

'You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' – John 8:32

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WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

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Brit's dream flourishes 10 years after Haiti quake

BY TANYA CONNOR | THE CATHOLIC FREE PRESS

The 10th anniversary of the devastating earthquake in Haiti is a time for some people to remember a local young Catholic woman whose life it claimed.

The people of Haiti are also remembered and appreciated, as efforts to serve them continue.

Ten years ago I drove my Britney to the airport so she could go on her first missionary trip to Haiti. Cherylynn Gengel, of St. John Parish in Worcester, said in a Jan. 4 Facebook posting. I didn't know it would be the last time I

saw her.

Britney Gengel was among an estimated 300,000 people who lost their lives in the Jan. 12, 2010 earthquake. The 19-year-old had gone on a Food for the Poor Journey of Hope trip with 11 fellow students and two faculty members from Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida. Four students and the faculty members died as a result of the earthquake.

Britney's father, Leonard Gengel, told The Catholic Free Press Tuesday that his heart goes out to other parents who have lost children in tragic ways, and he feels

the pain in Haiti over other earthquake victims.

In the midst of this, he spoke of having faith and hope for eternal peace and of the love we have felt and still feel the love of God. The words faith, hope and love are on Britney's grave.

The Gengels wrote a book called Heartache and Hope in Haiti, started the Be Like Brit Foundation Inc. and built an orphanage in Grand Goave, the town Britney was scheduled to travel to the day after the earthquake.

SEE HAITI, 7



PHOTO COURTESY OF BE LIKE BRIT

"Look at that face! She's so happy to be there. It's where she's supposed to be," said Cherylynn Gengel when looking at this photo of her daughter, Britney, in Haiti. Britney and the photographer, Christine Gianacaci, were among Lynn University students killed in the 2010 earthquake there.

Diocese fills two buses for March for Life

The Respect Life Office has filled two buses to capacity for the Diocese of Worcester's bus trip to the March for Life in Washington, D.C. The buses leave Thursday, Jan. 23, following the annual Mass for Life.

Bishop McManus will celebrate the Mass for Life at 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul Cathedral, 19 Chatham St., Worcester. Allison LeDoux, director of the Respect Life Office, invites all to attend the Mass as we remember the 47th tragic anniversary of Roe v. Wade and pray for an end to abortion and the conversion of our nation. We will also pray in a special way for all those who will be traveling to Washington, D.C., for the March for Life.

According to Mrs. LeDoux, the office may be able to add a third bus if there is enough interest.

If there are not enough registrants to fill another bus, we will keep a wait list in case any seats open up, she said.

If interested in attending and/or being kept on a wait list please inquire by email to aledoux@worcesterdiocese.org, as soon as possible. The cost is \$95 per seat.

If you can't attend this year, Mrs. LeDoux suggests that you consider a donation to help defray expenses for students and others with financial challenges. Donations can be made payable to Respect Life Office - Diocese of Worcester (mark March for Life donation in the memo),

SEE MARCH, 6

Called forth to serve the marginalized



BY SUSAN BAILEY | CFP CORRESPONDENT

Brenda Seymour from Hudson saw out 2019 by beginning a new life. On New Year's Eve, she departed for Kenya as a Maryknoll missionary, where she will serve for the next three-and-a-half years. The 65-year-old former parishioner of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Westborough and Immaculate Conception Parish in Marlborough was one of four lay missionaries and one Maryknoll sister sent to four countries around the world: Haiti, Kenya, Cambodia and East Timor.

SEE MARYKNOLL, 6



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARYKNOLL

During the Maryknoll Sending Ceremony in December, top, Brenda Seymour and Greg Garrity listen as they are called forth for mission in Kenya. Ms. Seymour, above, poses with Marj Humphrey, the Maryknoll Lay Missioners' director of mission, who bestowed a mission cross on Ms. Seymour during the ceremony.

20th anniversary Men's Conference announces speakers

The Worcester Catholic Men's Conference is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year with speakers that include author Scott Hahn, Bishop Robert Reed of CatholicTV, and Luis Soto of the Augustine Institute.

Msgr. Thomas J. Sullivan and Angelo Guadagno, co-chairmen of the nation's oldest conference of this type, announced the speakers for the event that will be held at Assumption College on Saturday, March 28.

The planning committee has been inviting parish contact persons for the annual Mass and planning breakfast set for 8 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 18, at Christ the King Church, 1052 Pleasant St., Worcester, where Msgr. Sullivan is pastor. If able to come, those men are asked to contact the committee.

The conference's speaking program and lunch will take place in Assumption's Plourde Center. Registration and 70 exhibitions will be in the Laska Gym. Confessions will be heard in the adjoining Hagan Campus Center.

We have a superb slate of speakers again this year, said Mr. Guadagno. There is something for everyone and I know that our participants will not be disappointed, especially given the variety of topics.

Scott Hahn, an exceptionally popular speaker, teacher and author, will offer two talks at the conference. His morning conference talk is titled, The Road to Emmaus: The Path to Lifelong Conversion. His afternoon program will be The Power of the Sacraments.

Mr. Hahn has delivered numerous talks nationally and internationally on a wide variety of subjects related to Scripture and the Catholic faith. His talks have been effective in helping thousands of Protestants and fallen away Catholics to (re)embrace the Catholic faith.

He is the chairman of Biblical Theology and the New Evangelization at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, where he has taught since 1990. He is the founder and president of the Saint Paul Center for Biblical Theology.

SEE 20TH, 7

Parishes can expand evangelization efforts with Legacy grants

BY SUSAN BAILEY | CFP CORRESPONDENT

People have to be touched, said Father Robert A. Grattaroti, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Charlton. The whole message of the Gospel is that people were touched by Jesus in their hearts. The key to evangelization is communication.

This is the thinking behind the Legacy of Hope's campaign, designating evangelization as one of its key components. From the target goal of \$32 million, the campaign

hopes to set aside \$1.5 million toward grants for evangelization programs in parishes.

The Diocese of Worcester has an established subcommittee which assists parishes in the choosing of evangelization programs for that parish's needs. There are many from which to choose but as Father William F. Sanders of St. Louis Parish in Webster pointed out, Some of these materials are a little bit expensive. Plus, to send

people for further training involves expenses most parishes do not budget for this. There isn't a lot of money left over for this sort of thing. This is where a grant from the Legacy of Hope campaign can help out.

According to Father Sanders, who has used several evangelization programs at St. Louis, the results have

SEE LEGACY, 6

GIVING BACK

“That's the key, when people realize that their faith isn't a personal thing but does involve sharing and reaching out. That's what evangelization is all about for me.”

– FATHER WILLIAM F. SANDERS
ST. LOUIS PARISH, WEBSTER



Mercy Centre Foxes preserve winning ways against Amcats team. 7



Puerto Rico reels under successive earthquakes; Catholic church damaged. 3

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Faith is about worshipping God, not oneself, pope says

BY CINDY WOODEN | CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Worshipping the Lord as the Three Kings did involves making a journey from the greatest form of bondage: slavery to oneself, Pope Francis said on the feast of the Epiphany.

To worship like the Magi did is to bring gold to the Lord and to tell him that nothing is more precious than he is. To offer him incense and to tell him that only in union with him can our lives rise up to heaven. To present him with myrrh, balm for the bruised and wounded, and to promise him that we will aid our marginalized and suffering neighbors in whom he himself is present, the pope said.

Pope Francis celebrated the feast day in St. Peter's Basilica Jan. 6.

In accordance with an ancient tradition, after the proclamation of the Gospel

on Epiphany, a deacon chanted the announcement of the date of Easter 2020 (April 12) and the dates of other feasts on the church calendar that are calculated according to the date of Easter.

In his homily, the pope focused on the importance of worshipping the Lord, bowing down in adoration and putting him before all other concerns, because the Christian life is a journey toward the Lord, not toward ourselves.

In the Gospel, he said, Herod worshipped only himself and wanted to rid himself of the child Jesus. What does this teach us? That when we do not worship God, we end up worshipping ourselves.

People can use religion to affirm themselves and their own abilities, the pope said. This is a grave risk: We use God instead of serving him. How many times

have we confused the interests of the Gospel with our own? How many times have we cloaked in religiosity the things we find convenient?

In the Gospel story of the Three Kings, the high priests and scribes know all the prophecies about the birth of the Messiah, yet they do not join the Magi in going to Bethlehem to worship the newborn king, the pope noted.

They offer another lesson to Christians, he said. In the Christian life, it is not enough to be knowledgeable; unless we step out of ourselves, unless we encounter others and worship, we cannot know God.

Faith is not simply a set of fine doctrines, but a relationship with a living person whom we are called to love, the pope said. It is in encountering Jesus face to face that we come to see him as he is.



CNS PHOTO | PAUL HARING

Pope Francis raises the Book of the Gospels as he celebrates Mass marking the feast of the Epiphany in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Jan. 6.



CNS PHOTO | NAZANIN TABATABAEE, WEST ASIA NEWS AGENCY VIA REUTERS

A woman holds prayer beads during Friday prayers in Tehran, Iran, Jan. 3, after Iranian Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani was killed in a U.S. drone airstrike at Baghdad International Airport earlier that day.

Iraqis hope attacks by U.S., Iran will ease and tensions will decrease

BY DALE GAVLAK | CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

AMMAN, Jordan (CNS) — Iraqis hope the violent attacks by the U.S. and Iran will ease and that moves to decrease tensions will take hold, said an Iraqi archbishop.

Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Yousif Thomas Mirkis of Kirkuk, Iraq, repeated the overarching concern of the majority of Iraqis, regardless of their religious affiliation: that foreign troops stop using their shattered homeland as a battlefield to settle scores.

On Jan. 8, Iran launched more than a dozen ballistic missiles at two Iraqi bases in what it said was retaliation for Washington's targeted killing of Iran's top militia commander, Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, in Baghdad Jan. 3. The missiles hit the al-Asad airbase, which houses U.S. troops, and American and coalition forces in the northern Iraqi town of Irbil, in areas not heavily populated.

We haven't heard anything about lives lost. Maybe it can stop here the revenge, Archbishop Mirkis told Catholic News Service by phone Jan. 8. The revenge was in all the speech

of yesterday. ... Now, that it is done, let us go to negotiate.

Iran called Soleimani's killing an act of war and state terrorism, and vowed hard revenge. Soleimani is believed to have been responsible for hundreds of U.S. service member deaths in Iraq. He was also Iran's main strategist in the Syrian conflict.

American officials said there were no initial reports of casualties, but the strikes' impact was being assessed. Analysts expressed hope that the crisis can now be defused, with Tehran showing it has retaliated over Soleimani's killing, while Washington may shrug off the limited nature of strikes.

My anxiety was real, Archbishop Mirkis said, referring to remarks he made earlier to CNS about the deep fears Iraqis share. They hate the fact that the United States and Iran are settling their differences on Iraqi soil and view this recent escalation between the two powers as very dangerous for their people.

Many fear that the assassination of Soleimani, known as the architect of Tehran's proxy wars in the Middle East, could spark further sectarian

divisions in Iraq between Sunni Muslims and Shiites.

We are fed up with all kinds of troubles and war. We don't want this anymore. Especially, the demonstrations in Baghdad are telling those who are with Iran or with America: Let us live in peace, Archbishop Mirkis said, underscoring the demand by protesters to end Iranian influence in their country. Iraq's parliament, minus absent Sunni Muslim and Kurdish lawmakers, voted Jan. 5 to expel American troops from Iraq.

The archbishop and other Catholic leaders, included Iraqi Chaldean Catholic Patriarch Louis Sako, repeatedly have appealed for an immediate de-escalation of tensions and for countries to stop using Iraq as a battlefield.

Analysts point out that Iran chose direct missile strikes from its own territory rather than using its proxy militia forces, such as Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah or Houthi rebels in Yemen.

But they wonder whether it will unleash such forces in asymmetric warfare against U.S. interests and allies in the region later on.

