Hope CommUnity Center expands

The Hope CommUnity Center in Apopka — is a service learning community dedicated to the empowerment of Central Florida’s immigrant and working poor communities through education, advocacy and spiritual growth — has become a second home for many clients. Its staffers become members of families served.

This ministry has grown over the years, and is short on space and limited parking forces many families to cross a busy street to reach the center’s doors. A new expansion plan will provide more space to serve more people.

Click on the ORLANDO DIOCESE above for more on this story.

Lent: 40-day journey begins

People flocked to churches Feb. 10 to receive ashes on their foreheads as a sign of the spirit of the season — repentance.

“The heart of Lent is reconciliation,” Father Andrew Brierley, pastor of St. Luke Parish in Palm Springs, places ashes on the foreheads of parishioners, students and faculty members from St. Luke School during Mass Ash Wednesday, Feb. 10. [LINDA REEVES | FC]

Click on the PALM BEACH DIOCESE for more on this story.

322 people set to enter Church

Women and men to join the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil were recognized during the annual Rite of Election at Epiphany Cathedral Feb. 14. This annual tradition is a formal Rite in which catechumens are presented and their names are entered into the Book of the Elect.

The 141 catechumens, those who are unbaptized and unchurched who are joining the Catholic Faith, were joined by an additional 191 candidates, those previously baptized, who also participated in the formal ceremony and were welcomed during the celebration for answering the call to continuing conversion.

Click on the VENICE DIOCESE above for more on this story.
Courageous witnesses to faith

Bishop Noonan thanks religious men and women for their vocations

KATHERINE LAGUNA
of the Florida Catholic staff

ORLANDO | In observance of World Day for Consecrated Life (Feb. 2), Bishop John Noonan celebrated a Mass Jan. 30 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of Mary, Queen of the Universe. Religious sisters, priests and brothers were honored for consecrating their lives to Jesus and choosing a life of service dedicated to building the kingdom of God on earth.

Bishop Noonan thanked all religious for their continuous vocation and effort to bring the “message of the Lord” into every community of Central Florida saying, “The history of the Church in Central Florida is because of you all and your hard work with children, with migrants, with the marginalized. It’s all because of you. So thank you for being the hands and feet of the ministry.”

Bishop Noonan said a consecrated life is a gift that is truly meant to be shared, a gift to bring mercy to the lives of others. In the Diocese of Orlando there are 23 religious communities of priests and brothers, and 27 religious communities of sisters who bring that gift of hope and mercy to the people of Central Florida.

“I have been serving in the Diocese of Orlando since 1973, so an event like this, I always want to be part of since it shows our commitment to the diocese and the communities we serve throughout Florida,” said Sister of Notre Dame de Namur Teresa McElwee. “I am so proud of the work we are all doing.”

Third Order Regular Franciscan Father Anthony Aarons, who was appointed by Pope Francis as a Missionary of Mercy, delivered the homily. He said the transition from the Year of Consecrated Life to the Year of Mercy should be seamless.

“It isn’t by chance that we’re still immersed in the Year of Consecrated Life,” Father Aarons said. “We are immersed in this moment because we must look back to the past with gratitude, look forward to the future in hope, but even more so, learn to live in the present with passion. As we are living this present with passion, we ask that the Year of Mercy comes to us completely.”

Pope Francis, who is a Jesuit, met with some 5,000 religious men and women at the Vatican Feb. 1 to mark the close of the Year of Consecrated Life, which began Nov. 30, 2014.

The pope thanked religious men and women for their work, especially consecrated women. “What would the Church be if there were no sisters?” he asked, recalling their presence in Catholic hospitals, schools, parishes and missions around the world.

For Third Order Regular Franciscan Father Patrick Quinn, his commitment in the Lord is driven by obedience and trust.

“It is important that as the Year of Consecrated Life ends, we live our lives in fraternity, to work as a community and to follow with obedience,” said Father Quinn, pastor of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in New Smyrna Beach. “I’ve been to many different places in this vocation and gladly I’d go where the Lord tells me to go next.”

To learn more about the religious communities serving in the Diocese of Orlando, visit: www.orlandodiocese.org/ministries-offices/consecrated-life.
Hope CommUnity Center expands ministry

ELIZABETH WILSON Special to the Florida Catholic

APOPKA | The Hope CommUnity Center in Apopka has become a second home for many of the immigrant farmworker, and working poor families in the area. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and the staff who run the programs have become their family.

But as this family has grown over the years, they are short on space and limited parking forces many families to cross a busy street to reach the center’s doors. A new expansion plan will provide more space to serve more people.

“We have been holding summer camps for more than 120 children in our center’s parking lot and we have 150 students attending classes, preparing to become U.S. citizens, to name just two very active programs,” Sister Ann Kendrick said. “Clearly, the added space afforded in developing a second campus case provides missional and programmatic opportunities that will benefit our community and for which we are truly grateful.”

Hope CommUnity Center is a service learning community dedicated to the empowerment of Central Florida’s immigrant and working poor communities through education, advocacy and spiritual growth. Plans for expansion started more than a year ago when the leadership of the center was approached about negotiating a merger and acquiring a property belonging to Apopka Family Learning Center. After many months of preparation, the property was acquired Feb. 5.

The newly acquired property is located two and a half miles away from the main campus, and is informally referred to by staff as Hope CommUnity Center “south campus.” The new space will operate in conjunction with the current center, but will offer new services to meet the needs of nearby residents. Over the past year, the CommUnity Center has served 8,250 people, a number that is now expected to grow when the new south campus officially opens its doors this spring or summer.

Several key donors have come alongside the center’s leadership in helping make this opportunity a reality. Last fall, the Walt Disney World Corporation presented the board with a surprise gift of $250,000. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have made a significant contribution as well. And a new grant from the Marguerite Casey Foundation is enabling the center to strengthen its outreach efforts through the community organizing and service learning programs.

“We are actively seeking to introduce our work to individuals and funders interested in partnering in this ministry of compassion and justice.”

David Crump

“In this Year of Mercy we are reminded of Pope Francis’ words that ‘there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor,’ Sister Kendrick said. “It is this vision of engaged faith that we seek to live out each day here at Hope CommUnity Center.”

For information on volunteering or donating to the center, call 407-880-4673.

Linda Leonard is one of many dedicated volunteers who make the work of the Hope CommUnity Center possible.

Orlando Diocese recognized for energy-saving initiatives

ELIZABETH WILSON Special to the Florida Catholic

ORLANDO | The Orlando Dioce- cese was recently recognized in the city of Orlando’s Stakeholder Spotlight for efforts to enhance school and campus spaces with energy-saving initiatives. The ef- forts included installing several LED lighting upgrades at the St. Augustine Parish Center in Casselberry, LED flat-panel upgrade at St. Joseph Catholic School in Winter Haven, and air conditioning and LED lighting upgrades at Holy Redeemer Parish in Kissim- mee.

Chris Castro, senior energy ad- viser for the city of Orlando said the diocesan efforts would not have been achieved without the “dedi- cation” of Patrick Barker, director of facilities with the diocesan Sec- retariat of Ecclesiastical Property, which is funded by Our Catholic Appeal, and other business manag- ers and maintenance supervisors including Jane Bailey from St. Jose- ph Parish, Matt Smith from Holy Redeemer Parish, and Douglas “JR” Armstrong Jr. of Bishop Moore Catholic High School.

In addition the diocese has in- stalled human-centric LED light- ing technology at Morning Star Catholic School’s newly renovated collaborative learning building that includes an exercise room, demonstration kitchen and educa- tional centers. The enhancements at Morning Star in particular will have a concrete impact on the lives of the students. The new lighting is designed to enhance alertness, mood and productivity. The set- ting will help children with special needs such as autism.

“The goal is to enhance envi- ronmental and human benefits by balancing the needs of the earth and our students, and by showing good stewardship of our resourc- es,” said Barker, diocesan director of facilities. “I see this technology as the future of lighting because it’s lighting the way for new opportuni- ties for students. It saves electricity, reduces maintenance and operating costs and helps students succeed.”

The Diocese of Orlando is commit- ted to following the call of Pope Francis’ encyclical message to be better stewards of “our common home.”

Hope CommUnity Center’s citizenship preparation classes on Tuesdays and Saturdays are overflowing, with nearly 150 students filling three small classrooms. The expansion to a second campus will allow for more ministry opportunities and a greater number of people served.

PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH WILSON | FC
Vietnamese community celebrates New Year’s Mass

The choir sings in Vietnamese during the New Year’s Day Mass Feb. 8 in Orlando. The all-female choir wore the traditional Vietnamese dress, known as ao dai. The color red represents the blood that was shed by martyrs for their faith.

Ceremonial dancers perform during the offertory. Vietnamese youth dressed in traditional costumes and military uniforms representing their history provided a lively display while gifts of bread and wine along with flowers and fruit were presented to Bishop Noonan.

Bishop John Noonan delivers the homily at St. Philip Phan Van Minh Parish during the New Year’s Day Mass Feb. 8, which follows the lunar calendar for Southeast Asia. (PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE COMMERCE | FC)
Pope’s astronomer to speak at Embry-Riddle

KATHERINE LAGUNA
of the Florida Catholic staff

DAYTONA BEACH | Jameson Pietrowski clearly remembers his parents taking him to the Cranbrook Science Center in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., as a young boy. He’d place his eye in the lens of a telescope and gaze into the night sky to see the glow of Mars and Jupiter’s Galilean moons. This is when he loves for astronomy began. On one of Pietrowski’s visits, a Vatican scientist named Brother Guy Consolmagno discussed his profession as a scientist and theologian and showed him a copy of his book “Brother Astronomer: Adventures of a Vatican Scientist.”

“It was not until my freshman year of college that I actually read my copy of ‘Brother Astronomer,’” said Pietrowski, a senior at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach. Pietrowski is majoring in mechanical engineering. “I enjoyed reading the book. It certainly planted a seed; the thought of finding God in my everyday life.”

Now years later, Pietrowski will have another opportunity to see Brother Consolmagno again. The Jesuit brother is known as “the pope’s astronomer” and was named by Pope Francis to be the director of the Vatican Observatory; and an ecumenical perspective by a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. David Keck. He has worked as an amateur astronomer with the Vatican Observatory since 1993. “It is a perfect fit to have Brother Guy on our campus,” said the Rev. David Keck, a Presbyterian minister who is a campus minister at Embry-Riddle. “Many of our students struggle with how to be both a believer and a scientist. For a number of reasons, Christians probably have the greatest problem reconciling their science and faith. Catholic teaching is very helpful in this regard, especially given the Church’s emphasis on natural law.”

Rev. Keck said he is delighted to have Brother Consolmagno in the classrooms and lab,” said Pietrowski. “In ‘Brother Astronomer,’ (Brother) Consolmagno makes this case that science and religion are not adversities, but companions; and the act of these discoveries, is also the act of furthering our look into God’s creation. Looking into God’s creation can be another form of prayer.”

“Cosmology, Science and Faith” is part of the Embry-Riddle Speaker Series. Rev. Keck will also speak and will present an eccumenical perspective on glorifying God by understanding God’s creation.

Since it will give an opportunity to learn more about a distinctive Catholic perspective and give a broader approach on faith that is common to all Christians.

With over 200 scientific publications, Brother Consolmagno is also the author of “Turn Left at Orion” and his most recent “Would You Baptize an Extraterrestrial?”

For Pietrowski, reading Brother Consolmagno’s “Brother Astronomer” influenced his perspective on life and faith.

“When I was a freshman, questioning everything from my faith to my major was constant, but there was some peace in realizing God could not only be in our campus’ tabernacle, but part of the revelations since we are to have Brother Consolmagno, a planetary scientist, is director of the Vatican Observatory. The Jesuit from Detroit will be the keynote speaker March 2 at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach. (COURTESY)
OBITUARY: FATHER PETER QUINN

Faithful priest and Irish sports champion

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Do you know Jesus? Lent is a time of conversion and a time to deepen our faith, to come to know Jesus and to renew our relationship with him. Lent is our gift, a special time set aside in the Church year that we might focus on Jesus of Nazareth, merciful like the Father. It is a time to reflect upon God’s covenant with humanity and our own covenant with God, as we begin with the Sacrament of Baptism.

Pope Francis wrote in his Lenten Message 2016, “The mystery of divine mercy is revealed in the history of the covenant between God and his people Israel. Here is a true love story in which God plays the role of the beloved father and husband, while Israel plays the unfaithful child and bride. This love story culminates in the incarnation of God’s Son. In Christ, the Father pours forth his boundless mercy even to the name Peter Quinlan because he was kind of the sport full time.

KATHERINE LAGUNA

ORLANDO | Father Peter Quinn, a retired priest of the Diocese of Orlando, died Jan. 30 in Ireland. He was 91. He leaves a legacy of faith, service and outstanding achievements, including a brief time as an Irish sports hero.

Father Quinn was one of 10 children born to William and Katherine Quinn from Ballina, County Mayo, Ireland. In his 20s, he was known for his swift speed and athletic leadership as a 1950s star of Gaelic football. After he entered the seminary, he continued to play football. However, he had to play under the name Peter Quinlan because of a ban on clerics playing inter-county football at the time. He was ordained a priest with the Columban Missionaries Dec. 21, 1950. That same year, Father Quinn won his first all-Ireland medal in volleyball. In his second in life I've baptized, all the marriage, all the anointings the millions of confessions down the years. These are the things you don't forget.”

After retirement he moved to Daytona Beach where he assisted at several Volusia County parishes. He later moved back to Ireland where he eventually moved into a nursing home 17 minutes from his family home in Ballina.

He is survived by brothers, Pat and Gerry; a sister, Sister Josephine; and nieces and nephews. His funeral Mass was celebrated Feb. 7 at St. Patrick Church in Ballina. 

Construction workers needed for missions trips to Dominican Republic

ELIZABETH WILSON Special to the Florida Catholic

ORLANDO | The Mission Office of the Diocese of Orlando, which is funded in part by Our Catholic Appeal, has set three ambitious but critical construction goals for 2016 to improve the safety and well-being of the people of Orlando’s sister Diocese of San Juan de la Maguana in the Dominican Republic. Local villagers are working on the projects throughout the year, but Emmett Sapp, associate director with the Mission Office, said additional help through diocesan mission trips are essential for the projects to be completed in a timely manner. He invites all the faithful to join this important effort.

“Knowledge of construction is helpful and needed, but the desire to show love and compassion for our marginalized family is the only requirement,” Sapp said. The top priority is the construction of a safety barricade and erosion-control system around one of the village schools. Educating children in the Dominican Republic is a work of mercy because missionaries are helping to instruct those without knowledge. The St. Maximillian Kolbe Middle School in Los Frios is located on a mountainside overlooking a steep valley. A 2014 addition to the school created educational space for the growing student population, but also created the need to install a safety barricade to protect the students from the drop-off outside their play area. In addition to a 400-foot concrete culvert to stop water erosion that could threaten to undermine the foundation of the school, the school needs 400 feet of 6-foot-high fencing. The Mission Office expects to complete this project in April.

The remaining construction missions this year will focus on the village of El Montazo with the repair of a damaged aqueduct system and expansion of the school. This project is also a work of mercy as missionaries bring water to the thirsty. On Aug. 30, 1979, Hurricane David pummeled the Dominican Republic and completely destroyed the aqueduct system of El Montazo. Currently residents must hike to the site of the destroyed aqueduct and collect water in 5-gallon buckets to carry back to school or home.

Additionally, the increase in student population at the school in El Montazo has caused overcrowding. Initially the school was designed for preschool and kindergarten classes. Today the school serves children from Pre-K to grade four. Due to a lack of space, third- and fourth-graders must hike to a different building about a half-mile away up a very steep hill. A new design will incorporate the open spaces around the school to keep all the students together.

“Don’t pass up this invitation to show love and compassion to our brothers and sisters living on the fringe,” Sapp said. “Working hand and hand with our less fortunate family will open hearts in life-changing ways for both yourself and our often-forgotten community.”

For more information, contact Sapp at esapp@orlandodiocese.org or visit www.orlandodiocese.org/ministries-offices/mission-office.

