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Sacred Heart Sisters Celebrate Beatification Of Co - Foundress

Photos And Text
By Msgr. Timothy P. Stein

Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, founder of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus held co - foundress Mother Klara Szczesna in high esteem, saying she lived “a life of wholehearted and practical love” for her Sisters and those they ministered to. According to Saint Jerome Sebastian “Mother Klara manifested great goodness and love in her concern for the Congregation of the Sacred

Heart Sisters and the works of Christian charity undertaken by them.” The Saint also spoke of Mother Klara’s “great prudence and love” and her “courage and patience.”

Mother Klara died February 7, 1916 in Krakow, Poland, where she had established the Congregation with Saint Joseph Sebastian in 1894. Almost 100 years later, in that same city, the Church recognized the same saintly qualities that the Father Founder saw in her when it beatified Mother Klara Szczesna on Sunday, September 27, 2015.

To celebrate the beatification of Mother Klara, the United States Province of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, headquartered in Cresson, invited friends of the Congregation to join them for a Mass of Thanksgiving on Tuesday, December 1 at Saint Francis Xavier Church. Bishop Mark L. Barchak was the principal celebrant, and in his homily he paid tribute to Blessed Klara and to her religious Sisters.

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BLESSED KLARA: Blessed Klara Szczesna, co - foundress of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, was beatified Sunday, September 27 in Krakow, Poland. A Mass of Thanksgiving marking that event was held Tuesday, December 1 at Saint Francis Xavier Church in Cresson, hosted by the United States Province of the Sisters. A portrait and relic of Blessed Klara was displayed in the sanctuary, and blessed by Bishop Mark L. Barchak following Mass.



EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST: Fourteen Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School, Altoona, students were commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist at the school's Thanksgiving Mass. They included (left to right) First row: Rebecca Kasun, Emily Yanoshak, Alyson Stevens, Madison Hearn, Hannah Crawford, Danielle Ferrell and Kaylie Hutzell. Second row: Aidan Sweeney, Andrew Potopa, Zachary Colyer, Bishop Mark L. Bartchak, Aaron Yasulitis, Samuel Keating, Collin Welteroth and Daniel Sullivan.

High Schools

Extraordinary Ministers

Altoona: Fourteen Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School students were recently commissioned by Bishop Mark Bartchak as Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist at the school's Thanksgiving Mass.

Robert Sutton, BG religion teacher and director of campus ministry, presented the students for commissioning after affirming with pastors that the students are in good standing in their respective parishes. The students are expected to serve as Extraor-

dinary Ministers at school Masses and at their parishes.

"It shows that they are feeling called to a deeper level of their Catholic faith – ministry," Sutton said. "They feel not only that they are coming to a moment of greater possession of their faith, but a greater responsibility in regard to their faith as well."

The BG students included Zachary Colyer, Hannah Crawford, Danielle Ferrell, Madison Hearn, Kaylie Hutzell, Rebecca Kasun, Samuel Keating, Andrew Potopa, Alyson Stevens, Daniel Sullivan, Aidan Sweeney, Collin Welteroth, Emily Yanoshak and Aaron Yasulitis.

The role of an Extraordinary Minister is to assist the priest with distribution of Holy Communion and the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ during the Mass.

"Their commitment to absorb their training as a ministry rather than just something that anyone could do. They really responded to the idea that this was something unique, something beautiful, and something that really involves their commitment at the level of faith rather than just learning the rules and rituals involved," Sutton said.

(Continued On Page 3.)



GIFTS: The Family Life Committee of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish, Altoona, is collecting children's gloves, mittens, socks, and scarfs to be distributed to those in need. Parishioners hang these items on a Christmas Tree in the church. Lilly and Milena Barr are pictured placing their gifts on the tree.



DECORATE TREE: Youth group members from Saint Mary (Immaculate Conception) Parish, Altoona, decorated the Christmas tree at the Saint Vincent DePaul Food for Families Soup Kitchen. Pictured are (left to right) Maddie Saylor, Claire Steinbugl and Demia Shaneyfelt. Jim Mock is the director of youth ministry at the parish.

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In The Alleghenies

Every Sunday afternoon at 4:00 p.m. and every First Friday 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.



“N” IS FOR NEWSPAPER: As an exercise to learn the letter “N”, Mary Kay O’Connor of Saint Patrick School, Newry, had her Pre - K students “read” **The Catholic Register** newspaper and circle letters from their names. 8 of 10 Pre - K students were present for the exercise and enjoyed reading and exploring the **Register**.



CNS Photo/Paul Haring

VATICAN CHRISTMAS TREE: The Christmas tree is positioned in Saint Peter’s Square at the Vatican Thursday, November 19. The tree is an 82 - foot spruce fir from Germany’s Bavarian region. It arrived earlier than usual to be ready for the Tuesday, December 8 opening of the Holy Year of Mercy. Pope Francis, with Pope - Emeritus Benedict XVI in attendance, presided at the opening of Saint Peter’s Holy Door that day.

(Continued From Page 2.)

The Bishop Guilfoyle Thanksgiving Mass was offered for the repose of the soul of Eileen Becker. Her son, Monsignor Michael Becker, pastor at Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Lakemont, concelebrated the Mass with Bishop Bartchak. The Becker family donated a new Eucharistic vessel to Bishop Guilfoyle in her memory for school Masses.

Parishes

Advent Concert

Johnstown: An Advent of Christmas Concert will be held at 7:00 p.m., Saturday, December 19 at Saint John Gualbert Cathedral, 117 Clinton Street.

The program will feature the Greater Johnstown Diocesan Festival Choir and Cathedral Catholic Academy Chorale under the direction of Cathedral music director, Evonne Yanzetich - Homway. The choral groups will be accompanied by the Hilltop Chamber Music Ensemble.

Admission is free and open to the public. A free - will offering will be taken.

Prayer

Christmas Novena

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

The Novena will be offered in the newly - renovated Carmelite Monastery Chapel, beginning Wednesday, December 16 and ending Christmas Eve, Thursday, December 24.

The regular monthly private novena in honor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Therese of the Child Jesus will take place at the same time. All intentions will be remembered in the special Novena prayers offered following 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.



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Point Of View

It never fails. Every year it is the same. Up to the rooftop, (attic) my husband goes and down comes a not so happy "HO - HO- HO." It's that time of year to decorate the outside of our home and for this to happen my husband climbs the steps to the abyss looking for the box of lights. As he locates the container labeled "Outside Christmas Lights" he holds his breath and with one eye closed he peers inside.

While I wait patiently down stairs for the familiar sigh of disgust to come echoing down the rafters, I hear his footsteps slowly approaching. My mind races. Maybe this year is different. Perhaps we actually did it right last year. Maybe, just maybe the decorating will go smoothly. As my thoughts wander into the happy place of a perfect afternoon of blissful decorating together, just like the very images I see on my beloved Hallmark movie channel, my thoughts are suddenly interrupted by the appearance of look of humbugishness on my husband's face and the world's record for biggest ball of tangled lights clinched tightly in his hands.

I ask myself, does this phenomenon only happen in the Kanich house? For I know one thing for sure, never, I mean never, do I see this written in any script of any Holiday movies, that is of course with the exception of the Griswold's.

Without a glance towards me, my husband sits on the stair-



Family Matters

By Amy Kanich
Christmas Lights

case and slowly begins to untangle the mass of lights. We each successful untangle, I see his furrowed brow start to relax and slowly the holiday cheer returns. The tangled mess soon becomes a delightful strand of colored lights, a recognizable order that will be easily used to mingle between the pines on our porch banisters, and a beautiful sight to behold that is of course until they are all plugged in. That's another story.....

Sometimes the hustle and bustle of Christmas, the to - do list and endless preparations for the Holidays brings out the best and worst in each of us.