BRIEFS

Church workers aid others after Jakarta floods

JAKARTA, Indonesia (CNS) — Caritas Indonesia (Karina) has joined the Jakarta Archdiocese in distributing aid to people hard hit by floods that have killed dozens of people in and around Indonesia's capital.

Ucanews.org reported the floods are considered among the worst to have hit the Indonesian capital and its suburbs since records began. According to the National Disaster Management Agency, at least 60 people have died because of floods and landslides in Jakarta, West Java and Banten provinces, while more than 90,000 people remain displaced.

Australian bishops respond to fires

CANBERRA, Australia (CNS) — Saying that there is no end in sight to the horror which confronts us, Archbishop Mark Coleridge, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, said the bishops have implemented a national response to months of wildfires.

The bishops have set up a national network, connecting people affected by the fires with people who can help with tasks such as preparing meals, clearing properties, rebuilding communities, as well as pastoral and counseling support. They are collaborating with other religious agencies and their institutes and will take up a special collection the last weekend in January, when Australia Day is celebrated.

Archbishop Coleridge said people who do not want to wait to donate to their parish collections can donate to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, known in Australia as Vinnies.



CNS PHOTO | AARON CHOWN, REUTERS

A worker removes anti-Semitic graffiti on a shop window in the Belsize Park neighborhood of London.

London cardinal condemns hate speech

MANCHESTER, England (CNS) — An English cardinal has condemned all expressions of hatred after anti-Semitic graffiti was daubed across shops, cafes and a synagogue in London.

Cardinal Vincent Nichols of Westminster denounced the Dec. 29 attacks, which coincided with the Jewish religious festival of Hanukkah.

In a New Year message posted Jan. 1 on the website of the Archdiocese of Westminster, the cardinal asked Catholics to include building up the kingdom of God among their New Year resolutions.

We look for justice and compassion, for generosity and truth, for faithfulness and love, for a sense of unity and shared well-being, said Cardinal Nichols before suggesting ways in which Catholics can improve their society.

China rules target Catholic, Protestant churches

SIEM REAP, Cambodia (CNS) — The Chinese government has targeted unregistered Catholic and Protestant churches with a new expansion of rules and regulations governing religious organizations.

It will institute another raft of laws covering 41 religion-related topics Feb. 1, two years after the implementation of another set of restrictive laws for religious groups in the country.

The goal is to have all religious organizations brought into the open, registered in one way or another and thus end the duality of official religious organizations and underground (or unregistered), which in China means the government knows about them but (previously) let them be, Francesco Sisci, a senior researcher at Beijing's Renmin University, told CNS.

Kenyan Catholic leaders alarmed at terror attacks

NAIROBI, Kenya (CNS) — Catholic leaders in Kenya are sounding an alarm after a terror attack killed three Americans and forced local people to flee.

The clerics feared the attack in Manda Bay in Lamu County which occurred amid increasing tension in the Middle East could be an act of revenge linked to the recent killing of the top Iranian military leader. It also could be retaliation for U.S. airstrikes targeting al-Shabab fighters after a truck bomb in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, killed at least 79 people.

We are condemning the attack, which has disrupted peace and tranquility in the region, Father Wilybard Lagho, vicar general of the Mombasa Archdiocese, told Catholic News Service. I think the war on terror is redefining itself in the global scale. We are likely to see dormant terror cells reawakening.

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Pope: Uphold 'the right to life'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Health care professionals always must promote the dignity and life of each person and reject any compromise in the direction of euthanasia, assisted suicide or suppression of life, even in the case of terminal illness, Pope Francis said.

Life is sacred and belongs to God, the pope said, hence it is inviolable, and no one can claim the right to dispose of it freely.

Pope Francis addressed health care professionals in his annual message for the celebration of World Day of the Sick, which is marked Feb. 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. The text of the message was released Jan. 3.

To people suffering from illness in body or mind, the pope offered words of hope and encouragement, assuring them of Jesus' closeness and his promise to alleviate their burdens.

Jesus does not make demands of those who endure situations of frailty, suffering and weakness, but offers his mercy and his comforting presence, the pope said.

BRIEFS

Bishop says religious prejudice cannot be tolerated

PORTLAND, Maine (CNS) Bishop Robert P. Deeley of Portland Maine, called for the country to continue working to end any form of religious prejudice during a New Year's Day Mass.

Citing incidents of religious violence as 2019 came to a close, including a knife attack at a rabbi's home in New York and a shooting at a Texas church, Bishop Deeley said American society is experiencing too much religious-based violence and hatred.

Unfortunately, it marks the century for us, he told worshippers at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Portland. We have seen too many shootings and attacks on religious houses and communities. As Christians we cannot tolerate any kind of religious prejudice.

Bishop Deeley attributed the violence to the implicit permission of society for giving rise to such attacks.

Pope accepts resignation of Bishop Higgins from military diocese

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Auxiliary Bishop Richard B. Higgins, the episcopal vicar for veterans affairs of the Archdiocese for the Military Services.

The retirement of Bishop Higgins, who reached the normal retirement age of 75 last February, was announced Jan. 2 in Washington by Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Bishop Higgins' duties as vicar for veterans affairs included responsibility for the more than 200 chaplains serving at more than 150 VA hospitals in the United States, Puerto Rico and Guam.

Theodore McCarrick has moved from Kansas friary

DENVER, Colo. (CNA) - The disgraced former cardinal Theodore McCarrick has moved from the Kansas friary where he had been living since 2018.

A spokesman for the Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Conrad told CNA Jan. 7 that McCarrick left St. Fidelis Friary in Victoria, Kansas, just days ago.

He has moved to a residential community of priests who have been removed from ministry, senior Church officials told CNA.

The former cardinal made the decision to leave the Kansas friary himself over the Christmas period, sources say, adding that his continued presence in the friary had become a strain on the Franciscan community that was hosting him.

McCarrick moved to the friary shortly after he was accused in 2018 of sexually abusing minors, seminarians, and young priests.

McCarrick's new location remains undisclosed.



CNS PHOTO | ED WILKINSON, THE TABLET

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn, N.Y., Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, and Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, executive vice-president of the New York Board of Rabbis, speak from the podium in Brooklyn's Cadman Plaza during massive No Fear, No Hate rally, Jan. 5.

Catholic leaders join New Yorkers in march against hate

BROOKLYN, N.Y. (CNS) Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York and Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn joined about 25,000 New Yorkers who took to the streets for a Jan. 5 Solidarity March in protest of anti-Semitism.

When there's an attack on you, there's an attack on all of us, Cardinal Dolan said in remarks at the rally in Brooklyn after participants had crossed the Brooklyn Bridge.

The march, which made its way from Lower Manhattan to Cadman Plaza in Downtown Brooklyn, brought together Jewish and non-Jewish residents alike from the New York area, along with a host of local leaders, including Gov. Andrew Cuomo, Sen. Chuck Schumer, Mayor Bill DeBlasio, and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez all marching under the banner of No Hate, No Fear.

The march was organized by the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee and the interdenominational New York Board of Rabbis.

NY governor announces \$45 million for security at religious schools

NEW YORK CITY, N.Y. (CNA) - During a solidarity march with the Jewish community of New York, which suffered numerous attacks during the week of Hanukkah last month, New York's Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that the state is spending \$45 million this year on increased security for religious institutions and schools.

Cuomo made the announcement on Sunday during a speech before walking across the Brooklyn Bridge with tens of thousands of fellow march participants.

The money for increased security at religious sites was earmarked last April as part of the state's budget, due to the advocacy of multiple Jewish organizations as well as the New York State Catholic Conference, a spokesman for the conference told CNA.



CNS PHOTO | RICARDO ORTIZ, REUTERS

A destroyed home is seen after an earthquake in Guanica, Puerto Rico, Jan. 6. A larger temblor of magnitude 6.4 rattled Puerto Rico before dawn Jan. 7, killing at least one person and destroying a Catholic church. A series of earthquakes and aftershocks beneath the southern part of the island have been occurring since the night of Dec. 28-29.

Puerto Rico reels under successive earthquakes

BY DENNIS SADOWSKI | CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON (CNS) At least one person has died and one Catholic Church was destroyed by the latest of a series of earthquakes to rock Puerto Rico.

A magnitude 6.4 quake shook people awake at 4:24 a.m. local time Jan. 7, less than 24 hours after a magnitude 5.8 temblor shook the island in the predawn hours of Jan. 6.

Aftershocks ranging in magnitude from 3.8 to 6 were felt throughout the island following the early morning temblor, reported the U.S. Geological Survey.

The continuous shaking has taken a psychological toll, said Father Enrique Camacho, executive director of Caritas of Puerto Rico, which is affiliated with Catholic Charities USA.

Right now we are helping the people with emotional support, Father Camacho told Catholic News Service Jan. 7. What we fear is that we continue having these earthquakes. If we have bigger ones, the damage is going to be very, very, very bad.

The latest earthquake sent people scurrying from their homes into the streets from Ponce, the island's second-largest city, westward along the island's southern coast to the towns of Guayanilla, Guanica, Yauco and Lajas, all near the epicenter of the quakes.

Police in Ponce said a 73-year-old man died when a wall fell on him, reported El Nuevo Dia, Puerto Rico's largest newspaper.

Immaculate Conception Church in Guayanilla was severely damaged, Mayor Nelson Torres Yordan told a local television station. Photos posted by El Nuevo Dia showed residents removing the church's undamaged tabernacle to safety.

Father Camacho said the church had survived the island's major earthquake of 1918, only to be shaken apart by the Jan. 7 temblor. The only church that remained on the street (in 1918) was that, he said. Then 100 years later, with this earthquake, it is the one that

fell down.

That's really sad because it was a very historical monument, a tourist place, he added.

Father Camacho said he had been in contact with Bishop Ruben Gonzalez Medina of Ponce, where the cathedral experienced some damage. Mass was canceled Jan. 7 at the cathedral and numerous parishes across the diocese, he said.

The most recent large quake knocked out power to much of the island, including the capital of San Juan. The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority reported that all of its power plants went offline ...

I talked with a priest in charge of social ministry in Ponce, Father Camacho told CNS. He told me even himself he is not traveling (in the diocese) because they are afraid there could be more ruts in the road and their lives are in danger.

Puerto Rico has experienced a series of minor earthquakes beginning the night of Dec. 28-29 leading to the major shakers, reported the U.S. Geological Survey.

The most recent large quake knocked out power to much of the island, including the capital of San Juan. The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority reported that all of its power plants went offline after its auto protection systems were activated.

The company reported damaged to one of its main power plants near the earthquake's epicenter, but that technicians were working to restore electricity to other parts of the island.

Archbishop Robert Gonzalez Nieves of San Juan tweeted soon after the quake Jan. 7: A 6.7-point earthquake has just shaken all of Puerto Rico that is now without light. Prayer, serenity, solidarity and charity are important. We are one family!

Father Camacho said if more powerful earthquakes occur, he feared damage in the rural mountainous center of the island, where housing is less sturdy, would be severe.

As for an immediate response, Caritas of Puerto Rico is in a holding pattern.

We are waiting to see what are the damages, the priest said. We are willing to help people reconstruct as soon as possible.

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"Live with good humor and just do the Lord's work," says Franciscan Sister de Lourdes Okoniewski (left), 87. She and Sister Florence Kruzcek, 91, have been doing the Lord's work for some 70 years each. "My batteries are still running," says Sister Florence. "I get up each morning and say, 'O Lord, thank you for the gift of another day.'"

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JOURNEY THROUGH CHRISTMASTIDE

Taking down the Christmas tree

I hate taking down the Christmas tree, and not just because it's such a pain to clean up all those needles that fall off as you drag the carcass out the door. Not just because the lights and the ornaments never seem to fit into the same boxes we removed them from last month either. I hate taking the Christmas tree down because it means Christmas is over and we have to return to our every day lives.

I guess one of the things I will miss the most is that wonderful piney smell, which no spray can could ever adequately reproduce. It reminds me of freshness and new

life, of courses of pine trees in a beautiful forest, each testifying to life's resilience.

