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Our Lady Of Guadalupe's Message Remains Alive

By Dennis Sadowski
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Nearly 500 years after Mexican peasant Juan Diego was greeted by Mary and urged to share a message of hope and comfort as promised by God's compassion, Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to inspire new generations of faithful believers in their daily routines and struggles.

That assurance, rooted in prayer and common experiences, guides daily individual devotion and communal gatherings that build toward grand observances of the apparitions centered annually on the Dec. 12 feast day.

And while Our Lady of Guadalupe is rooted in the Mexican culture, those who have studied the phenomenon and her message as it is lived today are finding that the patroness of the Americas, as she is known, can strengthen bonds of community in a disjointed world.

"In the United States she belongs to everyone. Even American Catholics have embraced her as a symbol of faith and devotion," said Hossfman Ospino, assistant professor of Hispanic ministry and religious education at Boston College.

Ospino, a native of Colombia, said Catholic Latinos outside of Mexico have come



to embrace the Guadalupe story because of their shared faith. That Mary presented herself to the indigenous Juan Diego, who was canonized in 2002, indicates that God cares for struggling and marginalized people everywhere, Ospino said.

"She appeared to someone who looked Latino, who was Mexican, and at a time in history when the situation of Juan Diego and the people was difficult," he said.

Mexico in 1531, the year of the apparitions, was undergoing massive changes after the Spanish conquest of the Aztecs a decade earlier. Catholicism was taking root and indigenous religions were disappearing. Speaking in his indigenous language, Mary asked the future St. Juan Diego, an Aztec and Catholic convert, to convey to church leaders her desire for a church to be built on Tepayac Hill in what today is Mexico City. The Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe near the site, completed in 1976, is the most visited Catholic church in the world outside of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

It took three visits by the saint-to-be to convince the local bishop that he indeed had seen Mary.

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CHRISTMAS CARDS: Religious Education Students from Queen of Archangels Parish in Clarence and Snow Shoe, made over 78 Christmas cards for the military, for the Red Cross. These cards were sent to service men and women all over the world and to Pennsylvania veteran's homes. Father Michael A. Wolfe is the parish's administrator.



CURSILLO: Mens Cursillo #118 was held October 20 - 23, and Womens Cursillo #117 was held November 3 - 6; both were held at Mount Saint Ann Retreat House, Ebensburg. Spiritual assistants for the mens weekend were Benedictine Father Thaddeus Rettger and Sister of Saint Ann Letizia; for the womens weekend, Monsignor Michael A. Becker and Carmelite of the Word Sister Celeste Ciesielka served. Pictured (left to right) in the top photo are First row: Doug Puchko, Matt Hoffman, Mark Komula, Sister Letizia, Briah Koch, Mike Thomas, Sean O'Dowd. Second row: Mark Hogan, John Wargo, Cristian Ridilla, Tom Descovich, Paul Smith. Third row: Mike Kissell, Father Thaddeus, Rick Messina, Ken St. Clair and Tom Price. Pictured (left to right) in the bottom photo are First row: Suzy Brett, Donna Carnicella, Janine Anna, Janis Komula, Michelle St. Clair, Arlene Cerimele, Pat Goodrich. Second row: Mary Ann Zanghi, Kathie Spargo, Mary Molnar, Monsignor Becker, Susanna Tomlinson, Juanita Kissell, Becky Mapes, Sister Celeste. Third row: Lori Hogan, Kim Kline, Roseann Bennett, Betty Dennis and Barb Bundy. Mens Cursillo #119 will be held March 16 - 19, 2017; Women's Cursillo #120 will be held March 30 - April 2, 2017. Those interested in attending a Cursillo retreat are asked to contact Tom Price, Cursillo lay director at thomasmprice@me.com or (814) 935 - 8281.

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Prayer

Reconciliation

Hollidaysburg: The following is a listing of opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation prior to Christmas.

- December 12 at 6:30 p.m. - Our Mother of Sorrows, 415 Tioga Street, Johnstown
- December 12 at 7:00 p.m. - Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 806 11th Street, Altoona
- December 12 at 7:00 p.m. - Saint Matthew, 1105 Cameron Avenue, Tyrone

- December 12 at 7:00 p.m. - Saint Thomas Aquinas, 159 Hickory Street, Ashville
- December 13 at 6:30 p.m. - Holy Rosary, 900 N. 4th Street, Altoona
- December 14 at 6:00 p.m. - Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, 605 Graham Avenue, Windber
- December 14 at 6:30 p.m. - Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, One Cathedral Square, Altoona
- December 14 at 7:00 p.m. - Saint Patrick, 609 Park Avenue, Johnstown

- December 14 at 7:00 p.m. - Saint Stephen, 303 Lincoln Way East, McConnellsburg
- December 14 at 7:00 p.m. - Transfiguration, 340 2nd Street, Conemaugh
- December 15 at 5:30 p.m. - Our Lady of Lourdes, 2716 Broad Avenue, Altoona

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In The Alleghenies



MILESTONE WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES: Couples celebrating milestone wedding anniversaries were honored at Mass, Sunday, October 30, at Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, Windber. The Mass was followed by a brunch hosted by the Family Life committee. Honored were: Dominique and Matthew Ross - one year, Anthony and Kelly Campitell - 20 years, Paul and Tammie Peterson - 35 years, Ken and Roxann Newcomer - 45 years, Gary and Sandra Newcomer - 50 years, Louis and Mary Jane Delgross - 60 years, Paul and Mary Louise Peterson - 60 years, Henry and Betty Renaldi - 61 years and Anthony and Betty Capatch - 65 years. Third Order Regular Franciscan Father Roderick Soha, pastor, celebrated the anniversary Mass.



CARVE OFF: Members of the Forever Broadcasting group in Johnstown took on members from the Johnstown Tomahawks Hockey team in the Saint Vincent DePaul Johnstown Family Kitchen annual "Carve Off." The event is held to help bring attention to the fight against hunger in Cambria County. The Kitchen serves a meal daily to as many as 200 people on any given day without charge to those in need. In addition the Food for Family program works with Feeding America and the Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank to bring much needed groceries and fresh produce to help supply 18 food pantries. In turn those pantries provide help to as many as 7,000 people per month. In the end, the Tomahawks were able to outcarve the team from Forever.

(Continued From Page 2.)

December 15 at 5:30 p.m.
– Sacred Heart, 511 20th Street, Altoona

December 15 at 7:00 p.m.
– Basilica of Saint Michael the Archangel, 321 St. Mary Street, Loretto

December 16 at 7:00 p.m.
– Saint Aloysius, 7911 Admiral Peary Highway, Cresson

December 18 at 2:00 p.m.
– Holy Name, 500 N. Julian Street, Ebensburg

December 18 at 2:00 p.m. –

Our Lady of Victory, 820 West-
erly Parkway, State College

December 18 at 5:00 p.m.
– Saint Benedict, 2310 Bedford
Street, Johnstown

December 19 at 7:00 p.m. –
Saint Rose of Lima, 5514 Rose-
lawn Avenue, Altoona

Confessions will be Mon-
day and Tuesday, December 12
and 13, and Monday and Tues-
day December 19 and 20, at 6:30
p.m. at Saint Mary (Immaculate
Conception) Parish, 1405 5th
Avenue.

Confessions will be heard
on December 22 from 6:30-7:30
p.m. and prior to Masses on
Christmas Eve from 4:00-4:45
p.m. and 11:00-11:45 p.m. at
Saint Joseph Parish, 628 W. 1st
Street, Williamsburg.

Christmas Novena

Loretto: The Discalced
Carmelite Nuns announce their
annual Novena in honor of the
Infant Jesus in preparation for
the Solemnity of Christmas.

The Novena will open at the
Carmelite Monastery Chapel on
Friday, December 16, and con-
clude on Christmas Eve, Satur-
day, December 24.

The regular monthly pri-
vate Novena honoring Our Lady
of Mount Carmel and Saint
Therese will take place at the
same time. All intentions will
be remembered in the special
Novena prayers offered follow-
ing daily Mass.

Those desiring to share
in the graces and blessings of
these nine days of prayer, are
requested to send their petitions
to Mother Prioress, Carmelite
Monastery, P.O. Box 57, Loretto
PA 15940.

Every Sunday afternoon at
4:00 p.m. and every First Fri-
day of the month, Benediction
of the Most Blessed Sacrament
is given in the public chapel at
Carmel, followed by veneration
of the relic of Saint Therese.

The "O Antiphons" Of Advent

The Roman Church has been singing the "O" Antiphons since at least the eighth century. They are the antiphons that accompany the Magnificat canticle of Evening Prayer from December 17-23. They are a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well. Their repeated use of the imperative "Come!" embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.

December 17

O Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!

December 18

O Leader of the House of Israel,
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
come to rescue us with your mighty power!

December 19

O Root of Jesse's stem,
sign of God's love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!

December 20

O Key of David,
opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!

December 21

O Radiant Dawn,
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the
shadow of death.

December 22

O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:
come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

December 23

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!

-- From **Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers**

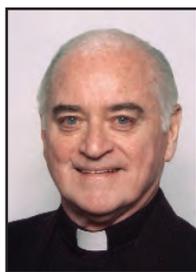
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Point Of View

As we rejoice in the Lord's birth this Christmas, it is important to remember that faith in the incarnation of Jesus Christ is an essential part of the Catholic Church's teachings: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14). Jesus came as a light into the world, to dispel the darkness and to give us new life (Jn 8:12). He gave up his life to bring salvation, love and joy to the human race.

The doctrine of the Incarnation, for Catholics, is the very basis of our Christmas celebration. It teaches us that each day we grow from darkness into the wonderful light of Christ.