A missioner from the Diocese of Orlando works on a building project during a recent construction mission trip. Construction missions help improve the lives and safety of the people of the Diocese of San Juan de la Maguana. (COURTESY)

Community Business Directory

ATTORNEYS

Anne-Marie E. Bowen, P.A.
Bankruptcy Law
Former Chairman, Bankruptcy Committee, DCBA
100 N. Orange Ave., Orlando
407-228-1300
www.bowenbankruptcylaw.com

Ian L. Gilden, P.A.
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Guardianship and Elder Law
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SCHOOLS CELEBRATED AS CENTERS OF FAITH, KNOWLEDGE AND SERVICE

Catholic schools throughout the Diocese of Orlando joined nearly 6,600 other U.S. Catholic schools to celebrate Catholic Schools Week Jan. 31-Feb. 6. Festivities and events included Masses, open houses, service projects and other activities for students, families, parishioners and community members. The theme was “Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service.”

Henry Fortier, superintendent of Catholic schools, said diocesan schools have long embraced the theme of this special week. “The theme of faith, knowledge and service is a concise definition of who we are as Catholic schools, with faith being at the center,” he said. “Obviously everything we do is a gift from God to be given back to God.”

The Diocese of Orlando is comprised of 31 elementary schools, five high schools, five early childhood centers and one special-education school, and serves more than 14,000 students. Nineteen of the schools are designated as Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence. Students receive an education that prepares them for higher education, a competitive work environment, but most importantly, living a Christian life of virtue in a challenging society.
MCC president receives national honor

KATHERINE LAGUNA of the Florida Catholic staff

MELBOURNE | “Catholic education is not just a career for me; it is truly a vocation and a way that I serve the Catholic Church,” said Michael Burke, president of Melbourne Central Catholic High School.

Burke is one of only two Catholic school presidents in the nation being recognized by top honors at the 2016 National Catholic Educational Association Convention and Expo in San Diego March 29-31. The annual award honors those who have demonstrated strong Catholic school education philosophy as well as exceptional ability, dedication and results. Dr. Thomas Burnford, interim president of the national organization, said the association “commends the outstanding efforts, contributions and achievements of these exceptional leaders in Catholic education.”

“We are grateful for the leadership of Michael Burke who serves as an ambassador of faith formation and academic excellence, and inspires Catholic educators across the world,” he said.

With more than 30 years of working in the Catholic school profession as a teacher, coach and principal, Burke has served as president of Melbourne Central Catholic for six years. He has implemented a variety of programs at the school, such as a multifaceted global studies program and a partnership with the Florida Institute of Technology so students may take college courses. These are just some of the reasons that the school’s enrollment has increased by 55 percent. He said the school is in the “business of transformation,” where students learn to grow and change.

“We do not have a world that we are working diligently to improve all areas of the student experience including faith formation, athletics and co-curricular,” Burke said. “The result of strengthening all of these areas set a solid foundation to begin to work on a more effective enrollment process. Strong enrollment is really a by-product of offering a solid, multidimensional and high-quality experience for our students.”

Henry Fortier, diocesan superintendent of schools, said he is impressed by Burke’s achievements and described him as a leader and “true community.”

“He has transformed Melbourne Central Catholic in many ways,” Fortier said. “He is a humble man who works diligently to afford the best Catholic education possible to all students.”

To be honored by the National Catholic Educational Association, candidates must meet the criteria of leading, learning and proclaiming. In leadership, Burke organized a productive plan immediately after becoming the president of Melbourne Central Catholic.

“One of the first things I wanted to address was our vision for the future,” he said. “That began with the undertaking of a five-year strategic plan.”

During his first year, he and the school’s board completed the school’s strategic vision, which allowed the school to rise in its performance across many levels. Burke provided students with the best instructional equipment possible by offering Chromebooks to help provide an educational experience that is “more engaging, thought-provoking and collaborative.” This allows students and teachers to be able to collaborate in the classroom with the use of Chromebooks and the education platform. Burke said the school’s Catholic identity thrives thanks to extracurricular activities, such as its annual service day where faculty, staff and student body spend the day “making a difference in the lives of those who are in need in our community.”

“Freshmen are charged with a beach cleanup, sophomores visit our partner schools and spend time with the youths in various activities, juniors work with various nonprofit agencies and seniors visit nursing homes or assisted-living facilities,” he said.

At the national convention in San Diego, Burke will participate alongside teachers, principals, pastors, presidents, superintendents and others who serve in the nation’s Catholic school educational system—elementary and secondary schools, religious education programs, and colleges and universities.

NEWSbriefs

Catholic couples to grow ‘Together in Holiness’

All married and engaged Catholic couples are invited to the “Together in Holiness” marriage conference Saturday, March 5, 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m., at St. Mary Magdalen Parish, 861 Maitland Ave., Altamonte Springs. This is a diocesewide conference that is being planned by several parishes and the Diocese of Orlando Family Ministry. Couples will learn how to strengthen their marriage and family life, and to overcome challenges they are facing with God’s love. The event features national and local speakers, including Danielle Bean, a mother of eight, who is editor-in-chief of Catholic Digest and Faith and Family Living; and Arland Nichols, president of the St. John Paul II Foundation, a national Catholic apostolate which seeks to proclaim the Gospel of life and form families as intimate communities of love. Together in Holiness is an inspiring conference series for Catholic couples that empowers them to deepen their faith life and grow together in holiness,” said Father Charlie Mitchell, pastor of St. Mary Magdalen Parish. “This is a great way for us to demonstrate our commitment to Pope Francis’ call for us to bolster our pastoral care of families.”

Attendees also will have the opportunity to participate in the celebration of Mass, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Register at www.TogetherInHoliness.org.

CRS collection set for March 5-6

Parishioners will have an opportunity to support brothers and sisters overseas through the Catholic Relief Services special collection March 5-6, which supports Catholic Church organizations that carry out international relief and solidarity efforts, which bring forth the corporal works of mercy such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked and sheltering the homeless. Programs include relief and resettlement for victims of persecution, war, and natural disasters; development projects to improve living conditions for the poor; legal and support services for poor immigrants; peace and reconciliation work for people suffering from violence; and advocacy on behalf of the powerless. This collection provides funding for CRS; the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Offices of International Justice and Peace, Migration and Refugee Services, and Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees; relief work of the Holy Father; and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. For more information on how you can help CRS locally, contact the Office of Advocacy and Justice at 407-658-1818, ext. 1084; or advocacyjustice@orlandodiocese.org.

Young adults invited to special night

Bishop John Noonan is inviting young adults to join him for “Called to Holiness,” Feb. 28, 6-9:30 p.m., at Holy Family Parish, 5125 S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando. This special night has been designed for young adults searching for answers about their vocation. The evening includes the celebration of Mass, vocation presentations and prayer with Bishop Noonan and young adults from around the diocese. Father Joshua Swallow and Sister Christine Hernandez, Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary, will speak about their vocation to priesthood and religious life, respectively, and Rachel and Jason Bullman will speak about their vocation to marriage. The evening will end with Eucharistic Adoration. There will also be an opportunity to meet religious communities from around the country. Contact the Office of Vocations at 407-246-4875.
**DIOCESAN EVENTS**

**Rituals of the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday workshops:** Presented for those who are responsible for the preparation and celebration of particular liturgies and rites of the Church, such as pastoral musicians, sacramental preparation catechists, priest preachers and diaconal ministers. Free of charge. Office of Music and Liturgy, 407-246-4860.

**Saturday, Feb. 20, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Our Parish Hall, 5301 N. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach.**

**“24 Hours for the Lord”:** Friday, March 4; Bishop John Noonan asks every parish in the diocese to open its doors for 24 hours for the Sacrament of Penance and Eucharistic Adoration. Parishes can offer communal celebration of the Rite of Penance with individual confession and absolution either March 4 or March 5. To find a parish, www.orlandodiocese.org/find-a-parish.

**40 Hours for the Lord: Good Shepherd Parish, 5900 Oleanndr Drive, Orlando.**

- Mass with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament: Wednesday, March 2, 7:30-9 p.m.
- Bilingual penance service and Confession: Thursday, March 3, 7-9 p.m.
- Closing Mass of 40 Hours for the Lord (Spanish): Friday, March 4, 7 p.m. 407-277-5393.

**Prison ministry training:**

- Saturday, March 19, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., St. Paul Parish, 1330 Sunshine Ave., Leesburg. Training sessions for new and current ministers will include ministering in a prison or jail, re-entry support for former prisoners, ministering to families of the incarcerated and more. Christine Shields, cshields@orlandodiocese.org.

**“Rise Up,” Catholic men’s conference:**

- Saturday, Feb. 20, 8-3:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Holy Family Parish, 5125 S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando.

The first diocese-wide men’s conference will feature Father Jeremiah Payen, a vicar of Holy Name of Jesus Parish, Diocesan Pastoral Associate, and first cousin from EWTN’s “The Crossing The Goal”; and Danny Abromovicz, former NFL player and originator of the video series “The Crossing The Goal.” Includes music, opportunity for Sacrament of Reconciliation and Mass. Dennis Johnson, 407-246-4913 or djjohnson@orlandodiocese.org.

**RETREATS/DAYS OF REFLECTION**

San Pedro Center retreats listed below, various dates:

- 2400 Dixie Highway, Delray Beach. For more information or to register: www.sanpedrocenter.org/retreats.png, 561-273-8772.

- “Walking to Penance,” assisted by Franciscan Father Giles Schiellini. Cost: $100, commuters.
- Senior diurnal retreat: Thursday, March 10, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. “Praying the Psalms,” facilitated by Franciscan Father Giles Schiellini. Please bring a Bible. Cash: $15. Joyful Again retreat: Saturday, Feb. 20, 2nd class, Feb. 28. For widows and widowers seeking healing and grace. Trained facilitators have been widowed themselves. Various topics are discussed, time for reflection and Mass.

**COMMUNITY EVENTS**

Mardi Gras “soupper supper”:


**“Together in Holiness” community ecumenical Eucharist:

- Sunday, March 2, 8 a.m., St. Mary Magdalen Parish, 861 Maitland Ave., Altamonte Springs. Eucharists are welcomed to grow together in holiness and to County Road 462. For more information and family life. Couple registration: $45; individual registration: $25. 407-831-6723. www.togetherinholiness.org/orlando-florida-2016.

**Morning Star Catholic School annual spring bazaar,

- Friday-Saturday, March 11-12, 8 a.m.-1 p.m., 330 Lehigh Ave, Orlando. Kathy Harding, ms59454@aol.com, 407-885-8588.

**St. Patrick’s Day card party:

- Tuesday, March 15, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., St. Mary Magdalen Parish, 861 Maitland Ave., Altamonte Springs. Card games, silent auction, door prizes and luncheon with complimentary wine. Benefits wounded veterans, families in transition and homeless children in Seminole County. Tickets: $25 per person; $100 per table. Nancy Larkin, 407-831-7108 or nlarkin100@gmail.com.

**Annual luncheon/fashion show:


**Preparing your Catholic legacy.***

- Seminars will help people get started by teaching important information about life and legacy planning. Seminars are free, but seating is limited, so please RSVP.
- Monday, Feb. 8, 1-2 p.m., St. Vincent de Paul Parish, 5323 E. Colonial and Bear Lake Drive, Orlando. R.S.V.P.

**DIOCESAN EVENTS WITH BISHOP JOHN NOOAN**

**“Called to Holiness,” an evening for current or future religious in Catholic schools and parishes:**

- Saturday, Feb. 27, 6-9 p.m., Holy Family Parish, 5125 S. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando. Bishop John Noonan invites you to participate in a retreat experience that includes Mass, vocation presentations, fellowship, food and drink. Young and religious sisters will share their vocation stories and a young priest will speak about marriage. Concludes with the Office of Vocations, 407-246-4875.

**Christ Mass:**

- Wednesday, March 23, 6:30 p.m., St. James Cathedral, 215 N Orange Ave., Orlando. Bishop John Noonan will bless the holy oils.

**DIOCESAN EVENTS WITH BISHOP JOHN NOOAN**

**FVI**

- To submit parish, school, diocesan or related event information to be considered for publication in the Diocese of Orlando and Florida Catholic calendar of events, please visit www.orlandodiocese.org/submit-an-event. Submissions should be received by 4-6 p.m. Tuesday prior to the requested event. Not all submissions will be printed due to space limitations and other considerations.

Parish, 6200 S. Orange Blossom Trail, Orlando. Invites Catholics to identify God’s voice in their lives and apply Catholicism to every aspect of life. Tickets: $39, includes all materials. www.dynamcccorklando.org.

**Spring dance:**

- Saturday, April 2, 8-11 p.m., St. Michael’s Parish, 530 N. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach. All singles and couples are welcome, $10.Y.O.B. Live music. Tickets: $8 per person. Proceeds benefit womens ministry. www.123-887-7775 or 727-833-4152.

**MASSES/PRAYER SESSIONS**

**Taize prayer service:**

- Tuesday, March 1, 7 p.m., San Pedro Center, Mary Mother of God Chapel, 2400 Dixie Highway, Winter Park. Candle lit, contemplative prayer to enrich the experience of Lent. Cost: $5 suggested donation to cover cost of musicians. www.orlandodiocese.org/mission-mass-prayer-services.

**MISSION OFFICE OF THE DIOCESE OF ORLANDO SEeks VOlunteers**

- Volunteers help staff pick up furniture and set up apartments for refugees before they arrive. Must be 18 or older and able to lift furniture. Jennifer.Powers@cfcc.org or 407-658-1818, ext. 1061.

**Volunteer medical professionals such as MDs, PA, RNs, even lay people or endocrinologists, orthopedic surgeons, certified health educators, general and nurse practitioners needed at each clinic. Myrna.Ariese@cfcc.org. Lazarus Free Medical and Dental Clinic in Wildwood; Erin.Burley@cfcc.org. St. Luke’s Free Medical and Dental Clinic in Eustis; Kelly.Bender@cfcc.org. St. Thomas Free Medical Clinic in Clermont.**

**Life Choices Women’s Center, a Catholic pro-life pregnancy resource center, 600 E. Altamonte Drive, Altamonte Springs, is in need of volunteer laundresses to do their laundry. Nurses to perform ultrasounds (trained provided), administrative staff and volunteers with light cleaning, and receptionists. Also accepting donations of baby items, especially diapers and wipes. Drop off during office hours. 321-422-4168.

**SUPPORT MINISTRIES/PEER GROUPS**

**Separated and divorced:**

- Mondays, 7:30 p.m., Holy Redeemer Parish, 1603 N. Thacker Street, Sylvester, 407-406-0707.

**Catholic Divorce Survival Guide Tuesday, 6-8:30 p.m.:** Cost: $30; scholarships available; first Fridays, Mass and dinner, social; St. Margaret Mary Parish, 526 Park Ave. N., Winter Park. Lori Reinneck, lori@stmargaretmary.org. 407-645-0284.

**Coffee and conversation, second Thursdays, 7 p.m. Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, 1104 Halcyon Place, Daytona Beach, Terrace, 386-238-3631.

**Families with incarcerated loved ones:**

- Third Saturdays, 8:45 a.m., St. Mary Magdalen Parish, Mother Teresa Room, 861 Maitland Ave, Altamonte Springs, 407-463-5780 or orlando@adaport.org.

**Bereavement support groups:**

- Blessed Trinity Parish, Building 209, 7001 Bruce St., Ocala, multiple groups; and first Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. Compassionate Friends, Ocala chapter, for bereaved families who have experienced the death of a child. Peggy McLskey, 352-594-2978.

- First Fridays, 6-8 p.m., St. Stephen Parish, Enrichment Center 1, Room 103, 575 Tuskaivilla Road, Winter Springs. For anyone who has lost a loved one, spouse, parent, child or sibling. 407-699-5883.


- Wednesdays, 7 p.m., Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, 1 University Blvd., Daytona Beach. Pat Beeman, 386-788-7128.

**Florida Catholic**

Feb. 19-March 10, 2016
Lent: 40-day journey has begun, a time of salvation

PALM SPRINGS | The Christmas season has come and gone, and now Ash Wednesday on Feb. 10 marked the beginning of Lent. People flocked to churches here to receive ashes on their foreheads as a sign of the spirit of the season — repentance.

“The heart of Lent is reconciliation,” Father Andrew Brierley, pastor of St. Luke Parish in Palm Springs, said during early morning Mass on Ash Wednesday to the parishioners, and students and faculty of St. Luke School who attended. “It is a period when our whole mind and heart are focused on Jesus. Lent is a time in which all are called to change and turn more to the Lord.”

During Lent, the faithful increase prayer, perform good works and give up certain items that they like as a means of purification and a way to center more closely on the word of God as Holy Week and Easter approach. This year, Palm Sunday, which begins Holy Week, is March 20. The Chrism Mass attended by clergy and parishioners from around the Diocese of Palm Beach will be celebrated March 22 at the Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola in Palm Beach Gardens. All are invited and encouraged to attend. Good Friday is March 25, and Easter Sunday, the resurrection of the Lord, is March 27.