They say that the Ponderosa Pine is the most popular Christmas tree in North America, with its long needles and thick branches and beautiful pine pitch odor. Even as a little child I can remember feeling the stickiness of the pine pitch on my fingers and deeply inhaling their fresh richness. After 500

years (if we don't cut them down as Christmas trees first) they can grow to more than 200 feet tall with 20 foot thick trunk

Pine trees are also the most resilient when a forest burns down. They are among the most sturdy of trees, often developing a thick bark, which does not so easily catch fire. The pines tree also drops lower branches as it gets older, deterring the fire from spreading from the ground.

But the most impressive thing about a pine tree is its ability to regenerate, even when it has seeming burned to the ground. The tree regenerates in two ways: sometimes by projecting buds on its deep roots which sprout quickly after the tree has died above ground. The second ingenious method is by dropping very hard pine cones which has been glued shut by strong resins. These resins are melted by the fire and the cone with its enclosed seeds drops to the ground and starts a new tree.

They say we started putting up Christmas trees in the late Middle Ages as a part of the Passion Plays. The tree was originally a stage prop for the tree in the middle of the garden, covered with red apples to tempt our first parents. It then joins the second act as the tree from which Joseph builds a manger and the holy cross is hewn.

So maybe the reason I will miss the Christmas tree so much is that it reminds me of the wonders of this creation through which God is constantly bringing life from death and victory from desolation. It's a lesson the Christmas tree teaches so well. A lesson I hope I carry with me through the whole of the coming year, until next December when another tree will teach me the same lessons all over again.



Msgr. James P. Moroney

Do I know how to see with the heart?

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman (Gal 4:4). Born of woman: Jesus came in this way. He did not appear in the world as an adult but, as the Gospel tells us, he was conceived in the womb (Lk 2:21). It was there that he made our humanity his own: day after day, month after month. In the womb of a woman, God and mankind are united, never to be separated again. Even now, in heaven, Jesus lives in the flesh that he took in his mother's womb. In God, there is our human flesh!

On the first day of the year, we celebrate this nuptial union between God and mankind, inaugurated in the womb of a woman. In God, there will forever be our humanity and Mary will forever be the Mother of God. She is both woman and mother: this is what is essential. From her, a woman, salvation came forth and thus there is no salvation without a woman. In her, God was united to us, and if we want to unite ourselves to him, we must take the same path: through Mary, woman and mother. That is why we begin the year by celebrating Our Lady, the woman who wove the humanity of God. If we want to weave humanity into this our time, we need to start again from the woman.

Born of woman. The rebirth of humanity began from a woman. Women are sources of life. Yet they are continually insulted, beaten, raped, forced to prostitute themselves and to suppress the life they bear in the womb. Every form of violence inflicted upon a woman is a blasphemy against God, who was born of a woman. Humanity's salvation came forth from the body of a woman: we can understand our degree of humanity by how we treat a woman's body. How often are women's bodies sacrificed on the profane altars of advertising, of profiteering, of pornography, exploited like a canvas to be used. Yet women's bodies must be freed from consumerism; they must be respected and honored. There is the most noble flesh in the world, for it conceived and brought to light the love that has saved us! In our day, too, motherhood is demeaned, because the only growth that interests us is economic growth. There are mothers who risk difficult journeys desperately seeking to give a better future to the fruit of their womb, yet are deemed redundant by people with full stomachs but hearts empty of love.

Born of woman. The Bible tells us that woman come onto the scene at the height of creation, as a summation of the entire created world. For she holds within herself the very purpose of creation: the generation and safekeeping of life, communion with all things, care for all things. So it is with the Mother of God in today's Gospel. The text tells us, But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart (v. 19). She kept all these things: joy at the birth of Jesus and sadness for the lack of hospitality shown in Bethlehem; the love of Joseph and the amazement of the shepherds; the promise and the uncertainty of the future. She took everything to heart, and in her heart, she put everything in its right place, even hardships and troubles. In her heart, she lovingly set all things in order and entrusted everything to God.

In the Gospel, Mary does this a second time: at the end of the hidden life of Jesus, we are told that his mother kept all these things in her heart (v. 51).



Francis touches a statue known as Mary Mother of God, Crowned, at the conclusion of Mass on the feast of Mary, Mother of God, in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Jan. 1. The Marian statue was brought to the Vatican from Foggia in southern Italy.

POPE FRANCIS

This repetition makes us realize that keeping in her heart was not something nice that Our Lady did from time to time, but something habitual. Women typically take life to heart. Women show us that the meaning of life is not found in making things but in taking things to heart. Only those who see with the heart see things properly, because they know how to look into each person: to see a brother apart from his mistakes, a sister apart from her failings, hope amid difficulty. They see God in all persons and things.

As we begin this new year, let us ask ourselves: Do I know how to see with the heart? Do I know how to look at people with the heart? Do I take to heart the people with whom I live? Or do I tear them down by gossip? And above all, do I put the Lord at the centre of my heart, or other values, other interests, like advancement, riches, power? Only if we take life to heart will we know how to take care and overcome the indifference all around. So let us ask for the grace to live this year with the desire to take others to heart and to care for them. And if we want a better world, a world that will be a peaceful home and not a war field, may we take to heart the dignity of each woman. From a woman was born the Prince of Peace. Women are givers and mediators of peace and should be fully

included in decision-making processes. Because when women can share their gifts, the world finds itself more united, more peaceful. Hence, every step forward for women is a step forward for humanity as a whole.

Born of woman. Jesus, newly born, was mirrored in the eyes of the woman, in the face of his mother. From her, he received his first caresses; with her, he exchanged the first smiles. With her began the revolution of tenderness. The Church, looking at the Baby Jesus, is called to continue that revolution. For she too, like Mary, is both woman and mother. The Church is woman and mother, and in Our Lady, she finds her distinctive traits. She sees Mary immaculate, and feels called to say no to sin and to worldliness. She sees Mary fruitful, and feels called to proclaim the Gospel and to give birth to it in people's lives. She sees Mary a mother, and she feels called to receive every man and woman as a son or daughter.

In drawing close to Mary, the Church discovers herself, she finds her centre and her unity. The enemy of our human nature, the devil, seeks instead to divide, to highlight differences, ideologies, partisan thinking and parties. But we do not understand the Church if we regard her by starting with structures, programs and trends, ideologies and functions. We may grasp something, but not the heart of the Church. Because the Church has a mother's heart.

The Martini Curve revisited

Pope Francis concluded his pre-Christmas address to the Roman Curia by invoking the memory of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, SJ, who died in September 2012. The Holy Father recalled that, in his last interview, a few days before his death, [Cardinal Martini] said something that should make us think: The Church is 200 years behind the times. Why is she not shaken up? Are we afraid? Fear, instead of courage. Yet faith is the Church's foundation. Faith, confidence, courage ... Only love conquers weariness.

The Martini Curve should indeed make us think. I thought about it at the time and ended up with questions rather than answers. What, precisely, was the Church 200 years behind? A Western culture come unglued from the deep truths of the human condition? A culture that celebrates the imperial autonomous self? A culture that detaches sex from love and responsibility? A culture that breeds a politics of immediate gratification and inter-generational irresponsibility? Why on earth would the Church want to catch up with that?

Call me a dullard, but try as I might to adjust my thinking, I'm afraid that's what I still think about the allegation that Catholicism's contemporary failures result from our being stuck in a rut behind the curve of history. Moreover, since Cardinal Martini's death seven years ago, certain empirical facts have become unmistakable: the local Churches that have tried hardest to play catch-up with history and the times are collapsing.

The premier example is Catholicism in the German-speaking world. Weekly Mass attendance percentages have fallen into single digits in German cities and aren't much better in Austria and the German-speaking parts of

Switzerland. Has this implosion of the sacramental community compelled a rethinking of the strategy of cultural accommodation? On the contrary. With a bullheadedness once caricatured as typically Prussian, the great majority of German bishops support a national synodal process that seems determined to put the pedal to the metal of surrendering to the times, even if particularly if this means jettisoning the truths that, according to both revelation and reason, make for happiness and beatitude.

Is there a single example, anywhere, of a local Church where a frantic effort to catch up with 21st-century secularism and its worship of the new trinity (Me, Myself, and I) has led to an evangelical renaissance to a wave of conversions to Christ? Is there a single circumstance in which Catholicism's uncritical embrace of the times has led to a rebirth of decency and nobility in culture? Or to a less-polarized politics? If so, it's a remarkably well-hidden accomplishment.

There is, however, evidence that the offer of friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ as the pathway to a more humane future gets traction.



THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

George Weigel

Shortly after last October's Great Pachamama Flap, I got a bracing e-mail from a missionary priest in West Africa. After expressing condolences for my recent Roman penance at the Amazonian synod (which had featured a lot of politically correct chatter about the ecological sensitivity of indigenous religions), my friend related an instructive story: You'll be happy to know that last year, when one of our villages invited me to come and help them destroy their idols and baptize their chief, we did not, before doing so, engage in any dialogue with the spirits, as was so highly praised in the [Synod's working document]. There was no Tiber to throw [the idols] in, so a sledgehammer and a fire had to suffice. Somehow the village managed to survive without such a dialogue, and in fact they have invited me back ... to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the great event, and to bless a cross that will be set up in the village as a permanent reminder of their decision.

Three weeks ago, the local archbishop wrote those same villagers, telling them of his immense joy that, the year before, they had turned away from idols in order to turn resolutely to the Living and True God ... You have recognized in Jesus Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Open wide your hearts to him ... and always conquer evil with good.

There's no Martini Curve in that part of the global vineyard, it seems. Rather, there is, to borrow from the late cardinal's last interview, faith, courage, confidence ... [and the] love that conquers weariness. That is surely something to think about in the Vatican and throughout a world Church in which everyone is called to missionary discipleship.



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The Baptism of the Lord

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, had, as the purpose of his life, to announce the immediate coming of the Messiah. St. Matthew describes John's prophetic vocation in Matthew 3:1-12. This vocation included announcing the need for humanity to repent of sin because of the nearness of the Kingdom of God. John was clear that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand! John explained that God's kingdom brought with it heavenly judgment upon the world and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all mankind through Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 3:13-17, John's fiery preaching about the coming of the Messiah is followed by Christ's appearance on the banks of the Jordan River so that he might be baptized by John. When John objects to Jesus request for baptism, the Lord responds by making it clear that his baptism by John is part of God's plan.

The passage begins in verse 13. St. Matthew states that Jesus came from Galilee for his baptism. In Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture: The Gospel of St. Matthew, the commentators explain that Jesus' appearance at the Jordan for baptism was the beginning of Jesus' public life. In The Navarre Bible: St. Matthew, the commentators suggest why Jesus came forward to begin his public life at that time. They propose that one factor may have been the Jewish custom whereby rabbis did not carry out their function as teachers until they were 30 years old, the approximate age of Jesus at the time of his baptism.

John the Baptist objects to Jesus' request for baptism. John states: "I need to be baptized by you!" The footnotes on this section of the Gospel in The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible New Testament explain that Jesus is sinless and has no need for John's baptism. He nevertheless submits to (it) to identify with sinners and align himself with God's plan. The baptism of John the Baptist was not sacramental. It did not remove



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GOOD NEWS

Father
Michael N.
Lavallee

sin but reflected the inner state of repentance present in those who received it. In Matthew 3:11, the evangelist explains that it is Jesus who will soon establish the sacramental system of the Church. St. Matthew indicates this when he records John as saying, "I am baptizing you with water but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. These words teach us that the sacraments will be endowed with grace through the power of the Holy Spirit."

In Matthew 3:16-17, after Jesus' baptism, a great theophany occurred in which God revealed Jesus as his beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. St. Matthew describes this theophany

as involving the heavens being opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon Jesus. In The Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture: The Gospel of Matthew the commentators suggest that this revelatory event at the Jordan River recalls the commissioning of the Prophet Ezekiel by the River Chebar. Like Jesus, Ezekiel came in a time of suffering for God's people and he too was beside a river when the heavens opened and he saw a heavenly vision, heard the voice of God and received the Spirit (Ezekiel 1:1; 2:1-12). Jesus, like Ezekiel of old, is being commissioned as a prophet to Israel in a new period of crisis.

