melody. The Mass, not me, not you, is the center of the world.

The Mass is not a race. It's a love dialog. Listen, and be slow to speak. *Questions about the sacraments should be sent to sacraments101@columbuscatholic.org*

Leaning into Advent

If there is ever a time when the difference in perspective between children and adults is stunningly clear, it is during the four weeks of Advent.

As Advent begins and its weeks stretch ahead, children will say, with a sigh of impatience, "Four whole weeks to Christmas." My younger self did too.

Adults, looking at the exact same calendar are more likely to say, with a much deeper sigh, "Only four weeks to Christmas." My older self does too.

Through the eyes of a child, the days of December drag on, with a slow march toward the glory of Christmas – a march filled with excitement and joyful expectation. Through the eyes of adults, however, Christmas arrives in a flash and flurry of activity, and the fleeting days of Advent can go unnoticed because they pass so quickly.

Cynics will say that the excited joy of children comes more from the coming of Santa than of Savior. Maybe that is true. Indeed, my younger self would acknowledge mixed motives.

Yet, there is more. There is something to be learned from the joyful, unencumbered anticipation that children have as they wait, wonder and hope.

They seem, simply, to be more ready than adults. Certainly, some of that is because life's responsibilities have not yet taken a toll. They have less to do to prepare for Christmas in a season when much adult labor is spent preparing Christmas celebrations for them. They seem less distracted and freer to anticipate all that is to come.

A child counts the days. A child notices when decorations first come out. A child



ON ORDINARY TIMES

Lucia A. Silecchia

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notices when a creche goes up and rejoices when the figures in the nativity scene move closer to the manger. A child notices when the Jesse trees in their churches start to fill up. A child counts the number of candles that are lit on the Advent wreath – not with fear that the number of days to Christmas is dwindling but with anticipation that what is to come is closer. With special joy, a child notices that on Gaudete Sunday, the rose candles offer hope that the wait is almost over.

A child anticipating Christmas seems to understand, more than I do, what it means to wait. Yes, they enjoy the festivities leading up to Christmas. But they also have a single-minded focus on Christmas itself. To adults, so often, it can seem as though Advent is a season of events that can exhaust us before Christmas arrives, leaving us with the feeling that Christmas is over before the Christmas season has even begun.

A child longing for Christmas will never say, as I do, that last Christmas seems like it was yesterday. A child is unlikely to wonder how the year went by so fast because, in the temporal economy of childhood, time moves more slowly, and last Christmas seems like an eternity ago. Perhaps that is why each Christmas seems so special.

The children in my life teach me much about what it means to wait with joy, and wait with readiness. They are not distracted by all that they think needs to be done before Christmas. Instead, they are ready to welcome the birthday of Christ with simple joy, uncomplicated excitement, and

the knowledge that something special and awesome -- in all senses of that word -- is about to happen.

I cherish the events leading up to Christmas. The traditions, celebrations, time with loved ones and special occasions fill my calendar and my heart. Yes, they also keep me busy.

But, this season, I hope to wait for Christmas a little bit more like my younger sisters and brothers in faith. I hope that the distractions and busy-ness of December do not make my heart hope that Christmas can wait until I am ready for it. My ancestors in faith spent millennia eagerly awaiting the birth of Christ. The ancients who came before me, and the young who come after me did not and do not spend their days hoping for delay and more time until that silent, holy night. They want no unnecessary distance between themselves and the night that brings the "thrill of hope" when "a weary world rejoices." They know how to anticipate that extra-ordinary time.

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Saints and heroes – Male role models in holiness

By Christopher Crum

For The Catholic Times

Men learn by watching other men.

On the job, you watched the older guys run the tools, read the room, close the deal. On the field, you watched the captain. At home, you watched your dad.

We need examples like theirs – people we can point to and say “That. That’s what it looks like.”

The Church knows this. She doesn’t just hand you abstract virtues; she hands you men — flesh-and-blood saints who show what holiness looks like in real life.

When God makes a saint, He doesn’t erase a man’s story. He builds on it.

The Church is full of men who were:

- Husbands and fathers. St. Joseph, carpenter and guardian of the Holy Family; kings like St. Louis IX, who ruled and still prayed, fasted and raised children in the faith. They show what fatherhood looks like when grace is in charge.
- Blue-collar workers. St. Isidore the Farmer, praying as he plowed, and St. André Bessette, humble doorkeeper who fixed things, show you don’t have to leave the worksite to be holy.
- Second-chance men. St. Peter, who denied Christ but became the Rock; St. Augustine, who chased pleasure before surrendering everything; and St. Bartolo Longo, former satanic priest turned apostle of the Rosary. Their lives show the past is not a barrier; it’s a starting point in God’s hands.
- Young men. The Church offers St. José Sánchez del Río, teenage martyr crying “Viva Cristo Rey!” and St. Carlo Acutis, hoodie-wearing gamer who called the Eucharist his “highway to heaven.”
- Leaders and professionals. St. Thomas More lost his head rather than lose his conscience; St. Homobonus, a merchant whose clean ledgers and open hands became a path to heaven.