The images of the picture perfect Christmas can easily be derailed by the simplest task such a untangling the lights, burning a batch of sugar cookies or perhaps maybe completely side tracked by much bigger heartaches such as addiction, debt or strained family relationships. No matter what a person's situation in life, the reality is Christmas, no matter how painted within the scripts of movies, is seldom picture perfect, in fact, it can be quite messy and downright painful. But the good news

is, this is exactly the reason for us to celebrate Christmas, a beautiful story, not crafted by any screen writers but authored by the greatest director, God Himself.

Christ did not choose to be born in a perfect picturesque world. No, He came into the world because it was not perfect in fact tangled in sin, a big mess of knots that only He could lovingly untie. You see, unlike most of us when we see our messes, God doesn't huff or puff around disgusted by our tangled lives. He doesn't grump around until we finally get it figured out. He simply comes to us in our weaknesses, in fact, chooses to born into the middle of our messes and if we allow Him He enters the tangles of our hearts and begins to untie our knots, showing us way to be truly set free.

Christmas is not about perfection but it is about the perfect Savior sent to earth to show us the way. As Christmas approaches my friends, let us gather the courage to come to the manger and leave our tangled lives at the feet of the Christ Child, trusting that He will patiently and lovingly untie the very things that bind us.

Joy to the World the Lord has come!



Another Perspective

By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein
Hail, Mother Of Mercy

Pope Francis showed great wisdom in opening the Holy Year Of Mercy on December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary's place in the life of the Church is to show forth in a very special way the mercy of Almighty God. Opening the Holy Year Of Mercy on her feast day and under her intercession highlights Mary as the Mother of Mercy - - a title we call to mind every time we pray the Salve Regina/Hail Holy Queen.

As I explained in my last column, "Mercy" is a theme very dear to my heart. Those feelings were reinforced when I read a new biography of the Servants of God Georges and Pauline Vanier, entitled **Mercy Within Mercy**; a spiritual biography of these great Canadian humanitarians subtitled "the search for God." I had just finished writing my column about Mercy as "Hesed" - - the notion of standing in solidarity with others, identifying with others in all their joys and sorrows, when I read this new biography. In Mary Frances Coady's book I was introduced to a new, and complimentary understanding of Mercy.

In the book about General and Madame Vanier, a letter from a Carmelite nun to Pauline speaks of the Latin word for Mercy - - "Misericordia," explaining that it means "to give a heart to the wretched." What a beautiful and consoling thought! What a powerful image to reflect on!

Hesed or Misericordia, it's all the same: it's a sharing of the heart, a reaching out to stand with someone in good times and in bad. Mary is truly the Mother of Mercy, the "Mater Misericordiae," because she gave the heart of her Divine Son to the wretched ones of this world. She is truly the Mother of Mercy, the Mother of Hesed, because she takes her place with her Son's people, not above them, not apart from them, but side by side with them. She was given to us as our mother when her Son's heart was pierced by a lance as He hung upon the cross. That was the moment when Mercy was poured forth in abundance upon our world.

Even Mary's great privileges - - her freedom from all trace of sin through her Immaculate Conception, and her bodily assumption into heaven do not separate her from the rest of redeemed humanity, but point out that these are privileges God has in mind for all of us: He wants us all to be free from sin and He wants all of us to share in the fullness of life with Him in Heaven. These privileges given to Mary are a reminder that salvation is for all of us - - a great gift purchased for us by Mary's Son - - an act of Mercy that binds us to God and to one another in a very special way. We have been redeemed and set free from sin by God's mercy. By God's mercy we are all called to live body and soul in His Kingdom. Mercy has drawn us into life as God's family. God is truly our Father and our Brother. Mary is truly His Mother, and ours.

As we live out the days of the Extraordinary Holy Year Of Mercy, incorporating some specifically Marian devotions into our celebration and our Works of Mercy would not be amiss. The daily recitation of the Holy Rosary, the wearing of Mary's scapular, the placing of her image in our homes can all be potent reminders of her Motherhood of all God's people, and of each of us as individuals. Mary is the Mother of the Church, the Mother of all of us collectively, but she is also a Mother with a very special care and concern for each of us as her unique sons and daughters. She shares her Son's Mercy with us in very particular ways as we invoke her intercession.

"Hail, Holy Queen! Mother of Mercy, hail our life, our sweetness and our hope!" May those words echo through our Allegheny Mountains in this Holy Year Of Mercy as a pledge of our trust in our Mother and the Mercy that makes us one with each other, one with her, and one with her Son.



Bishop Mark's Christmas Message

Mercy Christmas! No, it's not a typo. That's the title for this year's Christmas message. It may seem odd, but since we have just recently begun the observance of a Jubilee Year of Mercy, it's appropriate to wish everyone a *Mercy Christmas!*

The word mercy comes from the old French word *merci*, which means gift, kindness, grace, pity, or pardon, as in cancelling a debt that is owed or a punishment that might be deserved.

Circumstances of life or recent events, including persecution of Christians in places like Iraq and Syria, or acts of terror in Paris or San Bernardino have prompted many to call for justice or to say no one who commits such violence against other persons should be shown mercy.

These thoughts and feelings often emerge as people try to make sense out of such things that are so out of order that they make no sense. Another word for such disturbing events and the disorder and disorientation they cause is chaos.

I recently read a reflection by a theologian at Boston College, Jesuit Father James Keenan. He says that mercy may be best understood as "the willingness to enter into the chaos of others."

It made me think of a story about a 7 - year - old girl who came in the kitchen door while her mother was preparing supper. The mother asked, "Where have you been?" Emily replied, "I went next door to visit Mrs. Adams." The mother was immediately concerned because the funeral for Mr. Adams was just three days before.

The mother asked, "What did you say to her?" Emily replied, "We didn't really talk much." With growing worry and anxiety the mother asked, "What did you do?" Emily said, "I just sat next to her on the sofa and held her hand. She cried a lot and I handed her a tissue."

Without mentioning God, Emily had put into practice her faith in Jesus Christ who was born in Bethlehem. It was a work of mercy. Emily entered the chaos of Mrs. Adams whose life was turned inside out and upside down by the illness and death of her husband of more than 50 years.

Emily's visit was one of the Beatitudes in action: "Blest are the sorrowing, for they shall be consoled (Matthew 5:4), and it prompted a response of mercy from Mrs. Adams who paid Emily a visit the next day with a plate of homemade cookies: "Blest are they who show mercy, for mercy shall be theirs" (Matthew 5:7).

I almost forgot to mention that the French word *merci* also means thanks. Imagine what a sign of hope that must be for Mrs. Adams, whose life went from the chaos of suffering and death, to the experience of the grace and blessing of a young girl who cried with her and held her hand, to a sense of gratitude which is a real sign that hope is being restored.

You have probably read those cute Christmas stories where the baby Jesus was missing when the family manger scene was unwrapped and put on display at home. After much searching, the parents in one of those stories left the manger empty because other Christmas preparations needed to be done.

When Christmas Eve arrived, their son was unsettled (chaos). He felt it just wasn't right that there was no baby Jesus. On Christmas morning his mother discovered that he had placed a small crucifix in the manger. When asked about it he said, "It was the only size Jesus I could find that would fit in the manger scene!"

Now there's a boy who understands *Mercy Christmas!* The truth, the joy, and the hope of the Birth of Jesus Christ is that God found a way to fit into the chaos of our lives, whether it is our own sinfulness, the sadness of sickness and death; the anxiety of homelessness, hunger, poverty or unemployment; the changes in our towns, homes, schools, or parishes, to name a few. Jesus understands all of this and more.

The Lord Jesus has come to show us that the Lord God is kind and merciful (Psalm 103). The ultimate sign of mercy is Christ crucified. And the Lord Jesus born in a stable in Bethlehem shows us that he desires mercy, not sacrifice, for he has not come to call the righteous, but sinners (Matthew 9:13).