FUNDAMENTALS OF CATHOLICISM



GFP FILE PHOTO

THE SACRAMENTS

The sacramental grace

BY FATHER KENNETH BAKER, SJ

The purpose of the seven sacraments is to produce sanctifying grace or divine life in the person who receives them worthily. Baptism and penance are called the sacraments of the dead because the former confers grace for the first time, while the latter restores sanctifying grace which has been lost through deliberate mortal sin. Thus, in both cases the soul is dead spiritually before the fruitful reception of the sacrament. The other five sacraments are often referred to as the sacraments of the living, because they increase the sanctifying grace which is present in the soul a soul which is already alive spiritually due to the reception of baptism and perseverance in the love of God.

It is a dogma of the Catholic faith that all the sacraments of the New Covenant confer sanctifying grace on the receivers. For the Council of Trent teaches: "All true justification (i.e., sanctifying grace) either begins through the sacraments, or once begun, increases through them, or when lost is regained through them" (Denzinger 1600). As we have seen, according to the same Council the sacraments

are infallibly effective in producing divine grace in the soul so long as the recipient is properly disposed.

The teaching of Trent and of other councils as well is based upon the testimony of holy Scripture and the constant tradition of the Church. A number of passages point to grace (or the effects of sanctifying grace) as the result of the sacraments. Thus, according to the second letter to Timothy, 1:6, the effect of St. Paul's imposition of hands (i.e., ordination) is the grace of God. Other passages speak of the effect of the sacraments as regeneration (Jn 3:5), purification (Eph 5:26), as forgiveness of sins (Jn 20:23), communication of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17) and the conferring of eternal life (Jn 6:54). The revelation of God made known to us in these and many other passages was systematized by the theologians and incorporated into official Catholic teaching by the Council of Trent. It has been and still remains part of the living teaching of the Church.

In these essays I will try, as much as possible to stay away from theological opinions that are far removed from what is necessary to understand the essentials of Catholic faith. At times, however, commonly accepted opinions which do contribute to that full understanding will be mentioned. One of them that fits in here concerns the notion of sacramental grace. Sacramental grace is defined as the grace that is produced by the sacraments. The question that confronts the theologian and the Catholic well educated in his faith is this: Since the seven sacraments all confer sanctifying grace, do they all confer the same sanctifying grace? Or is the grace given by each of the sacraments different?

If, by sanctifying grace, we mean the supernatural life of the soul the eternal life of God communicated in a most mysterious way to the created soul who loves God, then, since there is only one God and one life of God, there can be only one sanctifying grace. So, in one sense, we can reply to our question by saying that the seven sacraments all confer the same sanctifying grace.

However, there is more to it than that. Clearly, God has instituted seven saving acts which we call sacraments. God does not do anything superfluous. If there were absolutely no difference between the effects of the seven sacraments, then six of them would seem to be superfluous. But there is a difference between the seven sacraments: The seven sacramental signs or rites are very different from each other and each one performs a different function in the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. We will see this more clearly as we work our way through the seven sacraments.

Suffice it to say for now that human life is multifaceted, complex, constantly changing. We encounter different problems at each stage of our life from the cradle to the grave. There are also different ways of living out our Christian life in the married state, as religious, as a priest, as a single person. At all stages of our life we need the help or grace of God birth, puberty, marriage, old age, death. Thus, the sacraments have been given to us by God to help us share in his life at all the crucial stages in our lives. Accordingly, even though the same sanctifying grace is given in each of the sacraments, there are also extra helps or side benefits that accompany each of them. So sacramental grace includes both sanctifying grace and the title or claim to those extra helps or graces that go along with the fruitful reception of a sacrament. Thus, those who receive the sacrament of matrimony not only receive an increase of sanctifying grace at the time of their marriage, but they also receive a certain pledge from God that he will help them to live out their commitment in a Christian way if they remain faithful to him.

NEXT WEEK: SACRAMENTAL CHARACTER: "We know from the constant tradition of the Church that three of the sacraments – baptism, confirmation and holy orders – can be validly received only once."

We are God's chosen ones

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

"Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have placed my spirit."

One of the supreme moments on the spiritual journey is when a person realizes that he is God's beloved son or daughter. It is an awesome and life-transforming moment. The words of the Prophet Isaiah apply to each of us today: "Here is ... my chosen one with whom I am pleased."

Why God specifically chose you or me is beyond our comprehension and will ever remain a mystery to us. However, as we survey the landscape of our lives, it becomes more than evident that God's favor is upon us. God's special protection kept you from undue harm; his extravagant and unconditional mercy washed away your sins. Countless times in our lives, God gave us an opportunity to start over again and put our past behind us. (It is only the evil one who periodically attempts to drag us down because of past sins and failings. His tactic is to shove our unworthiness in our faces.) However, God's name is Mercy! God's name is Faithful Lover! Inner strength comes when we own our personal identity as God's beloved.

The Prophet Isaiah tells us that God is pleased with his chosen ones. Unfortunately, when we dwell on our shadow (those dark parts of our lives) as Carl Jung referred to them, we become discouraged, frustrated and pessimistic in our self-awareness and outlook. The divine lover ever delights in our inherent goodness and the good that we accomplish in life. Our divine lover is patient with us. We always have to remember that we are works in progress as the saying goes. The lover is the potter; we are the clay, his cherished handiwork.

The more one gets in touch with being chosen, the more he realizes that God has called us to be servants, servants of him and servants of our fellow human beings. This is what Christ made evident in his saying: the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve. He preached that importance and greatness in his kingdom are to be found in lives of service. Like Christ, we are called to be a ransom for many, freeing others by our love, forgiveness and our thirst for justice. Our Christian spirituality tells us that we find



REFLECTING
ON SCRIPTURE

Father
Conrad S.
Pecevich

Christ in self-giving service.

At our baptism, God's Holy Spirit was poured into our souls. This spirit is divine energy given us from on high. Isaiah's assertion applies also to us when he says, "those upon whom I have placed my spirit. Yes, this prophecy refers directly to the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. There is no confusion that Isaiah was foretelling the arrival of the long-awaited savior. In fact, in the synagogue in his hometown, Jesus proclaimed and appropriated these words. In his public ministry, he fulfilled all the detail of the prophecy of Isaiah. He alone is the Messiah."

However, the Word of God is a living and dynamic word, and its application is relevant to us today. Like

Jesus the Messiah, for example, we are called to the victory of justice. There cannot be love without its very foundation justice! Justice is the supreme virtue of the Old Testament. Our duty is to promote justice. Christians must be committed to confronting injustice wherever it may be found. Like the Master whom we follow, we cannot be silent in the face of any abuse of justice. The Resurrection of Christ has ushered in the victory of justice.

Isaiah says, "I have formed you and set you as a covenant for the people, a light to the nations. We are now God's covenant people. God has called you and me into a special, solemn relationship with him. He has bestowed on us the light of Christ in order that we might illumine the world and dispel the darkness of hatred, injustice and division. We do this by simple acts of love done in the name of Christ. And most times as Isaiah writes, "not making his (our) voice heard in the streets. The silence of love will conquer the world."

Stories of God in our midst

One of the greatest privileges I have had as a Catholic Free Press correspondent has been learning about and sharing people's stories.

There is no more compelling evidence to me of God's presence in our lives than the experiences of everyday people. They stir my heart, challenge my complacency and cause me to ponder how I can serve and love the Lord more deeply.

I am drawn to the stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things like Brenda Seymour, who has just retired from her profession as an ESL teacher, and has gone to Kenya to serve as a Maryknoll missionary for the next three and one half years. I am around the same age, wishing to pull back from activity, tempted to make my circle smaller while she, driven by her call from God, is expanding hers by traveling halfway around the world to serve. Having spent time in Kenya years ago as a member of the Peace Corps, she is returning in anticipation of the exciting and likely, difficult journey ahead.

While we all must answer our own calls from the Lord, I could not help but marvel at her bravery, her faith, in accepting this change in her life. Am I as open to God's call?

Then there is the priest I interviewed for a future story for the Legacy of Hope campaign. Father Paul O'Connell's 60 years of service (and still going strong years after becoming a senior priest) moved me. There was no question that as long as his mind and body held out, he would serve. He reminded me of the many retired priests who are still active; without their help, it would be difficult to maintain parish services. As Bishop Daniel Reilly once said, "You never retire from the priesthood – you're always a priest until the end."

That does not just apply to priests but to all disciples of God. I never stop being his hands and his feet just because I grow old. Even in sickness I am expected to be faithful. And I should want to be faithful because I love him.

Then there is the nun who takes care of the 50 retired priests in our diocese. According to Father O'Connell, Sister Mary Ann Bartell has seemingly end-



BE AS ONE

Susan
Bailey

less physical and spiritual energy as she reaches out and builds relationships with priests who are ill or dying. Right through till the last breath, she has been with guys until they die, he said, "I don't know how she does it."

I think I know. It's yet another story of love, for love makes all things possible. Her service challenges me to stay strong for those I love for I too, want to be with them when they pass over, no matter how difficult it gets.

And then there is a woman I have gotten to know from my parish. She is a lecturer who makes the Word of God come alive for me every

time I am fortunate enough to hear her proclaim it. Because of stories I have shared about myself in this column, she chose to share hers with me. As a writer, this is the greatest privilege I could ever imagine.

My stories are about little things. I write them because I believe God means for me to do so. I often look at what I write and wonder how in the world they could be of any help. And then I meet someone who has read what I have written and is moved to share her personal story of faith with me. In that moment of connection, I know that somehow, I am being faithful to my call.

Whenever we are called to go, whatever we are meant to do, it requires faith and courage. God's will is not always clear. But thanks to the stories of others who love him and are doing their best to serve, I can draw inspiration, feel a deeper desire, and thus be more attuned to that still, small voice in my soul, calling me.

OBITUARY

Sister Marie Ruth Page, 103, taught at St. Cecilia

WINDHAM, Connecticut — Sister Marie Ruth Page, 103, a member of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit passed away on Dec. 28 at St. Joseph Living Center in Windham.

Born on April 3, 1916, in Chicopee, Marie Ruth Exilda Page was the daughter of Edouard and Amanda (Gelinas) Page. Sister Marie Ruth entered religious life in Putnam in 1934 and made her religious profession at the Motherhouse in St. Briec, France on Sept. 2, 1937. She was then known as Sister Edouard de la Croix.

Sister Marie Ruth was a teacher for more than 50 years having taught at St. Mary School, Jewett City; St. Cecilia School, Leominster; St. Brendan School, New Haven and Assumption School, Chicopee.

In her retirement years, she served as sacristan at St. Joseph Guest House, New Haven and did CCD

work at St. Cecilia Parish in Leominster and Assumption Parish, Chicopee. In 2004 she moved to the Holy Spirit Provincial House and was admitted to the Healthcare Facility in 2012. She was one of the first sisters to form the new community at St. Joseph Living Center in 2016.

She is survived by the Daughters of the Holy Spirit spiritual family — her sisters in community, the consecrated seculars and the associates as well as two nieces, one nephew and many grand and great grand nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her brothers, David Page and Raoul Page as well as her sisters, Gertrude Belanger, Rose Warwick, Florence Sampson and Viola Jerreld.

Donations in her memory may be made to DHS Retirement Fund, P. O. Box 497, Putnam, CT 06260.

MARYKNOLL: New lay missionary no stranger to mission work

FROM PAGE ONE

On Dec. 14, at a sending ceremony in the Annunciation Chapel of the Maryknoll sisters in Ossining, New York, the missionaries were called forth for their new mission countries and received their Maryknoll mission crosses. Reading a prayer together, they committed themselves to witness the Good News of Jesus Christ, in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are marginalized and oppressed. They also pledged to care for the Earth, our common home, and to respond in service to help create a more just and compassionate world. The missionaries also dedicated themselves to this sacred mission of building up your reign on Earth in justice, peace and love.