- Under trial or illness, or enduring quiet suffering. St. Mark Ji Tianxiang, doctor and addict who kept coming to God for decades and died a martyr; St. Benedict Joseph Labre, the “beggar of Rome,” who wandered homeless and sick yet spent his days in adoration and his nights among the poor. Both show that hidden pain and humiliation can become hidden power in God’s hands.

These men are not museum pieces. They’re alive in Christ, interceding for us, cheering us on as a “great cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1).

When we hear their stories, something in us stirs. Yet many of us think our life works just well enough that changing feels more dangerous than staying stuck. We admire the saints from a distance, like statues on pedestals, while quietly we worry: “If I get serious about my faith ... I’ll look weak. I’ll look weird.” And so faith stays “respectable,” not too visible, not too costly.

In 10 years, we won’t know most of the people whose opinions we’re now afraid of. The saints stopped living for audiences that don’t matter and started living for an eternal Audience of One.

Maybe you do want more but you’re tired, stretched thin and afraid that if you start changing things, you might not appear to have it all together. So, you agree and slide back into the same patterns, not because you don’t care but because you don’t see how to live differently.

A lot of men have a spiritual plan that sounds like “I should really pray more.” No specifics, no plan. Just a foggy good intention.

If you ran your job, your finances or your workout plan like that, you’d see it’s a setup for failure. The saints learned that habits and environment quietly train the soul – a chair that always has a Bible on it; 10 minutes that belong to God every day; a weekly Holy Hour that doesn’t move, even when your schedule does.

Many men in the pews feel like visitors in their own parish standing at the edges,

spiritually with hands in pockets, waiting to be “pulled in.”

The saints refused that posture. St. John Bosco didn’t wait; he built a community. St. Damien of Molokai didn’t wait for an ideal condition; he walked toward the people. They turned isolation into fraternity by taking the first step.

You don’t become a saint by accident, but you also don’t become a saint just by gritting your teeth and trying to “be more spiritual.” We are men who know we’re called higher, facing obstacles that are real but not final.

How do we change things? Here are some ways:

Your eyes lock onto a concrete example. Among the saints is one whose story won’t leave you alone. Maybe it’s Joseph’s quiet fidelity, Maximilian Kolbe’s sacrifice, Carlo Acutis’ Eucharistic love, Pier Giorgio Frassati’s joyful courage, Bartolo Longo’s outrageous second chance, Mark Ji’s stubborn hope. That tug is not an accident.

Plan your days with a simple pattern and a spiritual plan. Holiness grows the way strength does: under steady, repeated load. Examples: Ten minutes with the Gospel; a nightly examination of conscience and a few minutes of silence; a decade of the Rosary for your family; one hour a week in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Not everything at once, but one concrete commitment that belongs to God, even when you’re tired.

Your life is woven with those of a few brothers. Lone wolves look impressive for a while; packs survive the winter. Somewhere in your life is a man who would quietly be relieved if you said “I don’t want to drift any more. I’m trying to live more like St. _____. Check on me.” That sentence can turn private wishfulness into shared mission.

Look around our parishes, neighborhoods and towns: families are starving for spiritual leadership from fathers; boys are growing up without strong, loving men to imitate; the culture shouts a hundred confused messages about what a man should be.

In the middle of all that noise, the Church quietly points toward different examples – fishermen and kings., teenagers and grandfathers, scholars and farmhands, warriors and quiet doorkeepers

Holiness isn’t the polished man on the stage; It’s often the man in the back pew who let Christ love him where he was least impressive. It’s Christ stepping into a man’s unfinished story after every fall, against every trend, when it’s lonely, costly and misunderstood.

We don’t believe in an idea or a spiritual “energy.” We believe in a Person – Jesus Christ, who wants a real, daily relationship with you, just as He had with all the saints. They weren’t holy because they found a technique; they were holy because they kept turning back to Him in the real mess of their lives.

He seeks that same relationship with you. You’re walking the same road they walked, with the same Lord at your side.

Holiness is not for “other men.” It’s for you.

You were not baptized just to be “a decent guy.” You were baptized to be a saint, not an angel without a body, but a real man with your story, your wounds, your talents, your responsibilities, transformed by grace.

You are not a problem. You are raw material for greatness.

God looks at every scar, every failure, every dumb decision you wish you could erase, and says

“I can build with that.”

He turned a violent bandit into a monk of peace. He turned a gambling soldier into a healer of the dying. He turned an addicted doctor into a persevering witness. He turned a simple priest into a father of the forgotten. He turned a former satanic priest into a herald of the Rosary.

If He can do that in them, He can do something in you that you can’t imagine.

By God’s grace, we are learning to join the ranks of the saints.

Vivat Jesus!

