



The MESSAGE

Southwestern Indiana's Catholic
Community Newspaper

December 25, 2020

Volume 51, Number 17

www.evdiomessage.org

Christmas 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;

Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown.

You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing.

For a child is born for us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests.

Isaiah 9:1, 5

This good news of Isaiah is especially needed by us, our country and our world as we celebrate this Christmas of 2020. Like the people to whom the prophet first addressed his words, it seems that we have “walked in darkness” and “dwelt in the land of gloom” for so much of this past year. We have endured the terrible pandemic, racial protests, rioting and violence, and political battles. Yet in the midst of all this chaos, the Christmas message is proclaimed to us once more with words of hope and even joy. God, who is love, has embraced us in His Son, born as a tiny infant, to be our Savior. With Jesus’ birth, a light has shone in the midst of the darkness. Our world was

altered that night in Bethlehem and continues to be transformed to this day. With the birth of Christ, judgement has been pronounced on the darkness of sin and evil; the light has shone, and darkness must give way.

This is the cause of our joy — that humanity has hope; humanity has been redeemed. Despite the vestiges of darkness and gloom that still exist in our world, our Church and our lives, they cannot prevail. We are called to walk in the light of our Savior and to help spread His light to all those who live in the shadows. We do this when we proclaim hope where there is despair, peace where there is discord, reassurance where there is doubt, healing where there is bitterness. While much of the world will go back to its usual business on Dec. 26, it can't be that way for us. We must live each day in the joy of Christmas and so play our part in the renewing our world — beginning in our homes, our parishes and our communities.

At my Christmas Masses, I will pray that this holy season may be a time of grace and peace for you and your family. I invite you to share the hope and joy of Christmas with those you know

See **BISHOP**, page 5



CNS photo courtesy of Bridgeman Images
The “Adoration of the Shepherds” is pictured in this painting by Italian artist Guido Reni.

Merry Christmas from *The Message!*

The staff of Southwest Indiana's Catholic community newspaper wishes you and your family a Blessed and very Merry Christmas:

Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, *publisher*; Tim Lilley, *editor*; Megan Erbacher, *assistant editor*; Sheila R. Barclay, *design editor*; and Ruth Bandas, *advertising and office coordinator*.

Please note: We will not publish an issue on Jan. 1. The next issue of *The Message* will be Jan. 8, 2021.



The Message photo by Tim Lilley

Door to the future

Tricia Hollander Henning, *left*, and her sister, Teri Hollander Albin, *right*, of The Hollander Group at Baird in Evansville, help a member of the Habitat for Humanity Core Crew hang the front door on the first build in St Theresa Place on Evansville's North Side. See page 5 for a story on the partnership between Habitat and The Hollander Group at Baird focusing on St. Theresa Place.

Navidad 2020

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo,

El pueblo que caminaba en tinieblas ha visto una luz grande;

Habitaban tierras de sombra y una luz les brilló.

Acrecentaste la alegría, aumentaste el gozo.

Porque un niño nos ha nacido, un hijo nos ha sido dado;

y la soberanía reposará sobre sus hombros.

Isaías 9:1,5

Esta nueva noticia de Isaías es especialmente necesaria para nosotros, nuestro país y nuestro mundo al celebrar esta Navidad 2020. Como la gente para quien el profeta primero dirigió estas palabras, parece que nosotros hemos “caminado en las tinieblas” y “habitado tierras de sombra” por la mayor parte del pasado

año. Hemos soportado la terrible pandemia, protestas raciales, disturbios y violencia, y batallas políticas. Aún en medio de todo este caos, el mensaje navideño nos es proclamado una vez más con palabras de esperanza y hasta alegría. Dios, que es amor, nos ha acogido en su Hijo, nacido como un pequeño infante, para ser nuestro Salvador. Con el nacimiento de Jesús, una luz ha brillado en medio de la oscuridad. Nuestro mundo se alteró esa noche en Belén y continúa siendo transformado hasta hoy. Con el nacimiento de Cristo, el juicio ha sido declarado contra la oscuridad del pecado y el mal; la luz ha brillado, y la oscuridad debe ceder el paso.

Esta es la causa de nuestra alegría — que la

See **OBISPO**, page 5



Submitted photo

‘They were overjoyed at seeing the star’

“They were overjoyed at seeing the star” (Matthew 2:10). Folks who drive past the Holy Family Parish rectory in Jasper behold this stunning light display with a star as its centerpiece. Father John Boeglin, pastor of Holy Family, provided this photo to The Message. He decorates the rectory and his family farm in Gibson County every year. His message: “Merry Christmas to all from Holy Family Parish!”

Following is a feature in the *Message*, designed to help draw together the People of God in southwestern Indiana. Readers are invited to submit information about people who may benefit by some extra prayers and attention.

• **Madelyn Ann Eickhoff, 85**, of Mt. Vernon, died Dec. 11 at the Linda E. White Hospice House in Evansville. She is the sister of Father David Nunning, retired priest of the Diocese of Evansville.

Madelyn was born Oct. 26, 1935, in Evansville to the late Oscar and Marie (Bassemier) Nunning. She was a 1953 graduate of Mater Dei High School, where she received the Alumni Award during her senior year. She later worked as an administrative assistant for Quality Automotive and also with her husband at Eickhoff Construction Company. Madelyn was an active member of St. Philip Parish in Posey County. She, along with her husband Elmer, was inducted into the Diocese of Evansville Bruté Society for their service to the church. She served on many committees, most notably on the committee for building the new St. Philip Church. Madelyn also loved flowers and gardening.