As we carry his light within us, we show it by our love. We demonstrate how our beliefs influence our lives. We witness to Christ by our joys, our generosity and by the kindness we show



Spirituality For Today

By Father John Catoir
Celebrating Christ At Christmas

others; especially by the way we love our families, friends and neighbors. Christmas gift-giving and generosity is a sign of Christ living in us.

So, how did Santa Claus become the dominant symbol of Christmas? The name Santa Claus morphed from legends of the great St. Nicholas of Myra, who was well-known for his extraordinary charity. When Dutch settlers came to America, they brought with them their great love of "Sint Niklass," which

later became "Santa Claus."

St. Nicholas was born in the fourth century, in Lycia, a province in Asia Minor, which was then part of Greece. Today, Lycia is on the southern coast of Turkey. St. Nicholas' parents died while he was young, leaving him a vast fortune. Nicholas might very well have been drawn to the words of Jesus, "Sell what you own and give to the poor" (Mt 19:21).

For he was so moved that he donated his entire inheritance to assist the needy, the sick and the suffering, and then dedicated his life to God. He rose to become the bishop of Myra and was imprisoned during the Roman persecutions.

The legend of St. Nicholas grew steadily over the centuries and eventually came to be associated with gift-giving, and transformed into the fictional, secular character named Santa Claus. While we all enjoy the spirit behind Santa Claus, we must not lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas: our celebration of Christ's birth.

Jesus said that he came to bring joy. Christmas is a season of great joy, light and new life. I wish you a Merry Christmas, with all my heart.



Another Perspective

By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein
Something Worth Waiting For

It's been five years since English – speaking Catholics began using the new translation of the Roman Missal. Our tongues no longer trip over words like "consubstantial." We've become used to the reference to the "dewfall." It's rare to hear someone respond "And also with you," instead of "And with your spirit," when the words "The Lord be with you," are spoken."

There is only one phrase from the old Missal translation that I miss, and regret losing. With my well known and well documented aversion to waiting, it's ironic that the phrase I'm missing is "As we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ." The phrase that's replaced it - "We await the blessed hope and the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ," seems cumbersome to me. Waiting in joyful hope is an idea I can embrace. I'm not sure what awaiting the blessed hope is all about. I want the old wording back!

I loved that phrase "we wait in joyful hope," precisely because it took the sting out of waiting. Waiting can too often be a sad, sterile, waste of time. But waiting in joyful hope, ah now, that's another matter. Joyful hope infuses waiting with meaning and purpose. Waiting in joyful hope reminds us to keep our eyes on the prize - - to always look ahead expectantly and with sincere longing for something better, something brighter, that is yet to come.

Advent is a time of waiting, and surprisingly, my favorite season of the liturgical year. Advent reminds us that we are waiting to see the Lord come to us in glory. We are waiting for the coming of His Kingdom in its fullness. Waiting in joyful hope for that day, that moment to come fills each day, each moment, with a feeling of wonder and awe. With each breath that we take we find ourselves asking "Could this be the moment? Could this be the time? Will this be the day when the Lord returns?" Waiting in joyful hope is akin to the waiting of parents for the birth of their child. Waiting in joyful hope invites us to see the potential that is always before us, and to be grateful for all that is yet to be. When we wait in joyful hope we are caught up in the dramatic tension that marks a time that is "already, but not yet." The Lord Jesus has already come to us, but is not yet here in the fullness of His power and glory. His Kingdom has already come, but is not yet fully realized. Waiting in joyful hope causes us to catch our breath in awe of how little time remains, while simply waiting - - and waiting - - and waiting - - makes us only look wearily back at how much time has already passed, and how much more lies before us. How we wait opens up two vistas: one fills us with gladness and leads us forward, while the other depresses us and pulls us back. Advent waiting - - waiting in joyful hope - - is full of life and light and love.

I've got to keep all of that in mind the next time I find myself waiting at that pesky traffic light at the intersection of 17th Street and First Avenue in Altoona. I've got to remind myself of what waiting can mean the next time I'm the fourth or fifth car in line for the drive – through window at my pharmacy or my local "fast" food restaurant. I've got to keep waiting in joyful hope for all that is yet to be, confident that what God has in store for me is greater than anything I've ever known before.

It's worth waiting for!



Photo By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein

Pontifical University Of Mexico Opens Child And Youth Protection Center

By David Agren
Catholic News Service

MEXICO CITY (CNS) -- When Father Daniel Portillo set about designing programs to protect children and address allegations of sexual abuse, he quickly encountered a core challenge in Mexico: an unwillingness to acknowledge the very existence of a problem with predatory priests.

"The first aspect to overcome is saying that this does not exist in Mexico. It exists. Pedophilia among priests exists," said Father Portillo, a professor at the Pontifical University of Mexico and the director of the newly formed Center for Investigation and Interdisciplinary Training for the Protection of Minors at the school.

"We were in denial, thinking and supposing that it didn't exist or it wasn't here or it was an American or Anglo-Saxon problem," Father Portillo said. "It's a problem hitting us at a global level."

Sex crimes committed by priests against children have caused scandals in Mexico and undercut the church's credibility.

That credibility was especially hurt by revelations that the Legionaries of Christ founder, Father Marciel Maciel, who was considered close with some in the Catholic

hierarchy and the country's political and economic elites, sexually abused seminarians. The allegations of abuse made against Father Maciel stayed out of the press, while an advertising boycott was brought against a lone news outlet to report the scandal in the late 1990s.

In 2006, after a two-year investigation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Pope Benedict XVI called on Father Maciel to renounce public ministry as a priest and spend the rest of his life in prayer and penitence. He died in 2008.

Today the issue of protecting children appears to be attracting attention and action on the part of the Catholic Church in Mexico and Father Portillo said the training center will start receiving diocesan groups in early 2017. The center, which replicates a similar center at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University, will train "specialists in theology, spirituality, psychology, and canon and civil law" to work on the diocesan level in child protection, Father Portillo said.

Interest in Mexico appears strong. The university hosted the Congress for the Protection of Minors Nov. 8-10, attracting 450 participants -- 200 more than expected -- including vicars general, superiors of religious congregations, seminary rectors and religious.

Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston also participated in the gathering and shared experiences from

north of the border, where abuse cases have damaged victims, harmed the church and brought costly litigation. The church in Mexico has avoided legal consequences in abuse cases because the country's legal system does not hold employers legally responsible for their employees' actions.

Father Portillo said the lack of legal pressure resulted in some complacency on the abuse issue in Mexico.

Cardinal O'Malley's main message to attendees was that "we need to be totally transparent on this issue of child protection," said Trinitarian Father Juan Molina, director of the U.S. bishops' office on Latin America, who traveled to Mexico City for the conference with the cardinal.

In the U.S. church, "everyone is on board" with the goal of protecting children, Father Molina said.

The U.S. bishops first adopted their "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" in 2002 and revised it in 2005 and 2011. It outlines how church leaders must provide a safe environment for children and young people in church-sponsored activities.

Father Portillo said Mexico has come a long way in recognizing the problem of sexual abuse by clergy, although the issue of abusive priests proved to be inconvenient in that past.

Support For Survivors

Support for survivors of sexual abuse is available throughout the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. Survivors are encouraged to seek help through any of the following agencies.

Bedford County

Your Safe Haven Inc.
<http://www.yoursafehaven.org/>
(800) 555-5671

We are a comprehensive crime victims center and respond to victims of all crime whether it be through our office, the court system, the hospital, or police agency.

Blair County

Family Services Inc.
<https://www.familyservicesinc.net/>
(814) 944-3585

Crisis intervention and counseling, therapeutic counseling, legal and medical advocacy and accompaniment, information and referrals, safety planning, transportation, other supportive services.

Cambria/Somerset Counties

Victim Services Inc.
<http://victimservicesinc.org/>
(814)288-4961 and (800) 755-1983
24-Hour Hotline (1-800-755-1983) and Crisis Intervention; Counseling (Bachelors level, highly trained and experienced staff); Therapy (Master's level/licensed, highly trained and experienced staff, EMDR); Support Groups for Survivors of Sexual Abuse, Families of Homicide Victims, and others as requested/needed in the community; "Safe and Unsafe Touches" Individual Education Program for Children; Accompaniment to Medical, Police, and Justice System Proceedings; Court Preparation / Orientation to the Criminal Justice System; Assistance with Victims Compensation Claims; Victim Notification; Referrals to Other Resources; Prevention Education

Programs for schools/colleges; Professional Trainings on trauma, sexual abuse, victim-centered response, etc. (can be developed to meet your needs); Certified Mandated Reporter training (2 certified trainers on staff).

Centre County

Centre County Women's Resource Center, Inc.
<http://ccwrc.org/>
(814) 234-5050
Crisis counseling, 24 hour hotline, legal & medical advocacy, information and referral, civil legal representation, emergency shelter, transitional housing, primary prevention programs, safe custody exchange/supervised visitation, support groups.

Clinton County

Clinton County Women's Center
<http://www.ccwcsafe.org/>
(570) 748-9509
24 hour hotline service; Sexual Assault Protection Orders; advocacy and options counseling, support groups; medical advocacy; Prevention and outreach education; Safe shelter for victims of domestic violence, legal advocacy; PFA assistance; screening for TBI; referrals for community services; and children's advocacy.

Reporting Child Abuse

Bishop Mark L. Bartchak and the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown are firmly committed to protecting children and young people. If you have any information concerning suspected sexual or other abuse of minors, you are urged to report it immediately to:

- PA Child Line 1 - 800- 932 - 0313 (intake is available 24/7)
- Pennsylvania Attorney General Hotline (888) 538 - 8541
- Pennsylvania State Police Headquarters (717) 783 - 5599 or your local Pennsylvania State Police Station
- Your local police department

If there is an indication of imminent danger, you should call 911 immediately.

The Diocese reports all information regarding sexual abuse of minors to law enforcement. You are urged to do the same. Anyone may and should report suspected child sexual abuse.