“If we make reconciliation the heart of Lent, just think where we can be,” said Father Brierley encouraging all to take part fully in the 40-day spiritual journey by participating in prayer, fasting, penance and outreach to others. “We think about ways we can be Jesus to others. Let’s try to live that (way) each day of the season of Lent.”

RITE OF ELECTION CEREMONIES

Two Rite of Election ceremonies held at the Cathedral of St. Ignatius Loyola in Palm Beach Gardens served as a sign of the Church’s continued growth and dedicated mission of evangelization. A total of 39 parishes participated in the rite Feb. 13 and 14, which included 153 catechumens and 478 candidates (those who are baptized and seek full communion in the Church) being presented. Catechumens, those who are receiving baptism, confirmation and first Communion at Easter, sign the Book of the Elect, which was also signed by Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito, as seen top right. Above left, catechumens walk down the aisle of the cathedral with the right hand of their sponsor upon their shoulder. Bishop Barbarito served as main celebrant during both rites. He explained how Catholicism is a great gift from God, and Catholics are called to the faith. “You are on a journey, a journey to be a family. All of us are one and we hold on to our faith. … We have been called. The call is real, and it comes from God.”

Catechumens write their names in the Book of the Elect under the heading, “Those called to the sacraments of initiation.” (PHOTOS BY LINDA REEVES | FC)
Class offers exercise for body and soul

LINDA REEVES

DELRAY BEACH | A parish here in the southern part of the diocese is offering a new prayer gathering open to everyone, which is designed to not only nourish the soul and bolster prayer life, but also strengthen the body.

Welcome to St. Vincent Ferrer Parish’s “SoulCore.” The weekly program kicked off at the end of January and was so well received that the one-day gathering is now offered on two days of the week, Mondays and Wednesdays, after the 7 a.m. Mass.

SoulCore is a workout session featuring stretching and strengthening moves designed by two Catholic women. The one-hour exercise program incorporates the recitation of the rosary with short intervals of reflections on Scripture.

“I believe SoulCore is great to help strengthening our soul and body at the same time.” said Irene Hey, director of the parish’s family life services ministry, who learned of the program and brought it to the parish with the approval of the pastor. “I love the fact that it offers the participant the opportunity to learn how to pray the rosary if they are not familiar with the prayers and mysteries.”

Nearly 20 women showed up for the first session Jan. 20. There were work professionals, mothers who had dropped their children off at school and some retirees. The women — all ages, shapes and sizes dressed in comfortable clothing — took off their shoes and tossed workout mats on the floor.

The room was dimly lit, candles burned and a large rosary was displayed in the center of the multi-purpose room in the parish hall along with some images of the Holy Family, Jesus and a crucifix. The decor created a lovely setting for prayer unlike the busy, noisy atmosphere of a gym.

“It was so peaceful,” said Hey as she welcomed the women. “We will begin by reflecting on the joyful mysteries.”

It started a DVD. A couple of instructors on their own mats popped up on the big screen in front of the room. Music played, and one lead instructor, in a very soft voice, began presenting various strength-building exercises mainly focused on the core.

The instructors demonstrated the exercise move, encouraged all to join in and led rosary prayer. The women attending the session began the moves and were encouraged to go at their own pace, comfort level and with safety, avoiding any uncomfortable moves.

“It is nice to say the rosary with your exercise,” said Lorraine Maclaren, a parishioner of St. Vincent Ferrer, who showed up for the inaugural program. “The setting is lovely. Our program is beautiful. You get connected with people.

The sessions are nearly one hour. Resting intervals are held between exercise moves. This is a time for reflection on the rosary mystery.

The exercises used during the program are designed by a Pilates instructor, who is the Catholic co-founder of the program. The exercises involve basic Isometric exercises and powerful movements that originate from the center of the body out, and focus on areas including the abdomen, obliques and lower back. The movements are good for improving strength and relieving back pain, helping with posture and increasing good balance and tone.

Terri Pfeil came to the first class, but was hesitant at first because she thought some of the moves resembled yoga moves. Hey assured her that SoulCore is not yoga, and the St. Vincent program is approved and supported by Church leaders. Pfeil also did some research on her own.

“I know many Catholic women who attend yoga classes because they want to get a great workout, but don’t have any other venue that offers them the ability to strengthen their core,” said Hey about the many styles and forms of yoga, all with a different focus and many designed to control breathing and the mind.

“Yoga is a Hindu spiritual discipline that is also used by the New Age movement and incorporates Eastern meditation practices and relaxation exercises that are in direct opposition to biblical Christianity,” Hey said. “As Catholics, we are to stay clear from anything New Age.”

Program co-founder Colleen Scariano is a resident of Carmel, Ind. She created the SoulCore program with her friend Deanne Millner. Both women are parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Carmel.

“SoulCore was not created as a response to any other practice, but rather was a ‘yes’ to an inspiration of the Holy Spirit that came as I grew in my devotion to the Blessed Mother following a tragic loss in my family,” Scariano told the Florida Catholic.

She described the program as the full support of her local pastor, as well as many priests throughout the country, “Bishop Timothy Doherty of our diocese in Lafayette, Ind., has been gracious in his support of the ministry,” Scariano added.

Parishes across the nation are now offering the program, which is being discovered through word of mouth and the Internet. The St. Vincent program is the only one offered in Florida, according to Scariano.

Scariano shared the theological and philosophical differences between SoulCore and yoga. “Yoga is a practice of polytheism and SoulCore is founded in monotheism, one true God. Yoga is based on Eastern meditation practices, while SoulCore is based in Christian meditation, which is always focused on the life of Jesus Christ. Yoga is about ‘emptying’ the mind and SoulCore is about ‘filling’ the mind and soul, specifically with the life and word of Christ,” she said.

“I love the program,” said attendee Dawn Edwards, a parishioner of St. Vincent Ferrer. “I am so out of shape. The program is nice because you can pray and set different intentions for others.”

“One thing that I especially like about the new rosary exercise program is that it is a great alternative for Catholics who have been participating in some form of yoga.” said Very Rev. Canon Thomas Skindeleski, pastor of St. Vincent Ferrer. “The participants meditate on the word of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, as well as the mysteries and virtues of the rosary. Though the Eucharist is primary, praying the rosary is one of the greatest weapons we have against Satan. This program also helps those who don’t yet know how to pray the rosary, to learn it so that they can increase their prayer life. Through such a program as this, the participant is able to nurture both body and soul.”
Year of Consecrated Life concludes

LINDA REEVES
of the Florida Catholic staff

WEST PALM BEACH | A Holy Hour and Benediction were organized Feb. 7 to celebrate the World Day for Consecrated Life and to officially mark the close of the Year of Consecrated Life declared worldwide by Pope Francis in November 2014.

“Since it is the close of the Year of Consecrated Life, we invited the laity,” said Franciscan Sister Joan Dawson, diocesan episcopal delegate of the Office of Religious Men and Women. She organized the gathering that encouraged lay affiliates of various religious orders to attend along with religious sisters and brothers and order priests of the various communities who serve here. Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito presided.

“All bless the Church,” Sister Dawson said. “Today we gather to reflect and to pray.”

The event was held at Mary Immaculate Parish. Father Tomasz Makowski, pastor, was on hand along with Father Brian King, episcopal secretary, who assisted. The afternoon included exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction, prayer and reflection, Scripture readings, music and the singing of hymns and blessings.

At one point, the consecrated men and women processed to the altar to receive white candles. The candles were lit, and everyone gathered in a circle around the altar with a candle in one hand. Bishop Barbarito said, “On this World Day for Consecrated Life, I invite you to renew your vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.”

The men and women held their candles high and were united in the renewal of vows saying, “Eternal triune God, trusting in your faithful love, I renew my vows to live my life following Christ in poverty, chastity and obedience. I commit myself anew to serve the Church in the ministry entrusted to me from my congregation. May the light and joy of God’s love shine in me and through me all the days of my life.”

Bishop Barbarito responded by saying, “May Christ dwell in you through faith, and may love continue to be the root and foundation of your lives, so that you may be filled with the fullness of Christ. May almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

St. John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life in 1997. It was celebrated by the Church Feb. 2 and in parishes on Feb. 6 and 7. The celebration is attached to the feast of the Presentation of the Lord and is also known as Candlemas Day, a day when candles, symbolizing Christ who is the light of the world, are blessed.

The celebration and the recent Year of Consecrated Life both highlighted the many gifts that consecrated men and women bring to the Church. The yearlong celebration featured several events highlighting the more than 30 different orders of religious women, and 15 different orders of religious men serving in the diocese.

Religious men and women are engaged in parish ministry, education, health care, social work, outreach and community service. “We want people to know religious are alive and well,” Sister Dawson told the Florida Catholic about the yearlong celebration. “We want people to know we are active in the Church, and see that we are out there spreading the good news. That is what we are called to do.”

The faithful are encouraged to continue to pray for all those who have been called to consecrated life and vocations.

Above, religious hold candles representing the light of Christ and reaffirm commitments of perpetual vows to God. At left, members of religious communities serving the Diocese of Palm Beach gather for prayer during a diocesan World Day for Consecrated Life celebration.
Mother of Mercy

The formal Lenten message of Pope Francis this year, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice” (Mt 9:13), centers on his emphasis of mercy during this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. The pope begins his message by stressing that he had asked that the season of Lent be lived more intensely this Jubilee Year as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God’s mercy.

In a particularly way, the role of Mary, especially in regard to her praise of God when she encountered God’s mercy. In her Magnificat (Lk 1:46–55), Mary sings of the mercy of God with which she was chosen for this role. Mary realizes that she is the Son of God and not for any merit on her own, that she would be the Mother of God.

During this season of Lent, it is our invitation to us to reflect on Mary. God made someone who truly experienced God’s mercy in her life as well as in the lives of others, especially as she stood beneath the cross of her Son. Mary is the model of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and this is so precisely because she understood the revelation of God’s mercy in her Son. Mary stood with the apostles as the Holy Spirit came upon the Church on Pentecost, and was the clearest example of unity in Christ and guide for her his death and resurrection. She continues to be the source of unity within the Church even above Peter and the pope, and Mary has said on so many occasions. She is this emplifier of unity precisely because she realizes that it is Christ’s mercy which is central to her life and her death.

In his encyclical on God’s mercy, “Dives in Misericordiae,” St. John Paul II emphasized Mary as the “Mother of Mercy.” Truly this title of Mary is a significant one both in regard to her own experience of God’s mercy as well as to that experience in the lives of all the followers of her Son. It is also very significant because Mary is our mother and as our mother continually intercedes for us, and our Son’s mercy. She is the Mother of Mercy in a very real way because she is able to bring mercy into existence in the concrete events of our life. She also is the Mother of Mercy because she is the Mother of Christ who is indeed mercy itself.

It may be surprising to reflect upon Mary as one who accepted mercy in her life since, sinless, she was not in need of God’s forgive-ness. Mary, who was free from original sin, never committed any sin nor did she ever do anything to offend God in any way. Unlike the rest of us, she was not in need of coming to him and express himself in love. Therefore, Mary was the first to accept God’s mercy freely and unconditionally, always realizing that it is God who bestows upon us all that we have.

During this season of Lent, it is important for us to realize that we do not earn or deserve the mercy of God. It is especially important for us to realize that our merits and achievements result from the gift and grace of God. We are and what we may accomplish, as well as all of our talents and abilities, come from God. They are not our possessions.

However, what we can claim as our own, without any qualification, are our faults and our sins. These we possess completely on our own and our realization is that we really do not count our transgressions to be God’s way. No matter how significant our sins may be, God forgives us always realizing that he will never let us down.

He also forgives us over and over again, no matter how many times we may fail and turn to him. That is why the sacrament of reconciliation is such a wonderful gift all during the Jubilee of Mercy, and Lent is an especially good time to receive the sacrament and to grow in a better understanding of it.

It brings God joy to forgive us and we can never let our own pride come in the way of receiving this forgiveness. Soon we will be reflecting upon the betrayal of Judas who gave Jesus over in order to receive a monetary recompense. His sin is an obvious and grievous one which has marked the history of the world, making him an example of sinful betrayal. We will soon also be reflecting upon the betrayal of St. Peter who denied knowing Jesus Christ and separated himself from the Lord at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. His sin was also grievous.

However, what separates Peter from Judas is Peter’s willingness to accept and confess his betrayal. Jesus could not do this and put himself to death before asking for and receiving such forgiveness. As we reflect upon the mercy of God during this Lenten season, it is beneficial for us to realize that that Jesus, too, would have been forgiven had he not let his pride stand in the way.

St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, who is a very well-known and popular saint in the Church, knew very well the understanding of God’s mercy and Mary as the Mother of Mercy. Un-like Mary, St. Therese was not free from original sin, but she certainly lived a life free from any serious sins against God. However, she understood that God was all merciful and that the acceptance of his mercy by all of us brings him great joy. St. Therese cultivated the art of accepting forgiveness and it is a joy to light in her unsuccessful actions, not because they were unsuccessful, but because she knew they would bring her God’s unconditional mercy. She would say that “God has so much love to give, and he can’t do it; people present only their own merits, and these are so paltry.” She always knew that God was willing to forgive her failures joyfully and this brought her great joy.

As we continue our Lenten journey during this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, we look to Mary, the Mother of Mercy, in a special way as Pope Francis has called us to do. We reflect upon the words of St. Paul that we heard read at Mass on Ash Wednesday, “And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their transgressions against them... We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:18-20). These words are truly the epitome expression of God’s mercy which stands before all of us and should be the source of our life and joy.

May Mary, our Mother of Mercy, continue to intercede for us.

BISHOP BARBARTO’S SCHEDULE

Feb. 20 — 9 a.m., Welcome, Family Fully Alive in Christ, Palm Beach County Convention Center; West Palm Beach, 10:45 a.m., St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Palm Beach Gardens.

Feb. 21 — 10 a.m., Confirmation, St. John Fisher Parish, West Palm Beach; 6 p.m., Confirmation, Our Lady Queen of the Apostles, Royal Palm Beach; stop by visit, Spiritus Dei Gala, Lost Tree Club, North Palm Beach.

Feb. 22 — 2 p.m., Meeting, Finance Council, Pastoral Center, Palm Beach Gardens.

Feb. 24 — 10 a.m., Day of prayer for active and retired priests, Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center, North Palm Beach; 6 p.m., Mass/Dinner, Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulcher, St. Ann Parish, West Palm Beach.

Feb. 25 — 11:30 a.m.—4 p.m., Board meeting, St. John Vianney Seminary, Miami.

Feb. 26 — 10 a.m.—4 p.m., Board meeting, St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary, Boynton Beach.

Feb. 27 — 10:30 a.m., Wedding Anniversary Mass, St. Lucie Parish, Port St. Lucie.

Feb. 28 — noon, Confirmation, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Port St. Lucie.

March 2 — 10 a.m., Taping of TV节目, Maralip Productions, West Palm Beach.

March 5 — noon, Confirmation, St. Jude Parish, Boca Raton; 5:30 p.m., Confirmation, Emmanuel Parish, Delray Beach.

March 6 — 10:30 a.m., Confirmation, St. Andrew Parish, Stuart.

March 9 — noon, Meeting, Cathedral Deanery; 6 p.m., President’s Dinner, St. John Paul II Academy, Boca Raton.

March 10 — 11 a.m., Taping of televised Easter Mass, Paralax Productions.

March 11 — 9:30 a.m., Meeting, schools strategic management, Pastoral Center.

March 12 — 10 a.m., Confirmation, St. Jude Parish, Tequesta; 4:30 p.m., Confirmation, Sacred Heart Parish, Okeechobee; 6 p.m., Dinner dance/gala for Cardinal Newman High School, Marriott Hotel, West Palm Beach.

March 13 — 12:30 p.m., Confirmation, St. Mark Parish, Boynton Beach.
A special year to spend time with the Lord

WEST PALM BEACH | As part of Pope Francis’ worldwide Jubilee Year of Mercy, he is asking archdioceses and dioceses everywhere to open doors so that the faithful might encounter Christ and his mercy. Parishes here in the diocese are responding so that people have the opportunity to experience the Lord’s great love.

Linda Reeves
of the Florida Catholic staff

The special Jubilee Year of Mercy began Dec. 8, 2015, with the theme “Merciful Like the Father,” words taken from Luke 6:36. “The Jubilee of Mercy offers us, in the Diocese of Palm Beach, an opportunity to join with the universal Church in celebrating God’s mercy in our lives and in sharing that mercy with each other in a concrete manner,” said Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito. “It truly is meant to be a special year of grace.”