In addition to her parents, Madelyn was preceded in death by her husband of 53 years, Elmer Eickhoff, in 2009.

People We Care About

Survivors include two daughters, Lisa (Phil) Fleming and Laura (Kent) Reddington; two sons, Mark (Mary Ann) Eickhoff and Michael (Michelle) Eickhoff; one sister, Marge Basden; four brothers, Bernie (Janie) Nunning, Walt Nunning, Father David Nunning and Jerry (Donna) Nunning; 10 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Due to COVID-19 concerns, the visitation and Mass of Christian Burial at St. Philip Parish are private. Interment will follow in St. Philip Parish Cemetery.

Please keep Madelyn and her family in your prayers.

• **Daughter of Charity Sister Mary Ann Wiltzius** died Dec. 17 at Seton Residence in Evansville. She was born Oct. 8, 1927, in Chicago, and was the oldest of three children of Lawrence and Mathilde (Rohde) Wiltzius. She graduated from Providence High School in Chicago in 1945 and entered the Daughters of Charity in St. Louis that same year.

After initial formation, Sister Mary Ann taught in elementary schools in Louisiana and Missouri. She earned a B.A. in History and Philosophy from

Fontbonne College in St. Louis and an M.S.W. from St. Louis University. She served as a social worker in St. Louis, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Covington, Kentucky. Sister Mary Ann also served as Administrator at Marillac Social

Center in Chicago, Illinois, St. Vincent Early Learning Center in Evansville and St. Mary's Home in Mobile, Alabama. In 1982, she became the Director of the Recycle Center in Rockport, Illinois; and in 1986, she began serving as Parish Minister, Manager and Outreach Worker of Catholic Social Services in Hernando and Olive Branch, Mississippi. From 2000 to 2009, Sister Mary Ann was a Counselor at Our Lady of the Gardens School in Chicago, Illinois. She then went to Nashville, Tennessee, to serve as a Receptionist at St. Thomas Hospital for a year and then returned to Marillac Social Center in Chicago as a volunteer until 2010 when she came to Seton Residence in Evansville to serve in the Ministry of Prayer.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her brothers Lawrence N. Wiltzius Jr., and William J. Wiltzius. Survivors include her sister-in-law, Nancy Wiltzius, nieces and nephews, many friends and her Sisters in Community.

A memorial Mass will take place at a later date. Interment will occur at St. Joseph Cemetery in Evansville.

Please keep Sister Mary Ann and the Daughters of Charity in your prayers.

New parish hall at St. Philip Neri in Bicknell

Elaine Pepmeier, a member of the building committee at St. Philip Neri Parish in Bicknell, recently shared exciting news about progress on a new parish hall.

Pepmeier said, "We have had a busy and exciting fall at St. Philip Neri in Bicknell. We are building a new parish hall behind our church. The weather has been great, and the project is really moving along. We are anticipating a May 2021 completion date."

The first photo is from September, when parish administrator Father Tony Ernst and Deacon Paul Vonderwell led parishioners in prayer over the construction site. The second photo shows the tremendous progress that has resulted from the great weather our area has enjoyed.



Submitted photos



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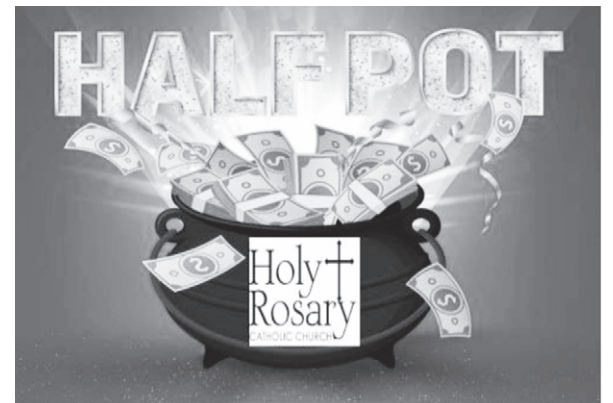
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AROUND THE DIOCESE

Happy Birthday!

Donna Bradley, parish catechetical leader at St. Peter Parish in Montgomery, celebrates her birthday Dec. 31.

Pam Freyberger, parish catechetical leader at St. Joseph Parish in Jasper, celebrates her birthday Jan. 3, 2021.

Deacon Jay VanHoosier of St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh celebrates his birthday Jan. 3, 2021.

Jack Tuinier, parish catechetical leader at Christ the King Parish in Ferdinand, celebrates his birthday Jan. 7, 2021.

Please send information for **AROUND THE DIOCESE** to **Tim Lilley**, *The Message*, P.O. Box 4169, Evansville, IN 47724. The e-mail address is tlilley@evdio.org.



Submitted photo

On the Polar Express!

Kindergarteners at Evansville's Good Shepherd School took a very brief break from social distancing for this group photo as they enjoyed a recent "trip" on the Polar Express! Kindergarteners enjoyed cookies, hot chocolate and a magical day as light snow fell outside.

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St. Joseph-County parishioner discovers new talent in her 80s

BY MEGAN ERBACHER
The Message assistant editor

About four years ago, in her early 80s, Mary Mayer discovered a new talent as she was writing to her prayer partner from St. Joseph School in Vanderburgh County.

Since it was discouraged to send gifts to prayer partners, Mayer decided to send something special in addition to her monthly letters: poems. So, with every letter she also writes and sends a poem; sometimes she also draws pictures to accompany it.

Now, Mayer has a collection of more than 90 poems. She was a bit surprised by her talent, she admitted. While she's always enjoyed telling and writing stories, putting them into poetry was different for her.

