

THE PRAIRIE CATHOLIC

Pastoral news from across the Diocese of New Ulm

Minnesota's Most Rural Diocese Diocese of New Ulm Vol. 31 No. 4 December 2016



(Photo by Debra Skelley Blaschko)

Christmas cookies!

Ione Grossmann (left), Scott Mohr, and Anita Mohr dish out the Marvelous Macaroons on Nov. 29 at St. John the Baptist in Searles as part of the parish's annual Cookie Bake. The event, which began as a modest effort in 1989, now draws donors, volunteers, and customers from across the region and raises over \$14,000 for Catholic education.

(Read more on page 6.)

At close of Jubilee, pope says it's a reminder of what's essential

by Catholic News Agency

VATICAN CITY – On Nov. 20 Pope Francis closed the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica, officially marking the end of the Jubilee of Mercy, which he said is a reminder that love is at the core of God's attitude, rather than power and prestige.

"This Year of Mercy invites us to rediscover the core, to return to what is essential," the Pope said on the Feast of Christ the King.

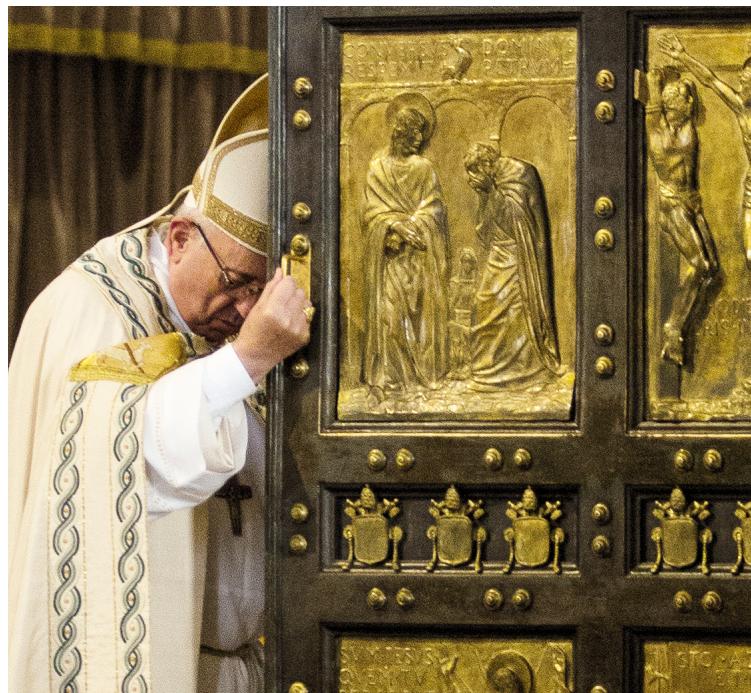
The "time of mercy" lived during the Jubilee serves as a call to look to "the true face of our King," and to rediscover "the youthful, beautiful face of the Church, the face that is radiant when it is welcoming, free, faithful, poor in means but rich in love, on mission."

Mercy, he said, takes us "to the

heart of the Gospel, urges us to give up habits and practices which may be obstacles to serving the Kingdom of God" and urges us to align ourselves "only in the perennial and humble kingship of Jesus, not in submission to the precarious regalities and changing powers of every age."

Pope Francis spoke to pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square for Mass marking the end of the Jubilee of Mercy. He first announced the Jubilee during a March 13, 2015, penitential liturgy inside the basilica. The Holy Year officially began Dec. 8, 2015.

After closing the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica, the pope processed to the square outside, where he celebrated Mass with the 70,000 pilgrims present, according to Vatican security.



Pope Francis closes the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica on Nov. 20, 2016. He then processed to the square outside, where he celebrated Mass with the 70,000 pilgrims present, according to Vatican security.

(Photo by Daniel Ibañez/CNA)

In his homily, the pope pointed to the day's Gospel from Luke, in which Christ, "the Chosen One, the King" appears "without power or glory: he is on the cross, where he seems more to be conquered than conqueror."

Jesus' kingship, he said, "is paradoxical:" his crown is made of thorns, he has no scepter, no "luxurious clothing" or "shiny rings" on his fingers, but is instead pierced with nails and sold for 30 pieces of silver.

Francis noted that glory of God's kingdom "is not power as defined by this world, but the love of God, a love capable of encountering and healing all things."

Christ "lowered himself to us out of this love, he lived our human

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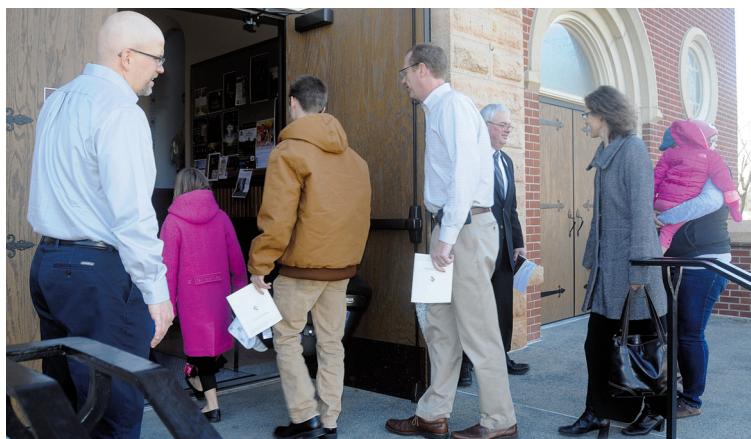
Bishop proclaims the 'King of Kings' is also 'Lord of mercy'

Closing of Year of Mercy celebrated at Cathedral in New Ulm

by Dan Rossini
The Prairie Catholic

NEW ULM – Several hundred members of the faithful, including priests, deacons, religious sisters, and lay people joined Bishop John M. LeVoir at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm Nov. 20 to celebrate the closing of the Year of Mercy.

Exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament began at 2 p.m., and the bishop led the Chaplet of Divine Mercy just before 3 p.m. Several priests offered the Sacrament of Reconciliation up until the



Pilgrims enter the Cathedral in New Ulm through the Holy Door on Nov. 20 to participate in the diocesan celebration closing the Year of Mercy. It was their last opportunity to gain the Jubilee Year indulgence by walking through the door. (Photo by Dan Rossini)

beginning of Mass at 3:30 p.m. A reception in Leifeld Hall concluded the celebration.

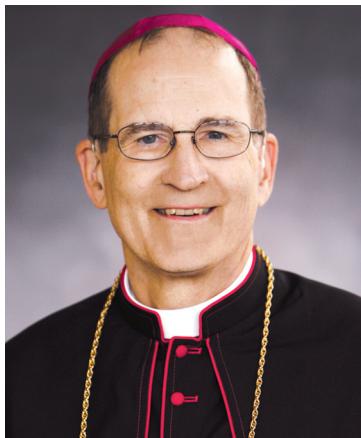
The occasion marked the last time Catholics in the diocese could receive a special Jubilee Year indulgence by walking through the Door of Mercy at the back of the Cathedral and meeting the other usual requirements for a plenary indulgence.

In his homily at Mass, Bishop LeVoir found in Jesus Christ the connection between the day's feast, Christ the King, and the

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Be Not Afraid

Christmas



by Bishop John M. LeVoi

Ever since the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, life on earth has been a mixture of good and evil. Life has been a combination of suffering and pain, and of happiness and joy. A cursory examination of history makes one acutely aware of these things. But, how are we to make sense of all of this?

Some people try to figure it out on their own, or seek the explanation of friends. Others seek wise scholars and teachers, past and present. Others look to celebrities, the movies, and media personalities. Still others take their wisdom from politicians and public figures.

But, when is all said and done, all of these seem to be lacking in one way or another. The final result is usually confusion and division. We have seen these

things in our recent political elections.

God understands us and our confusion, and he gives us the solution to our dilemmas. What is God's answer to the confusing question that seems to describe so well our life on this earth after sin? God the Father's answer is a Person: Jesus Christ. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (Gal 4:4).

It is the birth of the Son, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, that we celebrate on Christmas. On the first Christmas, God the Son, sent by the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit, was born into our world to share in our joys and sorrows. He comes to bring us good and to conquer evil.

"Each person needs to have 'adequate responses' to their deepest existential questions." Since "Jesus knows the heart of man like no other, he is able to heal and to give life and consolation to humanity" (Pope Francis, Angelus address, June 19, 2016).

As Jesus himself told us: "I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33). Let the peace of Christ fill our hearts this Christmas with his healing, life, and consolation.

World Day of Peace

In his Message for the 50th World Day of Peace, to be celebrated on Jan. 1, 2017, Pope Francis will

urge families, faith communities, government leaders, and the international community to practice non-violence and work to build a just peace.

In our country, as well as countries throughout the world, the solution to disputes seems to be death rather than dialogue. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops encourages us to pray for peace, to learn about the Church's teaching on peace (the Catechism of the Catholic Church is a good place to begin), and to act for peace.