Ms. Seymour felt called to service at an early age, inspired by President John F. Kennedy who said, "Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country."

During my teenage years, the Peace Corps became popular and my thoughts on service and possibly contributing or assisting less fortunate people took hold," she said.

I went to a small Catholic high school and became involved in some of the outreach programs in the area and saw the everyday needs of some people. I've always felt very blessed, having more than enough of what I need, and so the inequalities that exist in the world really struck me

then and still strike me. Upon graduation from high school and college Ms. Seymour joined the U.S. Peace Corps, serving in Gede, Kenya.

I was a harambee / high school teacher and fell in love with the people of Kenya and had a tremendous experience," she said.

The Kenyans around me lived very simply and yet very well. They took care of each other regardless of their differences. Neighbors shared everything.

After completing her Peace Corps service Ms. Seymour returned to the United States and lived in Gloucester, where she became involved with the Wellspring House and other social assistance programs. Going on retreat, she met Edwina Gateley who had started the Volunteer Missionary Movement in the United Kingdom. Longing to return to mission service while also embracing her Catholic faith, Ms. Seymour joined Ms. Gateley's program and went to Uganda to serve for two years.

Upon her return to the United States, Ms. Seymour decided upon furthering her education.

I wanted to go to graduate school to earn a master's in ESL/bilingual education," she said. My own struggle in learning the languages of the people in Kenya and Uganda prompted this. I also realized how so many immigrants in the U.S. had such difficulties in their workplaces and in everyday social interac-

'Most of my students who have been immigrants have enriched my life tremendously.'

Brenda Seymour
Maryknoll missionary

ley, Ms. Seymour learned of the Maryknoll missionaries.

The Maryknoll missionary spirit and vision seems to fit this call I feel God has drawn me to," she said.

In preparation for her mission, Ms. Seymour attended a 30-week Ignatian spiritual exercises retreat from September through May of 2018. She then, along with three other lay missionaries and a Maryknoll sister, attended a 12-week orientation in New York, which concluded on Dec. 14 with the sending ceremony.

The 12-week orientation was a very good training for the vision and call to serve," she said. We had many presentations and workshop classes in theology, Catholic social teaching, the mission of Jesus Christ in our discipleship, reading missionary life described in Scripture and really so much more. We met and were inspired by so many of the Maryknoll missionary sisters, fathers and brothers. They told us about their lifetime of mission service all around the world. We also attended many wonderful liturgies and cultural services.

Returning from the orientation in mid-December, Ms. Seymour made her preparations to leave for Kenya on Dec. 31. She has one hope for her mission:

To act on my faith to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, and to try to follow the Gospel message to love and serve all people, especially the marginalized and impoverished.

tions because of language communication and felt drawn to learning how I might play a part in their language education. As a result, Ms. Seymour became an ESL teacher upon graduation and dedicated her career to teaching English as a second language.

I've taught overseas a few more times and have been an ESL teacher for all age groups, from very young students to adult education and community college," she said.

Most of my students who have been immigrants have enriched my life tremendously. I have felt so blessed from meeting people from such diverse backgrounds.

With retirement looming in February of 2018, Ms. Seymour's thoughts turned again to some sort of service, to contribute and assist those who may need someone to walk alongside them.

After attending another retreat led by Edwina Gate-

MARCH: Buses filled for D.C.

FROM PAGE ONE

and mailed to 49 Elm St., Worcester, MA 01609.

In 2020, the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children is observed on Wednesday, Jan. 22.

In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court decision Roe v. Wade, along with its companion case, Doe v. Bolton, legalized abortion throughout all nine months of pregnancy in every state in the nation.

All the faithful in dioceses throughout the country

are called to observe this day in a spirit of prayer for the full restoration of the legal guarantee of the right to life and of penance for the violations to the dignity of the human person committed through acts of abortion.

We can observe this day through special prayers, fasting, sacrifices, and acts of charity (similar to our Lenten practices), both communally in our parishes as well as individually in our own spiritual lives, Mrs. LeDoux said.

LEGACY: Parish evangelization grants can help spread the faith

FROM PAGE ONE

been well worth both the work and the cost.

We started running these programs in the evening but as things progressed, we started offering two sessions — one in the evening for those who work, and during the daytime for those who don't work and don't want to come out at night.

Parishioners have often repeated the programs, bringing family and friends with them. Some of them have gone on to become group leaders. He sees these programs as a means of bringing back what he calls "uninvolved Catholics" to a deeper understanding of their faith.

That's the key, when people realize that their faith isn't a personal thing but does involve sharing and reaching out," Father Sanders said. That's what evangelization is all about for me. I keep pushing that, even at daily Mass. I'll say to the people, "None of you can sit here and say, 'I don't need this.'"

Father Sanders sets the example: "I need this, I go to sessions. I need to be evangelized."

Feedback from those from St. Louis who have attended has been very positive.

I am truly amazed how much more thankful I am with all my blessings," said Connie Jezierski. "These are blessings I have had all along, but now they have become more crystal clear to me."

Michelle Bellrose was deeply touched by a program she attended, calling it "inspirational."

The evangelization series provided the opportunity to spend time together in a smaller, less formal



Christ the King Parish in Worcester has employed several evangelization programs, including ALPHA. Pictured above are people who met there for ALPHA in 2017.

setting," she said. One of the end results is that feeling of our church family growing. True friendships have developed with people staying in touch even after the series has ended.

St. Louis evangelization efforts started with a program known as ALPHA.

There were several programs suggested by the diocese," said Father Sanders. He and his coordinator, Louise Forget, investigated further which led to a meeting with Deacon Patrick Driscoll of St. Richard of Chichester Parish in Sterling, who strongly recommended ALPHA.

Louise then took a group of five or six people to a day-long workshop, Father Sanders said. "I don't know what they did at that workshop but they came back all fired up about this program. It was a good cross-section of people by age. To have that cross-section excited was good because they talked about it with their contemporaries and their friends."

The results of ALPHA were so favorable that Father Sanders and Ms. Forget sought out other

programs to build upon that success. They have since offered "Wild Goose" (part of Franciscans Pathways, an outreach of the Franciscan Friars of the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Third Order Regular), "Catching Fire — Becoming Flame" from Paraclete Press, and "Unlocking the Mystery of the Bible" and "A Biblical Walk Through the Mass," both from Ascension Press.

Father Sanders hopes that grant money from the Legacy of Hope will help the parish to establish a lending library of books and DVDs. The library would be open two or three days during the week, manned by volunteers for a couple of hours each day so that visitors can talk with them about the materials.

Msgr. Thomas J. Sullivan of Christ the King Parish in Worcester has also employed several evangelization programs.

We have ALPHA, the Catholicism series and Pivotal Players (videos hosted by Bishop Robert Barron), intense Bible study programs, and a course on the Confessions of St. Augustine," he said. Most of the participants are Catholics who are already practicing the faith and are seeking renewal.

Participants Peter Fyrberg and Akua Kusiwaah have been inspired by these programs. Mr.

Fyrberg now serves as a eucharistic minister at an assisted living facility.

The participants' reception of the Eucharist is both joyful and faith-inspiring," Mr. Fyrberg said.

We are truly humbled and blessed to witness such faith in the Lord.

Ms. Kusiwaah learned the deeper meaning of the love of Jesus.

When you have Jesus, you don't hate, you don't say bad things about anybody," she said. "You treat everybody equally and you love everybody no matter where they are from, no matter who they are," she said.

Msgr. Sullivan wants to expand the outreach.

We seek to reach out to people of all ages. An important time is seeking out those who have recently lost a loved one and then, sometimes, the survivors go absent," he said. But there is a significant group that we continue to need to reach out to and it would be our younger families. Most of them do not worship on a regular basis or at all.

Having completed the Legacy of Hope campaign this past summer as a parish in the first block, Msgr. Sullivan is looking forward to using a portion of the funds that the parish would recoup as seed money for a new parish position on evangelization.

One committed to reaching out to all our families, he said.

To date the Legacy of Hope campaign has raised approximately \$16.8 million and a total of 46 parishes have participated, according to Michael Mesano, executive director of the campaign. Legacy of Hope addresses the long-term needs of the diocese, while Partners in Charity, which starts this week in 11 parishes, addresses the short-term, day-to-day operational needs of 27 ministries and agencies.

For more information go online to legacyofhope.worcesterdiocese.org.

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Mercy Centre Foxes preserve basketball winning streak

BY TANYA CONNOR
THE CATHOLIC FREE PRESS



TANYA CONNOR | CFP

Anna Maria Amcats and Mercy Centre Foxes play basketball at Mercy Centre Wednesday, aided by Coach Bill Gibbons.

The Mercy Centre Foxes did it again! And the Anna Maria Amcats did it for the first time. On Wednesday, basketball players from the Mercy Centre, a Catholic Charities program which provides work opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities, beat the women's basketball team from Anna Maria College 26 to 22 with the coaching of Bill Gibbons. For 28 consecutive years, when Bill Gibbons was coach of the women's basketball team at the College of the Holy Cross, he brought his players to Mercy Centre for a game. They lost every time. No matter how good the team was in college circles, they seemed to lose their skills when playing the Foxes. (Coach Gibbons said he coached and refereed both teams.)

He's no longer coaching at Holy Cross. But, he said, in addition to enjoying his 8-month-old grandson (the fourth William Gibbons in the family), he's been going to Mercy Centre once or twice a week to play basketball, charades and Simon Says with folks there. And at Mercy Centre's annual fall picnic he organized a basketball scrimmage against players from Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Worcester State University, he said.

The Anna Maria coach reached out to me through Peg Buzzell, the Mercy Centre administrator, Coach Gibbons said. Peg and I were talking about how we could keep the tradition going, the tradition of having a college team play against Mercy Centre each January. He said he now hopes to start a tradition with Anna Maria's team. Afterwards, an Anna Maria player thanked Coach Gibbons for inviting them. These are God's special children, Coach Gibbons told the Amcats, adding that the Mercy Centre folks can help them put their own problems into perspective. Amcats Coach Kevin Bigelow said he told his players he played against

Mercy Centre when he was in eighth grade at what was then Worcester Central Catholic Elementary School (now St. Peter's). I told them I hope they have the same experience I had, he said before Wednesday's game, which he and his wife, Rachael, cheered on from the sidelines. I hit a 3 (pointer). We sent it into overtime. They ended up winning in overtime. (Mercy Centre, apparently, could take on junior high as well as college teams.)

I think those girls didn't know what to expect, Coach Gibbons said after the Amcats lost to them too. I met with them this morning. I told them about the tradition. I said, You'll bring them joy, but you'll get a lot of joy from them.

HAITI: Brit's family members pray, work for Haiti

FROM PAGE ONE

Tomorrow there is an open house from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Be Like Brit headquarters at 66 Pullman St. in Worcester.

Ms. Gengel said they want to share the story of Britney and Be Like Brit and why she fell in love with Haiti.

Visitors can see a house like those Be Like Brit builds for people in Haiti, said Taylor Marek, Britsionary program coordinator. (People who go to Haiti to help with projects like building these homes and teaching the children skills are called Britsionaries.)

Ms. Gengel said she emailed Bishop McManus an invitation to the open house and he said he would offer his Mass for Britney on Sunday.

Father John F. Madden, St. John's pastor, said he is celebrating the parish's 12:15 p.m. Mass on Sunday for Britney. Ms. Gengel is to be there and Be Like Brit is inviting supporters to attend.

On Sunday we have a candlelight vigil at Brit's Home (the orphanage in Haiti), Mr. Gengel said. But he and Britney's brothers are to be at a remembrance service at Lynn University, which is also having a speaker Friday and an anniversary dinner Saturday. Britney inspired the building of the orphanage, which has taken in 33 boys and 33 girls symbolic of the 33 days Brit was missing in the rubble at the Hotel Montana, the website www.belikebrit.org says.

Three hours before the earthquake, she texted her mother, describing the poverty-stricken people she'd met in Haiti, the website says.

They love us so much and everyone is so happy, she texted. They love what they have and they work so hard to get nowhere, yet they are all so appreciative. I want to move here and start an orphanage myself.