"Although I thought I was doing it for (my prayer partner), it was really good for me," Mayer said. "I enjoy putting my thoughts into poems."

Mayer and her husband, Joseph, have been parishioners of St. Joseph Parish in Vanderburgh County for more than 60 years, and their five children attended

St. Joe School.

Inspiration for Mayer's poems comes in various ways, including from daily life and children, to animals and spiritual life.

"I'm 85-years-old, and I have lots of memories to draw on," she said. "I've been a teacher, a student, a patient, a nurse; I've been so many different things. There's just a wealth of things to draw on."

Becky Smither describes her mom as a "soft-spoken, sweet-tempered woman, but when she reads a book, tells a joke or reads one of her poems, she dramatically takes on the role of the characters."

This spring, Mayer read some of her poems to the Holy Rosary Senior Group with her husband and their daughters in the audience.

"As (the Holy Rosary Senior Group) leaned forward in their seats, the audi-



MARY MAYER

ence felt like they were right there with the character," Smither said.

"The ones I like best are the ones that allude to a mother's love, or the bond between a man and woman married for a long time — or the faith of a person who believes in God," Smither said. "She puts into words feelings that well-up inside me, where I get all

choked up and feel like crying." With the help of her daughter, Mayer hopes to one day share her newfound talent in a book with proceeds to benefit St. Joe School.

Smither types her mother's hand-written poems for her and has them stored safely on a flash drive.

"My poetry tickles me," Mayer said. "It gives me so much joy. I'd love to share it with other people."

That dang ol dog

I got this dang ol dog when I was small
He was the dangest dog you ever saw
He wouldn't sit, and he wouldn't stay
And when I called him he'd run away

Dang ol dog

He wouldn't mind a word I said
He chewed up my toys
And he claimed my bed

Dang ol dog

He'd wiggle all over when I'd come in
Be all over me and lick my chin

That dang ol dog

Well it came time for him to go
By then, I loved him so

That dang ol dog

"I call her the Grandma Moses of Poetry and am proud to share her talent," Smither said.

Holy Trinity Catholic School students make "Saints Sunshine Baskets" for Memorial Hospital

SPECIAL TO THE MESSAGE

Instead of doing class gift exchanges, students in preschool through second grade at Holy Trinity School in Dubois County are giving back to "saints" who are currently helping the community through the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, the school asked Saints families for their participation in a service-learning project. Holy Trinity strives to not only educate children through academics, but to also nurture their love for helping others. Holy Trinity's Central Campus Saints and their families donated items that became "Saints Sunshine Baskets."



The "Saints Sunshine Basket," included thank you cards and were filled to the brim with an assortment of drinks, individual bags of potato chips, pretzels, crackers, cookies, gum, breakfast bars, cups of applesauce and pudding, and bags of candy!

Students and staff assembled baskets, which were donated to various units at Memorial Hospital. The medical "saints" (doctors, nurses, support staff and more) are working tirelessly right now. The Saints hope to bring a little bit of happiness to the Memorial Hospital saints' often long and exhausting work days.

The accompanying photos show Holy Trinity students with some of the baskets they and their families made possible.



Submitted photos

Homesick

Make straight a highway

The Advent readings are always powerful, and they are especially so during this particular experience of isolation, physical distancing and quarantining. In the readings for the second week of Advent, the prophet Isaiah cries out, "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be lifted up, every mountain and hill made low; the rugged land shall be a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken" (Isaiah 40:3-5).

Give comfort

Right before this invocation to prepare the way of the Lord, Isaiah directs the listener to "Comfort, give comfort to my people," and our hearts respond with desire for this comfort and the ability to give comfort. How do we prepare the way of the Lord in this current wasteland where there is such suffering and hurt? How do we live in this present moment and be hope for one another? Many of us will not be gathering with family at Christmas and have not seen family for many months. There are so many who are suffering from depression and loneliness during this difficult time. How do we give comfort?

Homesick

Have you ever been homesick? My first bout of homesickness was when I was around 9 or 10. My aunt sent me and my two favorite cousins to camp



CONNECTING FAITH AND LIFE

KATHY GALLO

for two weeks — Camp Stella Maris, "Star of the Sea," north of Boston in Gloucester, Massachusetts. It was a wonderful place. The focus was on swimming (my great love). It had a Catholic environment, lots of kids to interact with, many great crafts . . . and I was miserable. For the first two days, I experienced an ache in my heart I have never forgotten. I couldn't smile and was not able to enjoy anything or anyone. In thinking about that time, I can feel that pain of homesickness. It reminds me of that great song recorded by Allan Sherman, "Camp Granada." It begins:

"Hello Muddah, hello Fadda, here I am at Camp Granada

"Camp is very entertaining and they say we'll have some fun if it stops raining"

After many stanzas of exaggerated horrible camp experiences the song ends:

"Wait a minute, it's stopped hailing, Guys are swimming, guys are sailing

"Playing baseball, gee that's bettah, Muddah, Faddah kindly disregard this letter

I have been homesick many times throughout my life. I have always lived far away from home or

family. But I have never had to worry about losing my home, being evicted or not being able to pay the rent. I have never had to worry about losing a job, food insecurity, education for my children or finding a shelter for my family to live in. These are the very real worries of our brothers and sisters today.

Isaiah's challenge to give comfort dates to the time of the Babylonian exile. The Israelites never forgot this experience of being away from all that is familiar, being far from home, being homesick. Isaiah challenges us to give comfort to those in search of home.