As part of the year, parishes are offering various events and activities. Pope Francis especially asked for the Year of Mercy “24 Hours for the Lord” be held March 4-5, featuring eucharistic adoration and the sacrament of reconciliation. Pope Francis especially asked for the Year of Mercy “24 Hours for the Lord” be held March 4-5, featuring eucharistic adoration and the sacrament of reconciliation. Pope Francis especially asked for the Year of Mercy “24 Hours for the Lord” be held March 4-5, featuring eucharistic adoration and the sacrament of reconciliation. Pope Francis especially asked for the Year of Mercy “24 Hours for the Lord” be held March 4-5, featuring eucharistic adoration and the sacrament of reconciliation. Pope Francis especially asked for the Year of Mercy “24 Hours for the Lord” be held March 4-5, featuring eucharistic adoration and the sacrament of reconciliation.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament begins at 5 p.m., and during the evening the sacrament of reconciliation will be made available to Haitian priests from 7 to 9 p.m., and Spanish priests from 9 p.m. to midnight.

“24 Hours for the Lord” beginning starting 7:30 a.m. to closing March 5, 7:30 a.m. St. Ann Parish, 310 N. Olive Ave., West Palm Beach. Call for schedule. 561-832-3757 or sryolandas@stannwpb.org.

The children of the Spanish confirmation class will lead prayer at 10 p.m.,” said Sister Nunez. “There will be a Spanish concert at 11 p.m.”

During the night various ministry groups will take turns leading prayer until the close at 7:30 a.m. “We encourage all to drop by St. Ann and spend some time with the Lord. It is a request of our Holy Father,” she said.

The parish will offer exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 9:30 a.m. to noon, and at midday there will be a Mass. “We will add to the Mass the anointing of the sick,” said Sister Nunez.

St. Ann Church will be open all afternoon for those who want to drop by for silent prayer and reflection. Booklets with prayers and reflections will be available. Music ministers will be on hand to provide soft spiritual music to add to the setting.

Visit the Diocese of Palm Beach website, www.diocesepb.org, for an update of other events.
School reaches out to feed the hungry

LINDA REEVES
of the Florida Catholic staff

BOCA RATON | On the first school day of Catholic Schools Week, Feb. 1, members of the St. Jude School community kicked off with the celebration’s theme at the project’s center — “Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service.”

Nearly 60 students and 20 adults, including the school principal and parish pastor, participated in a service project directed at helping the hungry. The program designed by Feeding Children Everywhere, a charity headquartered in Longwood, encourages people to come together and get involved in helping to feed the poor around the world.

“During this Year of Mercy we want to offer our children every opportunity to make a difference,” said Deborah Armstrong, principal.

Armstrong brought the program to the school after learning about it from Monica Valcavi, a St. Jude alumna, who found out about the program at a youth leadership seminar. Monica attends St. John Paul II Academy in Boca Raton, and partnered with Armstrong.

Lisa Miller, St. Jude School assistant, said St. Jude students, faculty and families raised $2,600 to spearhead the project.

As part of the outreach, money was raised for food, materials and supplies. On Feb. 1, participants gathered and formed assembly lines. Wearing caps and gloves, the volunteers organized, packaged and bagged food and then boxed it for delivery.

Each package contained enough healthy, nutritious food to feed a family of three to five people. In all, 6,048 meals were packaged and delivered to a shelter in Pahokee located in the western part of the diocese. The town is located on the edge of Lake Okeechobee and is known to be one of the poorest communities in Florida.

Eighth-grader Juliette Hof-fitz said, “I’m so happy to be part of this project. Helping others makes me feel good.”

Members of the St. Jude School community in Boca Raton, along with their pastor, Carmelite Father John Horan, center, wear caps and smiles after working together on a project that helped serve more than 6,000 people. (COURTESY)
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK

Event kicks off, marks significant celebrations

LINDA REEVES
of the Florida Catholic staff

STUART | St. Joseph Parish and School came up with a different idea for Catholic Schools Week this year and unveiled the project Jan. 31, the first day of the national celebration, during a special midday Mass at St. Joseph Church with main celebrant Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito.

After stepping up to the pulpit to proclaim how the event shines a light on Catholic education, Father Noel McGrath, pastor of St. Joseph, announced that parishioner Nancy Driscoll had created a special gift for Bishop Barbarito on behalf of the parish and school.

Escorted by Jack Mullarkey, school principal, Driscoll walked to the altar and carefully carried the gift in outstretched arms. She stood before Bishop Barbarito and presented to him a handmade, white and purple stole bearing the colorful logo of Catholic Schools Week.

“Thank you,” said a delighted and surprised Bishop Barbarito.

“It is rather novel,” Mullarkey said of the gift of appreciation for the bishop’s support of Catholic schools. “I had the idea, Father Noel contributed to it, and Nancy made it happen.”

Driscoll made a total of nine stoles. A product of Catholic schools herself and a big supporter of Catholic education, she volunteered to head up the project months ago. The stoles feature a small Catholic Schools Week emblem and the National Catholic Educational Association seal.

Driscoll, a winter resident from Maine and St. Joseph parishioner since 1980, said that her sewing skills date back to 1958 when her husband, George, bought her a sewing machine the year they were married. Driscoll, a busy mom of five children, was not interested at first in sewing, but began taking classes, and then later began making clothes for her three girls.

The credit goes to Mary, the Undoer of Knots,” said Driscoll about the beautiful stoles. “Mary, the Undoer of Knots was there for me on this project. So many times I had to call on her. Would I do it again? Yes, Overall, I am very happy the way it turned out.”

Following the presentation of the stole, Father McGrath asked altar server Kyle Ramos to approach the altar. The sixth-grader carried a high stack of colorful cards with greetings, messages and congratulations. Besides the kickoff to Catholic Schools Week, the day marked the 40th anniversary of Bishop Barbarito’s priestly ordination. He was ordained a priest Jan. 31, 1976. The special Mass also celebrated 617 students receiving the sacrament of confirmation.

“We liked working on the cards,” said student Alejandra Vallejos, 12. "It was a school wide project.”

Sporting a big smile, Bishop Barbarito was pleased with the gifts and surprises. He expressed his thanks over and over again to clergy, students, educators, Driscoll, the young people being confirmed and the entire St. Joseph community.

STUART | St. Joseph Parish and School came up with a different idea for Catholic Schools Week this year and unveiled the project Jan. 31, the first day of the national celebration, during a special midday Mass at St. Joseph Church with main celebrant Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito.

After stepping up to the pulpit to proclaim how the event shines a light on Catholic education, Father Noel McGrath, pastor of St. Joseph, announced that parishioner Nancy Driscoll had created a special gift for Bishop Barbarito on behalf of the parish and school.

Along with a stole for Bishop Barbarito, the other finely made stoles are being presented to pastors of the eight parishes which St. Joseph School serves — Holy Cross in Indiantown; St. Andrew in Stuart; Holy Family, St. Bernadette, St. Elizabeth Ann Seaton and St. Lucie in Port St. Lucie; Holy Redeemer in Palm City; and St. Martin de Porres in Jensen Beach.

“We thought it was a way to say thank you to our pastors and certainly our bishop for all they do for us,” Mullarkey added.

Driscoll said the total length of each stole is 60 inches. Her friend, Ruth Starn, assisted with the embroidery.

“The stole is reversible. The priests will be able to wear them on different occasions,” Driscoll said. “I hope someone will see the emblems and be reminded about Catholic schools.”

Driscoll, a winter resident from Maine and St. Joseph parishioner since 1980, said that her sewing skills date back to 1958 when her husband, George, bought her a sewing machine the year they were married. Driscoll, a busy mom of five children, was not interested at first in sewing, but began taking classes, and then later began making clothes for her three girls.

The credit goes to Mary, the Undoer of Knots,” said Driscoll about the beautiful stoles. “Mary, the Undoer of Knots was there for me on this project. So many times I had to call on her. Would I do it again? Yes, Overall, I am very happy the way it turned out.”

Following the presentation of the stole, Father McGrath asked altar server Kyle Ramos to approach the altar. The sixth-grader carried a high stack of colorful cards with greetings, messages and congratulations. Besides the kickoff to Catholic Schools Week, the day marked the 40th anniversary of Bishop Barbarito’s priestly ordination. He was ordained a priest Jan. 31, 1976. The special Mass also celebrated 617 students receiving the sacrament of confirmation.

“We liked working on the cards,” said student Alejandra Vallejos, 12. “It was a schoolwide project.”

Sporting a big smile, Bishop Barbarito was pleased with the gifts and surprises. He expressed his thanks over and over again to clergy, students, educators, Driscoll, the young people being confirmed and the entire St. Joseph community.

Driscoll, a parishioner of St. Joseph Parish, shows off a stole that she created and presented to Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito Jan. 31 on behalf of the parish and school.

Above left, Nancy Driscoll, who stands with Jack Mullarkey, principal of St. Joseph School, presents a handmade stole to Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito Jan. 31. The stole bears a hand-embroidered logo for Catholic Schools Week, seen at top right. At right are cards St. Joseph students made for Bishop Gerald M. Barbartio in celebration of his 40th year of ordination. (PHOTOS BY LINDA REEVES | FC)

St. Joseph School students Savannah Stranigan, 13, left, and Angela Charles, 13, write a personal message on a card for Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito in celebration of his 40th year of ordination.

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito shares his call to a priestly vocation during a Mass with the Cardinal Newman High School community celebrated Feb. 4, at Mary Immaculate Church, located next to the school in West Palm Beach. The bishop celebrated Mass at all three diocesan high schools during Catholic Schools Week. (LINDA REEVES | FC)

SHARING A CALL TO A VOCATION
DIOCESAN EVENTS

Workshops for extraordinary ministers of holy Communion:

for both new and experienced ministers. Call parish office to make reservations with the diocesan Liturgy Office.

- Feb. 20, St. Patrick Parish, 13591 Prosperity Farms Road, Palm Beach Gardens.


Notre Dame Club of Boca Raton lecture series: 3rd, 5 p.m., Lynn University, De Hoerner Lecture Hall, 3601 N. Military Trail, Boca Raton. “The Changing American Voter in 2016 and Beyond.” Speaker: Dr. Luis Richardo Martinez. For information, contact the Instituto for Latino Studies, Arthur Foundation endowed professor of transformational leadership, and professor of political science, and fellow at Institute for Educational Initiatives at the University of Notre Dame. Mass at Langdon Chapel followed by dinner in the cafeteria, and lecture at 7 p.m. 561-826-0626.

Lecture series on mercy and the family: March 18, 7-8 p.m., St. Patrick Parish, 2550 S. 20th St., Vero Beach. Organized by diocesan Office of Marriage and Family Life. Please contact our office for more information about the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Free admission. All invited. Visit www. diocesepb.org/events for upcoming lectures or call 561-775-9557.


Permanent deacon applications available: Men interested in serving the church by becoming a permanent deacon of the Diocese of Palm Beach are encouraged to speak to their pastors for permission to apply and download the application forms from the diocesan website, www.diocesepb.org/ deacon-formation. 561-775-9540 or lcowell@diocesepb.org.

Retreats/Days of Prayer

Lenten mission: March 7, 8 a.m.-7 p.m., St. John of the Cross Parish, 7550 26th St., Vero Beach. “Living as Christians/Catholic in Today’s World,” led by Al Barbarino, singer and lay franciscan. Registration deadline Mar. 5. 503-782-0557.

Benefit gala: March 12, 6 p.m., 3715 Golf Road, Boynton Beach. Cocktail reception followed by dinner. Silent auction. Tickets: $100 per person. Proceeds benefit Women’s Crèche ministry providing education and employment assistance to impoverished women. 561-244-7627.

Gala auction: March 12, 5-8 p.m., St. Sebastian Parish, 10705 S.W. 81st Avenue, Tallahassee. Hosted by Women’s Guild. Admission: $5, includes auction tickets. 772-644-6250.

Spring flea market: March 12, 8 a.m.-8 p.m., St. Clare Parish, 8121 Prosperity Farms Road, North Palm Beach. New and gently used items, more than 50 vendors, arts and crafts, refreshments. Proceeds benefit charity. 561-622-7477.


Prayer gathering: Fridays, 5 p.m., on the sidewalks near A Woman’s World, 13591 W. Floresta Dr., a family-run business that offers abortion services, 505 12th St., Fort Pierce. Treasure Coast parish group conducts rosary recitation for the end of abortion. 772-465-8298.

Lunchon and fashion show: Feb. 20, 11 a.m., Doubletree Hotel, 8431 PGA Blvd., Palm Beach Gardens. Fashions by Evelyn and Arthur. Raffle for baskets and a Coach handbag. Tickets: $55. Proceeds benefit Christ Child Society of Palm Beach County’s outreach to provide layette items for needy infants through local county departments, charitable organizations and individuals. 561-795-0134.


Free concert series: St. Patrick Parish, 13591 Prosperity Farms Road, Palm Beach Gardens. 561-626-8626, sk @stpatrickchurch.org.

- Feb. 21, 2 p.m., Manor Quantum, saxophone chamber ensemble, and singers. Free Will offering appreciated.
- Feb. 24, 7 a.m., Taize prayer service. Prayer by candlelight, icons and songs. St. Patrick choir, organ, violin and flute.
- “Between a Rock and a Hard Place.” March 17, 8-9 p.m., St. Vincent Ferrer Parish, 840 George Bush Blvd., Delray Beach. 561-276-6892.
- March 19, 10-12 a.m., St. Joseph Parish, 1200 E. 10th St., Stuart. 772-227-3277, natalie@ sjflorida.org.

Lenten mission: March 7, 8 a.m.-7 p.m., St. John of the Cross Parish, 7550 26th St., Vero Beach. “Living as Christians/Catholic in Today’s World,” led by Al Barbarino, singer and lay franciscan. The Diocese of Palm Beach continues to update its website with resources, suggestions and information to assist all in observing the special year. Visit www.diocesepb.org/jubileevent to view the event section, to learn of special events planned for the holy year.

Catholic singles in the Capitol: Feb. 16-18, Tallahassee. Florida Catholics are invited to meet state legislators and bishops legislation that supports teachings of the Church. Highlight: Red Mass celebrated by the Florida bishops. Cost: $70 per person, includes transportation and hotels. 772-342-0837, bmclimney@diocesepb.org. 561-360-3330, dkazimierz@diocesepb.org.

Catholic radio stations are available through the radio, the World Wide Web and downloads: WPBF FM (98.3 WPTF), WPBB (100.1 FM), WJPP (910 WJPP online) and WDMC (920 AM, online).

Pro-life radio talk show: Mondays, 2 p.m.; and Saturdays, 11 a.m., Catholic radio station WPBB (100.1 FM). “CrossRoads” is a one-hour program featuring commentary, news and commentary from the local area and from across the nation. Hosted by Anne Lotter and Duane Berreth, directors of the Pregnancy Care Center in Fort Pierce. To listen, visit WPBB online or tune in online at www.wpbbfm.com.

Women of Grace ministry program is seeking volunteers to facilitate study programs for English- and Spanish-speaking women. Training sessions are held at St. Joan Of Arc Parish minister, 251 S.W. Third Street, Boca Raton. Registration: Martha Nicoll, 561 212 8673 or ministerial@diocesepb.org.

Parish nurse meetings: Open to all registered nurses interested in providing spiritual care. For dates, time and locations, call Catholic Charities, Interfaith Health Care, 561-345-2000, ext. 256, or email wellness@ catholiccharitiespb.org.

Charitable giving guidelines: The bishops of Florida have developed charitable giving guidelines of appropriate and inappropriate organizations/ foundations. Please visit www. diocesepb.org/giving on and then charitable giving guidelines.

Protection of Children and Young to Promote: The Catholic Diocese of Palm Beach is committed to the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults in its care. Victims of abuse are encouraged to contact the diocesan victim assistance coordinator Theresa Freterd, 561-801-0999, to begin necessary steps toward psychological and spiritual healing. For more information, call diocesan policies and procedures for reporting abuse as well as to view the USCCB “Charities and Workers Protection of Children and Young People,” visit www.diocesepb.org and click on Diocesan Safe Environments.
Teacher recognized for outstanding work

Jill Ingebritson is a recipient of the 2016 National Catholic Educational Association’s Lead Learn Proclaim Award, which highlights outstanding work of Catholic school educators. Ingebritson has been a fourth-grade teacher at St. Ann School in West Palm Beach since July 2011. She will be recognized during the annual NCEA 2016 Convention March 29-31 in San Diego. The annual award honours those who have demonstrated a strong Catholic educational philosophy as well as exceptional ability, dedication and results. "Jill Ingebritson is not only a joy to work with, but a joy to watch teach," said Susan Demes, principal of St. Ann School. "She is a teacher I can always count on. The love of teaching radiates from her when she’s in the classroom or walking down the halls. She is a teacher I can always lean on, not only for fun and inventive lessons, but support through difficult situations. If you need anything finished, you can always count on Mrs. Ingebritson. She wears countless hats here at St. Ann’s and always has a smile on her face. She is a blessing to have here at St. Ann’s and I’m honored to be her co-worker and friend."