Whispering pines: listening for the Holy Spirit

The sun was setting by the time we’d reached consensus on our Christmas tree. We’d decided on a cedar that hadn’t been anyone’s first choice – safely neutral, conflict averted.

Now we were dragging it home in the dark – tired, cold and hungry. Suddenly, we heard a shimmering sound in the top of the swaying pines. It was different from the start-and-stop rustle of wind in oak leaves. The pines were singing, steady and smooth, their densely packed needles turned to reeds.

We paused our homeward trek, standing still and letting the sound wash over us.

Later, eager to confirm what we’d heard, I took to Google. Was it true? Were pines distinctly suited to make music?

Yes, I learned – and the Transcendentalists were enchanted by it. Ralph Waldo Emerson captured it well in his 1836 essay “Nature”: “The pine blows its own sweet music when the wind sweeps through it.” Later, his protégé, Henry David Thoreau, described it in his journal, writing,



TWENTY SOMETHING

Christina Capecechi

Christina Capecechi is a freelance writer from Grey Cloud Island, Minn.

“There is no finer music than the wind in the pine tops. It is the earth’s own breath, sweet and powerful, sighing through the forest.”

I read on.

Anne of Green Gables – one of my favorite literary heroines – finds comfort in singing pines. In book three of L.M. Montgomery’s beloved series, “Anne of the Island,” Anne returns to Green Gables, homesick and weary, and

soaks up the “passionate wind-songs in the pines.”

My next discovery delighted my inner etymology nerd. There’s actually a word for the sound of wind rustling through trees: psithurism. It’s an archaic word with a Greek root, *psithuros*, meaning whispering.

Isn’t that a lovely concept? Whispering wind.

At only a whisper, we may easily miss its lyrical song.

We embrace the spirit of Advent when we pause from our march to enjoy the view. When our instinct is to hurry up and look down, it is good to slow down and look up. We release our screens and our agendas and gaze into the heavens – available, attuned.

In an era of mindless scrolling and swiping, paying attention is a spiritual exercise. It allows us to see the sacred in our midst – the dignity of every person, the glory of God’s creation, pine needle by pine needle. When we pay attention, we process the world as we are intended to, with all our senses and grateful hearts. We remember we aren’t

machines and life isn’t a hamster wheel.

Only then are we able to sense the movement of the Holy Spirit, which Scripture likens to wind. (The Greek word for spirit is *pneuma*, meaning wind or breath.)

We can’t see the Holy Spirit, but we can feel it and hear it. And like pines swaying in wind, we can see it moving those around us. The Gospel writer John tried to capture this mystery, writing, “The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

Twice this month, I’ve interviewed Catholic leaders who spoke to the power of the Holy Spirit. It was a striking part of their ministry, opening doors at just the right time, providing the clue, the key, the cash.

“It’s been amazingly consistent,” one woman told me. “You know it when you experience it, and I believe it.”

Amid our many December to-dos, may we listen for the Holy Spirit, whispering like wind. May we know it and believe.

Catholics not part of the “full gospel” church movement

Have you ever heard of a “full gospel” church? How about the “Full Gospel Businessman’s Fellowship International?” “Full gospel” is not part of our Catholic vocabulary; does that mean we have only part of the good news? Where does the term “full gospel” come from?

Briefly, it goes back to A.B. Simpson (1843-1919), a Canadian preacher and founder of the Alliance World Fellowship. In 1890, Simpson published a book called “The Fourfold Gospel,” summarizing the Christian message in four titles of Jesus: “Jesus our Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming Lord.”

Early Pentecostals also emphasized sanctification after salvation. Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929) saw himself as part of a “Pentecostal Apostolic Full Gospel” movement. For him, accepting the “full gospel” meant not only receiving salvation and sanctification but also receiving the “baptism of the Holy Ghost” and exercising spiritual gifts, especially the gift of tongues. J. Tomlinson, the first general overseer of the Pentecostal Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), wrote in 1908 while preaching a revival: “The signs are blessedly following the preaching of a full gospel.”

Another preacher who helped spread the term “full gospel” was Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944), the most famous Protestant evangelist of her time, known especially for her preaching and faith healing.

In 1922, McPherson gave a sermon on the “Foursquare Gospel.” She identified four pillars of the gospel: salvation, post-baptismal sanctification, supernatural healing, and the second coming of Christ. While McPherson claimed that these ideas came to her in a vision, she closely followed A.B. Simpson’s teaching. This sermon would give a name



A SHEPHERD’S CARE

Father Thomas Buffer

Father Thomas Buffer is the pastor at Columbus St. Cecilia Church.

to the denomination she founded: the Foursquare Church.

The belief that preaching the “full Gospel” would lead to Pentecostal gifts, including miracles, was spread by the Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International, founded in 1952. Oral Roberts, who was heavily involved with the group, used the Letter to the Romans to connect the “full Gospel” and miraculous healings: “... by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ” (Rom 15:19 RSV). Like Tomlinson, Roberts taught that miracles would follow the preaching of the full Gospel.