Immigration Sunday

Immigration Sunday Minnesota is on Jan. 8, 2017, the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord. Immigration Sunday, celebrated in Minnesota since 2009, is an important moment for Minnesota Catholics to address the realities of immigration through prayer, education, and action.

This year, the theme is Building Communities of Encounter – communities that listen to one another with the ear of the heart, acknowledging challenges and differences but seeking to live together in friendship that recognizes the inalienable dignity of each human person.

Authentic, loving encounter is urgently needed in a deeply divided nation. It is especially needed in the way we discuss and approach our immigrant brothers and sisters, who are too often spoken of in dehumanizing language and for whom the results of the recent elections bring much fear and uncertainty.

As the bishops of Minnesota

wrote in their 2012 statement on immigration, "Unlocking the Gate in Our Heart," our nation has the duty to regulate our borders for the common good, ensuring the safety of our people and the integrity of our values.

But in doing so, we must also treat migrant men, women, and children as Christ among us, offering them love, compassion, and hospitality. These twin pillars of the Church's teaching on immigration must never be set in opposition to one another.

Let us take this year's Immigration Sunday as an opportunity to grow in faith by reaching out to the strangers in our midst and by forming stronger bonds of solidarity in our communities.

Catholics at the Capitol

The Minnesota Catholic Conference, which supports the ministry of the Minnesota Catholic bishops, invites all of us to the St. Paul RiverCentre and the Minnesota State Capitol on March 9, 2017 for Catholics at the Capitol.

We are invited to join more than 1,000 Catholics from across Minnesota for a day of inspiration and advocacy at our State Capitol. It will be a day to listen to Church leaders and speakers such as Bishop James Conley, the bishop of the Diocese of Lincoln, Neb., and Gloria Purvis Scott, of EWTN and Black Catholics United for Life.

The Minnesota bishops will all be present and will accompany those attending. There will be an opportunity to pray with the

bishops in the State Capitol rotunda. There will also be an opportunity to learn about the key issues facing our state, receive training from experts on effective advocacy, and see the potential of a united Catholic voice in Minnesota.

Finally, we will be able to lobby Minnesota lawmakers with the bishops, connect with other committed Catholics, and most importantly, to live out our baptismal call to faithful citizenship. Please join us on March 9 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the RiverCentre and the State Capitol in St. Paul. For more information, go to www.catholicsatthcapitol.org.

Two great Marian feasts

December is a month that contains two great feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dec. 8 and Dec. 12. Dec. 8 is the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and Dec. 12 is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Mary, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, is the patroness of the United States. Under the title of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mary is the patroness of the Americas and is especially honored by our Hispanic brothers and sisters.

There is no better way to honor the Blessed Virgin than to attend Mass and to pray for the people of the Americas, who need our prayers desperately. Please check your local parish for Mass times.

Bishop LeVoi's December 2016 calendar can be found at www.dnu.org/calendar/.

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A Blessed Advent & Christmas to all our readers from The Prairie Catholic Staff
Weekly **ADVENT & CHRISTMAS MESSAGES** by Bishop LeVoi — www.dnu.org/videos

Chaplaincy ministry gives hope, healing to mentally ill patients

After almost 20 years, Fr. Berger still serves faithfully at Minnesota Security Hospital

ST. PETER – “There is no hope otherwise. It’s very bleak. At best, you think you’re going to be locked up for life. It feels like the walls are closing in on you. I would wake up and pray and it would give me hope to know that there were people out there like Fr. Berger who were praying for me.”

That’s how a former patient at the Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter describes the impact Fr. John Berger’s ministry had on him. He was 30 years old when he came to St. Peter, serving time for second degree murder.

The security hospital in St. Peter is a sprawling complex on a large, 520-acre campus. It serves more than 400 patients struggling with mental illness who have been determined by the courts to be a danger to themselves or others.

The former patient, who agreed to speak on condition of anonymity, said that while he was raised Catholic, he had never experienced the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When Fr. Berger offered him this sacrament, it helped change his life.

“I was able to open up to confess my sins. It was a beginning for me. Usually you think of prison as an end, but it was a beginning for me,” he said.

Fr. Berger, a priest of the Diocese of New Ulm, has been ministering to patients at the Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter for nearly 20 years. During that time he has offered the sacraments and spiritual counsel to hundreds of people with mental illness.

His message to them is one of hope and affirms their value as spiritual beings.

“It’s just one of those bright

spots in their life when they are so constricted,” said Fr. Berger. “They have educational programs and work programs, but it’s a pretty small world that they live in. To have a spiritual side is important for the guys that choose it.”

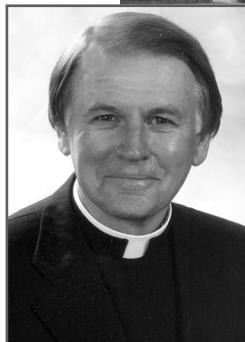
Dr. Robert Wieber, lead chaplain at the security hospital, says Fr. Berger “brings a presence that is very warm and at the same time is very peaceful. He is steady with them. He doesn’t get flustered.”

“To work with the mentally ill can be challenging, but Fr. Berger is clear he is not there to judge. Many patients have been judged by their church, by their family. Just by being there in a non-judgmental way, he is encouraging them to continue on their journey of recovery.

Fr. Berger retired from assigned parish ministry in 2012, but he is far from retired. He continues to provide fill-in ministry at parishes throughout the diocese as well as part-time work at the diocesan Tribunal, where he served as judicial vicar for more than 40 years. He ministers to patients at the security hospital for five to six hours every Wednesday.

Fr. Berger says spending time with people that could fall through the cracks is exactly where he needs to be. “Practically everything in the life of Jesus Christ was ministry to people on the margins, people on the fringes, that is where Jesus spent his time.”

Fr. Berger says Pope Francis provides a model for all of us to follow Christ by reaching out to those who are left out, whether they be a prisoner or refugee.



Fr. John Berger has been ministering to the patients at the Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter for six hours, one day a week since 1998.

(Large photo courtesy of BWBR Architects, Inc.)

One of Fr. Berger’s most inspiring memories from his service at St. Peter came earlier this year. Two men asked to be baptized as Catholics. He welcomed them into the faith there on the St. Peter campus.

“After some time of gathering for Scripture, they decided ‘I don’t want to be sitting on the sidelines of this. I’ve decided I want to be Christian and I want to be Catholic.’”

Stays at the security hospital last from a few months to much longer. However, most patients

are not at the facility as long as in years past. Now there are halfway houses and other community structures established to support them once they are released.

The journey to recovery is often made harder because of the loss of sense of value as a member of society and the loss of connection with family and community. Addressing a patient’s spiritual needs is an important part of recovering this sense of personal value.

“The need to address spiritual concerns is central. Sometimes

people’s spiritual concepts are negative and do not help,” said Wieber. “Some of the clients, they don’t see value in themselves. So spiritual value is very important for them to see in their recovery.”

The former patient helped on his road to recovery through Fr. Berger’s ministry says Fr. Berger has helped him help others. “I was in the maximum security unit and this girl came in and they put her in a room by herself and she was very disorderly, destroying her stuff. I thought, ‘This girl is going to be locked up in her room for life unless she knows someone cares about her’ and I’m thinking of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

“So I wrote a two-page letter to her and I sent it up to staff on her unit. Within a week she was out of the room and she was socializing with people on the unit. Eventually she was to the point where they let her go home to her mom and her grandma.”

“She didn’t have hope, but someone took the time to care about her and she had hope,” he said. “There was not medicine or counseling that could get her out of that room. She needed to know that someone cared. Fr. Berger changed my life and I helped change someone else’s life.”

Annual collection supports eldercare needs of religious communities

The annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be held Dec. 10-11 in the Diocese of New Ulm. Coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), the parish-based appeal benefits nearly 33,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests whose communities lack adequate retirement savings.

The Diocese of New Ulm contributed \$30,677.76 to the last collection. Women and men religious who serve or have served in the diocese, but whose communities are based elsewhere, may benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Catholic bishops of the United States initiated the collection in 1988 to address the significant

lack of retirement funding among U.S. religious communities. Proceeds help underwrite retirement and health care expenses. Nearly 95 percent of donations directly support senior religious and their communities.

The appeal raised \$30.7 million in 2015, the sixth highest total in its history. As a result, the NRRO distributed \$25 million to 401 religious congregations. These funds supplement the day-to-day care of elderly religious and help their congregations implement long-range retirement strategies. Throughout the year, additional funding is allocated for congregations with the greatest needs.

“We are humbled by the love and support that Catholics across

the nation share with our senior religious,” said Sr. Stephanie Still, a member of the Sisters of the Presentation and newly appointed NRRO executive director.