A straight highway

Isaiah speaks to the homesick heart, to the exiled and lonely. How can we make a straight path to God in such uncertainty? The Scriptures remind us that Jesus is the straight highway, Jesus is the Way. The only way we can make a straight path is through and with Jesus.

Jesus demonstrates how to be comfort to others. Before we give comfort, we are called to "put on Christ" — to be the Body of Christ for others. At a time when we cannot always receive the Eucharist physically, we can still be Eucharistic comfort and healing for others. God has built the highway for us over the rough country. Jesus is the highway. And we are called to be that highway and home for others.

Kathy Gallo is the director of the Office of Catechesis and can be reached at kgallo@evdio.org.

Tips for parenting together successfully

Parenting can be like spending time on a seesaw. There are ups and downs. Parenting with your partner when both partners do not see eye-to-eye on their discipline methods adds another challenging element to the mix.

Both parties need to sit down and discuss discipline philosophy. Discipline means "to teach" and should not be looked upon as being punitive. Children are smart; and if they see that one partner does not discipline the same way the other does, they may try to manipulate the situation, leading to conflicts between partners. It is important that children receive the message that they cannot get their way by winning one or the other over because their parents are a unified team. Here are a few suggestions to help couples work together in parenting:

- **Consistency is key.** Parents need to agree on what behaviors are desirable and which are unacceptable. Both need to agree on the parental response. What will the logical consequences be? If possible, include children in creating a behavior plan or family plan to follow. Make sure that your behavior plan is age-appropriate and has realistic expectations. We want the children and the plan to succeed!

- **Demonstrate and practice with children exactly what is expected.** For example, if you ask them to pick up their toys, show them how to do that. It does not mean they hide them under the bed but that they put them in their toy box or in a box in their closet. If they do not pick up they might lose their favorite toy for a day or more depending on their

ADVICE FROM YOUTHFIRST



LISA COSSEY
LCSW

age. This is an example of a logical consequence.

- **Use logical consequences whenever possible.** For example, on Wednesday, they are asked to have their room clean by Friday night in order to spend time with a friend. If they choose not to do that, then they will not be able to get together with their friend. Be sure to offer positive reinforcement to your children at every opportunity for making good choices. When they make mistakes, ensure that the consequences are logical and age-appropriate.

- **Another strategy is to have children repeat back the request/command that you have made.** To ensure a better understanding of the directions, say something like, "What is it that I just asked you to do?" Calendar plans or using a chore chart assist

with putting chores in better order and create better rhythm and routine in the home.

- **Helping children become responsible adults is our goal.** They build self-worth by doing and learning that they are capable of accomplishing things on their own. Behavior plans will also teach them to pay attention, focus on the task at hand, remember the rules and consequences, communicate and learn self-control.

- **Encourage better focus by playing games like "I Spy" or "Red Light Green Light."** Reading a story to a preschooler or nursery rhymes with repetition all create the moments of simple directions and serve-and-volley interactions that improve brain development and learning as they continue to grow. Positive interactions between parents and their children will help them grow into confident people poised for success.

Lisa Cossey, LCSW, is the Youth First social worker serving Evansville's Good Shepherd School.

Advent retreat



Third- and fourth-graders at St. Benedict Cathedral School in Evansville recently participated in a special Advent retreat and had fun doing a rotation of Advent activities! The students are shown during a special Advent discussion with Benedictine Father Godfrey Mullen, rector of the cathedral. The students also made Jesse Tree Ornaments, wrote Advent prayers, learned about the legend of the candy cane — then made their own out of beads — and colored and painted Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Submitted photo

The Message

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telephone (812) 424-5536
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First Habitat home at St. Theresa Place ‘opens door to the future’

SPECIAL TO THE MESSAGE

December 9 marked the latest milestone in the development of St. Theresa Place by Habitat for Humanity Evansville and its partners. As the sun climbed in the eastern sky and slowly began taking the chill off a clear late-fall morning, representatives from The Hollander Group at Baird joined Habitat staff and members of Habitat’s “Core Crew” volunteer construction team to hang the front door on the first build in the 14-home subdivision, located on the site of the former St. Theresa Church and School on Evansville’s north side.

Earlier this year, Habitat announced a new partnership with The Hollander Group at Baird focusing on St. Theresa Place. The wealth-management firm is sponsoring the front doors of all 14 homes in the subdivision in a program known as “Opening the Door to a More Secure Future.” The Hollander Group, formerly associated with Hilliard Lyons, became part of Baird in April 2019 when the two financial-services firms merged.

Tricia Hollander Henning of The Hollander Group at Baird said, “When we were presented with the opportunity to be this project’s Front Door Sponsor, it was an easy decision for us. We are a family business, so we understand the value of family and we understand the value of every child and person having a place to come home to where they are safe to grow and learn. Our business mission is to help provide secure futures for those families we serve as our clients. Our personal mission is to help provide secure futures for those in our community who are interested in working hard to improve their lives. Habitat is a natural fit for us.”

Teri Hollander Albin, who works alongside her sister Tricia at The Hollander Group at Baird, said, “Our Front Door Sponsorship

is simply a continuation of our family’s support of the great work that Habitat for Humanity does in our community. As a multi-generational family business dedicated to serving generations of families, our charitable and business philosophy are the same: Family helping families build strong, secure futures and create lasting legacies. Baird, our team and our family are thrilled to support a new future for the St. Theresa area and are extremely excited for the 14 families that will walk through these doors and call St. Theresa Place

home. Our prayer is that this opportunity sets them on a journey where they thrive for generations to come.”