This understanding of the “full gospel” is part of the New Apostolic Reformation (NAR) today. Randy Clark says that the “fullness of the Gospel” and the message of the Kingdom includes not only the preaching of the word

but the demonstration of God’s power through signs and wonders. Bill Johnson, senior pastor of NAR powerhouse Bethel Redding, also affirms that the Full Gospel includes signs and wonders, appealing to Romans 15:19. NAR “apostle” Ché Ahn, pastor of Harvest Rock Church in Pasadena, says that the Gospel is not complete if it is not followed by signs and wonders: “If signs and wonders do not follow the Gospel we preach, then we are preaching only part of the Gospel.”

Encounter Ministries, founded by Catholics, presents the same teaching, with a slight change of wording. Instead of “full Gospel,” they say that the Gospel is not “whole” without signs and wonders: “Although we understand that signs, wonders and miracles are not the whole Gospel, we are convinced that the Gospel is not whole without them.” Encounter Ministries is simply passing on the “full Gospel” teaching of 20th-century Pentecostals and the NAR while expressing it in different words.

What should Catholics think about this? First, the Catholic Church does not teach that the Gospel message is incomplete unless it is followed by signs and wonders. Catholics do say that our faith is based on the miracle of the Incarnation. Pope Benedict XVI taught, “While we too always seek other signs, other wonders, we do not realize that he is the real sign, God made flesh; he is the greatest miracle of the universe: all the love of God hidden in a human heart, in a human face.”

Second, the Catholic Church does not use the language of the “full Gospel.” The inventors of that phrase believed that the Church had lost something essential, so that it had to be restored. The Catholic Church has always preserved and handed on the essential truths of the faith.

Like Simpson and McPherson, Catholics believe that the Gospel is about more than “being saved;” it also includes post-baptismal growth in holiness, and living in expectation of Christ’s coming. Unlike them, instead of saying that the Gospel is incomplete without signs and wonders, Catholics confess that their lives are incomplete if they do not live a sacramental life in communion with the Church. The Council of Trent taught that doing so would lead to “an increase in justification” and, for those who receive the grace of final perseverance, resurrection and glorification.

The Council of Trent also taught: “the Gospel ... promised through the prophets in the holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated with His own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by His Apostles to every creature, as the fountain of all, both saving truth, and moral discipline ... this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the Apostles themselves ... have come down even unto us ...”

Both faith and a holy life are part of the fullness of the Gospel, and no Christian’s life is complete without both. Catholics believe miracles are possible, including the wondrous miracle of grace that is a life fully lived in faith, hope and charity. Such a life will make you a saint, even if you never see miraculous healings.

When the truth of Christ’s message is fully accepted in faith, and fully lived within the community of the Church, then are the words of Christ fulfilled: “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11 RSV).

Pope Leo’s homily for Solemnity of Christ the King on liturgical music

The following is Pope Leo XVI’s homily on the Solemnity of Christ the King at St. Peter’s Basilica.

Dear sisters and brothers,

In the responsorial Psalm, we have sung, “Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord” (cf. Ps 122). Today’s liturgy invites us, therefore, to walk together in praise and joy towards the encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, gentle and humble Sovereign, the One who is the beginning and end of all things. His power is love, his throne the Cross, and through the Cross his Kingdom shines forth upon the world. “From the wood he reigns” (cf. Hymn *Vexilla Regis*) as Prince of Peace and King of Justice who, in his Passion, reveals to the world the immense mercy of God’s heart. This love is also the inspiration and motive for your singing.

Dear choristers and musicians, today you celebrate your jubilee and you show thanks to the Lord for granting you the gift and grace to serve him by offering your voices and talents for his glory and for the spiritual edification of your brothers and sisters (cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 120). Your task is to draw others into the praise of God and to help them to participate more fully in the liturgy through song. Today, you fully express your “*iubilum*,” your exultation, which flows from hearts overflowing with the joy of grace.

Great civilizations have given us the gift of music in order to express what we carry deep in our hearts and what words cannot always convey. Music can give expression to the whole range of feelings and emotions that arise within us from a living relationship with reality. Singing, in particular, constitutes a natural and refined expression of the human being: mind, feelings, body and soul come together to communicate the great events of life. As Saint Augustine reminded us: “*Cantare amantis est*” (cf. *Sermo* 336,1), that is, “singing belongs to those who love.” Those who sing give expression to love, but also to the pain, tenderness and desire that dwell in their hearts, while at the same time, loving those to whom they address their song

(cf. *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 72,1).

For the people of God, song expresses invocation and praise. It is the “new song” that the Risen Christ raises to the Father, in which all the baptized participate as one body animated by the new life of the Spirit. In Christ, we become singers of grace, children of the Church who discover in the Risen One the cause of our praise. Liturgical music thus becomes a precious instrument through which we carry out our service of praise to God and express the joy of new life in Christ.