In addition to providing financial support for immediate needs, proceeds from the annual appeal underwrite educational initiatives in retirement planning and eldercare delivery. “Our mission is to help religious communities meet current eldercare needs while preparing for the ones to come,” said Sr. Stephanie. “We remain grateful for all those who support these efforts.”

Visit retiredreligious.org to learn more.

2017 Diocesan Distinguished Service Award recipient nominations now being sought

This award is presented to members of the diocese in recognition of outstanding service in some leadership capacity to the Diocese of New Ulm. Up to five awards will be presented by Bishop John M. LeVoir at the annual Bishop Lucker Lecture on March 23, 2017, in Redwood Falls. Forms for nominations, as well as a list of past recipients, are posted on the diocesan Web site, www.dnu.org, or contact Penny Forst at the diocesan Pastoral Center, 1421 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073; 507-359-2966; pforst@dnu.org.

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS IS JAN. 6, 2017



No Tengas Miedo *La Navidad*

por Obispo John M. LeVoir

Desde el pecado de nuestros primeros padres Adán y Eva, la vida en la tierra ha sido una mezcla del bien y del mal. La vida ha sido una mezcla de sufrimiento y dolor como de felicidad y alegría. Un examen de la historia, incluso muy superficial para que uno este consciente de estas cosas. Pero ¿Cómo le damos sentido a todo esto?

Algunos tratan de resolverlo por su cuenta, otros buscan una explicación entre los amigos. Mientras, otros buscan sabios eruditos y maestros, miran a las celebridades, las películas, y las personalidades de los medios de comunicación. Aún, otros toman la sabiduría de los políticos y figuras públicas.

Pero, cuando todo está dicho y hecho, parece ser que falta algo. El resultado final suele ser de confusión y de división. Nos podemos dar cuenta en la reciente elección presidencial.

Dios entiende nuestras confusiones y él nos da la solución a nuestros dilemas. ¿Cuál es la respuesta de Dios a la pregunta confusa que parece describir tan bien nuestra vida en esta tierra después del pecado? La respuesta de Dios el Padre es una Persona: Jesucristo. “Pero cuando se cumplió el tiempo, Dios envió a su Hijo, que nació de una mujer, sometido a la ley de Moisés” (Gal 4:4).

Es el nacimiento del Hijo, Jesucristo, el Verbo hecho carne, que celebramos en la Navidad. En la primera Navidad, Dios el Hijo, enviado por el Padre, por el

poder del Espíritu Santo, nació en este mundo para compartir nuestras alegrías y de dolores. El viene a traernos el bien y a vencer el mal.

Como Jesús mismo nos dijo: “les digo todo esto para que encuentren paz en su unión conmigo. En el mundo, ustedes habrán de sufrir; pero tengan valor: yo he vencido al mundo” (Jn 16:33). Que la paz de Cristo llene nuestros corazones esta Navidad con su sanidad, consuelo y de vida.

Domingo de Inmigración

El Domingo de Inmigración Minnesota es el 8 de enero, 2017, Fiesta de la Epifanía de Nuestro Señor. El Domingo de Inmigración, se celebra desde el 2009, es una fecha importante para los católicos en Minnesota ya que aborda la realidad de la inmigración a través de la oración, la educación y la acción.

Este año, el tema es de Construir Comunidades de Encuentro – comunidades que se escuchan mutuamente con el corazón, que reconocen los desafíos y diferencias, pero viven juntos en Amistad y que reconozcan la dignidad inalienable de todo ser humano.

En esta nación tan dividida se necesita un amor autentico. Sobre todo, en la manera como tratamos a nuestros hermanos y hermanas inmigrantes en un lenguaje inhumano. Los resultados de la reciente elección presidencial trae mucho temor e incertidumbre entre los inmigrantes.

En el 2012 los Obispos de Minnesota escribieron una declaración sobre la inmigración

“Abriendo la Puerta de Nuestro Corazón,” nuestra nación tiene el deber de regular nuestras fronteras para el bien común, asegurando la seguridad de nuestro pueblo y la integridad de nuestros valores.

Pero al hacerlo, también debemos tratar a los hombres, mujeres y niños como Cristo entre nosotros y brindarle amor, compasión y hospitalidad. Estos dos pilares de la enseñanza de la Iglesia sobre la inmigración nunca deben ponerse en oposición.

Entonces que el Domingo de Inmigración sea una oportunidad para crecer en la fe y buscar llegar a los extraños entre nosotros y formar Fuertes lazos de solidaridad en nuestras comunidades.

Fiestas Marianas

El mes de Diciembre comprende de dos grandes fiestas. El 8 de Diciembre es la fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción de María y el 12 de Diciembre es la fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

María, bajo el nombre de Inmaculada Concepción, es la patrona de los Estados Unidos y María, bajo el nombre de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe es la patrona de las Américas y nuestros hermanos y hermanos latinos la honran de manera muy especial.

La mejor manera de honrar a la Santísima Virgen es asistiendo a Misa y orar por el pueblo de las américas ya que necesitan de nuestras oraciones urgentemente. Chequear con su parroquia para el horario de Misas.

Pro-life Rep. Tom Price appointed to head HHS



Tom Price

by Matt Hadro
Catholic News Agency

WASHINGTON – Pro-life groups praised President-elect Donald Trump’s announcement that he would name Rep. Tom Price (R-Ga.) to be the next Secretary of Health and Human Services.

“In particular, Rep. Price’s strong pro-life values and record to match make him the right man to reform an agency that has been marred by its aggressive abortion agenda,” said Ashley McGuire, senior fellow with The Catholic Association.

“We are confident that Rep. Price will finally put an end to the anti-religious liberty HHS mandate, as well as introduce comprehensive reforms to restore the agency as one that genuinely promotes health care that respects human life and dignity,” she said in a statement.

As a member of Congress, Price has received a 100 percent rating from the pro-life group Susan B. Anthony List. Before his time as a six-term congressman, Price was an orthopedic surgeon who also taught doctors-in-training at the Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta.

“There is much work to be done to ensure we have a healthcare system that works for patients, families, and doctors; that leads the world in the cure and prevention of illness; and that is based on sensible rules to protect the well-being of the country while embracing its innovative spirit,” he stated Nov. 29.

While in Congress, Price sponsored a bill that was the

Republicans’ answer to the Affordable Care Act. The Empowering Patients First Act of 2015 sought unsuccessfully to repeal the health care law and replace it with a new policy.

The Susan B. Anthony List hailed the “excellent choice” of Rep. Price, noting his “pro-life record” and his efforts in Congress to defund Planned Parenthood.

“As HHS Secretary, he will play a key role in developing a robust health care reform proposal that protects life and consciences, while promoting options for low-income individuals and families,” the group added.

Price’s appointment is significant for two reasons. If he replaces the current health care law, his policy could impact millions, especially those who purchased insurance on the state exchanges, received federal subsidies for insurance, or obtained coverage through Medicare.

Additionally, Price’s department could do away with the law’s controversial mandate that virtually all employers must include contraceptives, sterilizations, and abortion-inducing drugs in their health plans.

Price’s Empowering Patients First Act of 2015 would have replaced the health care law’s insurance mandate with tax credits for buying insurance. It would have prohibited insurers from denying coverage to patients with pre-existing conditions, provided they had 18 continuous months of coverage preceding their plan switch. And it would have allowed for federal grants to states with high-risk insurance pools.

Regarding the health care law’s birth control mandate, which spurred lawsuits from hundreds of religious non-profits and business owners claiming it infringed upon their religious beliefs, Price in 2012 told a reporter “this is a trampling on religious freedom and religious liberty in this country.”

His 2015 bill would do away with such a mandate, along with all similar religious freedom conflicts.



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Bishop John LeVoir
@ourladyofnewulm

WORSHIP AND MUSIC DIRECTOR NEEDED

The Church of the Holy Redeemer in Marshall is seeking a Worship and Music Director.

The candidate should have a Bachelor of Arts or Fine Arts in Music; choral conducting, piano/organ performance, or church liturgy focus. A Masters in Liturgical Music or Liturgy is preferred.

For a complete job description visit www.dnu.org/employment-new or contact Fr. Paul Wolf, 503 West Lyon Street, Marshall, MN 56258; e-mail pwolf@holy-redeemer.com.

Sleepy Eye – St. Mary’s new church addition completed

by Claudia Broman
Prairie Catholic Correspondent

SLEEPY EYE – Parishioners at St. Mary’s Church in Sleepy Eye recently dedicated a new church addition that will allow their strong tradition of perpetual adoration to continue.

Though the Oct. 30 dedication was a simple ceremony that included a blessing from Bishop John M. LeVoir of the Diocese of New Ulm, it marked the culmination of years of planning and building.

“It turned out to be a rather substantial project,” said Msgr. Eugene Lozinski, pastor of St. Mary’s.