Benedictine Sister Jane Michele McClure, who serves Habitat for Humanity of Evansville as Major Gifts Officer, explained that “Opening the Door to a More Secure Future” will be a year-long process, during which The Hollander Group and Baird will highlight the ways Habitat’s education and sweat-equity programs prepare families to become self-reliant and grow wealth.



Message photo by Tim Lilley

Tricia Hollander Henning, left, talks about “Opening the Door to a More Secure Future” as her sister, Teri Hollander Albin, and Benedictine Sister Jane Michele McClure, who serves Habitat for Humanity of Evansville as Major Gifts Officer, listen. During the hanging of the front door on the first home at St. Theresa Place, Tricia said, “When we were presented with the opportunity to be this project’s Front Door Sponsor, it was an easy decision for us.” Teri added, “Our Front Door Sponsorship is simply a continuation of our family’s support of the great work that Habitat for Humanity does in our community.”

The Message will provide updates on the progress at St. Theresa Place in future issues.

Bishop's Schedule

Mass, Sarto Chapel, Evansville, 11:30 a.m. CST, Tuesday, Jan. 5

Meeting, Clergy Personnel Board, Catholic Center, Evansville, 1 p.m. CST, Tuesday, Jan. 5.

Mass, Sarto Chapel, Evansville, 11:30 a.m. CST, Thursday, Jan. 7.

Meeting, Department Head, Catholic Center, Evansville, 1 p.m. CST, Thursday, Jan. 7.

Obispo

Continued from page 1

humanidad tiene esperanza; la humanidad ha sido redimida. Pese a los vestigios de tinieblas y sombras que todavía existen en nuestro mundo, nuestra Iglesia y nuestras vidas, estos no pueden prevalecer. Se nos llama a caminar en la luz de nuestro Salvador y a ayudar a difundir Su luz a todos aquellos que viven en las sombras. Hacemos esto cuando proclamamos esperanza donde hay desolación, paz donde hay discordia, consuelo donde hay duda, sanación donde hay amargura. Aunque casi todo el mundo regresará a su actividad habitual el 26 de diciembre, no podrá ser de esa manera para nosotros. Debemos vivir cada día en la alegría de la Navidad y así desempeñar nuestro papel en la renovación de nuestro mundo – comenzando con nuestros hogares, nuestras parroquias y nuestras comunidades. En mis Misas de Navidad, yo oraré para que

Bishop

Continued from page 1

who are alone during this time, especially persons unable to leave home due to the COVID-19 crisis.

On behalf of Bishop Gettelfinger and the entire Diocesan Staff, I wish you a blessed Christmas and a joyous and healthy New Year.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Bishop Joseph M. Siegel

esta santa temporada sea un tiempo de gracia y paz para ustedes y sus familias. Los invito a compartir la esperanza y la alegría de la Navidad con aquellos que ustedes sepan que están solos durante este tiempo, especialmente personas que no pueden dejar sus hogares debido la crisis de COVID-19.

En nombre del Obispo Gettelfinger y de todo su personal diocesano, les deseo una bendecida Navidad y un alegre y saludable Año Nuevo.

Suyo sinceramente en Cristo,

Reverendísimo Joseph M. Siegel

— Translated by Dr. Daniela Abraham, St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology



Submitted photo

Bruté Society inductees from St. Benedict Cathedral

Some of the Diocese of Evansville’s Bruté Society inductees from St. Benedict Cathedral Parish received their medals and pins during Mass on Saturday evening, Dec. 12. Shown are Flavien and Kathy Elpers, left, St. Benedict Cathedral rector Benedictine Father Godfrey Mullen, and Bert and Gene Schmidt. Congratulations all!

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The vigil continues

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

May he infuse our hearts with faith, hope and love; and may we accept these great gifts and nestle into his peace and joy as he was nestled into the swaddling cloth. It is a very merry Christmas indeed, and I pray the Holy Spirit fills us with the remembrance of the Incarnation with a true sense of the indomitable love of the Lord for us — the indomitable love of God who became an infant.

Advent is a season of preparation and keeping vigil. The obvious reason is to prepare for our celebration of the Incarnation, but the season also reminds us of our constant vigil for Christ's Second Coming. As we profess in the Apostles' Creed, "He is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead." The Israelites hoped for their



MEDITATIONE IGNIS

MARIA SERMERSHEIM

Messiah because they knew the prophecies: "The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son . . ." (Is 7:14). The Church today hopes for his return because the Lord himself promised it to us; and so, we believe "he will come again in glory." So Christmas has come, but the vigil continues.

As I reflected on what it means for us to remain vigilant — being prepared with enough oil, like the five wise virgins (Mt 25:1-13), and keeping watch to pray with Christ, as the disciples failed to in the garden (Mt 26:36-46) — I was led to consider the unique nature of this Christian vigil. Our vigil absolutely includes the customary alertness, it certainly includes the active preparation and steadfast watchfulness, but it also includes the calm assurance of the Lord's presence. We can proceed in greater peace than a typical vigil because the Son has come, his Spirit is active and the Father sustains us in each moment. We look ahead in expectation to Christ's coming at the end of time; and yet, in this very moment, we are blessed with his presence. God accompanies us on the road to himself.

This liturgical season, some friends and I have been reading the spiritual journey of Jesuit Father Walter Ciszek, who went to Russia as a missionary during World War II and spent 23 years in the Soviet Gulag. In his stunning account "He

Leadeth Me," which I highly recommend, he wrote that, "when at last we find ourselves in the presence of God . . . every thought becomes the father to a prayer, and words quite often are superfluous" (p. 60-61). Father Ciszek explains that if we become truly aware of God's presence, our hearts are so moved that his divine will for us in every given moment will be clear, and living it will be more attractive for love of him.