Our celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ should remind us that he calls us to be born anew through repentance and ongoing conversion. He invites us to receive the gift of his mercy and he calls us to become people of mercy who bring others to encounter the person of Jesus Christ. It might be for the first time or to become reacquainted if they have been separated from the love of Christ because of the chaos of their lives.

At Christmas and throughout the Jubilee Year of Mercy, take to heart these first words of Pope Francis in his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation: "The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew."

As we celebrate the Birth of Christ, I pray that you will be renewed by your encounter with the Lord Jesus. Have a *Mercy Christmas!*

+ Mark L. Bartchak

+Most Reverend Mark L. Bartchak
Bishop of Altoona - Johnstown

In Rome, Or At Home Catholics Urged To Participate In Holy Year Of Mercy

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS)

-- Whether in Rome or at home, Catholics will have a variety of ways to take part in the Year of Mercy.

The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of New Evangelization, the office organizing events for the Holy Year, presented details about some of the events planned at the Vatican and the services available for pilgrims.

Pope Francis used a "very simple" ceremony to open the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica Dec. 8, said Archbishop Rino Fisichella, council president, who spoke at a Vatican news conference Dec. 4.

After reciting verses from the Psalms, the pope opened the door and lead a procession of cardinals, bishops, priests, religious and laypeople through the door, arriving at the tomb of St. Peter.

That evening a coalition of production companies and charitable foundations, including the World Bank's "Connect4Climate" group, presented "a gift of contemporary public art" to Pope Francis by illuminating the facade and dome of St. Peter's with high resolution images by world-class photographers and filmmakers, according to a coalition press release.

The images of people and nature were meant to show the interdependency of creation and "to educate and inspire change about the climate crisis," it said.

The pope will also carry out a "symbolic gesture" related to one of the works of mercy on one Friday of every month during the Holy Year. He will begin with a "strictly private" visit

Dec. 18 to a shelter run by the Rome diocesan Caritas.

Other details Archbishop Fisichella offered:

-- Until the year ends Nov. 20, 2016, every evening in front of the statue of St. Peter in St. Peter's Square, groups will take turns leading the recitation of the rosary.

-- In addition to the pope's Wednesday general audience, he will hold a special general audience one Saturday a month.

-- Special confessionals with wheelchair access will be available in St. Peter's Basilica and other Rome churches. Audio, video and "tactile-book" resources will be available for people with a visual or hearing impairment.

-- Pilgrims who wish to walk through the Holy Door at St. Peter's or take part in other major jubilee events in Rome will have to preregister in order to receive the free tickets. It can be done online at www.im.va or in person at the official pilgrim information center at Via della Conciliazione 7, which is along the wide boulevard leading to St. Peter's.

-- Tourists wanting only to visit St. Peter's Basilica will be in a separate line from pilgrims who are registered to go through the Holy Door. Everyone entering the basilica will have to pass through a metal detector.

-- Pilgrims who come to Rome, especially those traveling on foot, will receive an official "testimonium" from the pilgrim information center. Organizers warned against "inauthentic" certificates that may be in circulation.

-- Pilgrims should look for the Year of Mercy trademarked logo as a kind of "seal of approval" that also will guarantee fair prices for food and lodging at participating businesses.

Archbishop Jose Octavio Ruiz Arenas, secretary of the new evangelization council, said a pilgrimage to Rome for a Holy Year has always been a sign of the journey of conversion and renewing one's faith before the tomb of St. Peter.

However, despite the large numbers of pilgrims making the journey over the centuries, the time or expenses connected to a voyage to Rome also meant "the great majority of church members could not go through the Holy Door," he said at the news conference.

Pope Francis has asked that Doors of Mercy be opened Dec. 13 in every cathedral, major church or sanctuary in the world so that people can experience a pilgrimage near their own homes.

The pope also has "granted all the bishops of the world the power to give the papal blessing at the holy Mass for the opening of the Holy Door and for the closure of the door at the end of the Holy Year," Archbishop Fisichella said.

More than 800 priests will be appointed by Pope Francis to be "missionaries of mercy" and will go to different parts of the world to be "preachers and confessors of mercy," the archbishop said.

While all Catholic priests have been granted the faculty of lifting the penalties for the sin of abortion during the Year of Mercy, the "missionaries of mercy" have been given special authority to lift even those penalties reserved to the Holy See.

A series of eight Holy Year books on themes as mercy, confession, the saints and Mary, are available in 10 languages. Ordering information is at www.im.va or from the U.S. distributor, Our Sunday Visitor at www.osv.com.



SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE CHURCH, BEDFORD

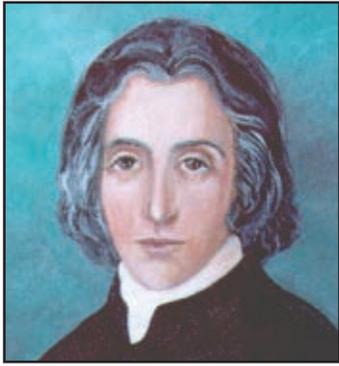
Bedford Parish Plans Bicentennial Celebration In 2016

In the Spring of 2016, Saint Thomas the Apostle Parish in Bedford will celebrate its 200th year of service to Bedford County. The parish was founded by Reverend Demetrius Gallitzin in 1816. Father Gallitzin, referred to as "The Prince Priest", arrived in America from Hague, Holland in 1790. Formerly a Russian prince, Gallitzin was ordained a priest by Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore in 1795. After building a church in Loretto, Father Gallitzin traveled to Bedford and stayed at the homes of Catholic families.

Plans for the bicentennial are well underway in Bedford. Dozens of parishioners are working on everything from a parish dinner to be held in the Spring, to a complete history of the parish, which includes a printed booklet and a radio documentary. Father Donald W. Dusza, Saint Thomas the Apostle's 13th Pastor, says "It's a once - in - a - lifetime opportunity for any parishioner, past or present. We hope all of our congregation participate."

Since 1816, the parish has had three sanctuaries. The first church still stands. The present church on Penn and Richard streets has been renovated twice, first in 1895 and again in 1925. The interior features carved wood altars and figures imported from Germany, as well as some local carvings.

The 200th Anniversary celebration of Saint Thomas the Apostle begins on May 22, 2016 with a 12:00 p.m. Mass concelebrated by Bishop Mark L. Bartchak and Father Dusza, at Saint Thomas the Apostle Church at 215 East Penn Street, and continues with a dinner at the Bedford Elks Club.



A Prince In The Service Of The Great King

The Servant Of God
Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin
1770 - 1840

The Prince's First Christmas On The Mountain

Continuing a holiday tradition we began in 2009, we present the story of the beginning of Demetrius Gallitzin's ministry in the Allegheny Mountains - - Ian account of Christmas 1799 from the book *The Voice That Shook the Windows: A Story Of Prince - Father*

Gallitzin, by Holy Cross Brother Bernard Donahoe, published in 1967 by Dujarie Press of South Bend IN.

"This is it, my friends. Our journey is over. We'll camp here for tonight, and tomorrow we'll stake out your farms. But first, let us all kneel and say the rosary to thank Our Lady for bringing us into this beautiful land."

As he knelt to lead his little flock in prayer, Demetrius' heart was filled with gratitude and hope. The land was beautiful indeed and very fertile. His parishioners were pious and God-fearing, and he had every reason to hope that things would work out just as he had planned.

Bright and early the next day he celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving. Then everyone set to work. There were houses to be built and land to be cleared. The problem of where the money was to come from to buy land for the poor families was settled by Demetrius' mother. As soon as she heard about her son's project, she sent a large sum of money to help him with the work and promised that more would be sent periodically. Demetrius took her at her word and borrowed enormous sums of money to buy all the land around Loretto. These great tracts of land were divided and subdivided among his parishioners many times. They were to pay for it over a long period of time if they could. If they couldn't, they could pay whenever they got around to it, if ever.

By early December two log buildings began taking shape in a clearing in just about the center of all the farm land. One was to be the church until something better could be built, and the other was to be a rectory. All of the men volunteered some of their time to work on them.