The \$1.5 million project began with the congregation wanting a new north entry with an updated elevator and bathrooms, and grew to include a chapel that can seat 30 people, a carport, and space for Mass-goers to commingle before and after Mass.

“Our church was in need of a new elevator,” said Chris Heiderscheidt, director of Development for the parish. Though St. Mary’s had a lift in its south entrance that allowed people to get into the church, “It was to the point where people would get stuck in it,” she said.

Part of the discussion about the proposed addition also involved what to do with St. Mary’s former convent building, she said, explaining that the cost to keep it up was an ongoing challenge for the parish.

From the minutes of the parish Administrative Council, it was apparent that the old convent had been a topic of conversation for quite some time, she said. When Msgr. Lozinski became pastor at St. Mary’s in 2007, that conversation was reinvigorated.

“Some people were very attached to the brick and mortar,” she explained, adding that people, herself included, felt sentimental about the structure, since at one time 24 Franciscan sisters lived there.

Over time, though, the parish came closer to an understanding about the building, and, “once the convent came down, the healing could begin,” she said. That demolition took place in February



Bishop John M. LeVoir of the Diocese of New Ulm blessed the new north addition to the Church of St. Mary, Help of Christians in Sleepy Eye on Oct. 30. The structure includes a large elevator, gathering space, adoration chapel, carport, and bathrooms.

(Photos by Josh Sellner)



The adoration chapel in the new north addition of St. Mary’s – Sleepy Eye is shown shortly after its completion in this April 2016 photo. The facility, which can seat 30 people, is a sign of the parish community’s ongoing commitment to perpetual adoration, which pastor Msgr. Eugene Lozinski says strengthens their faith.

2013 and allowed space for the addition to be constructed on the north side of the church.

After significant planning, floor plans were drawn up with the architect, YHR Partners of Moorhead, Minn. The parish broke ground on April 29, 2015, with building starting on May 15 of that year.

“The design augments the present church structure,” Msgr. Lozinski said. Inside the addition, cathedral ceilings and colorful windows complement the original church building, while the brown brick exterior closely matches the main structure.

A challenge with construction was keeping up with the timeline, Msgr. Lozinski said, as the project was supposed to be finished in 11 months, but took nearly 16. “It became very frustrating for everyone,” he said, “but now that it’s completed, people seem to forget that, so that’s good.”

Aspects of the addition that are particularly attractive to the parish include an elevator big enough to accommodate a casket, a large congregating place for people to gather before or after Mass out of the cold winter weather, and a sizable chapel to accommodate their tradition of perpetual adoration.

Perpetual adoration is the practice of having the Holy Eucharist exposed in a monstrance on an altar 24 hours per day, seven days a week. It allows faithful Catholics to be present with, pray

to, and worship Jesus at any time of the day or night.

Adoration started at St. Mary’s on Feb. 25, 1998, Ash Wednesday, while Fr. John Richter (now Msgr. Richter) was pastor, said adoration organizer Kathy Wichmann.

Adoration used to take place in a chapel in the old convent. When the old convent was demolished, it moved to a side chapel in the main St. Mary’s church until the new addition was completed.

Perpetual adoration is a 24-hour effort, with a volunteer adoror or two being present with the Eucharist every hour of the week, excluding the three days of the

Triduum or blizzards when people can’t get to their shifts. “Other than that, we just go around the clock,” Wichmann said.

Perpetual adoration “is very important to the parish,” said Heiderscheidt, describing Wichmann’s involvement as “instrumental” in instilling the practice at the parish. Adoring Jesus through perpetual adoration allows Christ to replenish and augment the grace in one’s soul to face personal challenges, she explained.

“It strengthens one’s faith,” Msgr. Lozinski said. “It strengthens the faith of the parish.”

Josh Sellner is a volunteer

adorer, St. Mary’s parishioner, and member of the church maintenance staff. He kept a blog of the addition’s progress, which is viewable at <https://saintmarysaddition.wordpress.com>.

“It fits in seamlessly,” he said of the new construction.

Msgr. Lozinski said he gives “thanks to the whole parish” and the St. Mary’s building and grounds and maintenance committee for supporting the new addition. “If the whole parish hadn’t supported it, it would have never been done,” he said.

New Catholic-based film shows how mercy can transform your life

by Catholic News Agency

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. – Personal stories about God’s mercy at work in the world today are the focus of a new Catholic-produced documentary airing on ABC affiliates across the United States from October to December of this year and available for purchase on DVD.

“These testimonies remind us that Divine Mercy is not just a devotion or theological concept – it is alive, it is present, and it is a force that can transform the world,” Knights of Columbus CEO Carl Anderson said Nov. 14.

The one-hour film “The Face of Mercy” depicts mercy as the antidote to evil even in great difficulty. Narrated by actor Jim Caviezel, the film interweaves history, theology, and testimonials about the importance of mercy in people’s lives.

Testimonies come from Immaculée Ilibagiza, who forgave those who murdered her family in the Rwandan genocide; a New York police officer who works for peace despite having been shot and paralyzed from the neck down; a young widow who forgave the killer of her husband; a baseball player who became a priest; and a former

NFL linebacker who now shares Christ’s mercy with the homeless.

The film was produced by the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal order with 1.9 million members worldwide.

The film is available for purchase at Amazon.com, the Ignatius Press website, and the Knights of Columbus site Knights Gear. More information about the film is available at faceofmercyfilm.com.

Huge Cookie Bake a proud tradition at St. John's in Searles

by Debra Skelley Blaschko
Prairie Catholic Correspondent

SEARLES – It's more than raising \$14,000 for the parish to support Catholic education. It's more than the comradery and pride in a job well done. It's even more than the satisfaction that comes from making people happy.

It's all of the above.

A Cookie Bake fundraiser takes place each November at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Searles, and it has grown to enormous proportions.

The event is organized by St. John's Catholic United Financial council with help from St. John's parishioners as well as people from other churches. St. John's is part of the Holy Cross Area Faith Community, which includes parishes in New Ulm, Lafayette, and West Newton Township.

Orders are placed in November by calling a Cookie Bake committee member, sending an e-mail, or submitting a message through the Holy Cross AFC Web site. Pickup is the first weekend in December at St. John's church basement, just in time for the holidays.

Gathering recently to talk about their yearly project were organizers Carol Waibel, Sherry Kuck, and Lester and Linda Braulick.

Humble beginnings

The idea came from an article Waibel saw in a "Midwest Living" magazine about 27 years ago describing a community's efforts to raise money through a cookie bake. That prompted her to take action.

"The first year we raised about \$500," she said. Parishioners baked cookies at home and at the church. Now the group bakes an average of 4,500 dozen each fall at the church. That's over 50,000 cookies!

Those first years were all about trial and error, they noted. One year they worked until 2 a.m. to get all the cookies baked. That changed to working from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, with pick up on Saturday and Sunday.

Over the years, the group has

overcome many challenges. "It's called learning and adjusting," said Lester.

The bakers have gone from rolling dough by hand and using individual cookie cutters to using a hand-crank machine (a Kookie King cookie depositor). It rolls and forms the dough and drops four at a time.

Wide range of volunteers

In addition to adult volunteers from St. John's, more help comes from students of New Ulm Area Catholic Schools and Confirmation students from area Catholic churches whose assistance counts toward their service hours.

"We get outside help every year, too," Lester said. "A lot of people are curious as to how it works."

"One family donates 20 to 50 dozen eggs each year," said Kuck. "They are not even from our parish but when there was a tornado, people from our parish went and helped them clean up Ever since that they donate those eggs."

Sr. Monica Wagner, a School Sister of Notre Dame in Mankato, has collected 45 cookie orders again this year. She taught at St. John's school for 10 years and then became the parish's pastoral administrator before moving to North Mankato, where she started collecting orders for the group. She and a friend fill a van with cookie orders and drop them off at Holy Rosary Catholic Church for local pick up.

"There are some who are very glad to hear someone else will do their baking," Sr. Monica said. Even some of her religious sisters measure time according to the Cookie Bake, saying "only two more months until cookie time."

Community spirit

Organizers acknowledge how the fundraiser bolsters a sense of community.

Joe Moldan, a Korean War veteran from St. John's, is in his 80s, said Kuck. "He frosts cookies from morning to night. The dedication! If you sit across from him, you can learn a lot."

Each year Thursday is designated men's night. Cookie making goes until 10 p.m. to allow people to help after their work day; it also



Harvey Stadick and Sue Griebel squeeze caramel on the popular Triple Chocolate Caramel-Chocolate Cookies last month during St. John's annual Cookie Bake. In the background, Paul Haala staples boxes together in preparation for packing cookies.
(Photos by Debra Skelley Blaschko)



St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Searles just completed its 27th annual Cookie Bake fundraiser, selling about 4,500 dozen cookies to raise about \$14,000. Organizers are Carol Waibel (left), Lester Braulick, and Linda Braulick. Standing in back is Sherry Kuck.

gives dairy farmers time to milk cows before heading to church.