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done" is only possible when we draw close to God in prayer and sense his presence (which is substantially reinforced by the Real Presence in the Eucharist). Our posts at this unique Christian vigil require that we prepare for the eschaton and "consecrate the world itself to God" (Lumen Gentium §34) through transformative love and obedience in humdrum and daily actions — in the 24 hours of each day that are God's will for us, as Father Ciszek says. And the distinctiveness of the vigil allows us to know his will precisely by our participation in that same presence whose fullness we await. The deeper our prayerful union with the Lord now, the better we will prepare with hope for our ultimate union with him in the future; and vice versa.

I wrote above that "it is a very merry Christmas indeed;" and only after did I realize the various reasons one might question that statement. Due to COVID-19 and its continued consequences and party-crashing proclivity, you may rightly ask me if I have just cause for declaring this to be such a merry Christmas, and I can assure you that I do. I have a single justification, and it is this:

God is here.

Maria Sermersheim is a 2018 graduate of Reitz Memorial High School and is currently a junior at the University of Notre Dame this year.

CHRISTMAS JOY WORD SEARCH

V H Z L G N E R T T R E E W X	FIRE
K Y P D M M R Y H R L B E W T	ROOT
Q A N S H L K I H U S L B K O	VIPERS
I I W T N P M X B A C N W B Y	CROWD
M C M O S D E F C R O W D U M	SHARE
R V M N L H E G Y U G V F J G	NONE
O S O E S G S F I W V O O J Z	TREE
O H D S B R T S D X D I O M S	STONES
T A A O E J T P Z E Z H D M V	TWO
I R P P E R L F Z Q Z O B T O	FOOD
C E I N I C I I E Y O O I D E	SHIRTS
R V O H W B T R B R K U T O I	FRUIT
W N S Q S P I X B Z R A W K K	CHILDREN
W L D P A F N Y M F C T K D O	BAPTISED
I S R B C H I L D R E N B R M	BROOD

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

Gospel for Sunday, December 27, 2020

Luke 2:22-40

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

COMPLETED	ASHER	DEVOUT
DICTATE	JERUSALEM	PIGEONS
MOSES	TEMPLE	SALVATION
PURIFICATION	ISRAEL	MASTER
GENTILES	CONSECRATED	LORD
ANNA	WOMB	RIGHTEOUS
TURTLEDOVES	SIMEON	PHANUEL

J P C C N S V A U A U C D R R
 E S S E O Z E R A E O E I E V
 R N I L I M H L T S V G T E D
 U O M P T W P A I O H S X E T
 S E E M A B T L U T A E T O W
 A G O E C C D T E M N A R O O
 L I N T I H Y O T T R E M P M
 E P P D F F U F G C E B G L B
 M X D T I S C P E X G D C O F
 J L E A R S I S M O S E S R B
 P F F J U H N A N N A N I D H
 D J T C P O P H A N U E L S C
 L O X D C X T S K E B P V G E
 N T U R T L E D O V E S G K T
 A L N O I T A V L A S C A R N

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Faith is like a mustard ___
- 3 Jewish festival
- 9 Veronica offered Jesus hers
- 10 Catholic protraiter of Dracula
- 12 Genesis weather
- 14 One of the theological virtues
- 15 "___ to God in the highest"
- 16 She saved the Jews
- 19 Galilee, and others
- 20 "...with darkness over the ___" (Gen 1:2)
- 22 NT epistle
- 24 Hometown of St. Catherine
- 25 The patriarchs were probably glad to see these
- 27 Pope St. Pius X's surname
- 29 What Samson did while his hair was shaved
- 30 Daniel was placed in this
- 31 Desert food
- 33 Geometric saint?
- 34 Most solemn Christian feast
- 37 Son of Jacob
- 39 What the flesh is sometimes
- 40 Hosea, formerly
- 42 Priest
- 43 Marriage vows

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- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 44 St. Francis Xavier's feast is on the 4th of this month | 6 Sins | 28 Worship |
| 45 "...but do not perceive the wooden ___ in your own?" (Mt 7:3) | 7 Nevada diocese | 29 Garden tempter |
| | 8 Certain feet in the Bible | 32 "___ My God to Thee" |
| | 11 A queen from here heard of the fame of Solomon | 33 Rod of ___ |
| | 13 Christian love | 35 Donate a portion of money to church |
| | 17 Holy one, in Paris | 36 ___ Novarum |
| | 18 Laying on of ___ | 37 Paul preached here |
| | 21 City destroyed in Genesis | 38 Monk's cowl |
| | 23 Liturgical color | 39 "Blessed is the fruit of your ___" |
| | 26 Paul's companion during his missionary travels | 41 "Mother of all living" |

See answers on page 8.

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, Joseph

First Reading: Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Response: Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5; Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-21; Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

The first reading is from the Book of Sirach. This is one of five Old Testament books in a class called Wisdom Literature. The others are Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and the Book of Wisdom.

One finds in them collections of wise sayings, proverbs and historical references. The material is not restricted to Israelite sources. They also relay knowledge of nature, of the skills of scholars and laborers, rules of conduct, and convey the experience that helps cope with life. Piety, as a relationship to God, is not excluded, but is not the chief thrust of Wisdom Literature. Here is the full title of the Book: "The Book of the Wisdom of Yeshua ben Eleazar ben Sira." He lived in the late 3rd and early 2nd centuries B.C. The title tells us that the author's name is Jesus, his father's name Eleazar, his grandfather's name Sira (or Sirach). He was a native of Jerusalem, 50:29. He had travelled widely, but was also a scholar of the Scriptures (Old Testament).