One morning Father Gallitzin rode over to see how the work was coming. A giant of a man, John Weakland, was just



Photo By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein

COMMEMORATIVE WINDOW: A window in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Francis University, Loretto, commemorates the first Midnight Mass celebrated by Father Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin in Loretto in 1799.

picking up a log and putting it in place when he arrived.

"Careful there, John," called the pastor. We don't want you hurting yourself with those logs. The nearest doctor is a couple hundred miles away."

The big man grinned. "Why, Father, this is child's play. I could take two of these logs at once without much strain, but I couldn't fit them into place too well. We'll have this chapel done by Christmas if it kills us. We all want a High Mass at Christmas, and we want it in this chapel if we can manage it."

"Well, you're certainly doing your part. I'm sure the good Lord will reward you for your labor."

The work went so fast that by Christmas the men had finished the buildings and Demetrius had moved into his new rectory. At midnight on Christmas Eve, there was not a sleeping person in the settlement. Everyone was gathered at the new log chapel for a High Mass,

well sung by the little choir of men that Father Gallitzin had been able to round up. Some of the spectators, Indians and trappers in the region, were seeing a Mass for the first time, and their eyes nearly popped at the brilliant ceremony performed in the wilderness of the Allegheny Mountains. The weather was bitterly cold and the new log cabins were none too comfortable, but everyone knew that they had good reason for offering thanks to Almighty God. It was the happiest Christmas many of them ever had.

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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Word of Life



The Pope Teaches

By Pope Francis
Missionary Spirit Means Giving Witness

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Missionary spirit is manifested by preaching love, humanity and faith through one's witness and not through proselytism, Pope Francis said.

Faith in Jesus Christ is shared first through "witness then with words," the pope said Dec. 2 at his weekly general audience.

The pope dedicated his audience to reflecting on his trip to Africa Nov. 25-30 when he visited Kenya, Uganda and the Central African Republic.

He said that his first stop, Kenya, was a country "that represented the global challenge of our time" in presenting a "model of development" that cares for creation in a "balanced, inclusive and sustainable" way. However, he said, there also is a noticeable situation of "wealth and misery" existing side by side.

"This is a scandal, not only in Africa but also here, everywhere," the pope said. "Coexistence between wealth and misery is a scandal, a shame for humanity."

Stressing the need for giving witness to the "natural and spiritual wealth" of the country, the pope remembered the victims of the terrorist attack at Garissa University April 2 where Al-Shabaab militants targeted and executed 148 Christian students.

"Their blood is the seed of peace and brotherhood for Kenya, for Africa and for the whole world," the pope said.

An example of the fruits of such a witness was reflected in the history of Uganda, the second leg of his trip, where the memory of the 19th-century Catholic and Anglican martyrs is still strong. Pope Francis thanked the catechists, charitable organizations and the youth of the country who "protect the gift of hope and seek to live according to the Gospel and not according to the world; going against the current."

The pope said that the final stop of his trip, the Central African Republic, took him to "the heart of Africa" and it was the primary reason for his visit given that it "is a country that suffers so much."

The early opening of the Holy Door at the cathedral of Bangui, he said, was done as "a sign of faith and hope for that people, and symbolically for the whole African population who are most in need of rescue and comfort."

Pope Francis said that the final Mass at the Bangui stadium was "wonderful" and marveled at the sight of so many young people.

He also expressed his admiration for the work of missionaries in Africa, men and women "who have left everything" for the Gospel. Speaking off-the-cuff, the pope recalled meeting an 81-year-old Italian nun along with a 3-year-old girl who called her "nonna" ("grandma"). Both made a harrowing trip to Bangui for the papal visit via canoe.

The nun, he said, told him that she works as a nurse in the Congo and went on to become an obstetrician, helping to deliver over 3,000 babies.

"That is how missionaries are, they are courageous," the pope said. "Like this nun there are many, so many nuns, so many priests, and so many religious who 'burn up' their lives to announce Jesus Christ. It is beautiful to see this! It is beautiful!"

The pope appealed to all young people, calling on them to reflect on their vocation and "to not exclude the possibility of becoming a missionary" and to preach with their lives, not by proselytizing.

"Those who are looking for something else are the ones that (proselytize)," he said. "Faith is preached first through witness then with words -- but slowly."



ONE MORE TIME: The choir of Holy Cross Parish, Spangler, is pictured at Midnight Mass, Christmas 1976.

"You were so good at making pies!" my mother said to her childhood friend who was visiting our family. "I can't make pies."

"Oh, pies are easy," the other woman answered and her face lit up as she explained the secrets to a flaky crust.

Both women were in their mid-70s and as they shared stories around our family dinner table, it became apparent that Mom had an easier childhood than her friend. Both were raised on family farms in eastern Iowa, but this other woman had some tough early years and, even as a girl, had been aware of the differences between her home and Mom's.

But at that table, when it came to pies, she basked in the glow of Mom's compliment. It was a marvelous thing to see. Mom wasn't lying. She did her share of baking, but never pies. And, from her friend's reaction, there was no doubt that our visitor had skills.

That little incident, from decades ago, has been on my mind as Christmas gets closer. I see now that, like the star hanging over Bethlehem, Mom shined a light and the rest of us looked to where it led us, to whom it led us. We saw this friend in a new light, more as Mom saw her, more as God saw her.

This Advent and Christmas season, I've begun thinking about whom I can shine a light on. Sometimes doing that in



Your Family

By Bill Dodds
Shining A Strong Light On The Goodness Of Others

front of others, sometimes doing it privately, one on one.

What a gift that would be for a person to hear: "I really admire the way you do (insert compliment)." Or, "You do such a good job at (insert compliment)."

And what if I got into the habit of looking at others that way, of more freely making those positive and encouraging comments? To my family members? Friends, neighbors, fellow parishioners, co-workers, store clerks and others?

What if I became a year-round Christmas "star"? Not like a movie star, but like the Bethlehem star: look at her, look at him. Or if I helped a person better see himself or herself in a new light, a truer light?

What a difference that little bit of recognition or appreciation can make in someone's day, in someone's life. When we shine that light on someone, we shine it on Christ, on someone who "hungers" or "thirsts" for a kind word.

What's in all this for me? First, there's the joy of doing something for someone else. (Something, by the way, that takes little effort, costs me nothing and has no calories.)

Second, just as I witnessed what Mom did and want to do likewise, my children and grandchildren will learn from me. They pay less attention to what I say and more to what I do.

And, third, I can begin to better see others as God sees them, as our heavenly Father sees each and every one of his unique, and beloved, sons or daughters.



Photo By Monsignor Timothy P. Stein



Question Corner

By Father Kenneth Doyle
‘Common Era’
Or ‘Anno Domini’?

Q. To mark dates, why are people now using C.E. (the Common Era) and B.C.E. in place of A.D. and B.C., which have been in use for hundreds of years? I was told by a Catholic teacher in our area that this change is intended to foster better relations with non-Christians. This is too “politically correct” for me to accept without further explanation. Please help. (Somerville, New Jersey)

A. The teacher you spoke to is right. The reason some have adopted the use of C.E. rather than A.D. (“In the year of Our Lord” or “Anno Domini”) is to ease the minds of non-Christians who might object to this implicit acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord.

Depending on one’s perspective, the new terminology has been viewed as an attack on Christianity or simply as an assertion of religious neutrality.

In 2000, the Southern Baptist Convention called it the result of “secularization, anti-

supernaturalism ... and political correctness” and encouraged its members to “retain the traditional method of dating and avoid the revisionism.”

On the other hand, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (who was himself a Protestant) has said: “The Christian calendar no longer belongs exclusively to Christians. People of all faiths have taken to using it simply as a matter of convenience. There is so much interaction between people of all faiths and cultures -- different civilizations, if you like -- that some shared way of reckoning time is a necessity. And so the Christian Era has become the Common Era.”