Saint Augustine exhorts us, again, to sing while we walk, like weary travelers who find in song a foretaste of the joy they will experience when they reach their destination. “Sing, but continue your journey (...) progress in virtue” (*Sermon* 256, 3). Being part of a choir means advancing together, therefore, taking our brothers and sisters by the hand and helping them to walk with us. It means singing the praises of God together, consoling our brothers and sisters in their suffering, exhorting them when they seem to give in to fatigue and encouraging them when difficulties seem to prevail. Singing reminds us that we are a Church on a journey, an authentic synodal reality capable of sharing with everyone the vocation to praise and joy on this pilgrimage of love and hope.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch also employs moving words to express the relationship between the song of the choir and the unity of the Church: “From your unity and harmonious love, sing to Jesus Christ. And let each one become a choir, so that being harmonious of your arrangement and taking up the song of God in unison, you may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ, that he may both hear you and recognize you for your good works” (Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Ephesios*, IV). In fact, the different voices of a choir harmonize with each other, giving rise to a single hymn of praise, a luminous symbol of the Church, which unites everyone in love in a single pleasing melody.

You belong to choirs that carry out their ministry primarily in liturgical settings. Yours is a true ministry that requires preparation,

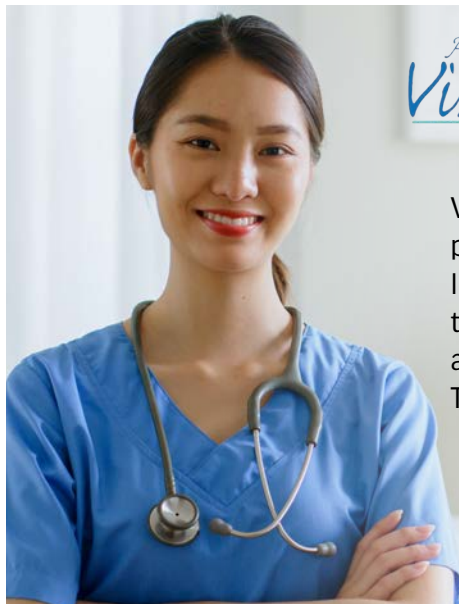
commitment, mutual understanding and, above all, a deep spiritual life, so that when you sing, you both pray and help everyone else to pray. This ministry requires discipline and a spirit of service, especially when preparing for a solemn liturgy or an important event in your communities. The choir is a small family of individuals united by their love of music and the service they offer. However, remember that the community is your larger family. You are not on stage, but rather a part of that community, endeavoring to help it grow in unity by inspiring and engaging its members. As in all families, tensions or minor misunderstandings can arise. These things are normal when working together and striving to achieve a goal. We can say to some extent that the choir symbolizes of the Church, which, striving toward its goal, walks through history praising God. Even when this journey is beset by difficulties and trials and joyful moments give way to more challenging ones, singing makes the journey lighter, providing relief and consolation.

Strive, therefore, to make your choirs ever harmonious and beautiful, and a brighter

image of the Church praising her Lord.

Study the Magisterium carefully. The conciliar documents set out the norms for carrying out your service in the best possible way. Above all, dedicate yourselves to facilitating the participation of the people of God, without giving in to the temptation of ostentation, which prevents the entire liturgical assembly from actively participating in the singing. In this, be an eloquent sign of the Church’s prayer, expressing its love for God through the beauty of music. Take care that your spiritual life is always worthy of the service you perform, so that your ministry may authentically express the grace of the liturgy.

I place all of you under the protection of Saint Cecilia, the virgin and martyr who raised the most beautiful song of love through her life here in Rome, giving herself entirely to Christ and offering the Church a shining example of faith and love. Let us continue singing and once again make our own the invitation of today’s responsorial psalm: “Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.”



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Deacons – Where they fit in as clergy

Not long ago, I wrote about who deacons are. Today, I offer more thoughts on deacons and the Diaconate, particularly some thoughts on where they fit in as clergy.

First, let's unpack a bit the difference between priests and bishops on the one hand and deacons on the other hand. This needs to be understood. What we have in common is that all clergy – bishops, priests, and deacons are ordained sacramental signs of Jesus Christ.

But when we say there is a significant difference between bishops and priests on the one hand and deacons on the other, we're going directly to the core of what is so unique about each order. Bishops and priests are ordained sacramental signs of Jesus Christ the Shepherd. Deacons, though, are ordained sacramental signs of Jesus Christ the Servant.

This is absolutely one of the most important things to understand about deacons. The Diaconate has its own theology that is quite different from the two higher orders. Jesus in the gospels shows over and over diakonia in action – His service – healings, feedings, freeing people of evil spirits, comforting the afflicted, afflicting the comfortable and much more. Diakonia is a Greek word meaning "service."