To report to the Diocese any suspected abuse of a minor, please call Jean Johnstone at (814) 944 - 9388.

Franklin/Fulton Counties

Women In Need/Victim Services
<http://www.winservices.org/home.aspx>
(717) 264-4444
Direct services for dv/sa victims-ind. counseling, group counseling, legal advocacy including accompaniment, medical advocacy, hotline, prevention education, shelter, VCAP assistance, Sexual assault response team.

Huntingdon/Mifflin/Juniata Counties

The Abuse Network
<http://www.abusenetwork.org/>
(717) 242-2444
Trauma-informed Empowerment Counseling, Support Groups, 24-Hour Hotline Counseling, Legal Advocacy and Accompaniment, Medical Advocacy and Accompaniment, Prevention and Awareness Educational Programs, Services are Free and Confidential.



PENNSYLVANIA
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

By Amy Hill

The 2015-2016 session of the Pennsylvania General Assembly officially closed on November 30. Here is the status of the several high priority bills that were on the legislative agenda of the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference.

Pro-Life Legislation – House Bill 1948 would have banned barbaric dismemberment abortions and abortions when the unborn baby is able to feel pain (20 weeks). It passed in the House, was voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee, but the session came to an end without a Senate vote. Governor Wolf promised to veto the bill, so it would have been unlikely to become law. The election brings some small but important political changes to Pennsylvania's General Assembly which could bring strength to the pro-life cause in the next session.

Adoption Records – House Bill 162 was passed by the General Assembly and was signed into law by the governor. It allows an adoptee to obtain a noncertified copy of his or her original birth record (what is commonly referred to as a birth certificate), naming the birth

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parents, unless a birth parent files a name redaction request form with the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The filing of the name redaction request form would protect that birth parent's privacy because the birth certificate issued to the adoptee would not name the birth parent. This new law changes the current law, which kept the identity of a birth parent confidential unless the birth parent agreed to disclosure. Now, a birth parent, for past and future adoptions, must take affirmative action to protect his or her identity by filing the name redaction request form. The PCC will pursue opportunities to alert the public and especially birth parents through Catholic media channels and www.pacatholic.org when the redaction forms become available.

Human Trafficking – Senate Bill 851 would have ensured that juvenile victims of human trafficking are not prosecuted as criminals and that support services are made available to them. Action was not taken by the end of the session, but legislation may be reintroduced next session.

Organ Donation – The Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association was successful in amending legislation that encourages organ donation so it is clear who is able to receive information and/or consent to an organ or tissue gift on behalf of a patient. The amended bill did not allow presumed consent for patients who have not explicitly indicated their wishes to donate organs; however, the General Assembly did not take up the bill before the end of the session.

End of Life – Although legislation concerning doctor-prescribed suicide or other



AMY HILL

end-of-life issues did not have much traction this session, the PCC did engage its advocacy network to urge the American Medical Association (AMA) to maintain its decades-long opposition to doctor prescribed suicide. If the AMA weakens its opposition, the move will send a message to the legislature that legalizing suicide is acceptable. It is not too late to send a message to the leaders of the AMA urging them to remain neutral on the issue of doctor-prescribed suicide. Connect to the Catholic Advocacy Network at www.pacatholic.org to send an email.

Much work has been done with work groups behind the scenes on the issue of Physicians Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST). Draft legislation has already been submitted to the State Joint Government Commission Subcommittee on Powers of Attorney and the Legislative Reference Bureau in preparation for its introduction next session.

Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) & Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) – The legislative session ended with strong public statements by

Speaker of the House Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny), urging a significant increase in the EITC and OSTC programs next year. He announced this at several press conferences at Catholic schools in different parts of the state. Rep. Turzai has set this as a priority for the next session.

Statutes of Limitation Reform – House Bill 1947 was a proposal to reform the statutes of limitation for childhood sexual abuse. The House of Representatives voted for legislation that would eliminate the criminal statute of limitations in the future, extend the civil SoL for future cases and give an equal opportunity for victims in public institutions to bring suit (sovereign immunity prohibits these victims from suing now). The bill would also retroactively nullify the civil statute of limitations for past childhood sexual abuse cases from decades ago. In June the state Senate voted 49-0 in favor of an amended version of House Bill 1947 that removed controversial retroactive provision, citing conflicts with Pennsylvania's state constitution as the reason for the change. The Senate version maintained prospective changes to the law. The House Rules Committee did not act on the Senate-amended version of the bill; therefore it simply died at the end of the session.

Leaders of those pushing for the legislation stated publicly that they are unwilling to accept any bill that does not include retroactivity. While the session comes to an end, no retroactive window was enacted; but it is anticipated that the proposal will be introduced again in the next session. The fight for fair statute of limitations reform is far from over.

Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Legislation – Legislation that would add "gender identity or expression" and "sexual orientation" to Pennsylvania's non-discrimination law was again debated this session. Changing the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA) will jeopardize many churches and their charitable outreach if they continue to adhere to their religious beliefs. In other states, this law has closed Catholic adoption agencies and violated religious liberty. These bills could mean that Catholic agencies would no longer be able to make our contributions to the common good of Pennsylvania without violating our religious beliefs.

One bill passed in the Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee; but no further action was taken so the legislation died at the end of the session. This potential threat to religious liberty will need to be addressed in the new session.

The Pennsylvania Catholic Conference is the public affairs agency of Pennsylvania's Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Dioceses of Pennsylvania. Stay up-to-date with Catholic news and issues at www.pacatholic.org, www.facebook.com/pacatholic, and www.twitter.com/pacatholic.

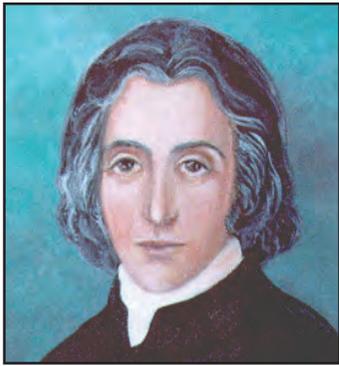
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Lourdes with Barcelona
with Collette

September 17—26, 2017

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800-692-6314



A Prince In The Service Of The Great King

The Servant Of God
Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin
1770 - 1840

Sulpicians Mark 225 Years Of Training Men To Be Priests

This story is of interest to the Diocese of Altoona - Johnstown because one of the first seminarians trained by the Sulpicians in the United States was the Servant of God Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin. He was the second priest ordained in this country, but the first to complete all his seminary studies here.

By Christopher Guntz
Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE (CNS) -- In October 1791, five men began

Prayer For Father Gallitzin's Intercession

O God, light of the faithful and shepherd of souls, who sent Servant of God Demetrius Gallitzin to serve God's people in the Allegheny Mountains, feeding your sheep by his words and forming them by his example, pour out your Spirit to sow seeds of truth in people's hearts and to awaken in them obedience to the faith.

May the Gospel continue to be preached and the Sacraments bring power and grace to the faithful. By the example of this man of faith, Demetrius Gallitzin, may your people advance in the path of salvation and love.

Confident of your faithfulness to us, we humbly ask you, our God, to grant us the favor of (name your intention).

May Christ's saving work continue to the end of the ages, and may we feel a more urgent call to work for the salvation of every creature. We pray this, as did your priest Demetrius Gallitzin, through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

+ + +

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studies for the priesthood at the first seminary in the United States, just a couple years after the Diocese of Baltimore was established as the first in the country in 1789.

At the time of that humble

beginning -- when Bishop John Carroll, Baltimore's first bishop, welcomed four priests from the Society of St. Sulpice and the five seminarians -- the Diocese of Baltimore encompassed the whole fledgling nation.

Sulpician Father Phillip J. Brown, president rector of today's St. Mary's Seminary and University, noted in his welcome to commemorate that occasion that the seminarians began their studies at St. Mary's downtown on Paca Street a month before Georgetown University in Washington opened, making the Baltimore seminary the oldest American institution of higher learning.

The remark brought a chuckle of pride from the congregation gathered Nov. 15 in the seminary's chapel to mark the 225th anniversary of the arrival of the Sulpician fathers in America and the founding of St. Mary's Seminary and University.

The prayer service included the conferral of an honorary doctorate of divinity degree on Cardinal Marc Ouellet, former archbishop of Quebec and now prefect of the Congregation for Bishops at the Vatican.

Father Brown welcomed the faculty and students of St. Mary's and two other seminal Sulpician institutions -- Theological College, the Sulpician national seminary at The Catholic University of America in Washington; and Mount St. Mary's Seminary and University in Emmitsburg, which was originally a Sulpician college seminary and eventually became

an independent major seminary.

"St. Mary's has formed more priests for the mission in parishes than any other (seminary) in the United States," Father Brown said.

He prayed that the Holy Spirit would "give many more men the courage and confidence to follow the call to priesthood for the good of the whole church so that it will be renewed and strengthened during the time of our service and in our lifetime."

Father Brown noted that each of the seminarians and faculty members present that evening would receive a copy of a new biography of Father Francois Charles Nagot, the first Sulpician superior in the United States, who played a role in the founding of each of the three seminaries represented at the anniversary celebration.

Sulpician Father John C. Kemper, provincial superior of the U.S. province of the Society of St. Sulpice, said, "The first decades or so were difficult for this initial band of Sulpicians, yet motivated by what their founder, Father Jean-Jacques Olier, called 'the apostolic zeal,' the Sulpicians pressed on."

He said the new seminary in Baltimore found itself to be "a launching pad for missionaries to the new land of the United States."

Graduates of the seminary went off to establish parishes in uncharted and hostile areas of the country. Many Sulpicians were called to leadership in the new Catholic Church in the United States, including the third and fifth archbishops of Baltimore, Archbishops Ambrose Marechal and Samuel Eccleston.

Father Kemper noted that the apostolic zeal that Father Olier encouraged finds new expression in each age.