In 2011, an op-ed piece in the Vatican newspaper *L’Osservatore Romano* blasted the British Broadcasting Corporation for abandoning the traditional A.D. in favor of C.E. “To deny the historically revolutionary function of the coming of Christ on the earth, accepted even by those who do not recog-

nize him as Son of God,” wrote the author, “is enormous nonsense.”

Some critics of the change point out that many commonly accepted designations have a basis in religious beliefs. (They note, for example, that “January” comes from Janus, who was the Roman god of gates and of doorways.)

To me, there is a certain silliness to the entire discussion. Even those who opt for the new designation as an ideological protest still adopt the traditional date of the birth of Christ as the basis for numbering the years. (If you really wanted a secular calendar, why not use the founding of Rome as the focal point of human history -- which is what the Roman Empire did for centuries.)

Q. The older I get, the more this is on my mind. I grew up in the Methodist Church but became a Catholic when I married my husband more than 60 years ago. We raised our children in the Catholic Church, and my husband passed away in 2006.

Now, at the age of 84, I feel a strong desire to attend the Methodist Church of my childhood. I don’t know that I really want to rejoin that church after all these years; I think it’s more just wanting to go to their services a few times.

What do you think of this? Am I just longing for the past, or is it a sign that I am not completely satisfied with the Catholic Church? (Iowa)

A. To be a Catholic is to be committed to certain core principles of faith. Among them are the centrality of the Eucharist and the conviction that Jesus has entrusted to Peter and his successors the task of guiding the church, with the guarantee of doctrinal purity.

Since you have pledged allegiance to those principles of faith for 60 years, I would find it surprising if you were ready to forsake them now. In my mind it’s more likely -- as happens when each of us age -- that you are experiencing a nostalgic longing for some of the experiences and surroundings of the past.



For The Journey

By Effie Caldarola
Yearning To Know Mary

My husband and I once lived in an apartment for several months before moving on to a permanent home in another state.

We stored the bulk of our possessions in a warehouse, and movers would eventually transport them to a house when we were settled. Traveling with us were just the essentials and a few small things of value, such as good jewelry.

When the day arrived to head out of state to our new home, it wasn’t difficult to pack. Clothes, toiletries, a few pots and pans, and a small television we had purchased for our apartment life were loaded into our two cars. Since I was reluctant to drive alone across country, my brother had flown in to help with the driving and had spent the night on our couch.

We were excited and eager for a new life. The three of us grabbed our coffee, did a quick inventory of the apartment’s closets and cupboards and prepared to take off.

But something drew my husband back for one last look. I’ll never guess how he managed to find them, but tucked away, hanging on a nail, out of sight, around the corner of my closet, were five beautiful sterling rosaries I had hidden there. I had forgotten about them.

“Do you want these?” he asked with a smile.

One of them was my mother’s, a gift from my father decades ago. She had valued it deeply and prayed with it all of her life. She loved it so much that she gave one to each of my three children, inscribed with their initials, and when she realized I loved them, she gave me one, too. They were all in my possession, and I’d almost left them behind.

I will never forget how I felt when I saw my husband holding them out. It wasn’t the monetary value, although my parents were not wealthy people and purchasing sterling was an indication of the importance of the gift. It was the immeasurable value of my parents’ love, and the significance of the rosary itself that would have made the loss devastating.

Like many women of my generation, I’ve evolved through various stages of Marian devotion in my life. When I was young, the nuns used to frighten us, in that Cold War era, with apocalyptic visions associated with Fatima.

Our family prayed the rosary together, and I yearned for Mary as a source of solace and not fear. Later, as I explored Scripture and theology, I yearned to know the real woman in Mary. Scripture gives us so little insight, although the words ascribed to her in the Magnificat are among the most powerful spoken by any saint.

Nevertheless, even today I struggle to know her. The saint I greatly admire, Ignatius of Loyola, was dedicated to her, as is Pope Francis and a host of other notables whose insight I value.

So I still search for this mysterious woman. When my youngest child was born looking gray and still, I spontaneously began to say the Hail Mary aloud over and over. Today, that baby, whom we named Maria, is beautiful and healthy at 25.

Like countless others, I go to Mary in times of trouble.

My rosary lies beneath my pillow, and in moments of nighttime anxiety, I cling to it as to a rope thrown from a ship to a drowning woman. That’s exactly how it seems to me in the dark hours of the night.

Mary, Mother of God, pray for us and help us to know you.

Mary di Rosa
1813 - 1855
Feast - December 15



Paula di Rosa left school at 17 to keep house for her father, an Italian textile-mill owner. She also took on the welfare of the factory girls, and she and the widowed Gabriela Echenos-Bornati nursed the sick during a cholera epidemic. Paula later set up a house for poor, abandoned girls and a military hospital. These charitable works evolved into the Congregation of the Handmaids of Charity, which was approved by the Vatican in 1850. Paula made her vows as Mary of the Crucified in 1852. She established convents in Dalmatia and near Verona, and died at home in Brescia after collapsing from physical exhaustion. She was canonized in 1954.



FOUNDERS HONORED: The Mass of Thanksgiving for the Beatification of Mother Klara Szczesna began with a procession which Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus bore portraits of their founder, Saint Joseph Sebastian Pelczar and co-founder Mother Klara, and a relic of Mother Klara, to the altar.



VENERATING MOTHER KLARA'S RELIC: Following the Mass of Thanksgiving at Saint Francis Xavier Church, Cresson, Father Leo Arnone, pastor, presented the relic of Blessed Mother Klara Szczesna to members of the congregation for veneration. Mother Klara was beatified Sunday, September 27 in Krakow, Poland.

Beatification Of Blessed Klara Szczesna Celebrated

(Continued From Page 1.)

“Thank you, Sisters, for sharing Blessed Klara with us,” the Bishop said, as he reflected on her life and ministry.

Bishop Mark told the story of a little girl who defined a Saint as “someone who is up on a pedestal,” and recalled too, the story of a famous writer who kept in his office a picture of a turtle perched on a fence post. The writer said he kept the picture as a reminder that “someone had to help lift the turtle up.” A Saint, Bishop Mark noted, is someone who knows that they have had help being lifted up, and wants to help lift others up, too.

Blessed Klara, “who is well on her way to being recognized as a Saint, didn’t set out to be placed on a pedestal,” Bishop Mark said, “but she did set out to be a Saint - - a person who expe-

riences God’s mercy, God’s love and God’s forgiveness. Blessed Klara experienced all of that. Her help in being lifted up was the very heart of Jesus.

“Blessed Klara saw in the sick, the poor and in young women people who needed someone to lift them up, so they could experience the love of Jesus” as she had experienced it.

Bishop Mark said that Saint Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, which was read as the second reading at the Mass of Thanksgiving, enumerated five virtues of a Saint: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. These virtues, he said, were the virtues that characterized the life of Blessed Klara Szczesna.

“As I have come to know her Sisters, I have come to appreciate how the spirit of Blessed Klara is alive in them,



**BLESSED KLARA
SZCZESNA**

as individuals and as a religious community.

“Sisters, you are such a blessing to us!

“We give thanks to God for you, and with you. We thank you for lifting us up.” Bishop Mark said.

Blessed Klara was born Ludwika Szczesna on July 18, 1863 in Cieski, Poland, the fourth of six children. Her mother died when Ludwika was 12,

and at 16 she left home to follow a religious vocation, rather than accept an arranged marriage. She ministered for a number of years as a member of a community known as the Handmaids of Jesus, until in 1893 she went to Krakow at the invitation of Father Joseph Sebastian Pelczar, to work with young serving girls in the city.

Until that time, most congregations of women religious in Poland, a country divided between Russia, Austria and Germany were forced to work incognito, without a religious habit and the formal structures of religious life. Father Pelczar, discerning that times were changing, determined that a community wearing a distinctive garb and living a regulated conventual life could now be established in Poland asked Ludwika to join him in the work. She consented, and on April 15, 1894 the Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus was established. Sister Ludwika took the name Klara, and was named the first superior.