The book was originally composed in Hebrew, as Sirach's grandson states in the foreword. The date of the original composition is about 180 B.C. This may have been a textbook Sirach used in his Jerusalem academy for young men. The Greek version that has come down to us, though in two forms, was translated from Hebrew by Sirach's grandson between the years 132-117 B.C. in Egypt. The translation was made for the Greek-speaking Jews of the Diaspora, Jews living throughout the Mediterranean world. Back to the academy for young men in Jerusalem: to cope with the world, Sirach's students needed instruction in all aspects of life as a Jew in a secular world. In today's liturgy for the Feast of the Holy Family, the instruction is concerned with the honor children owe to their parents. Though our reading speaks more of the honor due to a father, there are also three references to honor due to a mother of a family. Children who honor their parents atone for sins. When they pray, God listens. They will live a long life. If the mind of parents fails, they must still be treated with respect as long as they live.



SUNDAY SCRIPTURE

FATHER DONALD DILGER

Kindness to elderly parents will not be forgotten by God.

Psalm 128 picks up the family theme. The Psalm is directed to the father of a family and his relationship to his wife and children. If he walks in the ways of the Lord, his blessing will be to eat the fruits of his work. Since a Psalm is a poem, one expects metaphors. For the husband who walks in the Lord's paths, his wife will be like a fruitful vine (producing children), and their children will be like olive plants around their table. The family is therefore compared with a cultivated garden producing wine and oil — two basic ingredients of Israelite life. The fear of the Lord of which the Psalm speaks is not a servile, cringing fear but reverent awe due to God.

The first part of the second reading can serve as a pattern for a wholesome family life. Its qualities are compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, ready to forgive, love, singing and praying together, admonishing one another, (Does not always work!), and all done in the name of Jesus. The second part instructs individual family members. A husband must love his wife and avoid bitterness toward her. Children must obey parents because this pleases the Lord. Fathers must not anger their children so they do not lose heart. The trouble-maker: "Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord." This expresses a Greek-Roman world in which a husband had even total authority of life and death over his family. We must recall that Paul also taught husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:21, "Be subject to one another, for Christ's sake."

Luke's gospel reading speaks of two Jewish celebrations. The first is the purification of a mother after the birth of a child. The law of purification is found in Leviticus 12:2-8. It must take place 40 days after the birth of a male child, 80 days after the birth

of a female child. What was the purpose of this ritual? Through giving birth, a woman became ritually contaminated, probably because of an ancient taboo about loss of blood causing such defilement. According to Genesis 9:4, blood is the life of every creature. All life belongs to God. After spilling blood (life), atonement must be made. An offering was required. Usually the offering was a lamb. Out of compassion for the poor, two young pigeons or turtle doves were offered. The law states, "And the priest shall make atonement for her, and she shall be clean." There is a problem here with later theological development that Mary gave birth as a virgin, which excluded the loss of blood, according to such theology. The catchphrase: "a virgin before, during, and after birth." Luke wrote his gospel long before theologians went to work on it. Recall that Jesus also underwent John's baptism "for the forgiveness of sins," but had no sins to be forgiven.

The second Jewish ritual cited by Luke is the buying back of a child from God. Exodus 13:1-2, "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever opens the womb among the people of Israel is mine." Exodus 13:15 applies this law only to firstborn males. Why the law in the first place? Exodus 13:15, "When the Pharaoh . . . refused to let us go, the Lord slew all the firstborn . . . in the land of Egypt." Therefore, the firstborn of Israel belonged to God. In the temple the Holy Family encountered Simeon, a devout man to whom the Holy Spirit promised that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah. When he saw the child, he took him in his arms, and sang a hymn, which is to this day used in the official night prayer of the Church, the *Nunc Dimittis*, so called because of the first two words in Latin. Simeon proclaims that "this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be contradicted, that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed." Mary will not escape that contradiction. Simeon speaks to her, "A sword will pierce through your own soul also." The four gospels all reveal difficulties Mary faced because of her unusual Son. That is the sword. The Holy Family also encounters an elderly widow, a prophetess Anna, who "spoke about the child and the redemption of Israel."

Eucharist in mortal sin

Question: I have done something terrible. I committed a mortal sin and then I received the Eucharist. Am I going to be condemned? I am very worried. I am 17 years old, and I was baptized just two months ago. If I go to confession, will I be forgiven?

(I was afraid that my parents would question me if I did not take Communion, so I went up to receive even though I knew it was wrong.) Please help me to know what to do at this point. (City and state withheld)

Answer: Please be at peace. You are not going to be condemned, and you will surely be forgiven in the



QUESTION CORNER

FATHER KENNETH DOYLE

sacrament of penance. It strikes me that some of our best-known saints made their way back from moral wrongs to find healing and joy in God's forgiveness. I'm thinking of St. Paul, who once persecuted

those who believed in Jesus; of St. Peter, who during Christ's Passion denied that he even knew Christ; of St. Augustine, who had fathered a child out of wedlock. God can forgive anything, and he wants to. His very purpose in creating us was so that we could share eternal happiness in his presence.

Just go to confession and tell the priest of your sin and the fact that you went to holy Communion despite recognizing its gravity. And congratulations on your recent baptism. Like most Catholics, I was baptized as an infant, but I often find that those who entered the church later on have a faith that is more reflective and stronger.

Questions may be sent to Father Kenneth Doyle at askfatherdoyle@gmail.com and 30 Columbia Circle Dr., Albany, New York 12203.

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Merry Christmas!