Cardinal Ouellet has connections to the Sulpicians as well, having studied for the priesthood in Montreal and learning Spanish along the way. In the early 1970s, he taught philosophy at the major seminary in Bogota, Colombia, which was directed by the Sulpicians. Ordained a priest for the Montreal Archdiocese, he joined the Society of St. Sulpice soon after his arrival there.

In his talk, titled, "Toward the Renewal of the Priesthood in Our Time," the cardinal said he chose the topic given the central role the priesthood plays in any reform of the church.

After the event, the cardinal told the **Catholic Review**, the news outlet of the Baltimore Archdiocese, that his seminary formation was decisive for his encounter with Jesus Christ. "I remember the seminary in Montreal was the place where I experienced really deeply my faith." In the 1970s, the Sulpicians sent him for further studies in dogmatic theology.

In his talk, he quoted the conciliar document "Lumen Gentium" (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) on the topic: "Each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ."

Reflecting after the prayer service, Cardinal Ouellet said that formation is as important for lay people -- perhaps even more important -- as it is for priests. "I spoke of the interrelatedness of both participations in a deep ecclesiology, which is missing normally when we hear the speeches on that," he said, speaking of the common priesthood of the laity and the ministerial (ordained) priesthood.

He said that priests are so important because they are the heart of the church. "They are in the field. That's why I wanted to deepen the question of the priesthood, because they are important."



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Word of Life



The Pope Teaches

By Pope Francis
Compassion Must Live On

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Year of Mercy and its series of papal reflections may be over, but compassion and acts of mercy must continue and become a part of everyone's daily lives, Pope Francis said.

"Let us commit ourselves to praying for each other so that the corporal and spiritual works of mercy increasingly become our way of life," he said Nov. 30 during his general audience in the Vatican's Paul VI hall.

Because the day also marked the feast of St. Andrew, brother of St. Peter and founder of the church in Constantinople, Pope Francis gave special greetings to his "dear brother," Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople.

Pope Francis, the bishop of Rome and successor of Peter, said he was sending "a big embrace" to the patriarch and "this cousin church."

The Vatican released a letter from the pope to the patriarch, which praised the way Catholics and Orthodox have begun "to recognize one another as brothers and sisters and to value each other's gifts, and together have proclaimed the Gospel, served humanity and the cause of peace, promoted the dignity of the human being and the inestimable value of the family, and cared for those most in need, as well as creation, our common home."

In his main audience talk, the pope ended his yearlong series of talks on mercy with a reflection on the corporal work of burying the dead and the spiritual works of praying for the living and dead.

Catholics particularly remember the faithful departed during the month of November, he said. Praying for those who have died "is a sign of recognition for the witness they have left us and the good they have done. It is a giving thanks to the Lord for having given them to us and for their love and friendship."

By entrusting their souls to God's mercy, "we pray with Christian hope that they are with him in heaven," he said.

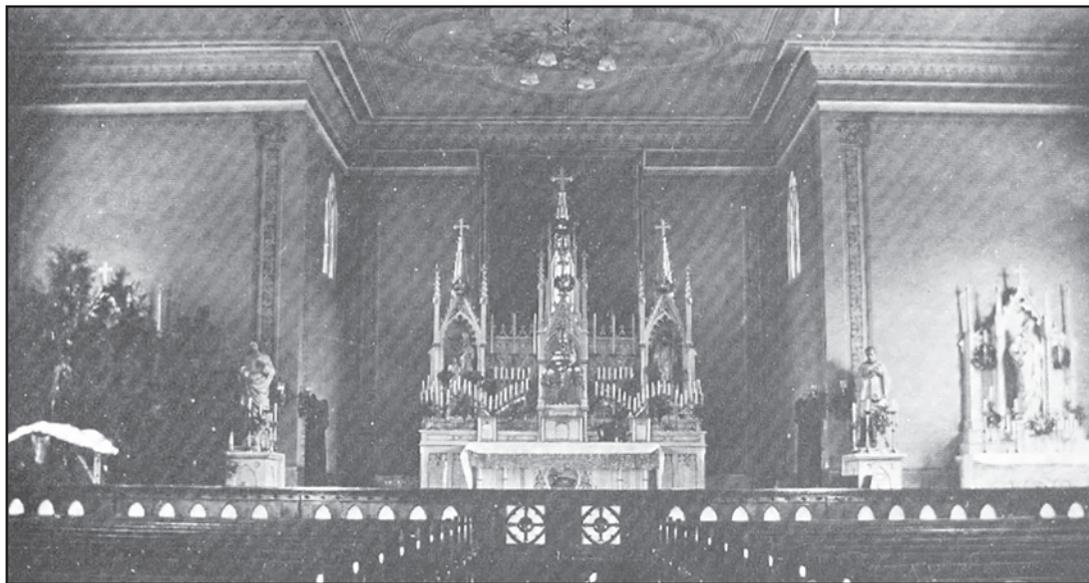
While for many burying the dead is an expected, straightforward ritual, there are some parts of the world where this may not be a given, such as places experiencing "the scourge of war, with bombings day and night that sow fear and innocent victims," he said.

"Even today, there are those who risk their life to bury poor victims of war," he added, thanking those particularly in Syria and the Middle East for their courage in recovering the dead and going to rescue the injured.

Praying for the living, he said, can be done in many ways, such as: blessing one's children every morning and evening; visiting and praying for the sick; praying silently, "sometimes in tears," for help during difficult times; even thanking God for the blessings bestowed upon one's family, friends and co-workers.

The important thing, he said, is to always have one's heart open to the Holy Spirit, "who knows our deepest desires and hopes," and can "purify and bring them to fulfillment."

"We always ask that God's will be done for ourselves and for others, like in the Lord's Prayer, because his will is definitely the greatest good, the goodness of a father who never abandons us," he said.



ONE MORE TIME: The sanctuary of Saint Mary Church, Hollidaysburg, is shown decorated for Christmas, following renovations to the church in 1910. The church was built in 1844, and is the oldest church building in Hollidaysburg.

Why is Advent needed more than ever this year?

The answer is found in the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

"Men," it states "should take heed not to entrust themselves only to the efforts of some, while not caring about their own attitudes. For government officials who must at one and the same time guarantee the good of their own people and promote the universal good are very greatly dependent on public opinion and feeling.

"It does them no good to work for peace as long as feelings of hostility, contempt and distrust, as well as racial hatred and unbending ideologies, continue to divide men and place them in opposing camps. ...

"Those who are dedicated to the work of education, particu-



The Human Side

By Father Eugene Hemrick
Promote Peace This Advent

larly of the young, or who mold public opinion, should consider it their most weighty task to instruct all in fresh sentiments of peace" (No. 82).

More than ever, safeguarding peace, and the unity it generates, is at stake. Much of today's divisiveness is reducing us to second-rate citizens by proliferating cynicism and disunity to the detriment of trust and harmony.

Inspiration is best when we are at our best and no better time exists than celebrating peace and its harmony on earth at Christ's coming. What, then,

should we practice in particular this season?

Two excellent exercises Lent and Advent encourage are undertaking acts of supererogation and self-denial. In today's world this translates into being, more than ever, well-disposed to life, government, church and friends and to sedulously avoid whatever diminishes a healthy spirituality.

This Advent, we should especially focus on the sacredness of words we employ. This can make all the difference between achieving unity and peace or promoting division and enmity. Here we might begin the day dedicating ourselves to the careful selection of words that generate courtesy and peacefulness.

Another good Advent exercise might be self-denial that encourages us to shun the divisiveness and indignities that fill the internet networks we use: to avoid the barrage of indecencies reducing us to second-class citizens.

Advent is a special opportunity for becoming the first-rate people God intended us to be.





Question Corner

By Father Kenneth Doyle Burial In A National Cemetery

Q. I can't seem to find the answer to the following question: Is it acceptable for a Catholic to be buried in a national cemetery? (My inquiry is centered around the issue of consecrated ground.) Any guidance would be appreciated. (Flippin, Arkansas)

A. A Catholic may be buried wherever he or she chooses -- in a Catholic cemetery, a non-Catholic or nonsectarian burial plot or, to your question, in a national cemetery where military veterans are honored. (My preference, of course, would be for a Catholic burial ground because the deceased would have the benefit of the Masses and prayers that are offered regularly for those buried there.)

The notion that a Catholic need always choose a Catholic cemetery may stem from a misreading of Canon 1180 in the church's Code of Canon Law. The first paragraph of that canon states, "If a parish has its own cemetery, the deceased mem-

bers of the faithful must be buried in it unless the deceased or those competent to take care of the burial of the deceased have chosen another cemetery legitimately."

The word "must" was intended to place the burden on the parish, not on the deceased -- that is to say, the parish is obligated to bury that parishioner if there is room and if that is the family's choice. The following paragraph in this same canon makes the option even more clear: "Everyone, however, is permitted to choose the cemetery of burial unless prohibited by law."

As regards "consecrated ground," when a Catholic is interred in a non-Catholic plot, the priest who officiates at the committal says a prayer that blesses that gravesite.

Q. This morning I went to weekday Mass, as is my custom. Due to a heavy snowstorm in the area, I was the only person there, so the priest decided not to cel-

brate Mass. I asked whether I could receive Communion, and the priest said that he was unable to do that since Communion can be given only during a Mass.

I didn't question him at the time, but simply left and went home. But on the way home, I began to wonder about it. For more than 30 years, I have been a eucharistic minister in hospitals throughout the Syracuse area, bringing Communion to patients in their rooms. If it is possible for them to receive Communion without attending Mass, why couldn't I? (Central New York)

A. It is true that, in ordinary circumstances, holy Communion is to be received only when someone participates in the celebration of the entire Eucharist. The bread and wine are offered, transformed into the body and blood of Christ, and then returned by God to the worshipper as a full sharing in the sacrifice of Jesus.