As the first Sacred Heart Sister, Mistress of Novices, and Mother of the Congregation, she said “The Heart of God has called us and continually urges us that we would not falter in our zeal in His service but would rather with dedication - - not sparing our strength - - give a firm foundation to our beloved Congregation.”

Blessed Klara’s remains are enshrined in a side chapel of the Congregation’s Motherhouse church in Krakow.

The Sister Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus came to the United States in 1959 and have ministered locally since 1962 when they established a kindergarten in Portage.

In 1968 they opened a novitiate at their Portage convent, and in 1971 moved it to a house in Cresson. In 1986 the United States houses became Sacred Heart Province, with Mother Amabilis, one of the pioneer Sisters, as the first provincial superior.

The Sisters operate John Paul II Manor in Cresson, and a retreat house in Munster.

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Feastday Celebrations Bring Special Luster To Advent



CNS Photo/Alessandro Bianchi, Reuters

SAINT NICHOLAS: Wolfgang Georg Kimmig-Liebe of Germany is dressed as Saint Nicholas as he stands among the crowd before Pope Francis arrives for his weekly audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Wednesday, December 2. Saint Nicholas Day is celebrated on December 6.

(Continued From Page 16.)

The "posadas" traditions vary but usually involve groups going to from home to home singing traditional Advent and Christmas carols and being turned down until they find one house that gives them shelter and a place to join in prayer and celebration.

The Filipino Catholic community celebrates Simbang Gabi -- a novena of early morning Masses from Dec. 16-24 in the Philippines and Dec. 15-23 in the United States. After Masses, families share traditional holi-

day sweets and desserts. According to the tradition, families hang lanterns on doors, windows and branches.

The last major feasts of the Christmas season are the feast of the Epiphany, often called the feast of the Three Kings, followed a week later by the feast of the baptism of the Lord.

In most countries, including the U.S., Epiphany will be celebrated Jan. 3 in 2016. In many countries, children leave treats for the wise men and their camels and in turn, when the children are sleeping, gifts or candy is left for them.

Early in the Advent season, December 6, the church celebrates the feast of Saint Nicholas, a fourth-century Bishop from the region of modern-day Turkey, well known for his generosity. The day has customs similar to Christmas but with variations: Instead of gifts placed in stockings or under the tree, they are placed in children's shoes left outside their bedroom door the previous night.



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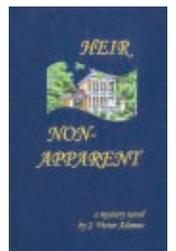


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Johnstown Quadrant Schools Regionalization Plan Announced

By Tony DeGol

Bishop Mark L. Bartchak has accepted the recommendation of the Board of the Johnstown school quadrant to regionalize elementary education in Johnstown.

At the end of this current academic year, the four elementary schools in the city – Cathedral Catholic Academy, Our Mother of Sorrows, Saint Andrew, and Saint Benedict – will close as parish-based schools.

Effective with the 2016-2017 academic year, a new regional school will open with three campuses. The current Our Mother of Sorrows and Saint Benedict school buildings will house students in grades pre-k through five. A middle school will be created at the current Saint Andrew building for students in grades six, seven, and eight. The building that currently houses Cathedral Catholic Academy will be repurposed and not be used within the school system.

The Board's recommendation to the Bishop came after an extensive study of elementary education in the Johnstown quadrant and feedback from parents. The Board announced its decision to parents in a letter sent home to parents on Friday, December 11.

"The decision to create this proposed school configuration was not an easy process," the Board stated in the letter. "The Board reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of different school configurations and determined the proposed plan offered the best opportunity to enhance the academic and social potential for elementary school and middle school students."

Among the options the Board considered was two pre-k through grade 6 sites, with seventh and eighth graders at-

tending junior high at Bishop McCort Catholic High School in Johnstown. During a listening session on Sunday, October 3, many parents spoke out against that proposal, prompting the Board to decide against that option.

In announcing their decision, the Board noted that a middle school will provide a stronger, more unified curriculum for sixth, seventh, and eighth graders, which they believe will better prepare the students for high school.

The middle school curriculum will be centered on the STREAM model – Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Arts, and Math – designed to create a more seamless transition for students into Bishop McCort Catholic High School.

According to the Board, a stronger and unified curriculum will also be established for the two elementary sites, while maintaining small class sizes at all campuses.

In the coming weeks, the Board, with assistance from the Diocesan Education and Human Resources Offices, will interview and select the school administration.

Other tasks to be completed include hiring teachers and establishing budgets.

Despite all of the changes, the Board has stressed that one thing will never change: Jesus Christ will remain at the center of the school.

"Please understand the decisions which have been made, and will be made, represent our goal of forming a Catholic education system to better serve the students now and into the

future," the Board stated. "It is the goal of the Board to establish a new school system that provides improved learning opportunities, better learning environments, and opportunities for students' social development. The goal is to improve the educational product being offered while providing families with a better return on their investment."

The Board is also stressing that parental involvement will be key as plans continue. Parents will be invited to join subcommittees that will decide such things as the name of the new regional school, uniforms, and school colors and mascots.

A meeting with parents is scheduled for Monday, January 11, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. at the current Saint Andrew School.

The Johnstown quadrant plan is similar to the plan announced by the Altoona quadrant in August, which calls for the closing of five elementary schools in the Altoona, Hollidayburg, and Newry areas and the creation of one regional school with two elementary campuses and one middle school campus.

The recommendations from both Boards come after Bishop Mark requested a study of all Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese more than three years ago, with the goal of ensuring that Catholic education remain available, accessible, and affordable.

The Diocese has said regionalization in the Altoona and Johnstown quadrants is necessary due to declining enrollment and rising costs to both the schools and the parishes.



OUR MOTHER OF SORROWS SCHOOL



SAINT BENEDICT SCHOOL



SAINT ANDREW SCHOOL

Effective with the 2016-2017 academic year, a new regional school will open with three campuses. The current Our Mother of Sorrows and Saint Benedict school buildings will house students in grades pre-k through five. A middle school will be created at the current Saint Andrew building for students in grades six, seven, and eight. The building that currently houses Cathedral Catholic Academy will be repurposed and not be used within the school system.

A Rationale For Middle Schools

By Sister Donna Marie Leiden S.C.,
Director of Education
And
Jo - Ann Semko,
Assistant Director of Education



Meetings Yielding Good Results For Altoona Quadrant

By Tony DeGol

I hate meetings! Like it or not, they are an important part of the day-to-day operation of a Diocese, so my colleagues and I attend our fair share of them.

Recently, I have had the privilege of attending subcommittee meetings with parents in the Altoona school quadrant. As far as meetings go, they have been a treat.

Parents were invited to join various committees including Naming/School Spirit, Fundraising, Development, and Athletics, and the first series of meetings is underway.

I've been impressed with the spirit with which the moms and dads have approached the opportunity. Despite heavy hearts as they prepare to say goodbye to their current school, and despite the anxiety often associated with change, they are clearly embracing this unique chance to help build a new regional school that will carry on the outstanding tradition of Catholic education in the Altoona area.

Although no decisions have been made at any of these early meetings, ideas are flowing on potential names for the new school, uniforms, school colors, and mascots.

Fundraising is a necessary part of the Catholic education experience, and parents seem more than ready to roll up their sleeves. They are looking at some of the tried and true fundraisers, and they are open to other promising options.

The good folks on these committees are eager to share thoughts and ideas with their fellow parents. I think everyone will be impressed with the positive energy of these groups and their desire to support and promote Catholic education.

As those subcommittee meetings continue, other developments are happening in the Altoona quadrant.

The pre-registration period for the new regional school has yielded higher than anticipated numbers. In fact, parents from outside of the Catholic school system are expressing interest in the new school and holding out hope that space will be available. As always, official registration will take place during Catholic Schools Week for families already in our system. Any remaining spots would then be opened to families outside our system eager to be part of the new regional school.