Photography exhibit planned

An exhibit of photographs March 12, 7 p.m., at St. Patrick Parish, 13591 Prosperity Farms Road in Palm Beach Gardens, will present portraits of people from diverse nations and ethnic groups. "Beautiful Faces and Cultural Expressions" is organized by Deacon Jaime Zapata, director of Tepeyac Mission, a Palm Beach charitable organization, which reaches out to support immigrant families in need. Deacon Zapata, also director of diocesan Hispanic Ministry and School of Christian Formation, is a longtime photographer. He is known for his excellent photographs taken during his travels to many areas around the world and for his images captured throughout the Diocese of Palm Beach.

Proceeds from the exhibit will support Tepeyac Mission and the outreach communications project, 98.3 WPBV FM, The Catholic Voice of the Palm Beaches, under the umbrella of Tepeyac Mission. The dozens of youngsters and adults captured through the camera lens wearing clothing of countries to which they are linked are invited to join the event. The models will be available to chat with guests and share information about their cultures, customs and traditions. Dance groups will be on hand in costumes to perform. There will also be a silent auction. Tickets are $20. For information, call 561-775-9506.

Facility dedicated at Cardinal Newman High School

Cardinal Newman High School dedicated a new softball complex in January. The Sam and Maurita Budnyk Softball Complex is now open for the 41st season of girls softball. The complex is named after Sam Budnyk, former school coach, and his wife, who are pictured at right with the girls’ softball team.

Budnyk, who coached five sports at Cardinal Newman and also was its athletic director, coached the Crusaders’ softball team from 1976 to 1993, winning three state 3-A titles in 1981, 1982 and 1983, and a state runner-up title in 1989. The new complex features new dugouts, spectator area, patio, home bleachers, a pro-style batting cage, a new scoreboard, and hitting stations and bullpen area. More than 150 alumni, former players and benefactors attended the dedication along with Budnyk and his wife. He told the crowd, “This new facility is a testament to all the players and great teams we have had from the past 40 years.”
**FLORIDA CATHOLIC**

**VENICE DIOCESE**

**RITE OF ELECTION**

322 people set to enter Church

BOB REDDY of the Florida Catholic staff

VENICE | A large group of women and men who will enter the Catholic Church during the Rite of Election Feb. 14, celebrated at Epiphany Cathedral, will be welcomed by Bishop Frank J. Dewane into the Catholic Church. The number of women and men who will enter the Church during the Easter Vigil was announced at the annual Rite of Election Feb. 14 at Epiphany Cathedral in Venice.

**FLORIDA**

Special to the Florida Catholic

Women to enter into communion with Church at Easter Vigil

SUSAN LALIELLI Special to the Florida Catholic

VENICE | While seeking to have her daughter baptized last year, Venice resident Julia Dees discovered many bumps along the way, which led her to a Catholic friend — a very important question.

“I called my friend and asked if she believed the Catholic Church would accept my daughter, and she said yes,” recalled Dees. “That was interesting to me. I had never heard before. Her curiosity was piqued. The ‘waterproof mascara’ part of it was where I got a huge smile.

“I began to experience a wave of understanding,” said Dees. “It’s important for me to offer a religious upbringing to my daughter, and we have found acceptance in the Church,” said Dees, who admits to crying at each Rite during her journey into the Catholic Church.

Bishop Frank J. Dewane speaks at the annual Rite of Election Feb. 14 at Epiphany Cathedral in Venice, which welcomed 141 catechumens and 191 candidates from 39 parishes. (PHOTOS BY BOB REDDY | FC)

**Catechumens come forward to greet Bishop Frank J. Dewane and enter their name into The Book of the Elect during the Rite of Election Feb. 14 at Epiphany Cathedral in Venice.**

The bishop noted that all of the catechumens and candidates will become part of the universal Church, founded by Jesus Christ. “You have each made a conscious decision that this calling is who you are becoming. … Live that out by reaching out to others, becoming an instrument of the Lord.”

The bishop noted that all of the catechumens and candidates will become part of the universal Church, founded by Jesus Christ. “You have each made a conscious decision that this calling is who you are becoming. … Live that out by reaching out to others, becoming an instrument of the Lord.”

Baptized and unchurched who are joining the Catholic Church this year. The Lord has led you on your journey into the Catholic Church. “I’ll wear waterproof mascara to the Easter Vigil.”

**Women to enter into communion with Church at Easter Vigil**

**Jesus and the Eucharist in a way she had never heard before. Her curiosity was piqued enough to go back and reread the Gospel, especially St. John the Evangelist.**

“I began to experience a wave of understanding about the Eucharist that I had never known before,” said Cordonnier, breaking into a huge smile.

**Two years ago the newfound knowledge worked like a magnet, pulling her to Our Lady of Lourdes in Venice, where Cordonnier attended her first Catholic Mass.**

“People were kneeling in pews, some praying the rosary, and I saw a reverence and respect in the Church that I had never witnessed before,” she said Cordonnier. “There were more Scriptures read than any church I had ever attended, and the music was beautiful. But, when I saw the people going forward to receive Christ in the Eucharist, it was a holy and moving sight.”

**When she looks at the Catholic Church Cordonnier sees a miracle. “It’s the voice of the unborn, the poor, and downtrodden. It’s the voice of traditional sacred marriage and family. And, one more miracle? My husband, a lifelong Catholic is returning to the Church after 42 years. I can’t wait to become part of the one holy Catholic Church this Easter.”**
18,615 years of marriage on display

Love, mercy keys to lasting marital bliss

BOB REDDY
of the Florida Catholic staff

VENICE | Some 365 couples received an early Valentine’s Day gift when they renewed their wedding vows at Epiphany Cathedral Feb. 13 at the first of two Diocesanwide Masses celebrating marriage. This is a special gathering of people who are committed to each other and the Lord,” Bishop Frank J. Dewane said. “Publicly, you are doing something that is viewed as countercultural.”

These couples were celebrating milestone wedding anniversaries, anywhere from 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50 and 50-plus years of marriage. The couples recognized as the longest married was Albert and Angela Cassettari of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in Osprey who have been married 77 years.

In fact, the front two rows of the Cathedral had six couples whose combined years of marriage was nearly 450 years. In all, the Mass included 365 couples who have been married a total of 18,615 years. Seven couples celebrated their wedding anniversary on the day of the Mass and 69 couples were celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary in 2016.

Bishop Dewane said all of the couples serve as an example of witness to others when the institution of marriage is marginalized and even mocked. They do this by living out the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony each day through sharing in God’s love and mercy.

“The Mass was of particular significance for Frank and Margaret Ferlin of St. Raphael Parish in Lehigh Acres, who celebrated their 56th wedding anniversary on Feb. 13. "Being married is all about loving one another and forgiving one another," Margaret Ferlin said. “It’s love and mercy. You have to hang in there no matter what. You can solve any problems, because someone has faced it and overcome it before.”

A second Mass celebrating marriage will take place March 12, 10 a.m., at St. Leo the Great Parish in Bonita Springs. Couples are asked to register for this Mass through their home parish.

Men grow closer to Christ at conference

STAFF REPORT

FORT MYERS | Catholic men were recently challenged to open themselves up to the mercy of the Lord and to pass that mercy on to others.

This was an underlying theme of the 2016 Diocese of Venice Catholic Men’s Conference which took place Feb. 6 at Bishop Verot Catholic High School in Fort Myers.

“I really needed to hear what was said,” said Paul Sullivan of Our Lady of Light Parish in Fort Myers about his first Catholic Men’s Conference. “It opened my eyes to what I need to do to be a better Catholic man.”

Other attendees had the same reaction as they heard from internationally renowned speakers who focused their talks about how they can use Sacred Scriptures as a basis for becoming better men.

The Conference was held within the context of the ongoing Year of Mercy and Bishop Frank J. Dewane said that while it is important to be merciful to others, sometimes the greatest amount of mercy has to come to ourselves. Pope Francis is wonderful about this point when he speaks about ‘letting it go.’ Open your minds and your hearts — hear what the Lord says to you and let His Mercy provide you with the opportunity to be more.”

Matthew Leonard, author and Executive Director of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, offered the men essential tools to becoming the man God calls them to be. He said that they can be aided in finding the mercy God provides them each day by: 1) using and reflecting deeper on Sacred Scripture; 2) learning how to pray in a more profound way; and 3) figuring out silence and its value.

While most men can cite lines from some action movies verbatim, they cannot quote the Bible. This is a lost opportunity.

“Divinely inspired, these stories are the greatest adventure, the greatest romance; the greatest action stories of all time are found in the Bible,” Leonard said. “What is better about this is that it is real, and the guys in Sacred Scripture are real men. The coolest part of the Bible, the stories are the greatest adventure, the greatest romance; the greatest action stories of all time are found in the Bible,” Leonard said. “What is better about this is that it is real, and the guys in Sacred Scripture are real men.”

Above, Bear Woznick, two-time Master’s World Tandem Surf Champion, radio host and author, shows off a rosary during the 2016 Diocese of Venice Men’s Conference. At right, Bishop Frank J. Dewane addresses participants of the conference. (PHOTOS BY BOB REDDY | FC)

Bishop Dewane said during the closing Mass that the concepts and lessons learned throughout the day should allow them to approach Lent in a different way. “It is about God’s Love and His Mercy and having the courage to ask for it and to listen for that response.”

The Conference began with Eucharistic Adoration, setting the proper tone for the day. Also, throughout the day many took the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
Boettcher

Sister Shirley

Adrian Dominican

Sister Shirley Boettcher

Sister Boettcher was born in Detroit to Edna and Edward Boettcher. One of four sisters, she attended Dominican High School and Siena Heights University in Adrian, Mich., and then graduated from the Detroit School of Practical Nursing. She is a licensed practical nurse.

Sister Boettcher entered religious life August 1946, and made her profession Aug. 4, 1948. As a religious, she worked in elementary education in Michigan, Ohio and Illinois. She moved to Florida in 1971 to stay and worked at a hospital in Miami until 1976 before being assigned to Highlands General Hospital in Sebring from 1976 to 1990. She then served at Lake Placid Medical Center from 1990 to 1992. She remained active, reaching out to those in need, particularly in nursing homes, hospitals and ministering to the sick and the alone. A favorite memory was an assignment at a country parish in Ohio where in addition to her duties as a religious sister, she ran farm equipment.

In her free time, she likes sports including watching football and swimming.

60 YEARS

Sister of Province

Catherine Buster

Sister Buster was born in Illinois to Rae and Joseph Buster. She is one of seven children, and was educated at Marywood High School in Evanston, Ill., and St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, St. Mary’s, Ind. She entered religious life in February 1956, and made her profession in August 1963.

An administrator and manager with experience in environmental services, she spent many years in multiple administrative and leadership capacities for her religious order at the Province Convention in Indiana, including working in human resources, purchasing and food service. She also worked in similar capacities in Kansas City, Kan., and Kalamazoo, Mich., before coming to the Diocese of Venice in 1999. For the Diocese, she was director of Real Estate and administrative assistant to the Building Commission. Since 2005, Sister Buster has worked with Catholic Charities Diocese of Venice Housing as a consultant on various housing projects assisting elderly, low income and farmworkers. Her favorite memory was her two-year novitiate training. In her

2016 religious jubilarians

70 YEARS

Adrian Dominican

Sister Shirley Boettcher

Sister Catherine Buster

Sister Constance Gleason

Sister Grace Henneberry

Sister Carmen Penia

Sister Maureen Michael Byrne

Sister Nilda Elizabeth Young

60 YEARS

Sister of Mercy

Constance Gleason

Sister Gleason was born in Philadelphia to Ida Mae and William Gleason. She has one sister. She attended Holy Spirit High School in Atlantic City, N.J., and then went on to Gregorian Court University in Lakewood, N.J., and then Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J. She entered religious life in September 1956, and made her profession in September 1959. Sister Gleason served in Catholic schools in New Jersey in Metuchen, Red Bank and Keyport. Within the Diocese of Venice she served at Incarnation Catholic School in Sarasota. Her interests include new technology, walking and enjoying the beauty of Sarasota.

Adrian Dominican

Sister Grace Henneberry

Sister Henneberry was born in Joliet, Ill., to Florence and David Henneberry, and is one of four children. Educated at St. Joseph Academy and then Siena Heights University in Adrian, Mich., she also earned advanced degrees from De-Paul University in Chicago, and the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind. Within the Archdiocese of Chicago and Diocese of Joliet, her service was focused on education as a teacher and principal and also as a parish business manager. Within the Diocese of Venice she was a teacher at St. John Neumann Catholic High School in Naples and currently teaches at Royal Palm Academy in Naples. She is interested in strong family ties, community involvement and genealogy.

Salesian Sister

Carmen Penia

Sister Pena was born in Sabinillo, Mexico, to Carmen and Genero Penia, and is the oldest of four children. She entered religious life in 1954 and made her profession in 1956. In Mexico, she attended Incarnate Word High School in Monterrey, and then Incarnate Word College in San Antonio, Texas. Her service was initially in education in San Antonio and Laredo, Texas, and then in Elizabeth, N.J. Sister Pena was later a bookkeeper and plant manager at the Provincial House in Haledon, N.J., and was later superior of her religious community there. She then returned to education in Tampa, Marrero, La., and is currently an assistant in the finance office of St. John Neumann Catholic High School in Miami. Her interests include reading, crochet and care of a garden.

50 YEARS

School Sister of Notre Dame

Maureen Michael Byrne

Sister Byrne was born in New Jersey to Catherine and John Paul Byrne, and is the oldest of four children. Entering religious life in September 1964, she made her profession in July 1966. She attended St. Vincent Academy in Newark, N.J., and then the University of South Florida in Tampa. Sister Byrne’s service focused on education, first as a teacher in Tampa and then as a principal there and in Thonotosassa. Within the Diocese of Venice she was an art teacher at Epiphany Cathedral in Venice, and since 1995 she has been art and spiritual director at Stillpoint Studio in Venice. Her interest is focused on art, music as well as walking near the water.

Franciscan

Sister of Mary

Immaculate Nisla

Elizabeth Young

Sister Young was born in Panama to Dominga and Gilberto Young, and has two sisters. She attended Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles High School, the University of Panama and the University of Cali, Colombia. Sister Young worked in high schools in Colombia and Panama before becoming university general secretary of the University of Mariana in Colombia, where she also served as dean of social work and rector. She served her religious order as provincial treasurer in Texas and Costa Rica and was local superior in Mexico. Within the Diocese of Venice she currently serves in parishes and is a member of the Worker Parish and San Jose Mission in Fort Myers. Here favorite memories were being with her family and travelling to China and Italy. She loves to get to know people, travel, walking, movies, music and games.
Church celebrates religious life

BOB REDDY
of the Florida Catholic staff

VENICE | In gratitude and recognition for the contributions of men and women religious within the Universal Church, but more precisely in the Diocese of Venice, a celebration was held Feb. 7 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat Center in Venice.

More than 40 religious from across the Diocese participated in the event, which was celebrated by Bishop Frank J. Dewane.

"Thank you for going out and making a profound impact in the lives of others, in particular those who live on the fringes of society," Bishop Dewane said. "Let your witness be a renewal for all of us — in following God and in creating a culture of encounter through a living out of your charism."

Pope Francis recently concluded the Year of Consecrated Life by calling religious men and women "custodians of wonder."

"What a beautiful concept," Bishop Dewane said. "Your love and mercy is the witness you give by reaching out to others, and this is an example we should all follow."

Seven religious women celebrating significant anniversaries during 2016 were specifically recognized during the Mass and at a reception that followed. The religious honored included: for 70 years, Adrian Dominican Sister Shirley Boettcher; for 60 years, Sister of Province Catherine Bucus, Sister of Mercy Constance Gleason, Adrian Dominican Sister Grace Henneberry and Salesian Sister Carmen Pena; for 50 years, School Sister of Notre Dame Maureen Michael Byrne and Franciscan Sister of Mary immaculate Nisla Elizabeth Young.