On Tuesday, looking at a photo of a beaming Britney on that trip, her mother said to The Catholic Free Press, Look at that face! She's so happy to be there. It's where she's supposed to be.

Ms. Gengel said her own faith, and assurance of



PHOTO COURTESY OF BE LIKE BRIT

A group of Britsionaries, most from St. John Parish in Worcester, stand outside a Britsionary home they built with Haitian employees in Grand Goave last August.

Earthquake Anniversary Events Open house

Be Like Brit headquarters
66 Pullman St., Worcester
Saturday, Jan. 11
10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Mass for Britney Gengel
St. John Parish
40 Temple St., Worcester
Sunday, Jan. 12
12:15 p.m.

Britney's faith, has helped her.

She had her faith when she was alive; she had her faith when she passed on, and that gives me a lot of peace, the mother said. In Haiti, Britney wore the cross her parents gave her for her confirmation. Ms. Gengel said it was one of the few things she got after her daughter's body was found.

I've never questioned my faith, Ms. Gengel said, adding that Father Madden has been a great support.

We're just grateful to all of those who have been with us the past 10 years, she said.

The Gengels recalled how Bishop McManus played basketball with Brit's Home children when he visited the orphanage a few years ago; Mr. Gengel said they're still talking about it.

Among locals who have been Britsionaries are people from Holy Name, St. Peter-Marian and St. John high schools, and the College of the Holy Cross, the Gengels said. Mr. Gengel said some who now work or volunteer for them originally came on one of these trips.

He said they haven't taken a missionary group since August because of the unrest in Haiti, but he goes each month.

Things have started to calm down, Mrs. Gengel said. She said she plans to take some of their staff from Worcester and some medical workers in February.

This has not been a journey that our family has done alone, Mr. Gengel said. Every year we probably get between \$80,000 and \$100,000 in in-kind donations. He said their website posts a wish list.

Cherylann and I made a commitment 10 years ago that we would dedicate our lives to Haiti and we have, Mr. Gengel said. And I couldn't be happier in the sense that they're raising the next generation of leaders, preparing the children, through use of technology, to compete in the world.

Pray for the people of Haiti, Ms. Gengel said. They're wonderful people.

20TH: Worcester Catholic Men's Conference

FROM PAGE ONE

Mr. Hahn is the bestselling author of numerous books, including: The Lamb's Supper, Reasons to Believe, and Rome Sweet Home (co-authored with his wife, Kimberly). Some of his newest books are The First Society, The Fourth Cup, Romans: A Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, The Creed, Evangelizing Catholics, Angels and Saints, and Joy to the World.

Bishop Robert Reed, an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Boston, will make a presentation prior to confessions. His talk is titled, O God, Just Give Me One More Chance.

The bishop has long entertained a keen interest in the full use of television and new media for an engaging and truthful sharing of Catholic faith and life. He is the president of The CatholicTV Network.

He holds an advanced degree in television management from Boston University's College of Communication. He was appointed to direct CatholicTV in May 2005. Its programs are available in more than 13.5 million homes and through live streaming online.

Bishop Reed is also the director of the Radio Apostolate for the Archdiocese of Boston and regularly assists at Corpus Christi-St. Bernard Parish in Newton and St. Bonaventure Parish in Plymouth. He is the author of Renewed: Ten Ways to Rediscover the Saints, Embrace Your Gifts and Revive Your Catholic Faith and its companion television series, RENEWED.

Rounding out the program will be two presentations by Luis Soto, one in English (1:30 p.m.) and one



Hahn



Reed



Soto

Bishop McManus will be the principal concelebrant and homilist for the conference Mass at 4 p.m.

Many diocesan and religious priests will participate by hearing confessions at mid-day. The sacrament of reconciliation has become a conference staple. Since nearly 1,000 participants go to confession, the committee hopes that more priests than ever will come.

Through March 11 ticket prices for adult men are \$45. They increase to \$60 on March 12. Ticket prices for students are \$30 prior to the conference and at the door. Tickets can be purchased online on the conference website at www.firstmensconf.org; by sending a check to Catholic Men's Conference, 49 Elm St., Worcester, MA 01609; by contacting parish contact persons; or by calling Joan DeMasi at 508-929-4345.

In addition to reaching out to men of all ages, a special effort is being made to invite teens and young adults and there is a concerted effort in our Catholic high schools to attract students to the conference, said Mr. Guadagno. We want to continue to strengthen the conference by welcoming young men who are so important for the Church's future. Each year the conference seeks a younger audience, he added.

He developed One Family Under God, a model for parish unity and integration among cultures. Recognizing his substantial contributions to the Church and society Pope Benedict XVI gave Mr. Soto the Benemerenti Medal in 2010, one of the most noteworthy distinctions to be bestowed upon a lay Catholic.

Singer and composer, Ryan Tremblay, his wife, Elizabeth, and others will lead the music at this year's conference.

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Pope Francis prays for 176 victims of Ukrainian Airlines plane crash in Iran

VATICAN CITY (CNA) Pope Francis has offered his prayers for the souls of the 176 passengers of a Ukrainian International Airlines flight, who died when the plane crashed near Tehran, Iran on Wednesday.

The deadly crash took place Jan. 8, approximately 10 minutes after the plane took off from Imam Khomeini international airport at 6:12 a.m. local time.

Pope Francis commends the souls of the deceased to the merciful love of the Almighty, and he sends condolences to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives, stated a Jan. 8 message.

Signed by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the telegram said the pope heard the news with deep sadness.

Upon all affected by this tragedy, His Holiness invokes God's blessings of strength and peace, it concluded.

The plane was bound for Kyiv, Ukraine, when it went

down, killing 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three Britons, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Vadym Prystaiko said.

HELP WANTED

Principal Position at Catholic School in Uxbridge, MA

Our Lady of the Valley Regional School in Uxbridge, Massachusetts seeks an experienced, energetic, and innovative leader to serve as principal. Located within the Diocese of Worcester at Saint Mary Parish, Our Lady of the Valley Regional School boasts an exceptional Pre-K – 8 program currently serving 185 students.

Responsibilities:

- Serve as the spiritual, instructional, and administrative head of the school
- Create an environment that fosters academic excellence and sound formation in the Catholic faith
- Implement procedures to assess program effectiveness; guide and assist staff in developing and implementing effective instructional strategies
- Support the professional development of faculty and staff
- Ensure all members of the school community (faculty, staff, students, parents, donors) are engaged to achieve the school's mission
- Grow enrollment through marketing, public relations and community partnerships
- Plan and manage the school budget, in collaboration with the school's Consultative Board

Key Competencies:

- Excellent oral and written communication skills as well as excellent interpersonal skills
- Demonstrates competence in staff selection, training, supervision and evaluation
- Proven instructional leadership capabilities
- Demonstrates problem-solving skills

Qualifications:

- A commitment to and practice of Roman Catholicism
- A minimum of five years teaching and/or administrative experience (preferably at the elementary level)
- A master's degree

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All applicants must submit a cover letter, resume, and three letters of recommendation (one from the applicant's pastor) by February 1, 2020 to Rev. Nicholas Desimone, Saint Mary Church, 77 Mendon Street, Uxbridge, MA 01569; or by email to fathernick@stmaryuxbridge.org.

ourladyofthevalleyregional.com

UPCOMING

FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY: St. Mary Parish, Uxbridge is offering the nine-lesson Christian based Financial Peace University (FPU) course on Fridays beginning (first class is FREE) Jan. 17 at 6:30 p.m., in the parish hall, 77 Mendon St. Dave Ramsey and his team of financial experts will teach you how to gain control of your money and stop living paycheck to paycheck. FPU is \$99 for a family kit and includes your workbook and a year of Financial Peace Membership, an online toolkit. Couples are highly encouraged to attend together. For information or to sign up call the office at 508-278-2226 or contact Diane at dmoriarty@stmaryuxbridge.org. All are welcome.

FAITH AND REASON SERIES-GARDNER: As part of Annunciation Parish's Faith and Reason series Father Stephen Lundrigan will present Searching for the Ever-Present God, on the hidden and not-so-hidden evidence for God's action in the universe on Wednesday, Jan. 22, 7 p.m., in the hall at Holy Rosary Church, 135 Nichols St.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP ROUNDTABLE: The next Environmental Stewardship Roundtable will be held Jan. 22 at 7 -8:30 p.m. at St Denis Parish, 23 Manchaug St., Douglas, hosted by the Environmental Stewardship Ministry for the Diocese of Worcester. It is a meeting for anyone interested in learning more about Catholic teaching on the environment and how to put this into action in your parish. Register at environment.worcesterdiocese.org/south-region-roundtable.

SATURDAY JANUARY 11

THRIFT SHOP/FLEA MARKET-WORCESTER: The Little Store, 242 Canterbury St., is open Monday-Saturday, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. For information contact 508-831-7455.

PRO-LIFE VIGIL-WORCESTER: A vigil will be held weekly, across the street from, or next to Planned Parenthood, 475 Pleasant St., 9 a.m.

THRIFT SHOP-LEICESTER: The New 2 You/Deja New-Marketplace, 759 Main St., is open Saturdays 9 a.m.-noon, Tues. 5-7 p.m., Wed. 9 a.m.-noon, Thurs. 3-6 p.m.

PRAYER GROUP-PAXTON: St. Columba Parish, 18 Richards Ave., will hold a weekly prayer group, 9 a.m., to pray for our country. Prayers include the rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet.

PRO-LIFE KICK-OFF EVENT: The Respect Life Month kick-off, "Let Life Live" event will be held at Sacred Heart-St. Catherine of Sweden Parish Hall, 596 Cambridge St., Worcester, 12-3:30 p.m., featuring music from Musicians for Life, speakers, representatives from Problem Pregnancy, Visitation House, Mass Citizens for Life, 40 Days for Life, First Concern and more! For information call Lynn at 508-612-3999.

OPERATION RANGER ROSARY/PRAYER SHAWL: Operation Ranger Rosary and Blessed Sacrament Prayer Shawl Ministry meets on the second Saturday of the month from 1-3 p.m., in the Phelan Center, Blessed Sacrament Parish, 551 Pleasant Street, Worcester. Contact the rectory, 508-755-5291 or Cecelia Mason at 508-335-0898 or ceceliason@yahoo.com.

PASTA DINNER-NORTHBRIDGE: St. Peter's Parish will host a pasta dinner at 5:30 p.m. in the parish hall, 39 Church Ave. Tickets are \$10/adults, \$9/seniors and ages 4-12, \$35/family and must be purchased in advance. All proceeds will help fund mission trips for teenagers in July. Call 508-234-2156 or email parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org for tickets or questions.

SUNDAY JANUARY 12

AFRICAN MASS-WORCESTER: The diocesan African Ministry will hold Mass weekly, 11:30 a.m., at St. Andrew the Apostle Mission, 5 Spaulding St.

AFRICAN MASS-WORCESTER: Sacred Heart-St. Catherine of Sweden Parish will hold an African Mass weekly at noon., 600 Cambridge St.

LEGION: The Legion of Mary, Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary Praesidium for Vietnamese, will meet weekly, 12:30 p.m., in Our Lady of Vilna church hall, 151 Sterling St., Worcester.

AFRICAN MASS-FITCHBURG: St. Anthony of Padua Parish, 84 Salem St., will celebrate a Mass in Swahili and English weekly at 12:30 p.m.

AFRICAN/GHANIANS MASS-WORCESTER: St. Joan of Arc, 570 Lincoln St., will celebrate Mass in Twi weekly, 2 p.m.

FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY: The St. Bernard Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order will meet monthly, 2 p.m., in Holy Family of Nazareth Parish, 750 Union St., Leominster.

YOUTH MASS: St. Joseph Parish will hold a LIFE TEEN Mass for children, pre-teens, teenagers and adults weekly, 5 p.m., in the church, 10 H Putnam Road Ext., Charlton.

SPANISH MASS-WORCESTER: St. Stephen Parish, 357 Grafton St., will celebrate a weekly Mass in Spanish, 6 p.m.