To make volunteering easier, meals are served: dinner and supper, said Kuck. Families sign up to provide food. One woman serves and cleans up. Everyone has a job.

Waibel is the general chairperson, the banker, in charge of orders and advertising.

Kuck purchases the groceries, looking for sales the whole month of November. That supplements the large items they get, like the 1,000 pounds of flour and the 450 pounds of butter.

Lester does the set-up work while his wife Linda prepares the batches of cookies. Linda also organizes the recipes

and ingredients on an Excel spreadsheet so they don't have to manually figure out ingredient proportions.

Countless cookies

The group laughs about the year their count was off and they were short 35 dozen cookies.

They used to have people count until Lester attached a hay-bale counter to the cookie machine. Even with the counter they are sometimes off, but to compensate they bake 5 to 10 percent extra which allows for some snitching, some mistakes, and extras for sale.

Each year the cookie menu changes a bit. One of the most recent trends has been for people to order "Cutouts-You Frost." Teachers, craft groups, and parents have a ready-made project.

What hasn't changed over the years is the rewarding feeling from the effort.

"It's a heck of a lot of work but also a lot of fun," said Lester.

"People are laughing, telling jokes, and it makes you feel good," Linda added.

"It makes people happy," said Kuck. "Who is going to take the time to make molasses crinkles and date pinwheels? The older people grew up with those" and appreciate them.

The group estimates that over \$200,000 has been raised over the years. Catholic United Financial in St. Paul continues to provide a matching grant up to \$1,000 each year.

Former Miss Delaware speaks to youth on the meaning of life, purity

by Debra Skelley Blaschko
Prairie Catholic Correspondent

SPRINGFIELD – Young people who have grown up in the Catholic Church sometimes don't have a clue as to what the purpose of life is, Maria Cahill told seventh-through-12th-grade religious education students at St. Raphael Catholic Church Nov. 20.

"I grew up Catholic ... we said the Rosary," she said. "We went to Mass, but I never learned specifics of the faith."

"Most people think the purpose in life is to get to heaven," she said. "No, the purpose is to love God" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1).

Cahill's life experiences have given her unusual opportunities to reflect on what really matters in life. A pro-life advocate from a young age, she attended the national March for Life annually, witnessed to her peers, and prayed outside abortion clinics. She was crowned Miss Delaware in 2011 and competed in the Miss America pageant in 2012.

A big challenge came as the board of directors of the Miss Delaware pageant urged her to remain silent about her pro-life views. Knowing it might compromise her chances to win the Miss America crown, Cahill chose to attend the March for Life in Washington, D.C. as Miss Delaware. She used her title to promote respect for life and chastity.

Finding purpose in life

The second oldest of seven children, Cahill grew up near Pittsburgh. Her family moved to Delaware about 15 years ago. While attending college there, her faith was put to the test and she realized she was slowly blending in with other college students.

Then she worked at a Catholic Church in New York where she said she noticed that people who claimed to be Catholic and went to Mass on Sunday were no different than those who said they were not even Christian. Both groups were into drinking and partying.

"I started to think, this must be okay," she said.

Then about three years ago she had a "reversion" or a coming



Maria Cahill speaks to seventh-through-12th-grade religious education students, catechists, and parishioners at St. Raphael Catholic Church on Nov. 20. A former Miss Delaware and a strong pro-life advocate, she travels the country talking to young people about the importance of resisting peer pressure and remaining pure in a secular world. (Photo by Debra Skelley Blaschko)

back to the faith. She has gone from a superficial Catholic to one who is actively seeking the purpose of life: to know and love God.

Following the saints

To find that purpose, Cahill recommended following the examples of the saints, whom she described as people who know how to love God. "The saints defied the world," she said. "We are called to be saints."

She gave the example of St. Maria Goretti, a 12-year-old Italian girl who died defending her purity from a young man who attacked her.

Goretti died from the wounds sustained in that attack in 1902. But she did not want her attacker to go to hell; she willed his good and pleaded with him to stop. She forgave her attacker before she died.

He spent 27 years in prison for his crime, but accepted her forgiveness and when released became a lay Capuchin brother. He was in the audience when Goretti was canonized in 1950.

"The first time I remember hearing the word purity was when I was 5 or 6," Cahill said. When her dad put her to bed at night, he routinely told her to say three Hail Marys for purity, which she did, but without understanding.

"We should be living a life of virtue, but we blend in with the rest of the world," she said about the need for Catholics to lead chaste lives.

The life of virtue

"We need to take it seriously – it is very hard to be virtuous in today's world. Virtue is a good habit – that's all," she said, referring to the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The Catechism describes virtue as a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It conditions the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best

of himself (no. 1803). In other words, virtue makes it easier for a person to choose what's best for him and for others.

"People forget we have an intellect and a will," Cahill said. "Be careful about emotions. They should not dictate life. ... They don't run the show."

Cahill encouraged the students in her audience and reminded them that everyone has the ability to think and the ability to choose based on that knowledge.

Fall into worldliness

Cahill also described how easy

it is to become involved in worldliness. When we prefer the created world to God, we become dependent on those things, she said. She talked about how that dependency then creates appetites that need to be fed.

"We start not being patient – 'I want it now'," she said. And that leads to thinking there is no point to waiting – abstinence until marriage, for instance.

However, as Catholics, we have to be okay with suffering, she said. We have to get comfortable with not being the most popular person. She said there were guys who wouldn't date her because of her commitment to chastity.

In this culture we have access to whatever we want and we think that is freedom, she said. But St. Thomas Aquinas said freedom is found in willing the good of another.

Cahill is currently an eighth grade teacher at Saint Therese Carmelite School in Los Angeles and speaks around the country to young people about chastity.

Several parishioners donated funds to help bring her to speak at St. Raphael, which is a part of Vine and Branches Area Faith Community. The AFC also includes St. Joseph in Lamberton and the Oratory of St. Thomas in Sanborn.

Have you been married 65 years or more?

The Prairie Catholic will once again honor couples who are members of a parish in the Diocese of New Ulm and will be celebrating a 65th or 70th (or beyond) wedding anniversary in the year 2017. There is no charge for this listing. Complete the form below and return it, along with a **current photograph** (no newspaper clippings, please), by Dec. 31, 2016 to The Prairie Catholic, 1421 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073, or e-mail them to cclancy@dnu.org. Your announcement will be featured in the February 2017 edition.

Groom's Name: _____

Bride's MAIDEN Name: _____

Parish and City Where You Were Married: _____

Date Married: _____ Number of Years Married As of Dec. 31, 2017: _____

Current Parish: _____ City: _____

Contact Phone Number or E-mail: _____

Please note: Due to space constraints, only couples who have not been recognized in The Prairie Catholic within the last five years will be featured in the February edition.

Pope: King of the universe must also be the Lord of our lives

(Continued from page 1)

misery, he suffered the lowest point of our human condition” of betrayal and abandonment. However, “he did not condemn us, nor did he conquer us, and he never disregarded our freedom,” but instead “paved the way with a humble love that forgives all things.”

In celebrating the Feast of Christ the King, we proclaim his victory over death “with the sole power of love,” Pope Francis said, but cautioned that it would mean “very little” if we believed Jesus was King of the universe, but didn’t “make him Lord of our lives.”

He pointed to three different figures in the Gospel representing the different attitudes we can have: naming them as the people who are looking on, those near the cross, and the criminal crucified next to Jesus.

Those who stood by and merely watched as Jesus was crucified without saying a word were the same ones who pressed “in on Jesus when they needed something, and who now keep their distance.”

Bishop: Real and true kingship is service

(Continued from page 1)

Year of Mercy, calling him both “King of Kings” and “Lord of Mercy.”

He explained that true kingship is very different from the image of kings we get from the movies and TV: that of a person who is primarily occupied with food and power, and not very concerned with the needs of others.

By contrast, “Jesus is the king, and he reveals to us what real and true kingship is,” said Bishop LeVoi. “Real and true kingship is service. It’s a giving of ourselves in love to others. And to rule over others with mercy. In other words, to look at the lives of people that are under his care and to try to make their lives better.”

That’s precisely what Jesus did, according to the bishop. “He saw the condition of the human race, afflicted by sin and death, darkness, and came to our rescue. He came for our salvation and redemption. And the way that he

Francis said that we too can keep our distance, preferring “to remain at the window, to stand apart, rather than draw near and be with him.” However, a people who are holy and “have Jesus as their King, are called to follow his way of tangible love.”

Pointing to the second group, which included leaders, soldiers and a criminal, the pope noted how they “all mock Jesus. They provoke him in the same way: ‘Save yourself!’”

This temptation, he said, “is worse than that of the people. They tempt Jesus, just as the devil did at the beginning of the Gospel to give up reigning as God wills, and instead to reign according to the world’s ways,” preferring to save himself over others.