The Board, with assistance from the Diocesan Education and Human Resources Offices, has completed interviews with administration and faculty. The process was a long one for everyone involved, but one that highlighted the fact that we have outstanding educators. The administrators and teachers for the new school will be announced in the near future.

Also, the various Board committees such as Finance, Facilities, and Governance continue to meet regularly.

The creation of a new regional school, with two elementary campuses and one middle school campus, is no small task. Parents, understandably, are anxious for more details as they look to the future. As groups continue to meet and decisions are made, we will update parents.

There is no question that the past few months have been bittersweet. Some parents still have a hard time accepting the reality that Catholic education in the Altoona area must regionalize in order to survive. Others question the need for a middle school. I invite everyone to read the piece authored by Sister of Charity Donna Marie Leiden, Diocesan Director of Education, and Jo-Ann Semko, Assistant Director of Education, in this edition of **The Catholic Register**. The article outlines the benefits of the middle school experience – benefits that include spiritual, educational, and social advantages.

The future of the new regional school in the Altoona quadrant is bright, thanks, in part, to the dedication and hard work of so many people working for the sake of Catholic education. I see it especially in the forward-thinking spirit of the parents who are attending meetings and willing to invest their time and talent so their children and future generations will have the opportunity for a complete education – one in which Jesus Christ is at the heart of the learning experience.

Maybe going to meetings isn't so bad after all!

Each step along the educational pathway helps to prepare a student for the next educational experience. In a Catholic middle school the student is preparing for high school in a Christian centered environment. High school can be a shock after experiencing the general safety and security of a small elementary school. Middle school gives the student the chance to adapt to a new school setting and new type of scheduling before making the transition into high school.

In the middle school, the schedule is typically more like a high school than an elementary school since the student will have different teachers for different subjects and the course requirements become more rigorous. Learning how to work with more than one teacher teaches the child to learn to work with a variety of personalities preparing him/her for what is ahead in high school and beyond.

In middle school, students take on more responsibility for their coursework. They cover more material in class than they're used to at the elementary level and they may be required to do more work outside of class. The student's homework load will increase. Teachers may cover class material more quickly. Good study habits will be important for every student. This is the time to develop good study habits if they haven't already been developed.

The middle school courses are very interesting. Science class will require more time spent in the lab conducting experiments or the foreign language class may spend a portion of the year learning about ethnic food, music and culture. Extra-curricular academic classes may be added allowing students to pique their interest in a subject and delve more deeply into those areas of interest.

By joining our students together in a middle school there will be many opportunities for faith development as a community. There will be more opportunities for co-curricular activities. There will be many athletic opportunities as well as school clubs. There will be more opportunities for students to be involved in the fine and performing arts.

The National Middle School Association points out that adolescents undergo rapid personal changes between the ages of 10 and 15, making the thought processes different over time. Early adolescents can present their challenges but middle school provides unique and wonderful opportunities for bonding and forming community. Social learning is as important to success as academic learning. The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interactions within a supportive community. There is a set of personal/social skills that students need to learn and practice in order to be successful socially and academically. Since middle schools are typically smaller, it makes it easier for students to form a group of friends that will make the transition to high school together.

Now Showing

'Good Dinosaur' A Warm And Fuzzy Cousin To 'Jurassic Park'

By Joseph McAleer
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) -- "The Good Dinosaur (Disney), the latest 3-D comedy-adventure from the animation wizards at Pixar, can be thought of as a warm and fuzzy cousin to the "Jurassic" films.

Having conquered the mysterious world of the tween mind in "Inside Out," Pixar now turns back the clock 65 million years to explore the (purely imaginary) interaction between dinosaurs and man.

"The Flintstones" this is not. But despite a few intense action scenes, "The Good Dinosaur" is wholesome -- and often hilarious -- entertainment for the entire family.

Director and co-writer Peter Sohn gleefully reworks history

by proposing that the asteroid which may have caused the extinction of the dinosaurs never happened. Instead, they evolved in an anthropomorphic fashion, talking and acting just like humans.

In this topsy-turvy world, plant-eating dinosaurs farm the land, while carnivores -- such as the mighty Tyrannosaurus rex -- are cattle ranchers. The real threat is not from fellow dinos or primitive man, but nature itself.

And so we meet an adorable Apatosaurus named Arlo (voice of Raymond Ochoa) and his extended family of farmers: Poppa Henry (voice of Jeffrey Wright), Momma Ida (voice of Frances McDormand) and Arlo's ram-bunctious siblings, Buck (voice of Marcus Scribner) and Libby (voice of Maleah Padilla).

Henry inspires his progeny to make their mark through courage and strength. "Earn it



CNS Photo/Disney

THE GOOD DINOSAUR: Animated characters appear in the movie "The Good Dinosaur." The Catholic News Service classification is A-I -- general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG -- parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

by doing something big in life," he intones.

That's easier said than done for Arlo. Sensitive and fearful, he struggles to keep up and win his father's respect.

Tragedy strikes (shades of "The Lion King"), and Arlo is separated from his family, alone in a strange world. His only companion is a feral Neanderthal boy (voice of Jack Bright), who walks on all fours and howls at the moon.

Arlo fittingly christens his new friend Spot.

And so, this dino "boy" and his "dog" wander the landscape, searching for the way home. Along their path they encounter an array of eccentric characters, including a grizzled T-rex cowboy named Butch (voice of Sam

Elliott), who dispenses wisdom around the campfire.

"If you ain't scared, you ain't alive," he says.

There's a delight in watching "The Good Dinosaur" seamlessly transition from family tale to buddy movie to rip-roaring Western, and then back again. All these genre variations share spectacular backgrounds rendered in photo-realistic fashion.

The real world is scary at times, and the film has its share of intense moments which could give pause to the youngest. No worries for their elders, though: Plucky Arlo inspires as he finds his inner dino and rises to his challenges.

"The Good Dinosaur" is preceded by "Sanjay's Super Team," a short animated film that is startling (for Hollywood) in its embrace of organized religion. Director Sanjay Patel draws on childhood memo-

ries growing up in India in this dialogue-free tale of a boy who comes to respect his father's devotion to Hinduism.

Jewish and Christian viewers with small ones in tow will appreciate the cartoon's affirmation of faith via a child's vivid imagination. But they may want to combat any potential confusion by giving an age-appropriate primer on the difference between human speculation about the divine -- which may or may not have genuine wisdom underlying it -- and the revealed truth about God and humanity.

The film contains a few scenes of peril. The Catholic News Service classification is A-I -- general patronage. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG -- parental guidance suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children.

Sunday Mass
Broadcast Live from
the Cathedral of
the Blessed Sacrament, Altoona
10:00 a.m. WFBG Radio, 1290 AM

Sunday Mass Telecast
Live from Saint John Gualbert Cathedral
Downtown Johnstown
11 a.m. - Noon WATM - TV ABC Channel 23

Proclaim!
10:30 a.m.

A half - hour of local Church news and features



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Coming Up On 'Proclaim!'

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

December 20 - - The Bishop welcomes students from Holidaysburg Catholic School as they prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

December 27 - - On this Solemnity of the Holy Family, Bishop Mark talks with a Catholic family from the Diocese about the importance of family life.

Murdered Missionaries Remembered In Own Words

At 35th Anniversary Vespers Service

By **Beth Griffin**
Catholic News Service

MARYKNOLL, N.Y. (CNS) -- Thirty-five years after they were murdered in El Salvador, four American churchwomen were remembered in their own eerily prescient and profoundly moving words.

Colleagues and successors of the women gathered Dec. 2 for a vespers service at the headquarters of the Maryknoll Sisters.

On Dec. 2, 1980, Salvadoran National Guardsman abducted, raped and murdered

Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Cleveland lay missionary Jean Donovan. They were among 75,000 people who died in El Salvador during a decade of violent conflict.