FESTIVAL OF LESSONS & CAROLS-CLINTON: The Sacred Music Series at St. John Guardian of Our Lady in Clinton, 80 Union St., continues with a special Festival of



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY KATE DAVIDSON

Children in religious education classes at Immaculate Conception Parish in Lancaster celebrated Epiphany on Sunday with their pastor, Father Tom Hultquist and teacher Debra Pedone.

Lessons and Carols, based on the Office of Matins for the Feast of the Epiphany at 7 p.m. Freewill donations will be accepted at the door for the benefit of First Concern Pregnancy Resource Center of Clinton.

TAIZE SERVICE-WORCESTER: Taize Worcester-Sacred Music for Vespers, a local ecumenical choir will sing simple, pure music to support peace and respect between all Christians and non-Christians at the Trinity Lutheran Church, 73 Lancaster St., 7-7:45 p.m. followed by a cider and donut reception.

MONDAY JANUARY 13

ROSARY-WORCESTER: Our Lady of Lourdes Rosary Prayer Group will meet weekly, 3 p.m., in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, 1290 Grafton St.

PRAYER CENACLE-CHARLTON: St. Joseph Parish will hold a Marian Movement Prayer Cenacle weekly, 7 p.m., in the church, 10 H Putnam Road Ext.

BEREAVED SUPPORT-WORCESTER: Pieta, a monthly support group for bereaved parents, will be held 7 p.m., in the parish hall conference room of St. George Parish, 40 Brattle St. For information contact Annie Doyle, outreach coordinator, at 508-853-0183.

DIVORCED SUPPORT-AUBURN: North American Martyrs church will host the Divorced Catholics Support Group on the second and fourth Monday of the month, 7-9 p.m., in the altar-server room, 8 Wyoma Dr. For information, contact Karen Lennox, 508-373-2067 or Sue Gustafson 508-934-6153.

TUESDAY JANUARY 14

KNITTING MINISTRY-MILFORD: The Hands to Work Knitting Ministry of St. Mary of the Assumption, 17 Winter St., is in need of additional knitters. Meetings are held the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month from 10-11:30 a.m. or work from home (material provided). Contact the parish office 508-473-2000 for information.

PARISH STORY TIME: Sacred Heart Parish, Hopedale, will hold Parish Story Time monthly, 10-11 a.m., for toddler/preschooler faith stories, songs, coloring and crafts, 187 Hopedale St.

PRAYER GROUP-WORCESTER: Marie Anne Center Prayer Group at St. Bernard Church will meet bi-weekly, the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month, at 10:15 a.m., in the lower church, 236 Lincoln St.

KNITTING MINISTRY-WESTBORO: The St. Luke Westboro Prayer Shawl group meets monthly in Room 23 of the parish center, 1-2:30 p.m. Contact Carol Mulcahy at 508-898-0409 for information.

AMERICAN HERITAGE GIRLS-WORCESTER: Troop MA0716 will meet at 4:30 p.m. at Our Lady of Loreto Church Center, 37 Massasoit Road. AHG is a Christ-centered character and leadership development program for girls ages 5-18, building "women of integrity through service to God, family, community and country!" Contact Lynn Somers at 508-393-8642.

FOOD WITH FRIENDS: St. Mary of the Assumption Parish will serve a monthly dinner for the needy, 5-6:30 p.m., in the small hall, 17 Winter St., Milford.

MARIAN GROUP-NO. OXFORD: St. Ann Parish Upper Room Marian Consecration Group will meet at 6 p.m., in the hall, 652 Main St., the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month.

COMMUNITY OF ADORATION-WORCESTER: A Catholic charismatic prayer group will meet at St. Bernard Church, 236 Lincoln St., weekly, with a rotating schedule of facilitators, from 7-9 p.m. Deacon Gilberto Javier-Almonte will lead an hour of adoration and an hour of prayer. For information call Sister Judith Dupuy at 401-474-3410.

ROSARY GROUP-BARRE: The Barre Rosary

Group meets weekly at 7:10 p.m., St. Joseph Chapel Hall, 29 South St. Enjoy prayer, fellowship and refreshments.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 15

ADORATION-GARDNER: Adoration is held 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Wednesdays in Holy Rosary Church, 135 Nichols St., (enter ramp door on side of church). Eucharist is covered during 9 a.m. Mass.

INFO SESSIONS-PILGRIMAGE TO GREECE: From Oct. 28 - Nov. 7, 2020, join Father William Schipper and Ray Delisle as they Discover Greece: in the Footsteps of St. Paul the Apostle. Information sessions with Collette Tours and featuring Greek foods to taste will be held at 2:30 and 5:30 p.m. at the Chancery, 49 Elm St., Worcester. Call Mr. Delisle at 508-929-4313 to register for the information session, for information, or a brochure, or visit worcesterdiocese.org/greece-pilgrimage.

MASS/DEVOTION-DUDLEY: St. Andrew Bobola Parish will hold Mass with devotion to Divine Mercy weekly, 6:30 p.m., in the church, 54 West Main St.

MASS/NOVENA-WEBSTER: A Mass and novena to St. Joseph will be held weekly, 7 p.m., in St. Joseph Basilica, 53 Whitcomb St.

SCRIPTURE STUDY-NO. OXFORD: St. Ann Parish will hold Scripture study weekly, 7-8:30 p.m., in the parish hall, 652 Main St. Father Michael Lavallee, pastor, will conduct the sessions.

NOVENA-WORCESTER: Our Lady of Czestochowa Parish, 34 Ward St., recites a novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St. John Paul II weekly, after the 6:30 p.m. Polish Mass.

TRAVELING HOLY HOUR FOR VOCATIONS-WESTBOROUGH: The monthly diocesan holy hour for vocations will be held at 7 p.m. at St. Luke Church, 70 W. Main St. All are welcome to attend and pray for vocations to priesthood and religious life in our diocese.

SECULAR ORDER OF FRANCISCANS-CHARLTON: St. Joseph's Fraternity meets monthly at St. Joseph Church, 10 H Putnam Road Ext., 7 p.m. Come and see; all are invited. Contact 508-735-8266, stjoseph.ofs@gmail.com, stjosephscharlton.com/order-franciscan-seculars for information.

SECULAR FRANCISCANS-NORTHBOROUGH: A Secular Franciscan gathering for spiritual formation; learning of Jesus, St. Francis, St. Clare and the Catholic faith; prayer; and fellowship, meets every third Wednesday of the month from 7-9 p.m. beginning in the church at St. Bernadette Church, 266 Main St. For information, call Patrick O'Donnell, 857-540-4008.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY-SOUTHBOROUGH: St. Matthew Parish Prayer Shawl Ministry, meets the first and third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the parish center, 105 Southville Rd. Contact Theresa Churchill at 508-839-3891 or theresa_churchill@hotmail.com.

THURSDAY JANUARY 16

CATHOLIC MEN'S GROUP-SHREWSBURY: St. Mary's Catholic Men's Group meets at 7 p.m. monthly in the Media Center, 640 Main St. Our discussion topic: Can science and faith go hand in hand? Material: The Father of Genetics.

VIANNEY DINNER: The monthly Vianney dinner for men, high school aged and up, interested in learning more about a priestly vocation will be held at the Holy Name of Jesus House of Studies, 51 Illinois St., Worcester. Please note the schedule change! Come to all or part of the evening as your schedule allows. 6:05 p.m. Mass, 6:30 dinner, and 7 p.m. social. An RSVP is not needed but it is helpful.

VENERINI ACADEMY EARLY CHILDHOOD INFO NIGHT: Venerini Academy, 27 Edward St., Worcester, will host an Early Childhood Information Night from 6:30-8:00 p.m. for families looking for Preschool (ages 2.9 - 4) and Kindergarten. Presentations begin at 6:30 for parents and guests only.

FAMILY PRAYER-WORCESTER: St. George Parish will hold a Family Prayer Hour weekly, 6:30-7:30 p.m., in the church, 38 Brattle St.

FRIDAY JANUARY 17

LEGION OF MARY GROUP-SHREWSBURY: An invitation is extended to all to come and learn about The Legion of Mary which will meet Fridays after the 9 a.m. Mass in the hall at St. Anne's Church, 130 Boston Tpke., Rte 9. Call Joe Duggan for information, 508-856-7129.

KNITTING CIRCLE-WORCESTER: The Religious of the Assumption will hold an Assumption Center Circle for knitting and crocheting for a cause weekly, 10-11:30 a.m., in the Assumption Center, 16 Vineyard St. For more information call 508-767-1356 or email: center@assumptionsisters.org.

GRANDPARENT PRAYER GROUP: St. George Parish Grandparent Prayer Group will be held monthly, 11 a.m.-noon, in the church hall, 38 Brattle St., Worcester. The program will include prayer for grandchildren's safety and prayers to Sts. Ann and Joachim, grandparents of Jesus. For information contact Ruth Viens at 508-852-5658, or ruthviens@charter.net.

DIVINE MERCY CHAPLET-LEICESTER: St. Aloysius-St. Jude Parish, 489 Pleasant St., prays the chaplet of Divine Mercy weekly at 3 p.m.

BINGO-LEOMINSTER: St. Cecilia Parish Bingo will be held weekly with doors opening, 4 p.m., and games, 6:30 p.m., in the parish hall, 188 Mechanic St. Call 978-537-5596.

BINGO-WORCESTER: St. Christopher Parish Bingo will be held weekly with doors open 4:30 p.m., kitchen, 5 p.m., and first coverall, 7 p.m., in the parish hall, 950 W. Boylston St. For information call 508-853-3302.

BINGO-WORCESTER: Sacred Heart - St. Catherine of Sweden Parish bingo night will be held weekly, 6:30 p.m., 596 Cambridge St. Call 508-752-1608 for information.

SPANISH PRAYER-FITCHBURG: St. Francis of Assisi Parish Spanish Prayer Group will meet weekly, 7 p.m., in the chapel, 81 Sheridan St.

ENDOW WOMEN'S GROUP-WORCESTER: An Endow group in Worcester will meet weekly at 8 p.m. in the home of Sarah Berry (a parishioner at St. John's, Worcester). For information, or to sign up, visit endowgroups.org/groups/worcester-group-2 or contact Sarah at 214-632-3399 or sarahlizberry@gmail.com.

SATURDAY JANUARY 18 FOR WEEKLY EVENTS SEE JAN. 11

CATHOLIC GIRLS CLUB: Catholic Girls Club, for girls 6 and up, meets the third Saturday of the month from October to May from 2-3:30 p.m. at the Emmaus Center, 17 E. Main St. across from Sacred Heart Church, Webster (use the Day Street entrance). This month's topic is the life of St. Angela Merici, followed by a corresponding craft or activity and enjoy a saint-related treat which is nut-free. There will be a "saint" coloring page for any younger siblings who wish to attend. There are no fees or long-term commitments. To sign up or for information contact Melissa McDonald at kyleandmelissa2004@gmail.com.

ITALIAN DINNER-HOPEDALE: Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish will host an Italian Family Night Dinner, 5-9 p.m. in the Father Reilly Center, 187 Hopedale St. starting with a cocktail hour at 5 p.m. (BYOB) and dinner at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$16/adults and \$6/under10 by contacting the parish house at 508-473-1900 or 508-473-1701.

SPAGHETTI DINNER-WESTMINSTER: St. Edward the Confessor Church Hall, 10 Church St., will host a spaghetti dinner from 5 to 7 p.m., to benefit our Boy Scout Troop. Menu includes spaghetti and meatballs, salad, rolls and dessert. Tickets, available at the door for \$10/adult, \$5/child under 12 and children under 6 eat free.

TRIVIA NIGHT-UXBRIDGE: St. Mary Parish, 77 Mendon St., will host a Trivia night starting at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10, to reserve a table or join one call 508-278-2226. BYOB and snacks.