“It is the most terrible temptation, the first and the last of the Gospel,” he said, but noted that when faced with this attack, “Jesus does not speak, he does not react. He does not defend himself.”

Rather, the Lord “continues rather to love; he forgives, he lives this moment of trial according to the Father’s will, certain that love will bear fruit.”

did it was to be seated on a cross. That was his throne.”

He gave himself “in complete and total love for his Father, for us, for our salvation,” he said.

Since Jesus presents us with the model of true kingship, we must push aside all the negative images of kingship that we have, and replace them “with the true king, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the King of our hearts, Jesus Christ, the Lord of mercy,” the bishop said.

How does the Lord show us his mercy? Bishop LeVoi explained that mercy comes to us from “the loving hands of the Church,” which is the Body of Christ.

“And that’s why we have this Year of Mercy. That’s why our Holy Father has stressed so much entering the Door of Mercy,” he said. “Once we enter the Door of Mercy, we enter a new space. We leave the world behind. We leave all of the problems and difficulties and sufferings and hurts and pains,

“The lure of power and success seem an easy, quick way to spread the Gospel; we soon forget how the Kingdom of God works,” he said, but said the Jubilee of Mercy directs our focus to what’s essential.

Turning to the third figure, the thief who begs Jesus to remember him, Pope Francis said this person in “simply looking at Jesus, believed in his kingdom.”

Instead of being “closed in on himself,” the man, despite his sins and errors, “turned to Jesus. He asked to be remembered, and he experienced God’s mercy.”

“As soon as we give God the chance, he remembers us. He is ready to completely and forever cancel our sin,” Pope Francis said, explaining that unlike our own, God’s memory “does not record evil that has been done or keep score of injustices experienced.” “God has no memory of sin, but only of us, of each of us, we who are his beloved children. And he believes that it is always possible to start anew, to raise ourselves up,” he said.

and we enter ... into the arms of Christ. There we are comforted, there we are embraced, there we are forgiven, and that oil of gladness is put upon our wounds ...”

The bishop focused on three ways that the faithful receive the mercy of Christ through the Church: the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and indulgences. Each gives us the opportunity to experience the “freedom, love, peace, and joy” that Christ brings.

To conclude, the bishop said that even though we’ve arrived at the end of the Jubilee Year, it is not the end of mercy.

“It’s really the beginning,” he attested. We must take to heart “all of the lessons that we’ve learned in this Year of Mercy, by living mercy ourselves, by being empowered by the sacraments to go out and live the spiritual and corporal works of mercy in the world, to make the world a better place.”

Pope extends Jubilee mandate on abortion, SSPX confession

by Catholic News Agency

special reconciliation.”

ROME – Although the Jubilee of Mercy has ended, Pope Francis has decided that some of the novelties he applied to the Church during the Holy Year will continue.

He is allowing all priests to absolve the sin of abortion from here on out, while priests of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) will be able to continue hearing confessions validly.

In addition, he has indefinitely extended the mandate of the Missionaries of Mercy and has decided to institute the World Day for the Poor, which will take place each year on the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time.

The pope announced his decision in his new Apostolic Letter “Misericordia et Misera,” meaning “Mercy with Misery.” Published Nov. 21, the letter was signed by the Pope Nov. 20 during Mass for the close of the Jubilee of Mercy.

In the letter, Pope Francis said that “the Sacrament of Reconciliation must regain its central place in the Christian life.”

Pardon for abortion

“Given this need, lest any obstacle arise between the request for reconciliation and God’s forgiveness, I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion,” the letter read.

The provision made for the duration of the Extraordinary Holy Year “is hereby extended, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.”

Pope Francis firmly stressed that “abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life,” but insisted that “there is no sin that God’s mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father.”

“May every priest, therefore, be a guide, support and comfort to penitents on this journey of

The pope had initially declared that all priests could forgive the sin of abortion in a set of pastoral guidelines for the Jubilee issued Sept. 1, 2015, in which he also granted SSPX priests the faculty to forgive sins in confession.

Confession to SSPX priests

In his new apostolic letter, Pope Francis also extended his decree allowing SSPX priests to hear valid confessions.

He noted how during the Jubilee, he allowed “that those faithful who, for various reasons, attend churches officiated by the priests of the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X, can validly and licitly receive the sacramental absolution of their sins.”

“For the pastoral benefit of these faithful, and trusting in the good will of their priests to strive with God’s help for the recovery of full communion in the Catholic Church, I have personally decided to extend this faculty beyond the Jubilee Year, until further provisions are made, lest anyone ever be deprived of the sacramental sign of reconciliation through the Church’s pardon.”

World Day of the Poor

Pope Francis said that during the special Nov. 11-13 Jubilee for the Socially Excluded, as all Holy Doors around the world apart from that of St Peter’s Basilica were closing, “I had the idea that, as yet another tangible sign of this Extraordinary Holy Year, the entire Church might celebrate, on the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, the World Day of the Poor.”

“This would be the worthiest way to prepare for the celebration of the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, who identified with the little ones and the poor and who will judge us on our works of mercy,” he said, adding that the day would also help both communities and individuals “to reflect on how poverty is at the very heart of the Gospel and that, as long as Lazarus lies at the door of our homes, there can be no justice or social peace.”



Giving the perfect gift for Christmas



by Ronda Mathiowetz
DCCW President

This is the time of year when all non-shoppers, like myself, become anxious and nervous about the upcoming responsibilities we put upon ourselves so our family and friends will have the best Christmas ever.

What gift can I give my child or grandchild so they know I love them? What gift will make them smile that enormous smile that says, “Thank you; I’ve always wanted this”? What gift can I

give them that makes them say, “You’re my favorite Grandma!”?

As I write this, I must ask myself, is giving a gift about the giver or the receiver? When I contemplate this thought, I am quite sure God didn’t have any of these thoughts in mind when he decided what to give his children. He wasn’t worried so much about being the favorite as he was giving the perfect gift that we needed. Yes needed!

I am grateful that God loved me enough to give me what I needed – Jesus Christ. I am grateful that the Catholic Church gives me opportunities to learn about and grow my relationship with the perfect gift, Jesus.

CCW offers many ways to learn about our Church and our God, as well as to reach out to others in service. All these things help us to grow in our relationship with Jesus.

Our Spirituality chair points out ways to pray for our families, communities, and country in our liturgies and in our homes. Our

Service chair informs us of the ways we can play an active role in helping others, like the Heartland Girls Ranch near Benson.

Our Legislative chair keeps us informed as to what laws are being brought forward, which call upon us to promote the Church’s teachings on social justice and other issues. Our Reverence for Life chair keeps us knowledgeable on the ways we can make a difference by participating in events like 40 Days for Life.

Finally, our Scholarship chair communicates opportunities to earn scholarships to attend workshops and CCW events so we can grow in our faith and relationship with God.

When I look over my gift list for my family and friends, I plan to put Jesus at the top of my list, because the greatest gift I can give my loved ones this Christmas and throughout the upcoming year is the gift of a stronger relationship with Jesus!

‘The night is advanced, the day is at hand’

by Deacon Mike McKeown

If you’ve ever been awakened from a very deep slumber, you may have experienced the feeling of being totally disoriented.

I remember taking a nap after work one day because I knew that my wife and I had a meeting to attend that evening. Suddenly, she burst into the room and said, “Wake up! Don’t you know what time it is? We’re going to be late!”

Having been in a deep slumber, I was like a deer in headlights. I was totally confused and disoriented. I didn’t know what time of day it was or where we were going. Even her words didn’t seem to be registering in my mind.

That disoriented stupor I experienced seems to be the state of the Christians in Rome when St. Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans, “You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand” (13:11-12).

These words that we find in the readings for the First Sunday of Advent are not just addressed to the early Christians in Rome, but to all of us. The season of Advent marks the beginning of a new liturgical year, and each year the Church invites us to enter into this new beginning in a spirit of reflection as we prepare for the Lord’s coming.

As a kid growing up in the ’60s and ’70s, much of my Advent preparation involved paging through the Sears catalog, dreaming of waking up on Christmas morning to the Rock ’em Sock ’em Robots or the latest G-I Joe.

As an adult, this materialistic preparation has been replaced with a desire to “prepare the way of the Lord” (Mk 1:3) in my own heart. Most of us share that desire, but we live in a consumeristic, materialistic society that constantly competes with the spiritual preparation of Advent.

Black Friday sales seem to blacken the season of Advent as they extend all the way to Christmas. Early Christmas parties and get-togethers – and even the music on the radio – cause us to skip our time of preparation and begin celebrating prematurely. It’s almost as if we have been lulled into spiritual slumber.

Amidst all these worldly distractions, we can hear the echo of St. Paul’s words bursting in upon us – “Wake up!” “You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep!”

Like the Romans of St. Paul’s day, we’ve become disoriented, not being able to discern day from night. But St. Paul makes it clear: “The night is advanced, the day is at hand.”