These are all splendid examples of service that our Lord showed, but my favorite image of Jesus the Servant is at the Last Supper: Jesus getting down on his hands and knees and washing each of the apostles' feet. Historians tell us that



THE CHANCELLOR'S ARCHIVE Deacon Tom Berg Jr.

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doing so was likely a smelly, dirty task, the lowest of menial chores that one could probably imagine in biblical times.

The Gospel of John emphasizes this moment. "Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Master, are you going to wash my feet?'"

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered him, 'Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me.'

"So, when he had washed their feet (and

put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet.

"I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it." Jn 13:5-17

This is not the moment the Diaconate is initiated, but Jesus is setting the stage by personally illustrating true diakonia. Deacons are asked to hold on to this image of Christ the Servant every day of their lives and to follow in His footsteps.

I cannot emphasize enough how important that is. A deacon who holds onto this vital image in his mind and heart every day has one of the keys to being a profoundly happy deacon, a joy rooted in his mind, heart, and soul because of God's grace and the deacon's humility.

This keeps a deacon in line with God's call to him, in line with God's purpose for him in his life. It won't make the tough times in a deacon's life and ministry go away, but it will make his life better. That's the best way I can explain it. And, as a result, he is better able to serve and be a source of comfort, inspiration and hope for the people the deacon serves.

All of this should be familiar territory for deacons, in fact. But understanding who

deacons are bears repeating whenever we explore the life of deacons. Starting at the proper beginning enables deacons to determine the right directions to take in their journeys of faith. If we do not start at the core of who deacons are, then things will get off track for them and the people they serve.

Wrong directions will be taken. Whenever I think about my own diaconate, I strive to remind myself to go back to this point: Who am I? Then, I'll think about what I should be doing to live out my life of diakonia effectively. That helps keep my thoughts, considerations, reflection and discernment centered properly and focused on God's will for me.

My last thought for this column is that exactly who we are as deacons is also going to be unique to each of us. I've been speaking in general terms here – things deacons all hold in common with each other. But the Holy Spirit does bless each person with different charisms and gifts.

However, the Spirit does not give each of us every charism and gift, so who we are is not stamped from the same exact mold. There is diversity among deacons, and that diversity itself is a strength for the Church as well. It's not like my wife and I stamping out gingerbread cookies at Christmas time.

With these thoughts and reflections in mind, I invite all who read this to pray for their deacons and to also consider how God is calling each of you to serve and discern His plan for your life during this Advent season.

Books for Christmas 2025

Surveys indicate that reading books is dropping precipitously across all age groups. This is a tragedy in itself; it's also a social disaster, as a post-literate society risks becoming a post-rational society. All the more reason, then, to consider giving books for Christmas: books that entertain, inform and open new horizons of understanding. Here are 11 suggestions, including recent publications and what the 1960s radio DJs used to call "oldies but goodies":

Jeeves and the Yule-Tide Spirit and Other Stories, by P.G. Wodehouse: The idyllic, imaginary world of foolish Bertie Wooster and his intrepid gentleman's gentleman, Jeeves, is both completely unbelievable and totally credible. And if Wodehouse doesn't make you laugh, you have no sense of humor.

Growing into God: The Fathers of the Church on Christian Maturity, by John Gavin, S.J.: Catholics who pray the Liturgy of the Hours meet the great Christian spiritual masters of the first millennium almost daily. Father Gavin, who teaches at Holy Cross, is a sure and accessible guide to the riches of the

patristic period, the rediscovery of which is one of Catholicism's great theological accomplishments of the past century and a half.

On the Dignity of Society: Catholic Social Teaching and Natural Law, by F. Russell Hittinger (edited by Scott J. Roniger): In the era of Pope Leo XIV, many find themselves wondering about Pope Leo XIII. Russ Hittinger is our most accomplished commentator on that great pope; the pivotal chapter in this fine essay collection, "The Accomplishment of Leo XIII," is required reading.

Church, State, and Society: An Introduction to Catholic Social Doctrine (Second Edition), by J. Brian Benestad and Ryan Connors: This revised and expanded edition of a masterful work brings the story of the "Church's best kept secret" up through Pope Francis. Highly recommended as a textbook.

An Anxious Age: The Post-Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of America, by Joseph Bottum: Why has the United States become so cranky in recent decades? Poet and philosopher Bottum offers an intriguing proposal — because the old



THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE George Weigel

George Weigel is the Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. George Weigel's column 'The Catholic Difference' is syndicated by the Denver Catholic, the official publication of the Archdiocese of Denver.

Protestant cultural hegemony collapsed when liberal Protestantism imploded into post-Christian wokery; Catholicism failed to fill the cultural vacuum (as it might have done through the teaching and example of John Paul II); and spiritual anxiety reigns supreme, taking various bizarre forms. Think of this distinctive work as both a primer for the New Evangelization and a penetrating analysis of the roots of our 21st-century political discontents.