Diocesan Director of Religious, Sister Carmella DeCosty, Sister of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, said the day is a chance to honor and recognize religious who otherwise serve the Lord without care for recognition or praise. "This is who the religious are. They live a life of mission every day."

Sister Byrne said at the end of the day that she entered religious life to answer a call that drew her closer to the Lord. "It is a life of joy and love that has an unending reward."

YOUth hold their own ‘Super Bowl’

Before this year’s Super Bowl, youths of five Collier County parishes participated in the fifth annual interparish YOUth Super Bowl. Held Feb. 7 at St. John Neumann Catholic High School in Naples, youths from middle to high school from St. Agnes, St. Peter the Apostle, St. John the Evangelist, San Marco, and St. William formed teams and played flag football in a round-robin tournament. The goal of the day was to bring youth from the area together for a day of fun, as often they meet independently at their own parishes. Father Eric Scanlan, Diocesan Director of Religious Vocations, started off the day with a prayer and the youth ministers refereed the games. Lots of fun was had by everyone.

Commentary by Kelly Dame, Executive Producer of ‘Fox 4 Rising’

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Students learn about Year of Mercy

BOB REDDY
of the Florida Catholic staff

VENICE | Students from two Sarasota County Catholic schools recently received a lesson about the ongoing Year of Mercy directly from Bishop Frank J. Dewane.

At the end of Catholics Schools Week Feb. 5, students from Incarnation Catholic School in Sarasota took a field trip to Epiphany Cathedral in Venice. The goal of the day was to learn about the Year of Mercy, the Holy Door and the Cathedral.

Bishop Dewane greeted the Incarnation students outside the cathedral and explained the significance of the Holy Door and how this was part of a larger spiritual journey that is part of the Year of Mercy.

The students silently filed through first the exterior door, which had a banner overhead which reads: "Pilgrimage Entrance: As you enter, be steadfast in Faith to leave sin behind." They then silently entered the interior door which leads from a foyer into the main portion of the Cathedral, this one decorated in gold and white bunting, with several banners and signs nearby which explain some of the details about the Holy Door and Year of Mercy.

As the students entered, they looked in wonder at the decorations and later spoke among themselves about how "cool" it was to go through a Holy Door. Once inside, the Incarnation students were joined by students of Epiphany Cathedral Catholic School. The Bishop explained how the Year of Mercy is about God's love and how everyone should share that love with everyone.

Citing Pope Francis, the Bishop said that everyone needs to give thanks for the times God has given us mercy. "God speaks to us in the language of love and the grammar of mercy. There are times when we can all be better and need to ask for God's mercy. ... Live this Year of Mercy so that it makes a difference in your life."

In explaining about the Holy Door of Mercy, the Bishop wanted everyone to be aware that going through the Holy Door should have a deep spiritual significance, much more powerful than going through any other door. "It is about consciously recalling that love God has for you and for me."

An aspect of going through the Holy Door is to take part in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and perform Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.

"Going to confession builds up mercy and grace within us," Bishop Dewane said. "The Works of Mercy need to be an essential part of this year — help people who need food, water or clothes. They are just like you and me. Share God's Love with them through the Works of Mercy."

Because the Year of Mercy brings many blessings, the Bishop asked the students to carry their lessons with them and to share their experience with others, particularly with their parents and family. "Invite them to come here to the Cathedral. Talk about what you learned regarding this Year of Mercy and the Holy Door. Encourage them, so they can join in celebrating God's mercy and love."

Following the presentation by the Bishop, the Epiphany Cathedral students returned to their classrooms, while the Incarnation students received a guided tour of the Cathedral. They later gathered to pray the rosary in the school chapel.

CARDINAL MOONEY SOCCER EXCELS

At left, the Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School boys soccer team celebrates reaching the Elite Eight. At right, the school’s girls soccer team poses after reaching the Elite Eight, the best-ever showing for the school. The Sarasota Catholic school’s girls and boys soccer teams both reached the regional finals — known as the Elite Eight — this year. The Cougar girls finished the season 15-3-3, making it to the regional finals for the first time in its history before falling to Holy Names Academy in Tampa. The boys finished the season with a record of 16-3-1, also one of the best seasons in school history before falling to Tampa Catholic.
Community celebrates Catholic Schools Week

BOB REDDY of the Florida Catholic staff

NAPLES | The Diocese of Venice celebrated Catholic School Week from Jan. 31 to Feb. 6, with the theme of “Communities of faith, knowledge and service.”

The focus of the week is on the important faith-building, academic and societal contributions provided by a Catholic education. Catholic schools are concerned with giving children knowledge, and with forming the whole person — spiritually, physically and academically in terms of their education for life.

The 14 Catholic schools within the Diocese each took time out to have various celebrations to thank those who support them, while also spreading the good news about the benefits of Catholic education for the whole community. Many schools took part in community service projects, including volunteering at local charities and donating food and clothes to aid their brothers and sisters in need.

An integral component of the week was the celebration of the sacred Liturgy. For the Catholic schools in Collier County, Bishop Frank J. Dewane celebrated Mass Feb. 2 at St. John Neumann Catholic High School. He was joined by priests from across the area. Students participating in the Mass represented St. Ann, St. Elizabeth Setton, the Donahue Academy and Royal Palm Academy.

Bishop Dewane said a Catholic education is dedicated to strengthening and fostering excellence for the students so that they can be formed as the new evangelists.

To achieve this, the Bishop challenged the students to work to recognize the Lord in their life. “Seek the presence of Christ in those around you. ... Catholics students are blessed to be given spiritual, academic and physical opportunities found nowhere else. You will learn about many subjects, but most importantly you must learn about the ways of the Lord. Let Christ be your guide.”

When asked if they were up to this challenge, all of the students responded with a resounding “Yes!” Following the Mass, the visiting students were given tours of the high school and joined in fun and games, as well as lunch.

Catholic Schools Week was created in 1974. It begins each year on the last Sunday of January.
Catechists discover power of mercy

BOB REDDY
of the Florida Catholic staff

FORT Myers | Educators and catechists recently gathered to celebrate the Year of Mercy and the importance of teaching discipleship.

The annual Catechetical Day conference, which was held Jan. 30 at Bishop Verot Catholic High School in Fort Myers, brought together more than 250 women and men who work at parishes across the Diocese bringing the faith to young and old alike.

Emily Osterhaus and Sean Lyons agreed with their classmates’ feelings about showing their support. All noted that it was an experience they were proud to be a part of and something they planned to share with their peers.

To achieve this, Carotta said religious educators must bridge the gap between general belief and true belief. This means helping the faithful go from having a broad, but potentially fractured, understanding of the faith to having a specific revelation of the divine teaching of the Church. This can only be done in a learning environment that is safe and trustworthy.

Bishop Frank J. Dewane opened the conference with a prayer and words of encouragement to the religious educators.

“Thank you. You are a living example of a call to faith in your words and in your example.”

As educators following Christ, he added, catechists are responsible for communicating the knowledge that through Baptism we are all called to be disciples of Christ. “With this call, we must promote the dignity of all persons and defend their value as being created in the image and likeness of God.”

Dr. Michael Carotta speaks at the annual Catechetical Day at Bishop Verot Catholic High School in Fort Myers Jan. 30. (BOB REDDY | FC)

St. John Neumann Catholic High School students proudly hold up the 40 Days for Life Banner for the kickoff of the prayer vigil Feb. 10 at the corner of Creech and Goodlette-Frank roads.

40 Days: praying for life

BOB REDDY
of the Florida Catholic staff

NAPLES | Lent started with the receiving of ashes and the starting of season-long prayer to pray for life.

A group of students from St. John Neumann Catholic High School proudly held a sign proclaiming that they are part of 40 Days for Life, a worldwide movement to seek an end to abortion.

The St. John Neumann students were some of more than 120 people who participated in the opening day of the ongoing peaceful prayer vigil in front of the Planned Parenthood at the corner of Creech and Goodlette-Frank roads in Naples. They were not forced to participate in the prayer vigil, instead they proudly volunteered, braving a cold wind and even colder glares from passing motorists all with a smile, a cheer and a wave.

“We will not be deterred,” said Sean Wilton. Alexa Guadagnolo said she was proud to be out as a witness for life. Samantha Roesler was too. “It is so important for young people to be a part of this. We have to stand up for life,” she said.

Emily Osterhaus and Sean Lyons agreed with their classmates’ feelings about showing their support. All noted that it was an experience they were proud to be a part of and something they planned to share with their peers.

Many people participate in the kickoff for the spring 40 Days for Life prayer vigil in Naples Feb. 10 in front of the Planned Parenthood on Goodlette-Frank Road. (PHOTOS BY BOB REDDY | FC)

The Florida Catholic (ISSN 0196-4384) publishes semi-monthly for the Dioceses of Orlando, Palm Beach and Venice for $24 per year in Florida, $30 per year in the U.S., and $35 per year foreign, by The Florida Catholic Inc. 3101 S.W. 8th St., Suite G, Orlando, FL 32805-1619. Publisher reserves the right to refuse advertisements contrary to par-

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CHARLOTTE ADVOCATES WALK FOR THE POOR

PUNTA GORDA | Some 130 walkers participated in the annual St. Vincent de Paul Society Walk for the Poor Jan. 30 at Sacred Heart Parish in Punta Gorda. It began with Charlotte County Commissioner Ken Doherty reading a proclamation honoring the walk, and Punta Gorda Mayor Rachel Keesling welcoming the walkers.

The event raised more than $22,000, which will be divided among the four St. Vincent de Paul conferences in Charlotte County at the following parishes: Sacred Heart, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Maximilian Kolbe and San Antonio. The money raised is used by the conferences to provide food, clothing, household goods and financial assistance to qualified families and individuals. In the past year, those conferences and their combined volunteer workforce of 483 spent more than 53,000 hours helping thousands of men, women and children. Assistance received was valued at more than $1.9 million and included 800,000 pounds of food. In addition, St. Vincent de Paul volunteers visited hundreds in prison, hospitals, nursing homes and a veterans facility.

LENT BEGINS

NAPLES | Lent began on Ash Wednesday with the people here having received their ashes at St. William Parish in Naples. When receiving the ashes the following is said: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (BOB REDDY | FC)

ORDER OF MALTA GATHERS FOR RETREAT

NAPLES | The Knights and Dames of Malta recently gathered in Naples for a retreat: a time of prayer, reflections and renewal. Bishop Frank J. Dewane celebrated the opening Mass for the retreat Feb. 5 at St. Ann Parish. During the Mass, the Bishop said that the message the Knights and Dames carry is one of preparing the way for the Lord. Citing the life of St. John the Baptist, Bishop Dewane said members of the Order of Malta must be conscious of who they are and how they are called to serve the Lord. “Just as St. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord, you must do the same — openly and with all of your heart and soul. You are not being asked to have your head served on a platter like John the Baptist, but your commitment to your faith is no less important.”

The Order of Malta is a lay religious order of the Catholic Church that seeks to glorify God by promoting the sanctification of each member through witness to the Catholic Faith and service to the sick and the poor. The retreat is held ahead of Lent to help the Knights and Dames prepare spiritually for this important Liturgical Season.

ST. JUDE GALA MARKS 10 YEARS

SARASOTA | For the past decade St. Jude Parish has served a dynamic faith community, and on Feb. 5 the parish held its annual gala at Michael’s on East to mark the anniversary and to raise money to support the parish. St. Jude Pastor, Father Celestino Gutierrez, said it is hard to comprehend how 10 years have passed since the parish was established. In that time the community, which is about 50 percent Hispanic, has grown and thrived. “It is a blessing to be part of such a wonderful community which celebrates its faith each day.”

Bishop Frank J. Dewane congratulated Father Gutierrez and the entire Parish for reaching this milestone, adding that while it is wonderful to look fondly on past success, the job is to build for the future. “That future is looking bright, indeed!”

The evening included dining, dancing, a silent auction and raffle prizes. Additional events are planned for later in the year as the anniversary celebration continues.
DIOCESAN EVENTS

Spring 40 Days for Life, weekdays through Lent. Prayer walk outside Planned Parenthood at Goodlettsville Shopping Center, 239-227-5172.

Diocese of Venice Women's Conference, March 16, 6-8 a.m., Bishop Verot High School, Fort Myers. Speakers include Scott Hahn, Emily Gibson, Stimson and Gino Loehr. Day offers participants opportunity to learn more about God's Mercy and grow in Faith. All are welcome to attend. Registration begins at 5:30 a.m. Advance, no tickets will be sold at the door. Register Office of Evangelization, 941-484-9545, or www.dioceseofvenice.org.

Vocation awareness weekend, Women: March 6, noon, St. John Vianney College Seminary, Miami. Open to all young men, juniors in high school and older. Experience what daily seminary life is like for one day and learn more about a vocation to the priesthood. No cost; transportation provided. For further information, contact Eric Scanlan, Diocese Vocations Director, scanlan@dioceseofvenice.org.

American Heritage Girls Stations of the Cross program, Sunday, March 6, Outreach of Perpetual Help Retreat Center, Venice. All members are welcome to attend. Bob Paquette, robertpaquette@net.net.

NET retreat, March 11-13, Our Lady of the Rosary Retreat Center, Venice. Open to all outgoing eighth- to 12th-graders. Retreat is coordinated by the Catholic Diocesan Youth Evangelization Teams (NET), comprised of young adults who invite and encourage the Catholic faith of young people. Cost: $100, includes meals and accommodations. Meets the Confirmation retreat requirements. Bob Paquette, robertpaquette@net.net.

Venetian Charity Ball, March 12, 6-11 p.m., Hyatt Coconut Point, Bonita Springs. Proceeds benefit programs and services of Catholic Charities Diocese of Venice Inc. in Venice, Hendry and Lee Counties. Includes cocktail hour, auctions, dinner and dancing. Tickets: $225 per person, 239-334-4007, venetianball@cslee.org, www.catholiccharitiesvenice.org.

Emerald Ball, March 19, 6-11 p.m., Ritz-Carlton Beach Naples, Naples. Cocktail hour, auctions, dinner and dancing. Tickets: $250 per person, 239-455-2655, maryshaughnessy@olph.org.

CHRIST MAIDEN OF MERCY

Evangelization, 941-484-9543; or at the door. To register: Office of Mercy and grow in faith. All to learn more about the Lord's offers participants opportunity to attend. Bob Paquette, robertpaquette@net.net.

Theology on Tap. This exciting program for young adults 18-29, is designed to help you learn about the faith while building community. We believe Theology on Tap will be held at various parishes throughout the Diocese. Each location will host a series of weekly talks and discussions on relevant topics in a relaxed atmosphere. Pizza, pop, ice cream, icebreakers, trivia, and food and drinks are provided. BYOB. Upcoming dates:

- Venice area, “Upper Room Coffee House,” Tuesdays, 6 p.m., Epiphany Cathedral, Venice.
- Naples area, Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m. First Tuesdays, St. John the Evangelist, Naples; Third Tuesdays, St. Agnes; fourth Tuesdays, St. William.

Project Rachel post-abortion retreat, April 2, 2016. This Year of Mercy is the perfect time to experience a Project Rachel retreat. For confidential information, contact Fonda, 239-719-7210, fonda.rachel@gmail.com.

Diocesan Scout Awards ceremony and Mass, May 15, 11 a.m., Epiphany Cathedral, Venice. Scouts and Scouters in uniform are invited to process in and then join Bishop Frank J. Dewane for the celebration of Mass and to receive their awards. To register: Bob Paquette, robertpaquette@net.net.

Year of Mercy information. Dec. 8 marked the start of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, called by Pope Francis to spread the message of mercy throughout the world. The Year of Mercy concludes on Nov. 20, 2016, the Solemnity of Christ the King. For more information: http://dioceseofvenice.org/jubilee-year-of-mercy/.

Visiting the Holy Doors of Mercy, March 26, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Diocesan performance center, 240 Park Ave., Venice. 941-484-3505, Monday through Saturday, 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.; Sunday all day; and Our Lady of Mercy Parish, 3101 12th Ave. E., Boca Grande, 941-964-2254, Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. - noon. Please call ahead.

Theological Adoration, First Friday of each month, 1st Friday of each month, Holy Rosary Parish, 2500 9th Ave. S.W., Venice. 941-484-0233, gazo@olph-venice.org.

Day of prayer, second Wednesdays through April 21, 10 a.m., Outreach of Perpetual Help Retreat Center, Venice. Includes continental breakfast, Eucharist and Franciscan conference and the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Mass at 12:15 noon. To preregister, $30 at the door. 941-486-0233, gazo@olph-venice.org.