As with the Romans, when we awaken from our spiritual stupor, we may realize that we are not prepared to welcome Jesus. Our spiritual house is a mess! But Paul tells us what to do: “Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”

And in case our mind is still foggy from slumber, he tells us the works of darkness to which he is referring: [sexual immorality], drunkenness, promiscuity, lust, rivalry, and jealousy (Rom 13:13).

These words of St. Paul to the Romans invite us to ask ourselves, “What are those things in my life that keep me from welcoming Christ into my heart?”

During the season of Advent, there is no better way to prepare for his coming than by “throwing off our deeds of darkness” in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and “putting on the armor of light” in the Eucharistic celebration. It’s not too late to prepare!

Catholic leaders of tomorrow



The Mankato Serra Club presented its Great Promise Award to 12 students Oct. 25 at their 10th annual awards ceremony. Recipients were selected based on service, generosity, compassion, trustworthiness, and leadership, indicating the promise of future leadership in the Catholic community. They were nominated by their teachers and religious education instructors in sixth grade and received the award in seventh grade. Recipients are (front row, from left) Rayna Gruenes, Holy Rosary Catholic Church, North Mankato; Natalie Benton, Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Mankato; Wyatt Rodriguez, Ss. Peter and Paul; Drew Smook, Ss. Peter and Paul; and Ann Voracek, Holy Rosary. Back row, from left: Duram Kelly, Holy Rosary; Annelise Winch, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Mankato; Kaitlin Wolff, All Saints Catholic Church, Madison Lake; James Schueneman, St. John the Baptist; and Faith Kodet, Holy Rosary. Not Pictured: Sadie Burns, Ss. Peter and Paul; and Mackenzie Wolff, All Saints. (Contributed photo)



Editor’s note: Deacon Mike McKeown is director of Development and Healing Ministry for the Diocese of New Ulm.

A healing balm for a wounded nation

by Jason Adkins

Much can and has been said about the most recent election, and much more will be said for years to come. What is undoubtedly true is that the election cycle exacerbated two powerful dynamics in American public life: the constant thirst for change as a reaction to a political system that does not seem to work for average Americans; and deepening, vitriolic divisions between people.

This reality requires us to approach the results with sobriety rather than jubilation or despair. The latter responses are those of people whose horizons, sadly, do not extend beyond the finite things of this world.

For, Catholics, the question now is how we become salt and light in a situation where divisiveness and partisanship, anger and fear, have been felt by many across the political spectrum. Because although we elect new leaders, we know that the true “elect” of this world – the sons and daughters of God the Father – have a decisive role in bringing God’s loving care to all of creation. That’s you and me, not someone else or some class of people called “politicians.”

True hope

First, we must ground ourselves in a hope that lasts, and is not subject to the ebbs and flows of electoral politics. Our hope is in the Lord who has won the final victory. He is the king, the standard bearer, who calls us to renew political life from the ground up – to restore all things in and through his name.

And, ever faithful to his people, he gives us the tools of Catholic social teaching with which to build.

Rather than impose our will on others, we instead propose what we believe best serves human dignity and the common good. Sometimes, however, our arguments, policies, or candidates, will not prevail.

This is not the end of the world. In politics, there are no ultimate victories, just as there are no ultimate defeats. And though there are sometimes matters of great weight that are decided in the public arena, and injustices that need to be corrected, practicing scorched earth politics, demonizing others, or using power expediently to occupy spaces

rather than nurture participation is, in the end, counterproductive.

Secure in the knowledge that politics can only create the *conditions* for human flourishing – the state cannot love people, provide happiness, or lead people to their ultimate end of eternal beatitude – we recognize the limited nature of political life, understand that the work of persuading others and the community takes time, and that our own personal work may be to sow the seed and let others reap the harvest.

Civic friendship

A new generation of missionary disciples in the public arena can address the divisions and unresponsiveness in our political culture by modeling politics in the way the Church sees it: as civic friendship, rather than as a power game.

Politics as civic friendship sees public life as a great conversation – a coming together of the community to answer the question how we ought to order our lives. In that conversation, every voice matters because every person and part of the community matters.

Therefore, a necessary component of a healthy politics is coming together, encountering one another as brothers and sisters, and listening to their challenges, problems, joys, and hopes. In that

encounter, new paths may arise, and new relationships forged, leading to greater peace instead of discord.

Countercultural politics

What is described above cuts so deeply against our current political climate. People are becoming more isolated from each other, are blindly committed to their own narratives despite evidence pointing in a different direction, and cannot believe it when a whole class of people seemingly emerges from thin air to challenge their rule and moral superiority.

A critical question is whether our political, business, and media elites will properly understand the election results as a rebuttal of their exploitation of our nation’s economic, moral, and social capital. We can be hopeful, if not optimistic.

Either way, Catholics, as missionary disciples in the public arena, can model a different way of practicing politics by offering principles that serve the well-being of all and by listening to others with civility, respect, and generosity. In this way, we can be an invaluable balm for healing the deep wounds that divide us.

Editor’s note: Jason Adkins is executive director of the Minnesota Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Minnesota.

Action
ALERT



Catholics at the Capitol 2017

Help us put the “saint” back in St. Paul!

Each election brings opportunities and challenges. This coming year, Minnesota Catholics will have the chance to shape our state’s conversation in a positive way by being a compelling voice for life and dignity.

Catholics at the Capitol will bring together hundreds of Catholics from every corner of Minnesota, as we gather at the state capitol for a day of inspiration and advocacy. **Listen** to dynamic Church leaders. Pray with other Minnesota Catholics in the Capitol rotunda. **Learn** about the key issues facing our state. **Meet** your elected officials and advocate with your bishops. **Live out** your baptismal call to faithful citizenship.

Confirmed speakers include Bishop James Conley of the Diocese of Lincoln, and Gloria Purvis of EWTN and Black Catholics United for Life, with more to be announced soon.

Your voice matters. Don’t miss this opportunity to have it heard. Learn more and register by visiting CatholicsAtTheCapitol.org or calling 651-227-8777.

Raise the roof: worshipping God with myriads of angels and saints

by Fr. Aaron Johanneck

This month we continue our reflections on the nature of the Church’s liturgy. Last month we discussed how the Sacred Liturgy is the prayer, praise, sacrifice, and offering of Jesus Christ himself. It is his perfect prayer to the

Father to which we are united by virtue of our Baptism, which unites us to him and makes us members of his Mystical Body.

Sursum Corda
Lift Up Your Hearts
Reflections on the Sacred Liturgy

As we said, this is one of the aspects of the liturgy described in the Second Vatican Council’s “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” (“*Sacrosanctum Concilium*”).

Another perspective from which this constitution discusses the liturgy is as a foretaste and participation in the heavenly liturgy. Here’s what the Fathers of the Council have to say in this regard: “In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle.”

They continue, “With all the warriors of the heavenly army we sing a hymn of glory to the Lord; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory” (SC, no. 8).

What this means is that we truly do “Sing with All the Saints in Glory,” as the hymn goes, every time that we participate in the Sacred Liturgy. Imagine that as the Holy Mass begins the roofs of our churches are torn away and we are lifted up into the perfect and eternal praise offered by the angels and saints, who fall down in worship and adoration before the Lamb who was slain in the heavenly Jerusalem as described in the Book of Revelation (cf., for example, 4:1-11).

Here the living creatures give to the One who is seated on the throne, glory and honor and thanks. The elders fall down before him and worship him singing, “Worthy are you, Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things; because of your will

they came to be and were created” (Rev 4:11).

Here they offer incense, which represents the prayers of the

holy ones. Gathered around the throne they sing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (Rev 4:8).

We, too, sing or recite this prayer at every Mass just after the priest invites and exhorts us with these or similar words: “And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim ... Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts!”

This prayer, the “Holy, Holy, Holy” or “*Sanctus*” is found not only in Revelation, but also in Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah is given a vision of heaven in which he sees the seraphim singing this hymn to one another as they glorify God (6:3). In the liturgy, it is this worship and praise of God that we are drawn into.

This is why traditionally churches have often had images of angels and saints, especially in and around the sanctuary. This is a reminder to worshippers of the reality that we enter into when we gather as Christ’s Body to take part in the Church’s prayer, especially in the Holy Mass. It is the wedding feast of the Lamb; the adoration of the myriads upon myriads in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Editor’s note: Fr. Aaron Johanneck is director of Worship for the Diocese of New Ulm.

What does it really mean to observe Advent?

by Hillary Mast
Catholic News Agency

DENVER – What does it actually mean to “observe Advent”?

The observation of other liturgical seasons may be more readily apparent – Lent is clearly a time for prayer, sacrifice, and almsgiving, while Christmas and Easter are clearly times for celebration.