There are, however, exceptions. One is the situation you mentioned, when a patient is visited in a hospital room by a eucharistic minister bringing the gift of Communion. Another is a Sunday or weekday celebration in the absence of a priest: When a priest is unable to be present, a deacon or designated lay leader may distribute Communion, after appropriate prayers and scriptural readings.

In the circumstance you raise, my own choice as a priest would have been to celebrate the Eucharist. You, after all, had fought off the snow to arrive at church, and you deserved to be credited and accommodated.

What would have been lost if the priest had taken 25 minutes to say a Mass even with just the two of you present -- especially since he had already set aside the time to do that? Not only would the two of you have benefited, but other people as well -- since the Mass is always offered for the needs of the wider church.

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



For The Journey

By Effie Caldarola How To Spot Fake News

My husband and I were planning date night. There was a new restaurant in town, so we Googled it.

On a site that posts restaurant reviews, supposedly submitted by customers, my spouse read aloud what was possibly the worst review I've ever heard.

Tepid soup handed back to an insolent waiter. The patron, with- in earshot, called "stupid" by the expeditor. The list went on as the poor service and insults -- one from the owner himself -- continued. I started to giggle.

"Wait a minute, that might be a fake review," I said. This new spot had been getting good press.

A restaurant review -- or any online submitted review -- can definitely be bogus. Your mom in Peoria may send in a glowing description of your new lunch spot in Dallas even though she has never left Illinois. Or your competitor from down the block, who has never set foot in your establishment, may assert he ate the worst meal of his life there, complete with cranky waitress and a hair in the salad.

You have to take online reviews with, pardon the pun, a grain of salt.

Now we know, on a far more serious and threatening level, that we have to take the "news" we see online with a block of salt.

Not only was our recent election threatened by fake news planted, allegedly, by sites in Russia and Eastern Europe, but National Public Radio, in a Nov. 23 "All Things Considered" report, found a man in California who was responsible for scores of widely read fake news, most of it anti-Clinton.

Claiming to be a Democrat, the man said it was easier to get the pro-Trump people to click on fake news than it was to get liberals to do so. So, since getting those clicks is very lucrative business, he cast aside any principles he obviously didn't have anyway, and went with anti-Clinton stuff.

For example, maybe you saw a story online: "FBI agent suspected in Hillary email leaks found dead in apparent murder-suicide." Written by the operation in California, the story was a complete and total fabrication. No such agent, no such murder-suicide. But the story had traction.

People make money off of clicks, and Facebook and Twitter are receiving increasing pressure to police their platforms for these fake stories.

But the thing is, folks, it's up to us to be better-informed, better-read citizens. First of all, if you are one of the many Americans who get most of your news on Facebook, please stop right now. If you must find your news online, always go to established news sources, like **The New York Times**, **The Atlantic** or our own Catholic News Service and a host of others.

If, while perusing Facebook or Twitter, you see a story that sounds compelling -- and these fake sites are great at producing eyebrow-raising headlines -- don't click until you evaluate the source. Some fake sites try to sound suspiciously like real sites you trust. Tread carefully.

Leonard Pitts Jr., a syndicated columnist for the **Miami Herald**, has a great antidote for fake news. He made a pitch recently for a medium that isn't perfect, but isn't fraudulent.

"So what, you ask, is this miracle medium?" Pitts asks in a Nov. 27 column. "It's called a 'newspaper.'"

Real journalists have gone to journalism school. They know the First Amendment and journalistic ethics. They enhance our democracy rather than threaten it. Although imperfect, they are not "the lame stream media" as they've been foolishly tarred.

And they are not inventing lies to make money off gullible citizens.

Our Lady Of Guadalupe 16th Century Feast - December 12



Under this title, Our Lady is the patron of Mexico, the United States and all of the Americas, as well as the protector of unborn children. In 1531, she appeared in a vision to the peasant Juan Diego, on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City, and charged him with asking the bishop to build a church on that spot. But the bishop demanded a sign, so Our Lady had Juan gather flowers in his cloak, in December, to take to the bishop. When Juan opened his cloak, the colorful image of Guadalupe was emblazoned on the cactus-cloth. That icon is preserved in the most famous shrine in the Western Hemisphere and Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to inspire poor and oppressed people worldwide.

After Five Centuries Our Lady's Message Still Alive

(Continued From Page 1.)

It was on the third visit that the miracle attributed to Our Lady of Guadalupe occurred when he unfurled his poncho, or tilma, to present to the bishop the Castilian roses in full bloom that had inexplicably appeared on the hill despite freezing temperatures. More impressively, the tilma bore an image of Mary exactly as Juan Diego had described her: olive skin, pregnant with Jesus, adorned in a turquoise mantle and surrounded by rays of light.

Such an image of Mary adorns the homes of countless Mexican and Mexican-American families and serves as much as a cultural symbol and as religious one, said Oblate Father

Bob Wright, professor of systematic theology at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio.

"You cannot separate the two of them," he told Catholic News Service.

Such an attachment is readily apparent in the hundreds of celebrations of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which feature the singing of "Las Mananitas" (early morning song) and traditional dances along with a festive Mass, all followed, of course, by hearty food and drink.

Father Wright described the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe as "universal to everyone, a mother figure who looks after us, that you can turn to ... just as Jesus himself you can turn to."

A colleague, Oblate Father Fernando Velazquez, associate professor of missiology at the Oblate school, said devotion to Mary is carried out in daily life by many of Mexican heritage. It is customary, he said, for mothers or grandmothers to send children to school with a brief prayer that Mary and God's mantle protect them throughout the day.

Perhaps it is no other group

than women who have embraced a devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe. From family prayer to weekly praying of the rosary among a group of women to sharing a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe in processions from home to home, women have led the practice of prayer before Mary.

Nancy Pineda-Madrid, associate professor of theology and Latino/Latina ministry at Boston College, is writing a book on the religious symbolism of Our Lady of Guadalupe and how the message of a five-century-old apparition can be liberating for women today.

She called the appearance of Mary then a Pentecost moment for the church, serving to "transform fear and pain and suffering into a hope for life."

"Her narrative, which is taking one of those living at the margins and talking about their dignity and coming to know their own sense of themselves with God in a way that's deeply, deeply affirming," Pineda-Madrid explained. "She speaks to that. That's the reason she is such a powerful symbol to Mexicans today."

Celebrations of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe this year in the U.S. may take on a more somber tone among Latinos who say they feel unwelcome because of increasingly sour rhetoric and strident calls for the deportation of millions of immigrants in the country without legal permission.

Because of the concerns arising from such talk, Renata Furst, associate professor of Scripture and spirituality at the Oblate school, finds that Mary's message remains deeply relevant today. She said it helps people understand how important it is to be grounded in their culture and its values while seeing "the way God is recreating them" to respond in a changing world.

"The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is extremely valuable for reading back into the Bible," said Furst, who grew up in Hon-



CNS Photo/Paul Haring

ORIGINAL IMAGE: The original image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is seen as Pope Francis celebrates Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City February 13.

duras. She has observed that the images of a black Christ that appear in the border region of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras reflect a fusion of culture and faith in a way that people could better understand. So it is with Our Lady of Guadalupe and other lesser known apparitions of Mary in the Americas.

"You might look at Our Lady of Guadalupe as the source of this integration," Furst said. "It is as though God is bubbling from the bottom up as opposed from the top down."

Our Lady of Guadalupe also has influenced what scholar Rebecca Berru-Davis calls popular religion, or the faith practiced in the home.

Berru-Davis, who recently concluded a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, explained that such the popular practice of religion can

come through music, performing arts and even traditional foods. She saw how that popular religion was expressed while spending time over four years in Berkeley, California, with a group of Latino women who met weekly to pray the rosary before a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe that traveled from home to home.

She focused on trying to understand the importance of such devotion in the women's lives and how it was transmitted throughout the family. She said the devotion transcended age and continues to be transmitted to children.

A devotion like this diffused the formal aspect of liturgy (in church) and the informal or the home religion, the popular religion," Berru-Davis told CNS. "But it also said, 'We're carrying liturgy into the home and the virgin is the vehicle.'



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Bishops Declare Today's Guadalupe Feast Day Of Prayer For Migrants, Refugees

By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) -- Prayer services and special Masses will be held in many dioceses across the country as the U.S. Catholic Church has asked that the Dec. 12 feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe be a day of prayer with a focus on migrants and refugees.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patroness of the Americas.

"As Christmas approaches and especially on this feast of Our Lady, we are reminded of how our savior Jesus Christ was not born in the comfort of his own home, but rather in an unfamiliar manger," said a Dec. 1 statement from Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, who is president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The day of prayer is intended to be a time to place before a merciful God the hopes, fears

and needs of all those families who have come to the United States seeking a better life.

"So many families are wondering how changes to immigration policy might impact them," Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, USCCB vice president, said in a Dec. 1 statement. "We want them to know the church is with them, offers prayers on their behalf, and is actively monitoring developments at the diocesan, state, and national levels to be an effective advocate on their behalf."

The USCCB suggested that Catholics unable to attend such a service or Mass Dec. 12 or who live in an area where one is not being held should "offer prayers wherever they may be." The USCCB's Migration and Refugee Services office has developed a scriptural rosary called "Unity in Diversity" that includes prayers for migrants and refugees. It can be accessed at the Justice for Immigrants website at <http://tinyurl.com/hldg3o9>.



CNS Photo/David Maung

BORDER MASS: A statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe is unloaded from a truck after a November 19 procession to the U.S.-Mexico border fence in Tijuana, Mexico, where Mass was celebrated. The Mass and a procession with a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe were a call to remember and pray for migrants and were led by Archbishop Francisco Moreno Barron of Tijuana.