SUNDAY JANUARY 19

FOR WEEKLY EVENTS SEE JAN. 12

ADDICTION SUPPORT-WEBSTER: The Calix Society, a Catholic support group (supplement to AA) for those concerned/affected by alcoholism or drug dependency, will meet monthly, 9:30-10:30 a.m., in the rectory at the side of Sacred Heart Church, 18 E. Main St. For information contact Kyle, 508-887-2225 or krichardmcd@gmail.com.

PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY-WORCESTER: Blessed Sacrament Church, 551 Pleasant St., will host an ecumenical prayer service at 2 p.m. during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

CURSILLO: Ultreya a meeting of persons who have completed the "short course in Christian community living" will be held monthly, 7 p.m., in Holy Family of Nazareth Church, 750 Union St., Leominster, (parking in lower lot).

‘Little Women’ is a thought-provoking and daring take on the classic novel

BY SUSAN BAILEY | CFP CORRESPONDENT

Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* has been a staple in family libraries for the last 150 years, passed down from generation to generation. Emerging from the story are timeless themes: becoming your best self, sisterhood and the bonds of family, and the difficult passage from childhood to adulthood. Beneath the seemingly mundane exploits of the four sisters lurk the deeper themes of the meaning of love and marriage, the relentless drive and cost of ambition, the pain of self-doubt, the devastating experience of death and loss, and grief’s transformative power.

Little Women has been adapted in many forms, including three major motion pictures and a three-part mini-series for PBS. Director and writer Greta Gerwig’s version reinterprets Alcott’s classic novel for the 21st century, deepening its feminist message with nods to the author’s trail-blazing life as a best-selling author. Inspired in part by Louisa May Alcott’s drive to support her family through her writing, Ms. Gerwig focused on the theme of women with relationship to ambition, art, and money.

Sprinkled throughout the lavish two-hour and 15-minute film are references to women and economy: Meg’s longing for wealth and a large home like her friend, Sally Moffat; Amy’s bold declaration that marrying well was an economic necessity for women (reflecting the thoughts of the wealthy Aunt March); Jo’s drive to sell stories in New York, and using her earnings to help her family.

Ms. Gerwig’s other innovation was to disregard the linear timeline of the story in favor of a thematic approach. As a means of focusing on the sisters as adults, the film employed flashbacks to recall memories which supported the themes. While this approach created a vibrant energy and unpredictability in the storyline, it also proved challenging and confusing, even for viewers who knew *Little Women* well. The change between present and past was so rapid at times that it was hard to grasp the connecting point between the two.

Such an approach hampered character development, depriving the story of its emotional depth. The continual back-and-forth in the timeline robbed scenes of their emotional intensity. The buildup, for example, to Beth’s tragic death was undone in an instant with a time-shift back



CNS PHOTO | SONY

Emma Watson, Saoirse Ronan, Eliza Scanlen and Florence Pugh star in a scene from the movie “Little Women.”

MOVIE

to Meg’s wedding, showing Beth alive and well.

While the heart of the story was missing at times, there was much to engage the mind, and this is where Ms. Gerwig’s version takes its rightful place. After an impassioned speech to her Marmee about the terrible dilemma of loneliness for women who chose to follow their ambition, Jo (inspired by the memory of Beth) threw herself into the writing of the novel of her heart, raising the everyday story of four sisters to the level of art and greater importance. The last 30 minutes of the film was an exhilarating ride, vacillating back and forth between Jo’s mad dash to the railroad station (egged on by her sisters) to catch Professor Bhaer before he leaves for the West, and Jo sitting with publisher Mr. Dashwood, hammering out the ending to her novel called *Little Women*. In a fitting tribute to Louisa May Alcott, Ms. Gerwig added aspects of Alcott’s own story to the scene.

The casting of the March sisters was

excellent. Saoirse Ronan is the quintessential Jo March with all of her creative fire (and anger), along with vulnerability and self-doubt. Emma Watson was a lovely Meg, and Eliza Scanlen played a thoughtful and thoroughly human Beth. Florence Pugh nearly stole the show as Amy, bringing a greater depth to a much maligned character, and spicing her performance with touches of humor. There was a genuine sense of affection and camaraderie between the four actresses that created an endearing sisterhood.

Timothée Chalamet was questionable at times as Theodore Laurie Laurence, particularly when it came to a romantic chemistry between him and Ms. Ronan. He was, in fact, more persuasive as a future husband to Florence Pugh. Laura Dern was warm and earthy as Marmee, but it was hard to believe she was angry nearly every day of her life.

Supporting players Aunt March and Mr. Laurence were played to perfection by Meryl Streep (who brought a tart humor to the formidable character) and Chris Cooper (creating a warm and poignant relationship with Beth). Louis Garrel was a

surprisingly sexy Professor Bhaer with far too little screen time.

The movie sparkled with energy, creativity and beauty, complete with exquisite costumes and historical details. Shot entirely in Massachusetts, settings included the city of Lawrence along with Concord and Harvard, the Arnold Arboretum in Boston and the Crane Estate and beach in Ipswich.

A point of contention was the near total absence of both the spiritual and moral core of *Little Women*. While today’s viewers may not understand the connection of *Little Women* with John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, it should not be difficult to underscore the need for an inner life and the acknowledgement of something beyond ourselves in order to become better people. The movie touched upon this theme with Beth but missed the opportunity to develop it.

In an interview with Gabrielle Donnelly on the *Louisa May Alcott is My Passion* blog, Ms. Gerwig shared this insight: There was such a bent of self-improvement and bettering oneself in books at the time but the fact is that these days, why we love the characters is not because of how they conquer themselves but because of how they don’t.

Ms. Gerwig does understand her audience. But by focusing exclusively on women with regards to ambition, art and money, the movie neglected the deeper message that a greater use of Beth could have delivered. Different from her sisters, Beth was acknowledged by Amy as the best of the four. She quietly gave of herself while reflecting upon the meaning of life and death, a wisdom she somehow imparted to Jo in her last days. This then propelled Jo into creating her greatest piece of writing.

All that being said, Greta Gerwig’s *Little Women* is deserving of praise; it is a thought-provoking movie to enjoy, ponder in the aftermath, and then see again. It is rated PG and is family friendly.

Susan Bailey of North Grafton is a columnist for The Catholic Free Press. She is the author of: Alcott’s Imaginary Heroes: The Little Women Legacy, River of Grace: Creative Passages Through Difficult Times, and Louisa May Alcott: Illuminated by The Message. She also writes a blog: Louisa May Alcott is My Passion, found at louisamayalcottismypassion.com

BOOK REVIEW

‘Solid’ explanation of importance of Mary in Catholic life

BY MITCH FINLEY | CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

Some wit once quipped about Christmas, “Ah, yes, the only season of the year when Protestants can’t avoid talking about Mary. There may be some truth to this. However, Catholic readers are likely as Protestant readers to find these two books both inspiring and informative when it comes to nourishing a healthy, theologically balanced attitude toward Mary.”

Any Protestant who only looks at the books covers is likely to feel reaffirmed in the opinion that if Catholics don’t literally worship Mary, they at least skate altogether too close to it. Anyone who takes the risk of actually reading a chapter or two of either book, however, may find it difficult to talk about Mary only during the Christmas season.

Marge Steinhage Fenelon’s *My Queen, My Mother* begins with fine explanations of what pilgrimage and novena mean. Her discussion of these traditional Catholic concepts will help many Catholic readers to nourish a healthy adult devotion to Mary and abandon any quasi-magical perspectives they may have.

At the same time, these introductory discussions will help any Protestant readers to begin letting go of misunderstandings of Catholic veneration of Mary they may have lived with for many years. Indeed, the deeply scriptural character of these concepts may surprise and challenge readers from both camps.

The core chapters of *My Queen, My Mother* focus on nine (hence, novena meaning nine) of the many Marian shrines in the United States. The author visited all nine of these shrines, and she explains the history and unique character of each one, offers suggestions for making a spiritual visit to each, and concludes with questions for reflection and discussion.

In an appendix, Fenelon explains briefly how to pray

the rosary and provides the words of each of the rosary’s prayers including the Fatima prayer with its petition to save us from the fires of hell and the prayer to St. Michael with its petition to protect us from the wickedness and snares of the devil. Prayers this reviewer would prefer to label optional.

My Queen, My Mother is a solid, beautifully written book that deserves many readers.

Maria Morera Johnson’s *Our Lady of Charity* is a remarkable book about the Cuban-American author’s life with Our Lady of Charity, the patroness of Cuba. The author was brought as a child from Cuba to the United States in 1965 by her parents, and growing up with Our Lady of Charity was part and parcel of her everyday family life.

Whenever my mother referred to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Johnson writes, she did so lovingly and with an affectionate diminutive, the *virgencita*. In this way, Mary was always present in our home, a part of the family.

Recounting her first return to Cuba in 2015, on the occasion of the visit to that island-country by Pope Francis, Johnson narrates the origin and development of devotion to Our Lady of Charity. She does so in a way that is thoroughly Christian and Catholic, theologically complete and balanced.

I want to introduce Our Lady of Charity to her North American children, Johnson explains. Devotion to Mary under this lovely title comes at a time when our society, and our world, should revisit her message of love.

Our Lady of Charity is a book to cultivate an adult Catholic faith, to renew one’s devotion to Mary by getting to know her through a special devotion nurtured for many generations by the Cuban people.

ON TV/RADIO

SUNDAY MASSES

8 a.m. Boston CatholicTV and CW 56
10 a.m. WWLP-TV CH 22
6 p.m. Charter CH 193
6 p.m. Mondays (re-broadcast) Worcester CH 194
Spanish Language: 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
Charter CH 101; Comcast CH 268; Boston CH 296

DAILY MASSES (Monday -Friday)

9 a.m. Charter CH 193
For list of celebrants/specials: www.worcestercatholic.tv.com
9:30 a.m. Boston CatholicTV and WBXP CH 68
4:30 p.m. Shrewsbury Cable CH 28/328
5 p.m. Clinton Comcast CH 99
7 p.m. Boston CatholicTV
7:30 p.m. WBXP CH 68

FAMILY ROSARY

Sunday: 7 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Shrewsbury Cable CH 28/328,
8 a.m. Clinton Comcast CH 99,
8:30 a.m. Charter CH 193
Monday: 7 a.m. Shrewsbury Cable CH 28/328
Saturday: 4:30 p.m. Shrewsbury Cable CH 28/328

CATHOLIC RADIO PROGRAMMING

5:27 a.m., Morning prayer, WTAG, 580 AM and 94.9 FM
EWTN Global Catholic Radio (24-hours)
Emmanuel Radio, WNEB 1230 AM Worcester
and 970 AM Southbridge
Eternal Life Radio, WQPH 89.3 FM Fitchburg

CATHOLIC QUIZ

CatholicQuiz of the Week™ Feast of the Baptism of the Lord January 12, 2020

1. According to Isaiah, the servant of the LORD is a strong figure whose voice is heard crying out in the street against injustice?

- a. True
- b. False

2. According to Isaiah, which cardinal virtue will characterize the servant of the LORD?

- a. justice
- b. fortitude
- c. temperance

3. “The God of glory _____, and in his temple all say, ‘Glory!’”

- a. sings
- b. thunders
- c. reigns

4. According to Saint Peter, God shows no partiality.

- a. True
- b. False

5. When did the Holy Spirit visibly descend upon Jesus?

- a. at his birth
- b. at his baptism
- c. at his crucifixion

6. How did the Holy Spirit appear at Jesus’ baptism?

- a. as a dove
- b. as wind
- c. as tongues of fire

7. According to Matthew, what did the voice from heaven say at the baptism of Jesus?

- a. Prepare the way of the Lord
- b. Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!
- c. This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased

Answers and References

- 1 • **b. False (Isaiah 42:2-3)**
- 2 • **a. justice (Isaiah 42:4)**
- 3 • **b. thunders (Psalm 29:3)**
- 4 • **a. True (Acts 10:34)**
- 5 • **b. at his baptism (Matthew 3:13-17)**
- 6 • **a. as a dove (Matthew 3:16)**
- 7 • **c. This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17)**

The Catholic Free Press

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