In a letter read at the service, Sister Maura Clarke wrote, "The way innocent people, families, children are cut up with machetes and blessed temples of the Lord thrown and left for the buzzards to feed on them seems unbelievable, but it happens every day. ... Being here with Ita and working for the refugees has its sweetness, consolation, special grace and is certainly a

gift. The courage and suffering of these people never ceases to amaze me."

Sister Kazel was remembered for writing, "This little country of El Salvador is writhing in pain, but we continue to preach the word of God, even though it may mean 'laying down your life' in the real sense and it is my most vivid realization that Jesus is here with me."

Sister Antoinette Gutzler, president of the Maryknoll Sisters, said the women's faith was a gift that permeated their personalities, their relationships and their missions.

She used the words of her predecessor, Sister Melinda Roper, who led the congregation at the time of the murders: "The inescapable challenge of their lives and deaths is their compassion for and solidarity with the poor. They were not blind to the evil and sin in our world, nor were they naive about its causes. The wisdom of their faith was that their lives were not focused against the evil and sin but upon the holiness of human life."

Participants at the service reflected on words written by Sister Ita Ford, "I don't know if it is in spite of, or because of the horror, terror, evil, confusion, lawlessness, but I do know that it is right to be here. To activate our gifts, to use them in this situation, to believe that we are gifted in and for Salvador now. ... It's a privilege to come to a church of martyrs and people with a strong committed faith."

Sister Peg Donovan, director of the Maryknoll Mission Institute, said the women lived the call to be in solidarity with the poor and were killed for their Gospel stance. She quoted Blessed Oscar Romero, the Salvadoran archbishop who was shot dead while celebrating Mass: "The one who is committed to the poor must run the same fate as the poor. We know what that 'fate of the poor' signifies: to disappear, to be tortured, to be held captive, to be found dead."

of vows on June 27, 1962 and her final profession of vows on June 27, 1967.

Sister Linda served locally at Saint Aloysius School in Cresson, from 1976 to 1982.

From 2005 until the time of her death Sister Linda Anne was the chaplain for LIFE Geisinger at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton.

She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in music, and a Master of Science degree in religious studies from Marywood College, Scranton; and a Master of Science degree in elementary education from Saint John's University.

She is preceded in death by her step - mother, Mildred Greenberg, and is survived by a brother, David, and sister - in - law, Barbara, of Plymouth MA; nieces and nephews; and the members of the IHM Congregation.

The funeral Mass for Sister Linda Anne Greenberg IHM was celebrated Wednesday, December 2 at the IHM Center. 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

May
They Rest
In Peace



Sister Linda Anne Greenberg
I.H.M.

Sister Linda Anne Greenberg, (formerly known as Sister Mary Saint Isidore) of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary died Saturday, November 28 at the IHM Center in Scranton. She was 76.

She was born August 25, 1939, in New Haven CT, the daughter of the late Isadore and Theresa (Anderson) Greenberg. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1959 and made her temporary profession

The vespers service in the main chapel of the Maryknoll Sisters Center was part of an international five-week celebration of the lives of the four churchwomen.

In her reflection at a Nov. 29 Mass, Sister Gutzler said the martyred churchwomen were icons of the love and courage central to the Christian story and witnesses to the challenge and consequences of the Gospel call to risk one's life as Jesus did for the poor.

"This yearly remembrance of our four holy women and the love and courage that marked their lives emboldens us to con-

tinue to ask: why the poor, why oppression, why violence, why the deaths of so many innocents?" Sister Gutzler said.

"In our struggle for answers, our martyrs help us by continuing to call us to conversion as a nation, conversion as a church and conversion as a community - a community of believers and the community of Maryknoll Sisters."

Maryknoll Sisters is the first U.S.-based congregation of women religious dedicated to foreign mission. Founded in 1912, its 430 members work primarily among the poor and marginalized in 224 countries.

Mother Angelica Placed On Feeding Tube

By **Catholic News Service**

HANCEVILLE, Ala. (CNS) -- Mother Angelica, who spearheaded the founding of the Eternal Word Television Network, has been placed on a feeding tube as she continues to battle lingering effects of two strokes she suffered 14 years ago.

A spokesman for her order, the Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration at Our Lady of Angels Monastery in Hanceville, said the 92-year-old nun is doing as well as can be expected for someone her age who remains partially paralyzed.

"From what I'm told, it's not that she's completely unable to eat. It's assisting her to get the nutrients she needs," said Luke Johnasen, director of pilgrimages at the monastery.

Johnasen told Catholic News Service that she was fitted with the tube in recent weeks.

"She's had some up and downs the last few months," he said. "She's a fighter."

Johnasen added that Mother Angelica remained confined to



CNS Photo/EWTN

MOTHER ANGELICA

bed, but that she acknowledges visitors to her room in the monastery.

"She's able to communicate with a squeeze of a hand, make gestures with her eyes. She acknowledges people when they're there. The nuns say she does sleep a lot," he said.

A native of Canton, Ohio, Mother Angelica launched EWTN Aug. 15, 1981. The initiative was met with doubt from television executives who felt there was little demand for Catholic programming. The networks' website reports that it transmits programs 24 hours a day to more than 230 million homes in 144 countries via cable and other technologies.

Advent Season's Focus On Waiting Enlivened By Celebration Of Special Feastdays

By Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS)

-- Although the four weeks of Advent focus on waiting for Christmas, the church does not just sit around and wait for the main event.

It celebrates plenty of major feasts with lots of customs, traditions and even special foods during the month of December.

Early in the Advent season, Dec. 6, the church celebrates the feast of St. Nicholas, a fourth-century bishop from the region of modern-day Turkey, well known for his generosity. The day has customs similar to Christmas but with variations: Instead of gifts placed in stockings or under the tree, they are placed in children's shoes left outside their bedroom door the previous night.

The day is celebrated differently around the world and particularly emphasized in Eastern Europe, but in the United States, it is primarily focused on the shoe custom with an added emphasis on doing good things for others.

The St. Nicholas Center in Holland, Michigan, sponsors a traveling St. Nicholas exhibit and also has lots of information on its website, www.stnicholas-center.org, on history of the feast day, ways to celebrate and the



OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE: Pilgrims carry an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe during a mid-night Mass at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Des Plaines IL, December 12, 2014.

CNS Photo/Karen Callaway/Catholic New World

distinction between Santa Claus and St. Nicholas.

Two days after the feast of St. Nicholas, the church celebrates the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the patroness of the United States. The feast is a holy day of obligation celebrating the belief that Mary was without sin from the moment she was conceived.

The day itself does not have anything to do with Advent but was chosen as the date nine months from the date the church celebrates Mary's birth, Sept. 8.

The other Marian feast in December is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe Dec. 12, which commemorates Mary's appearance to St. Juan Diego in 1531 at Tepayac, a hill north-

west of modern-day Mexico City. The Mexican celebration of the tradition also has been adopted by many people from Central and South America and is described as one of the most popular religious feasts for Latinos in the U.S. Many parishes throughout the country celebrate the feast day with re-enactments of Mary appearing to Juan Di-

ego. They also pray the rosary and present roses to statues of Mary, while mariachi bands sing Marian songs.

The very next day is the feast of St. Lucy, particularly observed in Scandinavian countries and Italy. Her feast day -- near the winter solstice -- and her name, which means light, has made celebrating the young girl martyred in the year 304 a festival of lights.

In festivals in Norway and Sweden, the oldest girl in the family traditionally wears a white dress, a red sash as a sign of martyrdom, and a wreath crown with lighted white candles. Other girls also dress as Lucy and walk in procession singing traditional songs and carrying rolls and cookies that are later shared.

Other major church and cultural celebrations in December take place over a number of days such as the Latin American tradition of "posadas": the re-enactment of the pilgrimage to Bethlehem by Mary and Joseph in search of a room that takes place Dec. 16-24.

(Continued On Page 11.)

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