Another resource suggested by the USCCB is "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," the 2003 pastoral letter issued jointly by the bishops of the United States and Mexico. Summary versions of the pastoral are available online in English at <http://tinyurl.com/zpd4tex> and in Spanish at <http://tinyurl.com/hy2e69m>.

A USCCB announcement on the day of prayer said the bishops' conference would develop additional pastoral resources.

"To all those families separated and far from home in uncertain times, we join with you in a prayer for comfort and joy this Advent season," Cardinal DiNardo added.



CNS Photo/Ghulamullah Habibi, Reuters

REFUGEE MOTHER AND CHILD: A displaced Afghan woman arrives with her child July 16 at a U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees camp upon their voluntary return to Afghanistan's Nangarhar province from neighboring Pakistan. Overall, 65 million people are displaced worldwide, the highest number since World War II, according to the UNHCR.

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Iraqi Christians Preserve Christmas Spirit

By Oscar Durand
Catholic News Service

ISTANBUL (CNS) -- Sami Dankha, his three brothers and their families used to kick off Christmas celebrations by attending a packed Christmas Eve Mass at St. Thomas Church in Baghdad. Wearing brand new

clothes and sporting fresh haircuts, they would spend the night chatting, singing and eating pacha, a dish made from sheep's head that Iraqis consider a delicacy and a staple of Christmas.

But that was 20 years ago. Today, Dankha, 51, his wife, Faten, and their five children live in Turkey as refugees, far away from the rest of their families. They are waiting for an an-

swer to their resettlement application to Australia.

"If you count Christmas and Easter, it has been about 40 times we haven't gathered," said Dankha, whose brothers now live in New Zealand, Australia and the Netherlands.

Years of instability, violence and discrimination have forced Iraqi Christian families to leave their homes. Christmas,

traditionally celebrated with loved ones, is a reminder of the exodus of Christians from Iraq and the Middle East to countries all over the world. Despite the distance and across different time zones, families keep the spirit of the holiday alive.

"The last time we were all together was 2005. Maybe 2006. I am not sure," Habiba Taufiq, 69, told Catholic News Service.

Taufiq was born in Aqrah but has lived most of her life in Ankawa, a Christian enclave in northern Iraq. She is now a refugee in Turkey, where she lives with one of her 10 children. The other nine are split among Australia, France, Sweden and Iraq.

"We danced and celebrated because of Jesus. Not only us but also with other families," Taufiq said, remembering Christmas back home. "Now there is a big difference because we are in different countries and that affects the occasion."

To stay connected, families rely on messaging and calling apps.

"I call them on Viber video," said Dankha, mentioning one of the most popular apps among the Iraqi community in Turkey.

Last year, Dankha spent at least four hours glued to his phone as he virtually celebrated Christmas with family and friends in 10 different countries. At some point he had to connect his phone to a power adapter after running out of charge. But seeing and hearing what is happening on the other side of the call is no replacement for being face to face.

"I see them celebrating in parties, and I feel sorrowful because I am here and we are separated, in different countries," Dankha said.

Nearly halfway around the world, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Nesrin Arteen, 42, also uses a messaging app to keep in touch with her family.

"I talk to them often; with the internet, it is easy. But back when I arrived, it was very different," she told CNS.

Arteen is from Zakho, Iraq, and moved to Canada in 1994

before smartphones became ubiquitous. At the time she had to use a call center and wait in line before she could speak with her family. And when it was her turn, the quality of the connection was not good, and the calls frequently disconnected.

For Arteen, Christmas meant attending the Christmas Eve Mass and staying up all night with her family. She fondly remembered klecha -- a traditional cookie usually filled with nuts, coconuts or dates -- which she could not have when she first arrived in Canada. Back then Saskatoon did not even have a Chaldean Catholic church, which made her feel removed from her Christmas traditions.

"It was a different feel, different from home. I didn't feel the spirit of Christmas," Arteen said, remembering the first Christmas she spent in Canada.

Over time things changed. Today there is a Chaldean church in her city, and Arteen has started to create her own Christmas traditions.

"I feel that the spirit of Christmas is here," she said. "My children go to a Christian school and are also part of the choir. There are places where they sing Christmas carols."

Taufiq hopes to reunite soon with some of her family in Australia. As she navigates visa procedures, she said she feels at peace that her children continue the traditions she started.

"The circumstances separated us and now we are in different countries. But we still continue living with love," she said.

Dankha told CNS this Christmas will be special. His younger brother, Yalda, will visit him in Turkey from the Netherlands. They haven't seen each other since 2000.

That makes one less person on his list of people to call on Christmas.

"There are so many friends I don't know if I will ever see. Maybe one day when my country's situation is OK, maybe then we will get together. But I don't know if that will happen," he said.

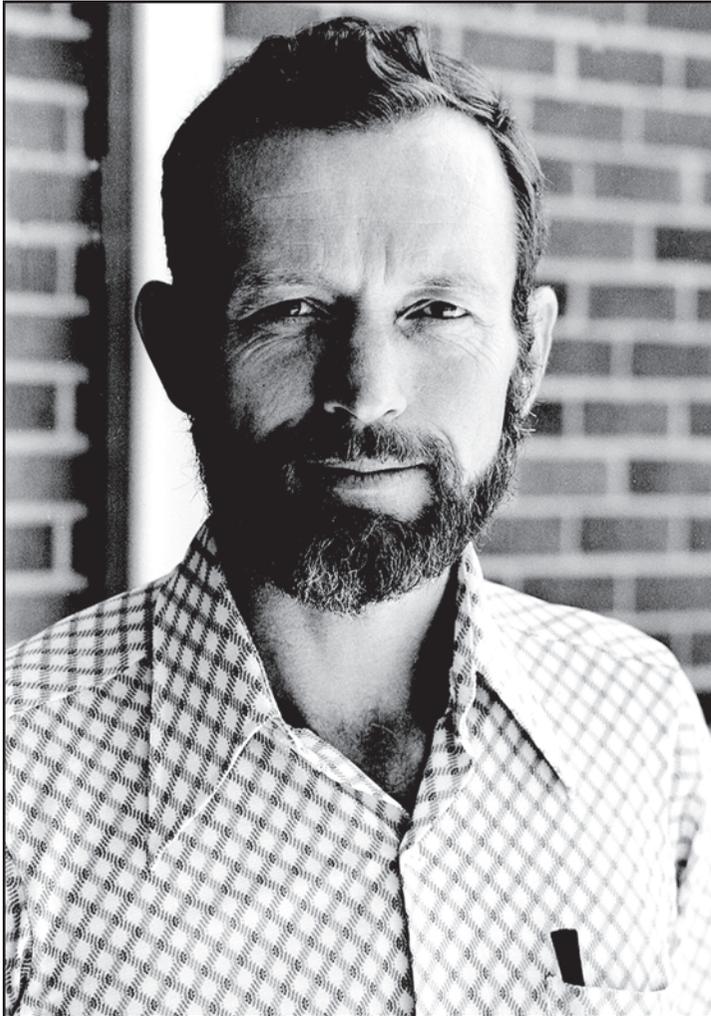


CNS Photos/Oscar Durand

REFUGEE: Iraqi refugee Sami Dankha, 51, feeds his son Alin, 1, at his home in Istanbul, Turkey. He lives in Istanbul with his wife and five children; his brothers live in New Zealand, Australia and the Netherlands.

IRAQI CHRISTIAN: Habiba Taufiq, 69, is photographed at her home in Kirsehir, a city in central Turkey. Habiba is from Aqrah, Iraq, but has lived most of her life in Ankawa, a Christian enclave in northern Iraq. She is now a refugee in Turkey, where she lives with one of her 10 children. The other nine are split among Australia, France, Sweden and Iraq.





CNS Photo

FATHER STANLEY ROTHER

Oklahoma Priest Recognized As Church's First U.S. - Born Martyr

(Continued From Page 16.)

Because Father Rother was killed in Guatemala, his cause should have been undertaken there. But the local church lacked the resources for such an effort. The Guatemalan bishops' conference agreed to a transfer of jurisdiction to the Oklahoma City Archdiocese.

News of the recognition was welcomed in Oklahoma.

"This comes as a great joy to all of us here not only in Oklahoma, but I think it's a great blessing to the church in the United States," Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City told Catholic News Service Dec. 2.

He also called the recognition of the priest's martyrdom a gift to the Church in Guatemala.

Archbishop Coakley recalled how both he and Father Rother are alumni of Mount St. Mary Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland. He remembered a ceremony at the school a few months after the priest's death in which a plaque was erected in his honor.

"His witness has marked me from my earliest days in priestly formation," the archbishop said. "It's a blessing to be the archbishop now who has the opportunity to bring to fruition the work on my predecessor Archbishop (Eusebius J.) Beltran."

Now-retired Archbishop Beltran was head of the archdiocese when the sainthood cause for Father Rother was officially opened in 2007.

Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda, author of a 2015 biography of the priest, **The Shepherd Who Didn't Run: Fr. Stanley Rother, Martyr From Oklahoma**, wrote in an email that the martyrdom recognition was "an incredible gift not only to the United States, but to the universal church."

"I am delighted and grateful that more people will come to know and be changed by his beautiful story," Scaperlanda

said. "Not only because of his death as a martyr. But even more significantly, because his life and his priestly service remain a testament to the difference that one person can, and does, make."

Scaperlanda described Father Rother's martyrdom as a "reminder that we are all called to holiness in our ordinary lives, and that holy men and women come from ordinary places like Okarche, Oklahoma."

Describing the priest as a faithful man, Scaperlanda said he was called to serve in the fields of Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, alongside his Tz'utujil Mayan parishioners. "This is what his community remembers -- that he was one of them," she wrote. "And when their village suffered oppression and killings from a violent and brutal civil war, he remained one with them. He was truly the shepherd who didn't run."