First-time home buyers classes, various dates, Catholic Charities Venice, 219 16th St. W., Bradenton. Classes in both Spanish and English. New homebuyers will be fingerprinted and trained in the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Mass at 12:15 noon. To preregister, $30 at the door. 941-486-0233, gazo@olph-venice.org.

World Youth Day pilgrimage: March 3-6, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Retreat Center, Venice. 941-486-0233, gazo@olph-venice.org.

DIocese of Venice in the News

To report abuse by Diocesan clergy, religious liberty, or if you or someone you know needs help, call 941-366-4010, ext. 318; or contact George Smith, TDMS, SSC, Taft, 941-366-4010, ext. 318; or by writing: TV Mass, Diocese of Venice, 3100 12th Ave. E., Venice, 34285. Cost: $45, payable to Diocese of Venice.

Reboot Live! Feb. 25, St. Jude Parish, Sarasota. Features Chris Stefanick and Jon Niven for a special night of faith enrichment and family fun. To register: Decide@newparish.org.

Pavone, St. Jude Youth Director, julissa.baez.pavon@gmail.com.


Spaghetti dinner, Feb. 27, 3-6 p.m., Amarynth, 780 Nokomis Blvd. W., Bradenton. Tickets: $30 per person. For information, call Marie, 941-795-3951.


Lifesaver event, March 2, 7 a.m., Sleepy Hollow Golf Club, Venice, 941-366-4010, ext. 318; or contact George Smith, TDMS, SSC, Taft, 941-366-4010, ext. 318; or by writing: TV Mass, Diocese of Venice, 3100 12th Ave. E., Venice, 34285. Cost: $45, payable to Diocese of Venice.

Tridentine Latin Mass, Sundays, 8:30 a.m., St. Agnes Parish Chapel, 7775 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Naples. Confession, 30 minutes before Mass begins in chapel. 239-262-8127, oremus@naples.net.

Tridentine Latin Mass, Sundays, 12:15 p.m., Resurrection Parish, 8121 Cypress Lake Drive, Fort Myers. Confession, 30 minutes before Mass begins in chapel. 239-747-3337.

Eucharistic adoration, Fridays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. (excluding Good Friday); and Mondays, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., Holy Family Parish, 5105 S. Tamiami Trl., Sarasota. 941-366-4010, ext. 318; or contact George Smith, TDMS, SSC, Taft, 941-366-4010, ext. 318; or by writing: TV Mass, Diocese of Venice, 3100 12th Ave. E., Venice, 34285.
NATION

Cardinal has seen too much human trafficking

WASHINGTON | During a Feb. 8 evening prayer service for victims of human trafficking, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, Washington’s retired archbishop, said of the practice, “I've seen this in too many places.” It has gotten to the point he said, “In some of our centers, parents have to give explicit instructions to their young children on how to avoid being kidnapped, he said in his homily at the prayer service, conducted at St. Gabriel Church in Washington. The children did not seem to mind the gravity of the situation.

“The child does have a mythical game,” Cardinal McCarrick said. He recounted a time five years ago when he and two Catholic Re- vellers were walking in the city. They heard someone yelling “Hey, Hey, Hey...” He turned to find he and another couple had formed a coalition,” he told parishioners, “cultural not political,” Archbishop McCarrick said. Others had been given work as housekeepers, “subject to being beaten if they didn’t do what the children wanted,” Cardi- nal McCarrick said. Others had been turned into beggars “with instructions to bring back so much (money) or they wouldn’t eat that night,” he added.

Archbishop calls Latinos to build pro-life culture

SANTA ANA, Calif. | Saying the future of the pro-life movement is “cultural not political,” Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles called upon Catholics to serve freely. He said, “We are not a political party” and a new political coalition,” he told par- ticipants at the Hispanic Pro-Life Congress Jan. 30 at Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana, pointing to the necessity of changing society’s views on the “fundamental injus- tice” of abortion and euthanasia. Archbishop Gomez said that the practice of abortion and euthanasia raises concerns about “what kind of society we are and what kind of people we want to be.” He expressed unease that society is losing a sense of its common humanity and re- sponsibility for others, especially when it comes to abortion and eu- theansia, which he called the most important issues facing the country. While running through a list of so- cial ills and the importance of ad- dresses racial discrimination, de- portations and unjust immigration policies, unemployment, homeless- ness, pollution of the environment, new (abortion) violence, drug abuse, decedent prisons and the death pen-

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alty, the archbishop said the Church must place abortion and euthanasia foremost in its efforts.

Kentucky governor signs abortion-related measure

LOUISVILLE, Ky. | Year after year, a bill related to informed con- sent for an abortion has lan- guished in the Kentucky House. Not this year. The proposal was ap- proved by the Senate Feb. 1 in a 33- to 2-vote vote after the House added an amendment. Republican Gov. Matt Bevin, who took office in December, signed it into law Feb. 2. Louisville Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz and the state’s three other Catholic bishops, along with their public policy arm, the Catholic Conference of Ken- tucky, followed the country’s five other Catholic bishops to introduce a new law. It amends Ken- tucky’s informed consent statute, which requires women seeking an abortion to be informed of its risks at least 24 hours prior to the pro- cedure in a private setting with a medical professional. Pope urges work for reconciliation

VATICAN CITY | Meeting Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, Pope Francis expressed his hopes for a “new spirit” and other war-torn coun- tries would have leaders strong enough to bring once-divided people to- gether. “I wish for Iraqs and for all of us — for the whole world — leaders like this,” the pope said Feb. 10 as he gave the Iraqi leader a medallion featuring an olive tree — a symbol of peace and freedom in the Holy Land between East and West. Pope Francis told thousands of members of Padre Pio Prayer Groups from around the world. The prayer was a “work of mercy,” Pope Francis said.

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Women to lead theological-pastoral aspect of Vatican communications

VATICAN CITY | The director of the new theological-pastoral de- partment of the Vatican Secretariat for Communications is Natasia Gov- ek, a Slovenian nun who special- izes in the communication of faith through images. The Vatican an- nounced Pope Francis’ nomina- tion on Feb. 7, but at the time, the pope said, the jubilee prescrip- tion was established by Pope Paul II Institute for Studies on Mar- rial and Family Life.

Popes names American to be nuncio in South Africa

VATICAN CITY | Pope Francis named Msgr. Peter B. Wells, a native of Tulsa, Okla., as the next papal nuncio to South Africa and Botswana. The long-time deputy chief of staff at the Vatican’s Sec- retariat of State will be ordained archbishop. His appointment was announced Feb. 9 by the Vatican. “I am extremely humbled and hon- ored by the faith which has been placed in me by the Church and our Holy Father,” in this Year of Mercy,” Archbishop-designate Wells said in a statement. “I ask for your prayers as I prepare to embark on this new mission.”

Cellibacy helps priests to ‘travel light,’ serve freely

ROME | Celibacy helps priests to “travel light” as they go about their work and serve free from attachments that could hinder them in bring- ing Christ’s love to the faithful, said Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state. Giving the key- note address Feb. 6 at a conference on priestly celibacy, Cardinal Pa- rolinsaid the call to celibacy is not “antithetical to marriage,” but rather a different way of giving one’s self completely in a loving relationship. Although celibacy is not demanded by the “very nature of the priest- hood,” he told the conference at the Pontifical Gregorian University, there are some "special advantages" that help priests in their pastoral ministry, including the “freedom to serve.”

Cellibacy, he said, is “suitable for those called to the priest- ship, the pope said, the jubilee prescrip- tion was established by Pope Paul II Institute for Studies on Mar- rial and Family Life.

wants everyone to share what they have with others in a true jubilee, Pope Francis said. It “is not fairest,” he insisted. “It’s in the Bible.” At his weekly general audience Feb. 10, in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis spoke about the description of a ju- bilee year in the Book of Leviticus. The religious feast also had serious social implications, he said, because it proclaimed a forgiveneness of debts, the freedom of indentured servants and widows and the restoration of the poor and the stranger.

Open God’s heart with prayer, pope says

VATICAN CITY | Praying is not like taking an aspirin, something one puts in a drawer and forgets, but a daily tech- nique to “travel light,” serve freely

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OBITUARY: MSGR. ED THOMPSON

Inspirational priest always offered answers to tough questions

STAFF REPORT

ALTAMONTE SPRINGS | Sitting upon a scooter that had a sign reading "Confessions on Wheels," May 29, 1923, in Philadelphia to Mother J. Thompson rode around St. Mary Magdalen's fall festival while sporting his trademark Philadelphia Phillies cap.

It's not the stereotypical image one might conjure when thinking of a priest, but for those who knew the 92-year-old Msgr. Thompson, it was a fitting image of a priest who loved and lived to serve.

In his nearly 65 years as a priest, Msgr. Thompson served a legacy in Central Florida as someone who advocated for the faith, answered faith-filled questions and inspired the faithful — laypeople, religious and clergy alike.

"All he really wanted in this life was to be able to serve the people of God as a priest and he did so through his last breath," wrote Father Charles Mitchell, pastor of St. Mary Magdalen Parish in Altamonte Springs where Msgr. Thompson served since 1991.

Msgr. Thompson passed away peacefully Feb. 11 at the parish rectory. He was 92.

In his Facebook post, Father Mitchell recalled how blessed he was to live and serve with Msgr. Thompson for 22 years.

"Although I am feeling great loss at the moment, I am extremely grateful for the gift of his long life," Father Mitchell wrote. "I learned so much from him and was inspired by his strong faith, dedication to duty and prayerful nature. May God receive you at your arrival and lead you to the holy city Jerusalem. May choirs of angels receive you and with Lazarus, once a poor man, may you have eternal rest."

Although Msgr. Thompson served the Sunshine State for the past two and half decades, he previously served in his hometown of Philadelphia. Born May 29, 1923, in Philadelphia to David and Catherine Thompson, he attended St. Charles Borromeo Seminary that was ordained at Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral May 19, 1951, one year after the ordination of his twin brother, Ward J. Thompson.

Msgr. Thompson — served as shepherd of the Diocese of Charleston, S.C., until his retirement in 1999. He died in 2013. Along with sharing a passion for the priesthood, the brothers shared another passion — baseball.

Msgr. Thompson served in many roles both in the Philadelphia Archdiocese and also the Reno-Las Vegas Diocese. He served as diocesan vocations director in Philadelphia, and also as a high school teacher, bishop’s secretary and hospital chaplain. Because of his successful voca- tions recruiting efforts for the Philadelphia Archdiocese, he was named monsignor Oct. 25, 1963.

In an interview with the Florida Catholic marking his 50th anniver- sary as a priest, Msgr. Thompson said he brought in 463 candi- dates for the priesthood and reli- gious life by canvassing families and students in elementary, high school and college.

During that same interview, Msgr. Thompson said his favorite job was that of a parish priest. He served as pastor of Sacred Heart in Philadelphia, Holy Family in Yerington, Nev., and Our Lady of Wisdom in Reno, Nev.

He arrived in the Diocese of Orlando in 1991, where he was assigned to St. Mary Magdalen Parish. He was incardinated in the diocese by Bishop Norbert Dorsey in 1993.

Msgr. Thompson served at St. Mary Magdalen in a variety of ways. In addition to serving as vocations chair and Knights of COLUMBUS clergy moderator, he led catechetical sessions to deepen the understanding of faith such as "What Do Catholics Really Believe?" Twelve Tough Issues, "Catholicism Coming Home," and "Bible Blitz." He was a frequent leader of retreats and prayer ser- vices, was involved in interfaith ministry and Habitat for Human- ity, and led pilgrimages to Eng- land and the Holy Land.

But true to his roots and pas- sion to serve as a priestly shep- herd, Msgr. Thompson had a great love for the liturgy and participated in Sunday Masses at St. Mary Magdalen for nearly 24 years.

On the occasion of his 60th ju- bilee, Msgr. Thompson said, "Be- ing able to say holy Mass every day is the greatest privilege on the face of the earth."

A friend of the Florida Catho- lic who celebrated Mass at the newspaper's office chapel in Eatonville, Msgr. Thompson con- tributed to a popular feature in the paper. Readers would write in questions for "Father Ed's Ques- tion Box," which he answered with enthusiasm and care. He delved into many different texts — Scripture, General Instruction of the Roman Missal, the Cat- echism of the Catholic Church, and spiritual and academic texts at his disposal.

He answered everything from questions about prayer life to Church dogma. He said his most profound question ever came from a child who asked, "Where was God before God was?" He recalled how the column was "one of the best teaching tools I've ever had."

In honor of Msgr. Thompson, the Florida Catholic has reprint- ed some of his contributions to "Father Ed's Question Box" on this page.

Michael Carlock of the Florida Catholic staff and longtime pa- rishioner of St. Mary Magdalen, recalled Msgr. Thompson as hav- ing a great devotion to Mary. So much so that Carlock would call the priest "Mary's second-favorite son." Perhaps fittingly, Msgr. Thompson's passing occurred on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

"Father Ed was a lifelong Phil- lies fan, sharp as a tack and pro- ductive to the very end and a trea- sure to the Church," Carlock said.

"The man was a living saint and his three-point homilies spoke to one with the authority of an apostle. The Spirit was definitely with him and in him."

Msgr. Thompson was preceded in death by both his brother and sister, who died last year. He is sur- vived by many nieces and neph-ews. His funeral was scheduled for Feb. 18 at St. Mary Magdalen Parish, with a burial scheduled for Feb. 19 at San Pedro Priests’ Cem- etery in Winter Park.

Father Ed’s question box

Question from Yale professor’s exam: How hot is it in hell? Is hell exothermic (giving off heat) or endothermic (absorbing heat)?

Answer: "Eternal fire," (Mt 25:41); "hell of fire," (Mt 5: 22); "furnace of fire," (Mt 13:42); "unquenchable fire," (Mt 3:12) — these are some of the "hot" expressions about the mi- lieu of those who, after death, are in a state of definite self-exclusion from the communion with God and the saints. They are in what the Bible calls "hell," (Catechism, 1033-1037). In using these five images, Jesus was not giving a literal description of hell but used the Old Testament expressions associated with the fate of the damned to give pain to the feelings of those separated from God forever (2 Kgs 23: 10; Jer 7: 31). Hell punishes lost sinners with a spiritual "fire." Hell is neither hot nor cold nor even homey. Without God, it is a whole lot of nothing.

Question: In class today we talked about God. We wondered, is God our conscience?

Answer: Conscience is not God but is helped by the "Voice of God," the whisperings of God the Holy Spirit inspiring us to know what is right and what is wrong. Conscience is an act of the mind that judges the rightness and the wrongness of particular thoughts, words and actions. The law of God is written on our hearts, in our conscience. God the Holy Spirit inspires us to do good and avoid evil and gives us the gifts of wisdom, understanding and counsel. In prayer, God speaks to our con- science if we invite God to do so. God works through the advice of others who help us to do the right thing. So, in a non-technical yet very useful sense, God is our conscience if we fol- low God's directions. (Catechism: 1776-1802).

Question: Are you sinning if you question your faith?

Answer: No, you are not sinning if you question your faith. By nature, you owe it to yourself to ask the big questions about God, salvation, Jesus, Mary, the Mass, confession, heaven, hell, purgatory — any and all aspects of your faith. Not to seek answers to your faith questions is not to grow religiously. For correct answers to your questions, consult the official teachings of the Catholic Church. The new Catechism of the Catholic Church is a reliable source for your research. Seek the wisdom of Catholic Church people, clergy and laity, who speak the authentic teachings of the Catholic faith. Keep asking your questions. Father Ed's Question Box is at your service. Not to ask why is to die.

Question: How do we get people to quit chewing gum in church and then receive Communion?

Answer: In itself, chewing gum (the noun) is not considered a food product and, therefore, chewing gum (the verb) before receiving Communion does not break the eucharistic fast. However, if the gum is wrapped in a food product such as candy, then such a food would break the fast. To break the fast, there must be the actual eating of the food (‘Moral Theol- ogy,’ H. Jone, p. 358). How to get gum-chewers to quit chewing gum in church is anybody’s try. Perhaps the bigger challenge is to get gum-chewers not to stick their gum on the pews. Uncouth, vulgar, gross! House of God!

Question: Who made God?

Answer: Nobody made God. God is not made. God simply is. God is not a receiver of existence. God does not come into existence. God does not exist because of any other being, for God is the source of all being. God must exist; lie cannot not exist. God’s nature is to exist. In the burning bush episode of Exodus Moses asked God, Feb. 18 at St. Mary Magdalen Church, he could identify God to his people in Egypt. God said to Moses: "I am who I am ... He Who is has sent me to you." God is eternal; he always was and always will be ("Theology and Sanity," F.J. Shedd, O. S. V., Chapter 3, "He who is").
But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved). — Ephesians 2:4-5.