Search Pinterest for “how to celebrate Advent” and everything from ideas for a do-it-yourself Jesse Tree, to instructions for a handmade Advent calendar bunting, to a tutorial on “how to make your own wreath from foraged materials” appears.

The penitential time of preparation before Christmas seems to have taken on a crafty life of its own over the last few years, thanks to Web sites such as Pinterest and Instructables. Add in a few glowing shots of your friend’s handcrafted nativity set on her Instagram feed and you’ve got a recipe for some serious Advent-envy.

While all of these crafts and activities can help one better celebrate Christmas, it’s important not to let them distract from the true purpose of the season: preparation for the Incarnation, said Fr. Mike Schmitz, chaplain for the Newman Center at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

Fr. Schmitz told Catholic News Agency (CNA) that one of the things that gets easily overlooked about Advent is “that it’s actually

a season of penance” and as such, the Church asks us to practice prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

“That’s kind of like the buzzkill of Advent because it’s like, ‘Okay, don’t have too much fun because, remember, this is a penitential season,’” he said.

However, just because it’s a season of penance doesn’t mean we need to be somber.

“I think there’s some great ways that a person or a family can make that – prayer, fasting, and almsgiving – a part of the celebration of preparation for Christmas. It doesn’t have to be a dour kind of experience,” he said.

The simplest way Catholics can prepare for Christmas, Fr. Schmitz suggested, is by going to confession during Advent.

“During Advent the faithful are asked not only to prepare themselves to celebrate Christmas, but we’re called to prepare ourselves to meet Jesus at the end of time,” he said.

“There’s a lot of good ways to do that, but I think one of the best ways a person could possibly do that is to go to confession.”

For Kathryn Whitaker of the blog, “Team Whitaker,” observing Advent is all about knowing what works best for your family.

“There are lots and lots of beautiful ideas on Pinterest and other places, but I think you have to find what suits your family and then not apologize or feel badly

because someone else is doing it differently,” she said.

In an attempt to dial back the frenzy of Christmas morning, she said her family began look for ways to serve others and be grateful for what they already have in the weeks leading up to it.

“I think for us, it’s just been about pouring a little bit more love, particularly in these next four weeks, in everything that we do.”

The Whitakers pick a local family in need to “adopt” each year by providing gifts and food, or they donate presents to Brown Santa – a tradition named for the brown uniforms members of the Travis County, Texas Sheriff’s Office wear that provides assistance to underprivileged residents, particularly during the Christmas season.

That, plus “lighting” her kindergartner’s Advent wreath – made from tissue paper and toilet paper rolls – and having a Jesse Tree, an ancient tradition of decorating a tree with ornaments that represent the story of salvation, will make up their Advent, which also includes Mass and confession.

Over the years, Whitaker and her family have adapted their Advent season to their “family season.” The year that she and her husband brought their premature son home from the hospital, for example, all they could do was put up the Christmas tree with some ornaments.

“And that was OK,” she said.



Lighting an Advent wreath is a traditional preparation for Christmas in many Catholic homes. To help us better understand its significance, Bishop John M. LeVoir of the Diocese of New Ulm discusses the Advent wreath in his four weekly Advent audio messages, which can be found at <https://www.dnu.org/videos/>.

“And then knowing next Advent, or the next liturgical season that comes up, you can do more. Or you can do less.”

Much like Whitaker, Bonnie Engstrom of the blog “A Knotted Life” said that the best way for a family to observe Advent is by “looking through the options and seeing what will work for them, what will help them create meaningful lessons and memories during that season of their family’s life.”

In recent years, the Engstroms have “scaled back our Advent activities by a ton” by just focusing on the Advent wreath and a few saints’ feast days. Festivities that many Americans typically do in the time before Christmas – such as looking at light displays, drinking cocoa and watching Christmas movies – are all saved for the actual Christmas season.

“It has greatly bolstered Christmas beyond December 25th and has brought a lot more peace and joy to our home, while greatly reducing the stress,” she said, which is a definite “win-win.”

Gradually filling the nativity scene, adding ornaments to their Jesse Tree, and celebrating St. Nicholas’ feast day with her kids are all enjoyable ways that Engstrom said she can “trick them into learning about her faith.”

While engaging her kids in celebrating Advent is important, she said observing this season has also helped her grow in her relationship with God.

“The silence, the simple beauty, the focus on preparation,” she said, “those things have really helped me create the still in my interior and exterior life for God to speak to me.”

Quilt raffle supports LAMA



DARWIN – The Council of Catholic Women Quilting Group at St. John’s Catholic Church in Darwin made a \$1,332 donation to the Litchfield Area Ministerial Association. The funds were raised through the group’s quilt raffle. Phyllis Levno (left) and Kathy Reinke presented the check in October to Pastor Bill Kerr of the Litchfield United Methodist Church, who is treasurer of LAMA.

(Contributed photo)

Upcoming events

Pallium Mass for Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis will be on Sunday, Dec. 18 at 2:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of Saint Paul in St. Paul. The apostolic nuncio will confer the pallium, which was blessed at Saint Peter’s Basilica by Pope Francis last June, on Archbishop Hebda at the special Mass. All the faithful are invited to attend.

Cor Jesu will be held on Saturday, Jan. 7, 2017, from 7:15 p.m. to 8:15 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm. Cor Jesu (pronounced “core yay-zoo”), is an evening

of adoration, contemporary praise music, and fellowship. All ages are welcome. Visit www.dnu.org/cor-jesu for more information.

Riverbend TEC (Together Encountering Christ) will host a retreat Jan. 14-16, 2017, at Holy Redeemer Catholic School, Marshall. TEC is a three-day retreat experience that focuses on the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. For more information, call 320-523-1271, or e-mail riverbendtec@gmail.com.

Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) Cycle 1 will be Jan. 15 – Feb.

18, 2017, with registration closing Jan. 11. Five-week and three-week courses are offered. Certificates for catechists, youth ministers, and social concerns committee members are available. For course information or to register, visit <http://vlc.udayton.edu>. Scholarships are available for those involved in catechetical ministry; contact Bryan Reising at 507-233-5324; breising@dnu.org.

THE DRAIRIE CATHOLIC

Pastoral news from across the Diocese of New Ulm

Minnesota's Most Rural Diocese Diocese of New Ulm Vol. 31 No. 4 December 2016



(Photo by Chris Clancy)

Closing of Year of Mercy

NEW ULM – Faithful of the diocese greet Bishop John M. LeVoit as they exit the the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New Ulm on Sunday, Nov. 20 at the conclusion of a Mass celebrated by the bishop to end the Year of Mercy. As Holy Doors closed in churches and basilicas around the world, including in Rome, it is estimated that over 20 million people participated in the Church's Jubilee Year of Mercy at the Vatican – and a billion people may have participated in churches worldwide. For photos of the diocesan event, visit www.dnu.org/bishop/.

Read more about the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of Mercy on page 1.

catholic trends

BALTIMORE (CNA/EWTN News) – The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on Nov. 15 elected Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston as its president, and Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles vice-president during the bishops' fall assembly in Baltimore. Each will serve a three-year term.

The bishops' conference president plays a significant role in coordinating and leading charitable and social work and education, while providing a public face for the Catholic Church in the United States.

Cardinal DiNardo has served as Archbishop of Galveston-Houston since 2006, and was elevated to the cardinalate in 2007.

Archbishop Gómez succeeded as Archbishop of Los Angeles in 2011.

Cardinal DiNardo and Archbishop Gómez had both also been selected (at the 2014 general assembly) by their fellow U.S. bishops to be among the delegates to the 2015 Synod on the Family.

The cardinal was chosen vice president of the U.S. Bishops' Conference in 2013. He had

previously served as the head of the bishops' pro-life committee, where he was outspoken against the contraception mandate of the Obama administration.

Archbishop Gómez heads the largest U.S. diocese, with more than 4 million Catholics. He is the highest-ranking Hispanic bishop in the United States.

WASHINGTON – A Day of Prayer with a focus on the plight of refugees and migrants will take place across the United States on Dec. 12, 2016, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It will be a time to place before a merciful God the hopes, fears, and needs of all those families who have come to the U.S. seeking a better life.

“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 Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, archbishop of Galveston-Houston and president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

“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,” he said.

Prayer services and special Masses will be held in many dioceses across the country as the Catholic Church continues to accompany migrants and refugees seeking an opportunity to provide for their families.

Catholics who are unable to attend are invited to offer prayers wherever they might be. For example, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' office of Migrant and Refugee Services (MRS) has developed a Scriptural Rosary entitled “Unity in Diversity” that includes prayers for migrants and refugees at <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/documents/Scriptural-Rosary-Eng.pdf>.

“So many families are wondering how changes to immigration policy might impact them,” said Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, vice-president of the USCCB. “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.”

In the coming days, the USCCB will be developing additional pastoral resources. These efforts will continue to follow the principles contained in “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope,” the 2003 pastoral letter issued jointly by the bishops of the United States and Mexico.

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