Author Gives Strong, Clear Portrait Of U.S. Priest Killed In Guatemala

By Kathleen Finley
Catholic News Service

The Shepherd Who Didn't Run: Fr. Stanley Rother, Martyr From Oklahoma by Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda. Our Sunday Visitor (Huntington, Indiana, 2015). 255 pp., \$19.95.

Few people will encounter an actual martyr in their lives, someone who dies for his or her faith. If we were to go looking for a martyr in our times, perhaps one of the least likely places we might think to look would be on a farm in Oklahoma.

Maria Ruiz Scaperlanda tells the inspiring story of Father Stanley Rother, from his days of growing up in rural Oklahoma to his being drawn to the priesthood and to serve the people of Guatemala, even to giving his life for them.

Scaperlanda gives a strong and clear portrait of a boy and young man who absorbed his family's deep Catholic faith and love of the land but whose academic abilities often fell far behind his practical skills and interests. Having failed the seminary curriculum the first time -- much of it in Latin then -- he was only able to go to another seminary with special permission and tutoring help to achieve ordination, much like St. John

Vianney, the cure of Ars, more than a hundred years earlier.

After his ordination and a few years in pastoral ministry in Oklahoma, Father Rother was drawn to the diocesan mission team that had been sent to Guatemala years earlier as a result of St. John XXIII inviting the churches of North America to help those in Latin America. So in 1968, he joined the team working in Santiago Atitlan, a peaceful village near breathtaking Lake Atitlan in the southwest part of Guatemala.

He connected well with the simple people of the earth there, the Tz'utujil Indians, openhearted people with a deep faith. "Padre Francisco" -- easier for them to say than Stanley -- became deeply loved by them, even dressing like them and eating in their homes. He made it a point to learn their language, a difficult one to master, although languages had never come easy.

When he dined at the rectory in later years after a number of the other members of the team had left for various reasons, he always welcomed an older peasant man to dine with him, one whom many in the community could not be around for long because of his odor and his mannerisms.

As the 1970s went by, there were more and more signs of

violence that were coming nearer to the remote area where he was ministering, and many foreigners and natives of the area went into hiding from the brutal civil war that was raging. Father Rother often ended up hiding those fleeing the daily disappearances, killings and danger that were the life of his people.

In early 1981, he learned that his name also was on a death list; he returned to Oklahoma to see his family and was urged to stay for his safety, but he knew he needed to return to be with his people.

Scaperlanda takes us into the beautiful country of Guatemala in a way that those of us who have had an opportunity to travel there will really appreciate. She also helps us see how Father Rother's gifts, including his open simplicity, his practical skills and steadfastness were just the ones needed in the mission to which he was called.

The only shortcoming of the book for this reviewer was its title because many dedicated pastors and shepherds in that part of the world felt that they had to leave at times to be there for their people in the long run. But Father Rother didn't leave his flock, and the church in Guatemala, the United States and the world is richer for his steadfast, caring love for his people.

Now Showing

Spunky Heroine At Heart Of 'Moana'

By Joseph McAleer
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) -- The same tropical setting that provided the backdrop for the 1949 musical "South Pacific" now lends its exotic flavor to the animated feature "Moana" (Disney).

As for the feminism-friendly story of the movie's eponymous heroine, well, as Rodgers and Hammerstein's lovelorn Seabees so famously declared, "There is nothing like a dame."

The spunky heroine of Disney's 56th animated film is a 16-year-old Polynesian princess (voice of Auli'i Cravalho) who

seeks not a boyfriend but a grand adventure on the high seas, all to save her world from destruction.

There's no mistaking the entertainment value of "Moana," gloriously rendered in 3-D, with a delightful array of characters and toe-tapping songs co-written by Lin-Manuel Miranda of Broadway's "Hamilton." The film also offers good lessons about family, friendship and the need to be responsible.

But Christian parents may be concerned to find that Jared Bush's screenplay is steeped in indigenous mythology. "Moana" presents a view of creation at odds with the biblical account, and could confuse impressionable minds. Well-catechized teens, however, will



CNS photo/Disney

MOANA: Characters are shown in a scene from the animated movie "Moana." The Catholic News Service classification is A-II -- adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG -- parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

likely slough these elements off as mere fantasy.

As "Moana" tells it, in the beginning was not God but a comely goddess named Te Fiti, who commanded the oceans and brought life to the world.

Te Fiti was joined by a demigod (half-god, half-human) named Maui (voice of Dwayne Johnson). Maui had a nifty talent of pulling islands up from the sea with his trusty fishhook. But he was greedy, and stole the magical "heart" of Te Fiti. Darkness covered the world, and Maui was banished.

Fast-forward several centuries to the tranquil island of the so-called "Chosen One," Moana. Since her name means "ocean," it's no wonder that Moana is drawn to the open waters beyond her island's protective reef, despite the warnings of her father, Chief Tui (voiced by Temuera Morrison).

"No one goes beyond the reef," he says. "It keeps us safe."

But the ocean has a mind of its own, and -- in a manner strikingly similar to the animated column of water in 1989's "The

Abyss" -- the sea pokes and prods Moana into seeking her destiny. Her quest is to locate Maui, transport him across the sea (demigods don't swim), and restore Te Fiti's heart before the encroaching darkness reaches Moana's island.

Maui is more surfer dude than classical Greek god. He's also accustomed to adulation, not the commands of a teenager. The tattoos covering his ample girth spring to life, acting either as a voice of approval or an admonishing, Jiminy Cricket-like conscience.

Throw into the mix Moana's pet, a dimwitted rooster named Heihei (voice of Alan Tudyk), and you have the recipe for a chaotic but amusing journey across the sea.

With previous helming credits like "The Little Mermaid" and "Aladdin," co-directors Ron Clements and John Musker represent the aristocracy of Disney animation. Yet "Moana" does feel derivative at times,

with echoes of previous films. And storm sequences as well as creature battles may be too intense for younger viewers.

Preceding "Moana" is an amusing animated short called "Inner Workings." A riff on last year's "Inside Out," it tells the story of a man stuck in a dead-end job in the firm of "Boring, Boring, and Glum." When he imagines doing crazy, potentially risky things like surfing, his brain works overtime to keep him safe, lest he wind up dead (depicted by his gravesite, with a Latin-chanting priest offering a blessing.)

The film contains nonscriptural religious ideas, mildly scary action sequences and occasional bathroom humor. The Catholic News Service classification is A-II-- adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG -- parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

Coming Up On 'Proclaim!'

Upcoming guests on "Keeping The Faith," Bishop Mark L. Bartchak's segment of "Proclaim!" will include:

December 18 -- Third Order Regular Franciscan Father Malachi Van Tassell, President of Saint Francis University in Loretto, discusses plans for Cardinal Timothy Dolan's upcoming visit to the university.

December 25 -- On this Christmas Day, Proclaim! will not air due to an ABC network programming obligation.

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**Father Marion R. Deck
T.O.R.**

Father Marion R. Deck, 83, of the Third Order Regular Franciscan Friars of the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, Loretto, died Sunday, November 20, at Cambria Care Center, Ebensburg, after an extended illness.

He was born Richard Vernon Deck April 7, 1933 in Fort Wayne IN, the son of the late Ferdinand A. and Gladys (Nulf) Deck.

He graduated from St. Catherine Grade School, Pittsburgh, and Mount Carmel High School, Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada. Following high school, he served in the United States Navy. He entered the Third Order Regular Franciscan community in Loretto in September 1964, and did his postulancy at Mount Assisi Friary, Loretto. He made his novitiate at Sacred Heart Friary, Winchester VA and pronounced his first vows on July 1, 1966.

On July 1, 1969, Father Marion pronounced his solemn vows at Immaculate Conception Chapel, Loretto. He was ordained to the priesthood by the late Bishop James Hogan at the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, Loretto on August 15, 1969.

Father Marion received his bachelor of arts degree in Speech from DePaul University, Chicago IL, in 1963. He com-

pleted his theological studies at Saint Francis Seminary, Loretto, in 1969. He received his master of arts degree in Communications from the University of Notre Dame, South Bend IN in 1977.

Father Marion ministered in the various works of the province. He worked in formation, administration and taught at Saint Francis Seminary. After a very serious automobile accident in 1980, Father Marion began the ministry of prayer and suffering. To this ministry he became a witness and example for his brothers.

Father Marion was preceded in death by his sister, Divine Providence Sister M. Rosalie. He is survived by his sisters: Divine Providence Sister M. Rosamonde, of Massachusetts, Virginia Reis, Indiana, and Dolores Fontana of California; nieces and nephews, and his Franciscan brothers.

The Funeral Mass for Father Marion Deck T.O.R. was celebrated Tuesday, November 29, at Saint Francis Friary - Mount Assisi, Loretto with the Father Richard L. Davis, minister provincial, as principal celebrant. Committal was in the Franciscan Friars' Cemetery, on the campus of Saint Francis University, Loretto.

Memorial contributions may be made to support retired Third Order Regular Franciscan Friars, c/o P.O. Box 137, Loretto PA 15940.

Sister Norma Weigand O.S.B.

Benedictine Sister Norma (Marlene Catherine) Weigand, died Tuesday, November 22, at Saint Benedict Monastery in Bakerstown. She was 80, and in the 61st year of her religious profession.

Born November 5, 1936, she was the third of six children born to Cyril and Eleanor (Baumgartner) Weigand, Sister Norma grew up in Pittsburgh. She was a junior at Saint Benedict Academy when she made the commitment to enter the Benedictine Sisters of Pittsburgh. She made her First Profession on July 13, 1955.



From 1955 to 2003 Sister Norma ministered as teacher and principal in the Dioceses of Altoona - Johnstown, Greensburg and Pittsburgh, serving locally at Saint Benedict School, Carrolltown. During those years she also served on Parish and Community Councils. In 2003, she began ministering in food service at the monastery, serving as Meals - on - Wheels site manager at Perry Reserve, and kitchen ministry in the Benedictine Center until she retired in 2005.