Make Peace Before the Sun Goes Down: The Long Encounter of Thomas Merton and His Abbot, James Fox, by Roger Lipsey: Abbot James is typically presented as the authoritarian nemesis of the world's most famous Trappist during their lifetimes. The relationship certainly had its complexities, but Dom James took Merton as his confessor for 15 years, even as they were battling over various aspects of monastic life. That the two men are buried side by side at the Abbey of Gethsemani

has always struck me as something deeply Catholic; this uneven but fascinating book confirmed that intuition.

Zbig: The Life of Zbigniew Brzezinski, America's Great Power Prophet, by Edward Luce: Catholic readers will be particularly interested in Ed Luce's discussion of the relationship between Brzezinski and Pope John Paul II, which had a significant effect on history during the rise of the Solidarity movement in 1980 and the Soviet threat to crush it by military force.

The Golden Thread: A History of the Western Tradition, Volume One, by Allen C. Guelzo and James Hankins: A magnificent, detailed overview of the evolution of the West from antiquity to the Renaissance, and, thanks to the good people at Encounter Books, the most beautiful piece of bookmaking in decades. Give it to every college student you know.

If Russia Wins: A Scenario, by Carlo Masala: A brief, deeply informed analysis of what might happen around the world if the United States and Europe do not gather the wit, will, and capacity to resist the new Russian imperialism.

On Active Service in War and Peace, by Henry L. Stimson: A reminder of the days when men of experience and character brought distinction to public service rather than getting notoriety from it, and an elegy for the days when bipartisanship characterized U.S. foreign policy.

The Last Manager: How Earl Weaver Tricked, Tormented, and Reinvented Baseball, by John Miller: Given the subject's salty vocabulary, don't read this aloud with children around. But if you want to know how contemporary baseball "analytics" trace their roots to a bookie in Depression-era St. Louis, this fine biography of the "Earl of Baltimore" is for you, and for anyone who loves the great game.

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Waiting in hope

As we begin a new liturgical year in the Church, we enter the Season of Advent. Advent is a period of waiting, preparation and hopeful joy at the coming of the Christ Child. This year is also unique in that we are ending a Jubilee Year, where we were called to be Pilgrims of Hope in 2025. How did we do on this pilgrimage year? Did we seek opportunities to be hopeful, serve others, or are we still on the journey toward hope? Perhaps there remains a struggle to find a hopeful outlook when things appeared to be uncertain much of the time. Advent is the perfect time to recollect and reflect, as we wait in hope.

Taking stock

At the end of each year, I like to take a few days to recollect and reflect in preparation for a new year. In recollection, we look back and recall the things we have done (or should have done), along with the people and circumstances we have encountered. Experience is a great teacher, and we can learn from our memory in ways that preserve the good and avoid the other stuff. In reflection, though, we build on our lived experience through introspection and discernment. The questions shift from “what have I done?” to “what should I do?” A reflection of “who am I?” to “who God is calling me to be” can be a great directional waypoint on the map of life. Taking stock periodically



SERVING AS NEIGHBORS

Kelley Henderson

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through recollection and reflection is one way to course correct and navigate back toward the person who has already shown The Way.

Why wait?

If Advent is a period of recollection and reflection, it is also a period of waiting. We live in a society that is impatient, self-absorbed and hurried most of the time. “I know what I want, and where

I am going, so why wait!?” The holiday season tends to amplify this further, as we bounce from one party to another ... one shopping destination to another ... one commitment to another. It can be a stressful time for many, and a lonely time of the year for others who feel lost in the shuffle. Advent gives us a chance to slow things down and wait. There is a reason that we do not put the Baby Jesus in the crèche until Christmas! We wait for the joy that comes with Christmas, and we wait in hope that we can experience that special gift once again. Waiting is tough, especially when everything is spinning around us all the time. We recall the scripture that accompanies our Jubilee Year. St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans speaks of the process as one where we should “boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint.” (Rom 5:3-5). Our pilgrimage is made worthy because of the One we seek, and sometimes we must simply wait for the gift that is always, already there.

Hope is coming

Nearly 2,000 years ago, humanity was waiting for hope to arrive. Then God did something few understood at the time; a choice to dwell among us so that we can have hope in a future where we dwell

with Him. Each Sunday we recite in the Nicene Creed, “For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” We boldly speak the words that define our faith, and in confidence acknowledge that hope is coming again. The reality is that hope is already with us, as St. Paul closes his encouragement for our Jubilee Year by saying “hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has poured out into our heart through the Holy Spirit, that has been given to us” (Rom 5:5). This gift is with us and for us, and no one can take that away. Advent is our seasonal reminder to slow down and wait, so that we do not take for granted the joy of Hope being born in our midst.

As we wait in Advent, we recollect and reflect. With the close of the Jubilee Year of Hope upon us, this is also a time to take stock and make new commitments. Being hopeful can begin with a choice to be available for the people God puts in our lives. It is in the encounters of life, like a little baby 2,000 years ago, where we find the joys and purpose that guide us. I pray that you may wait in hope this season and experience the Christmas miracle in a special way.