December 25 is the publishing date of this edition of **The Message**, even though most people will be reading this *after* Christmas day. Yet it is completely appropriate to wish one another “Merry Christmas” after Christmas day.

While Christmas is celebrated on Dec. 25, the celebration lasts through the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord, which is Jan. 10, 2021, next year. There are those who say we celebrate Christmas through the Presentation of the Lord, which is Feb. 2, 2021, but that’s a different column. Regardless of which camp you belong to, wishing each other a “Merry Christmas” can continue in good conscience for some time.

If that’s the case, then why have we been saying “Merry Christmas” since, well, Halloween? Because much of our world is run on a consumerist calendar that marks holidays by a rise in sales as opposed to the birth of the Savior of Mankind.

In the event that there is any confusion, the season that just ended was Advent. It was the time of preparation for Christmas, not Christmas itself. But Hallmark has never produced an Advent movie, and no home lighting contest has ever been dubbed an Advent lighting contest. If you want to fight that particular battle, I would say don’t waste your time. Rather, next year when all the Christmas decorations come out — snowmen, reindeer, penguins, polar bears drinking cola — keep them on the shelf.



RADICAL JOY CATHOLIC STEWARDSHIP AND ABUNDANCE

MATT POTTER

That’s a radical concept; but the title of this column is “Radical Joy,” right? Trying to change popular culture is nearly impossible. However, we can change the way we do things. Instead of propping an elf doll on a kitchen counter, or placing a cola-swigging stuffed polar bear on the fireplace mantel, focus on the daily Mass readings, which, indeed, are preparing us for celebrating the birth of our Lord. One of the ways to keep that focus is to read one of the many commentaries on the readings offered by some outstanding Catholic writers.

One of these meditations came from a book we received from our parish, Holy Rosary in Evansville. It was a story about a small boy who developed a rare and deadly blood disease that required a blood transfusion in order for him to continue living. It turned out that his seven-year-old sister was a match, and she volunteered to give her brother her blood.

The transfusion was successful. After the procedure,

she asked the doctor if he could tell her how long it would take for her to die. She mistakenly believed that she had given all her blood to her brother and that he would live but she would not.

What struck me the most about this heart-wrenching story was the selfless love shown by a 7-year-old for her brother. Her actions were the embodiment of Jesus’ own words from John’s Gospel: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13).

This little girl gave everything she had to save her brother. Jesus gave everything He had to save us. God the Father gave us His only Son for the sole reason that He loves us.

The world will now put away its decorations, stop playing Christmas music and concentrate on returning gifts it neither wanted nor needed.

For those of us in the know, however, let the celebration begin.

Merry Christmas!

As always, thanks for reading. I would love to hear from you. Write to me at mpotter@evdio.org. Like and Follow us on Facebook (Radical Joy — Diocese of Evansville Stewardship); Twitter @Radicallyjoyful; Check out our blog radicaljoy.blog/.

Matt Potter is Director of Stewardship for the Diocese of Evansville.

The most wonderful time of the year

‘All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children’ (Isaiah 54:13).

On Dec. 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a “Unite Our Country” prayer service was planned at St. John the Evangelist Parish in downtown Indianapolis. An outdoor Eucharistic Procession through the city streets, with the recitation of a Patriotic Rosary near Monument Circle, was scheduled as part of the service. The weather forecast for that morning was not favorable. The rain was pouring as we drove up to the church for morning Mass. Pastor Father Rick Nagel informed the 250 people in attendance that we would pray the rosary after Mass in the church and hope that Our Lady would clear the sky for our outdoor procession.

Central Catholic grade school students from Indianapolis performed a liturgical dance in beautiful costumes of the Indians of Tepeyac, and a play about Our Lady of Guadalupe appearing to St. Juan Diego. The 50 students had been preparing for this feast day since September. The joy on their faces and the sincerity in their performances were very inspiring. As we completed the rosary, the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and procession began to line up outside under a beautiful “Mary blue” sky and sunshine. This procession, led by the Body of Christ through the streets of a metropolitan city, was very powerful. Celebrating the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, was truly a time of rejoicing after witnessing the faith in the eyes of those children.

The Christmas season is the most wonderful time of the year,



GRATITUDE FOR THE GIFT OF FAITH

ZOE CANNON

but every day is a blessing from God. We have an opportunity to share the gift of faith daily with little ones, so they will feel the love of God in their hearts. This is how we make the world a better place; please be the person you needed as a child. I am very grateful to observe our adult children giving this gift to our grandchildren. I pray daily for the un-churched; for those who do not know the power of our Triune God, Creator, Savior and Counselor.

We placed a six-foot wooden cross with benches in a wooded area near our home to create a place of reflection. One afternoon, I discovered two of our grandsons kneeling and praying a decade of the rosary at the cross. I stood back and observed this unprompted “genuine witness” as these little guys ended with, “Please bless our country.” Our children need to know that God is the King of the Universe, not the

secular, material world that grabs so much of our attention.

Every Christmas we celebrate the birth of the tiny King who was sent to be our Savior. And 2,020 years later, we anticipate His Second Coming. On this beautiful Christmas Day, take time to reflect on the gift of this True Presence in our lives. Nothing in this world is as precious to our salvation as the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved!” (Acts 16:31). This one perfect message, shared with us from the Apostles of the early Church, makes every day the most wonderful time of the year! God bless you all! Amen.

Zoe Cannon lives in Morgantown, Indiana, and is a member of Sts. Francis and Clare Parish in Greenwood, Indiana.

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OR Emma Jean Couture at 812.457.4854 or ejcancouture@gmail.com.

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