Sister Norma is survived by her brother Norman and sisters, Carol (Randy) Schubert and Sister Kathleen Weigand, as well as nieces and nephews.

The funeral Mass for Sister Norma Weigand O.S.B. was celebrated Monday, November 28 in the chapel of Saint Benedict Monastery, Bakerstown.

Sister Eileen Miller I.H.M.

Sister Eileen Miller, (formerly known as Sister Mary Berchmans) of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary died Friday, November 25, at Regional Hospital of Scranton. She was 91.

She was born January 5, 1925, in Spangler, the daughter of the late James Gilbert and Rosalia Agnes (Gray) Miller, and given the name Eileen Rose. She entered the IHM Congregation on July 2, 1943, and made her temporary profession of vows on May 8, 1946, and her final profession of vows on August 2, 1949.

Sister Eileen served locally as a teacher at Saint Agnes School in Lock Haven,



from 1958 to 1964; Saint Mary School in Patton, from 1966 to 1972; Lock Haven Catholic School from 1972 to 1978; Saint Thomas School in Bedford, from 1978 to 1983.

She also served as a nurse's aide at the Marian Convent and Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton, PA, from 1991 to 2012.

From 2012 until the time of her death, Sister Eileen served as a prayer minister at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton.

She received a bachelor of science degree in English and

Social Sciences from Marywood College, Scranton.

She was preceded in death by four brothers, Wilbert, James, Eugene, and Irvin John; and three sisters, Margaret Mary Llewellyn, Florence Miller, and Rita M. Thomas.

She is survived by a brother, Marlin Joseph of Hastings; four sisters, Alice Anna of Hastings, Louise Rennie of Stratford CT; Lucy Vivadelli of Hammonton NJ, and Hazel Eckenrode of Northern Cambria; many nieces and nephews, and grandnieces and grandnephews. She is also survived by the members of the IHM Congregation.

The Funeral Mass for Sister Eileen Miller I.H.M. was celebrated Thursday, December 1, in the chapel of Our Lady of Peace Residence, Scranton. Committal was at Saint Catherine Cemetery, Moscow.

Memorial contributions may be made to support the retired IHM Sisters c/o the IHM Sisters Retirement Fund, IHM Center, 2300 Adams Avenue, Scranton PA 18509.

Former Jesuit Superior General Dies In Beirut

ROME (CNS) -- Jesuit Father Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, whose service as superior general of the Society of Jesus marked a return to normal governance after a period of tension with the Vatican, died in Beirut Nov. 26, four days before his 88th birthday.

After the Jesuit general congregation accepted his resignation as superior in 2008, he returned to Lebanon and served as an assistant librarian at the Jesuit-run St. Joseph University in Beirut.

In a message of condolence to Father Arturo Sosa, the current superior, and his brother Jesuits, Pope Francis praised Father Kolvenbach's "complete fidelity to Christ and his Gospel" and his "generous commitment to exercising his office with a spirit of service for the good of the church."

When Father Kolvenbach was chosen as superior general

in 1983, his election marked the end of a two-year period in which a papal delegate, Jesuit Father Paolo Dezza, led the society.

St. John Paul II had bypassed the Jesuits' normal governing structure when he named Father Dezza interim head of the society after Father Pedro Arrupe, then-superior general of the Jesuits, suffered a stroke. The pope's action troubled many Jesuits, who saw it as a lack of papal trust in the order and its members' ability to govern themselves.

Born Nov. 30, 1928, in the Netherlands, he entered the Jesuits in 1948. In 1958, he was sent on mission to Lebanon, where he was ordained to the priesthood in the Armenian Catholic rite in 1961 and where he earned his doctorate in theology from St. Joseph University.

Pope Recognizes Martyrdom Of Oklahoma Priest

By Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Francis has recognized the martyrdom of Father Stanley Rother of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, making him the first martyr born in the United States.

The Vatican made the announcement Dec. 2. The recognition of his martyrdom clears the way for his beatification.

Father Rother, born March 27, 1935, on his family's farm near Okarche, Oklahoma, was brutally murdered July 28, 1981, in a Guatemalan village where he ministered to the poor.

He went to Santiago Atitlan in 1968 on assignment from the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. He helped the people there build a small hospital, school and its first Catholic radio station. He was beloved by the locals, who called him "Padre Francisco."

Many priests and religious in Guatemala became targets during the country's 1960-1996 civil war as government forces cracked down on leftist rebels supported by the rural poor.

The bodies of some of Father Rother's deacons and parishioners were left in front of his church and soon he received numerous death threats over his opposition to the presence of the Guatemalan military in the area.

Though he returned to Oklahoma for a brief period, he returned to the Guatemalan vil-

lage to remain with the people he had grown to love during the more than dozen years he lived there.

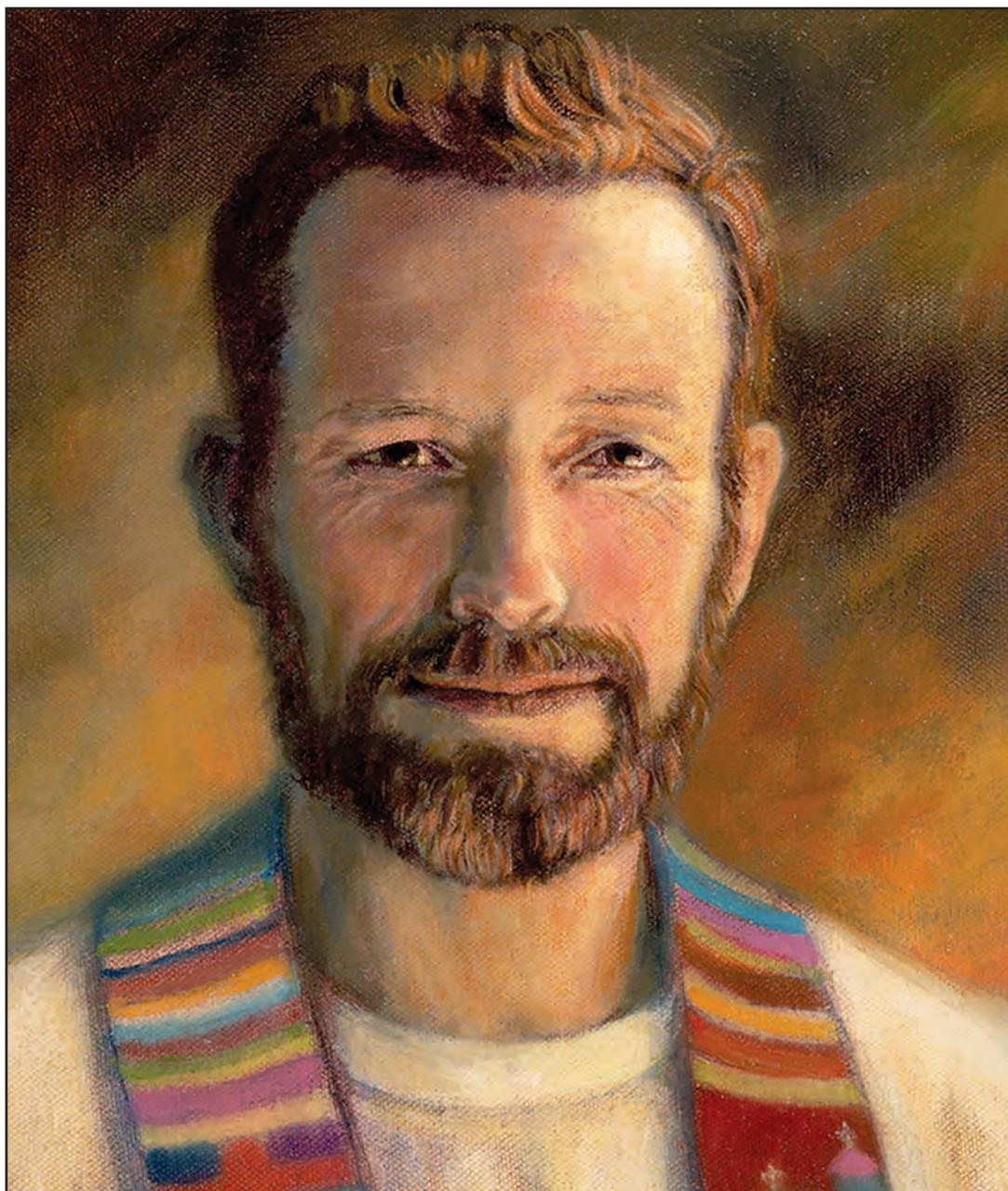
He was gunned down at the age 46 in the rectory of his church in Santiago Atitlan. Government officials there put the blame on the Catholic Church for the unrest in the country that they said led to his death. On the day he died, troops also killed 13 townspeople and wounded 24 others in Santiago Atitlan, an isolated village 50 miles west of Guatemala City.

Many priests and religious lost their lives and thousands of civilians were kidnapped and killed during the years of state-sponsored oppression in the country.

While his body was returned to Oklahoma, his family gave permission for his heart and some of his blood to be enshrined in the church of the people he loved and served. A memorial plaque marks the place.

Father Rother was considered a martyr by the church in Guatemala and his name was included on a list of 78 martyrs for the faith killed during Guatemala's 36-year-long civil war. The list of names to be considered for canonization was submitted by Guatemala's bishops to St. John Paul II during a pastoral visit to Guatemala in 1996.

(Continued On Page 13.)



CNS Photo/Courtesy Our Sunday Visitor

FATHER STANLEY ROTHER

Pope Francis has recognized the martyrdom of Father Stanley Rother of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, making him the first martyr born in the United States.

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