Learn more about getting involved with Catholic Social Services at www.colss.org

What is Jesus to me?

There is a poignant yet necessary question that Jesus poses to the Apostles, as described in St. Matthew’s Gospel, about how people define or interpret who He is. The genesis of the question stems from the Pharisees and Sadducees demanding a sign from heaven to prove his identity to them. (Mt 16:1-4) What is interesting about this question is that both religious groups witnessed Jesus’ healings, the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000, his discourse as the Lord of the Sabbath, through the plucking of the grain of wheat on the Sabbath. (Mt 12:1-8) But they still demanded a sign due to their spiritual obstinacy toward the Son of God.

When the Apostles attempted to answer Jesus’ question from the perspective of other followers, Jesus reasserts his question directly to the Apostles, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter finally responds, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mt 16:13-17) Jesus affirms Peter’s description of Jesus by immediately associating God the Father, who revealed this wisdom and insight through the gift of grace. The question posed by Jesus could have easily been reworded to say, “Who am I to you?” The importance of this question establishes a direct and fruitful dialogue between Christ and the Apostles for the intention to confirm the establishment of the Church on earth. Until the Apostles understand the nature and identity of Christ, it is pointless to establish the Church of Christ on earth. In other words, there must exist a sincere belief, which leads to faith, which leads to a consent to the will of God through the Son to be a disciple of Christ and His Church.

When I posed a similar question to a group of missionaries, “What is Jesus to you?” as part of their evangelization and kerygmatic training, they had a challenging time coming up with a



CALLED TO TEACH, NOT JUDGE

Dr. Marlon De La Torre

Dr. Marlon De La Torre serves as the senior director for the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis in the Diocese of Columbus. His professional catechetical background spans more than 30 years.

response. The question provided the missionaries with an opportunity to discern their relationship with Jesus Christ in a way they had not thought of. What I discovered with these missionaries is that they had an idea of what their relationship with Christ looked like, but nothing concrete to substantiate their understanding of Jesus in their lives.

The thought of Jesus Christ as either a theoretical concept or a manufactured figure meant to help us get along in a pacifist way does not quite explain who Jesus really is, or how we are to apply the way, truth, and life of Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6-7) in our daily lives. It is important when addressing the question, “What is Jesus to me?” to demonstrate a physical reality of who Jesus was on earth, what he actually did, and who he is now. To address the human sense of a person in relation to the question, “What is Jesus to me?” a visible and attractive reality must be made present, or better yet, revealed,

that would help the person understand who Jesus is for him.

Whether Jesus is viewed as a religious figure, friend, counselor or someone of insignificance, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, must be presented as someone who lived, breathed and suffered like us except in sin. The concept of Christ to someone who has difficulty developing any meaningful thought of Christ in his life must start with a human witness who unabashedly believes and actively seeks to embrace a life with Christ. Active communication with Jesus Christ through prayer, an embrace of a life of beatitude, the genuine display of forgiveness to your neighbor, the willingness to defend the teachings of Jesus Christ with prudence, wisdom and love are all visible realities of what Jesus can be to the person who questions the purpose of Jesus in his life.

When the missionaries asked me, “What is Jesus to me?” I told them that, “he is the reality of truth, beauty and goodness that compels me to love Him more than anyone else. He is my model of sanctity, holiness and suffering that compels me to speak well of him as a husband and a father. The answer to the question of “What is Jesus to me?” requires one to be willing to acknowledge that Jesus is God, the second person of the blessed Trinity, and that our lives revolve around the constant development and confirmation of a relationship with him that moves us to embrace the way of the cross.

In Luke’s Gospel, after Peter had denied knowing Jesus, the chief priests and scribes led Jesus away, and they asked him if he was the Christ. (Lk 22:66-70) Jesus’ response is very telling because he says there is no point in telling them who he is because they do not believe. This is very important because to answer the question, “What is Jesus to you?” requires a consent of faith and belief that Jesus

Christ is the Son of God, the Word made flesh, the bread of life, my Lord, Savior and King. The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides us with a wonderful answer to the question, “What is Jesus to me?”

The Son of God, who came down “from heaven, not to do (his) own will, but the will of him who sent (him),” said on coming into the world, “Lo, I have come to do your will, O God.” “And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (CCC 606) From the first moment of his Incarnation the Son embraces the Father’s plan of divine salvation in his redemptive mission: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work.” The sacrifice of Jesus “for the sins of the whole world” (CCC 606) expresses his loving communion with the Father. “The Father loves me, because I lay down my life,” said the Lord, “(for) I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. (CCC 606)

In conclusion, St. John’s Gospel provides us with a fitting closure to the question What is Jesus to me through the bread of life discourse;

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me; and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” (Jn 6:35-41)

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