Lord, we are ashamed, like our kings, our princes, and our ancestors, for having sinned against you. But to the Lord, our God, belong compassion and forgiveness, though we rebelled against him. — Daniel 9:8-9.

Lent: Mercy & Forgiveness
Two words to reflect upon while embarking on a Lenten journey

How do mercy and forgiveness fit into Lent?
To answer that, ponder another question …
Have you ever had a splinter?

You are minding your own business, walking along and come across a wooden beam that has some frayed surfaces. You scrape next to the beam and a sliver of wood gets lodged in your hand.

Ouch! That hurts.
The splinter is pesky, but you got rid of it. At least, you thought you did. Then you bang your hand a certain way and … Ouch! It hurts again. You thought you dealt with the splinter and it looked like it was physically gone, but it seems a piece of it is still lodged in your hand. It hadn’t been removed like you thought it was. And every time you think of that person or you hear that person’s voice or having a bad day and you came home and lashed out at a family member for no reason. You figure, “Hey, it’s no big deal. They can deal with it.” But you still can’t get that look of pain you saw on your family member’s face out of your mind.

So what do you do? Well, if you don’t get rid of the splinter, it might get infected. It might even become more painful over time. It might be best to remove it, and you might even need help — someone you trust to take your hand and remove that painful splinter.

Sometimes it is more than just physical pieces of wood that cause pain like a lingering, pesky splinter. Think about it. Have you ever wronged someone and tried to dismiss it? Maybe you were having a bad day and you came home and lashed out at a family member for no reason. You figure, “Hey, it’s no big deal. They can deal with it.” But you still can’t get that look of pain you saw on your family member’s face out of your mind.

Or maybe the opposite happened. Maybe you have a friend who is suddenly doing something that hurts your feelings. You might have told that friend to quit it, but he or she just doesn’t get it, laughs it off or dismisses your feelings altogether. And in response you just hold this grudge. That person’s not worth your time. That person’s a loser who won’t listen and doesn’t care. And every time you think of that person or you hear that person’s voice or pass by him or her in the hall, that grudge rears its ugly head.

In either situation, there is that lingering pain.

Could sins and grudges be splinters of the soul?

During Lent, Catholics are challenged to examine our lives and remove those things we possess that damage our relationship with God. And that is where forgiveness and mercy play a huge role.

The word sin comes from an ancient Greek word that was used in archery. It literally means “missing the mark.” When we miss the mark, sometimes we hurt others and we hurt God — and those two things create hurt in our own lives, just like that pesky splinter. That is why reception of the sacrament of reconciliation is such a beautiful expression of admitting to God we have missed the mark and want to be on target with our words, thoughts and actions.

The sacrament of reconciliation is a powerful expression of God’s forgiveness and mercy. Through it, God’s reaches out and repairs the damage done by sin, even the damage that is deep down inside, like a splinter lodged deep within your skin.

But it all starts with you participating in the sacrament and revealing your own desire to come clean about your own transgressions, your own sins, and asking God for that forgiveness.

Lent is also a time to examine whether you have the ability to forgive a transgression done towards you. If someone wrongs you, you could ignore it or seek revenge in some way. Or you could forgive.

In our hearts and souls, we all know that the last choice is the right choice, but it can be difficult. It could also take time. As Pope Francis said, “A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just. We need to understand properly this mercy of God, this merciful Father who is so patient.”

During Lent, recognize the grudges you hold and ask God to show a path of love and mercy to release those grudges that linger and cause pain. Even when situations cannot be resolved, forgiveness can be found. And that is the difference between a splinter festering in your soul, and expelling pain to forge a deeper relationship with God.

**EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

- Have I been hurtful to others, either in words or actions?
- Have I respected the belongings of others?
- Have I told the truth? Have I been open and honest with others?
- Have I kept my mind and thoughts pure?
- Have I been happy with what I have instead of being jealous of others?
- Have I been responsive to the needs of the poor and respected the dignity of others?

**SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION**

In reconciliation, we acknowledge our sins before God and His Church. We express our sorrow in a meaningful way, receive the forgiveness of Christ and His Church, make reparation for what we have done, and in return we receive God’s mercy.

**Steps in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation**

- Examination of conscience by the penitent.
- Priest gives a blessing or greeting. You make the sign of the cross and say, “Bless me, father, for I have sinned. My last confession was (give weeks, months, or years).”
- Confess all of your sins to the priest. If you are unsure or uneasy, tell him and ask for help.
- Say, “I am sorry for these and all of my sins.”
- The priest assigns a penance and offers advice to help you be a better Catholic.

- Say an Act of Contrition, expressing your sorrow for your sins. You are able to speak from your heart, but if you prefer, here is an example of an Act of Contrition:
  
  My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy. Amen.
- The priest, acting in the person of Christ, then absolves you from your sins.

- ‘I think we too are the people who, on the one hand, want to listen to Jesus, but on the other hand, at times, like to find a stick to beat others with, to condemn others. And Jesus has this message for us: mercy. I think — and I say it with humility — that this is the Lord’s most powerful message: mercy.’

— Pope Francis, during a homily on March 17, 2013

- ‘For there are three ways of performing an act of mercy: the merciful word, by forgiving and by comforting; secondly, if you can offer no word, then pray — that too is mercy; and thirdly, deeds of mercy. And when the Last Day comes, we shall be judged from this, and on this basis we shall receive the eternal verdict.’

— St. Faustina Kowalska

- ‘Forgiveness is the remission of sins. For it is by this that what has been lost, and was found, is saved from being lost again.’

— St. Augustine
POPE IN MEXICO

In crime-plagued periphery, pope preaches conversion

ONDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

ECATEPEC, Mexico | Pope Francis began his travels to Mexico's "peripheries" by visiting an overcrowded, sprawling settlement known internationally as a hunting ground for girls to force into prostitution and for boys to enlist in the drug trade.

Ecatepec, on the northern edge of Mexico City, also has tied up religious communities and members of the Servant Missionaries of Mary, who normally faces the congregation, can be turned around to allow a closer and more private moment of veneration.

Laying a bouquet of yellow roses in front of the image, the pope sat down in prayerful silence with eyes closed and face to the wall. He let out a prayer and then lit a candle in front of the image, with the words "Maria, our Mother." He then sat in silence for several minutes, saying a few words in Spanish.

The pope later visited the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, which is considered one of Mexico's most sacred sites. He was accompanied by Bishop Oscar Garcia Barrera, who is in charge of the city of Ecatepec.

In his homily, the pope reflected on the apparitions of Mary to St. Juan Diego in 1531. "In this way, she managed to awaken something he did not know," the pope said.

"Three great temptations" — wealth, vanity and pride — are behind such an attitude and so many other ills that destroy society and attack human dignity, he said.

The sinful use of money and material things, he said, is "seizing hold of goods destined for all and using them only for my own people." It involves living off the sweat and labor of others, "even at the expense of their very lives," the pope said.

"Such bread," he said, "tastes of pain, bitterness and suffering. This is the bread that a corrupt family or society gives its own children."

"We know what it means to be reduced by money, fame and power," Pope Francis said. "For this reason, the Church gives us the gift of this mercy of God is." The pope said that despite the indigenous saint's feelings of inadequacy, Mary chose him to "oversee, care for, protect and promote the building of this shrine."

"In this way, she managed to awaken something he did not know how to express, a veritable banner of love and justice: No one could be left out in the building of that other shrine — the shrine of life, the shrine of our communities, our societies and our cultures," he said.

God's true shrine, he added, is the life of his children, especially young people without a future, the elderly who are often unacknowledged and forgotten and families lacking even the most basic necessities. The "shrine of God is the faces of the many people we encounter each day," the pope said.

Pope Francis said that those who suffer do not weep in vain and their sufferings are a silent prayer that rises to heaven, "always finding a place in Mary's mantle."

Like St. Juan Diego, Christians are called to be Mary's ambassadors and console those who are overwhelmed by trials and sufferings, he said.
POPE IN MEXICO

Bishops urged be unified, speak out

DAVID AGREN
Catholic News Service

MEXICO CITY — Pope Francis demanded forceful denunciations of drug violence in Mexico from the country’s bishops, who have preferred timid pronouncements instead of speaking prophetically on a tragedy that has claimed more than 100,000 lives over the past 10 years and left another 25,000 Mexican missing.

Speaking Feb. 13 to an audience of bishops in Mexico City’s Metropolitan Cathedral, Pope Francis urged them to confront the scourge of drug cartels and organized crime by raising their voices, developing pastoral plans, and “drawing in and embracing the fringes of human existence in the ravaged areas of our cities.”

“I urge you not to understate the magnitude of this phenomenon ... and the gravity of the violence ... do not allow us as pastors of the Church to hide behind anodyne denunciations.”

The pope spoke to the “courage of the bishops” for more than 40 minutes, delivering a tough talk on matters the pope plans to highlight in his visit to Mexico Feb. 15 for a Mass with Mexico’s indigenous peoples, who have fallen away from the Church in droves. He urged the bishops to build a Church more inclusive for indigenous peoples and their fascinating but not infrequently decimated cultures.”

Pope Francis also alluded to the folkloric Santa Muerte, a skeletal pseudo-saint attracting hordes of followers in Mexico and Latin America, living Jesus.”

He ended with a call for unity, departuring from his prepared comments to do so.

“If you have to fight, then fight; if you have to say things, say them but like men, face-to-face, like men of God, who can pray together, who can discern together, and if you argue to ask for forgiveness,” he said. “But always maintain the unity of the episcopal body.”

Church observers said the pope’s message was unprecedented for Mexico, where the bishops’ conference has become quite conservative over the past quarter-century as the Church and government restored relations. In some Catholic circles, critical voices on issues such as human right have been considered an impediment to that process.

“Francis is saying something along the lines of ‘I am aware of the differences among you,’” said Rodolfo Soriano Nunez, a sociologist and Church observer in Mexican City. “There are lots of ‘sects’ within the Mexican bishops, groups that fight bitterly with each other while trying to offer themselves as the most reliable partners to the government.”

The pope travels to Chiapas at the other end of the country Feb. 15 for a Mass with Mexico’s indigenous peoples, who have fallen away from the Church in droves. He urged the bishops to build a Church more inclusive for indigenous peoples and their fascinating but not infrequently decimated cultures.”

Pope Francis expressed his admiration for Our Lady of Guadalupe, who “teaches us that the only power capable of conquering the hearts of men and women is the tenderness of God.”

He also told the bishops, “We do not need ‘princes,’ but rather a community of the Lord’s witnesses.”

“Do not allow yourselves to be corrupted by trivial materialism or by the seductive illusion of unfettered agreements,” he added in an allusion to suggestions that bishops sometimes smooth things out behind closed doors with corrupt officials and even criminals, instead of acting publicly. “Do not place your faith in the ‘chariots and horses’ of today’s pharaohs, for our strength is in the pillar of fire that divides the sea in two, without much fanfare.”

He ended with a call for unity,
EDGARDO AYALA
Catholic News Service

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador | The Salvadoran bishops have made no comment on a government recommendation to women to delay pregnancy because of the Zika virus, and priests contacted by Catholic News Service gave varied responses on their reaction.

The recommendation to not get pregnant “is illusory; the state doesn’t have a say regarding the private matters of the citizens, especially in regard to the procreation of children,” Father Jose Antonio Ventura, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in San Juan Opico, told Catholic News Service.

He added that the Salvadoran state has unsuccessfully tried to eradicate the mosquito, and their efforts should continue to focus on that direction.

“If someone asks me for advice, I would say that the important thing is to get rid of the larvae, but I can’t say do not get pregnant,” he added.

Health officials have urged women to postpone their pregnancies for two years, because the Zika virus can produce microcephaly, a rare neurological condition that causes smaller heads in newborns, affecting the normal development of their brain.

“So far, we have not been given any guidance by the bishops on how to deal with this situation,” said Father Simeon Reyes, vicar of the Basilica of the Sacred Heart in San Salvador.

“One of the first tasks is to go to the cause, to combat the mosquito, but I would say a recommendation to postpone the pregnancies may also be appropriate,” Father Reyes told Catholic News Service. He said he sees no malice or misconduct in advising all women not to get pregnant until 2018.

“The government just wants to prevent skyrocketing cases of microcephaly, once detected,” he added. He said the suggestion of the health authorities is just that, a suggestion, not an obligation, and it is for the people to decide to take it into account or not.

“As a Church, we are in favor of life, as God made it clear,” Father Alfonso Guzman, pastor of Calvary Parish in San Salvador, told Catholic News Service. “These are not profound measures; we can’t go against God’s nature.”

The link between Zika virus and microcephaly was first seen in Brazil in October, and by the end of January more than 4,000 suspected cases were reported, the Brazilian government said.

The virus is transmitted by the bite of an infected mosquito, Aedes aegypti, and was first detected in El Salvador in November. Since then, more than 6,000 suspected cases of Zika have been reported; three have been confirmed. Another 22 nations have confirmed the presence of the virus in the Americas.

Health officials said that among the 122 pregnant women who were under observation in El Salvador, 11 of them have given birth, and the condition of the babies is normal.

They have acknowledged that the country does not have the resources to carry out the tests to confirm the presence of the virus in the body, but added that they are working with Nicaraguan officials to develop such a test as soon as possible.

For two decades, El Salvador, a tropical country of 6.3 million people, has fought the same mosquito, which also transmits dengue and chikungunya viruses. The warm weather generates favorable weather conditions for the mosquito to develop.

The Salvadoran government’s efforts have been focused on eradicating mosquito larvae, which live in water. The government has distributed small plastic bags containing a chemical to be placed in any object that contains water in households, emphasizing that the population plays a key role in destroying its environment. The Washington Post reported many Salvadorans are suspicious of government workers and will not let them into their homes to fumigate.

In San Salvador, 25 percent of households have the mosquito larvae, an amount well above the 4 percent that is considered safe by the World Health Organization.

The Ministry of Health’s delaying pregnancy recommendation is not considered an official policy of the Salvadoran government. A similar measure was announced in Colombia, Ecuador and Jamaica.

The government suggestion would imply that couples should use birth control methods if they want to avoid the risk of microcephaly. In most of Latin America and the Caribbean, condom use among sexually active women who have never been married varies from 34 percent to 74 percent, according to a 2013 study by the New York-based Guttmacher Institute.

The Catholic Church is opposed to artificial birth control, but promotes natural family planning to space births.

Know Someone With Cancer?
(or other life-threatening illness?)

St. Peregrine prayed and the Lord miraculously cured his cancer: You need only ask St. Peregrine to intercede for your friend or family member.

God answers all prayers.

Also ask St. Peregrine to intercede with the Lord to make your loved one ready for the moment when a loving God comes to meet us face-to-face.

A SPECIAL NOVENA OF MASSES AND PRAYERS to seek the aid of St. Peregrine – Patron of those afflicted with cancer or other life-threatening illness – will start March 11. Please send your intentions today and ask for your free folder and blessed St. Peregrine medal. God is our comfort and hope.

A pregnant woman waits to be seen Jan. 29 at the Women’s National Hospital in San Salvador, El Salvador. Health officials have urged women to postpone their pregnancies for two years, because the Zika virus can produce microcephaly, a rare neurological condition that causes smaller heads in newborns.

(JOSE CABEZAS, REUTERS | CNS)
Surge in Zika virus rekindles abortion debate in Brazil

LISE ALVES
Catholic News Service

SAO PAULO | The president of the Brazilian bishops’ conference criticized a proposal by the U.N. Human Rights Commission that countries allow abortion in cases in which the mother was infected with the Zika virus.

“Abortion is not the answer for the Zika virus,” Archbishop Sergio da Rocha of Brasilia told reporters during a Feb. 10 news conference to announce the bishops’ Lenten Fraternity Campaign. “We need to value life in any situation or condition. Less quality of life does not mean less rights to live or less human dignity.”

The same day, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff met with members of the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil to seek their help in fighting the Aedes aegypti mosquito, which transmits the Zika virus.

Rousseff asked the religious leaders — including Catholics — to urge parishes to look around their homes and neighborhoods for possible breeding grounds for the mosquito, which also transmits dengue and chikungunya fever.

The Zika virus, which has made world headlines in the past few weeks, has been linked by the Brazilian government to the surge in microcephaly cases, although only 400 of 3,670 suspected cases of microcephaly have been proven to be linked to the virus.

The possible link has led to the rekindling of the debate surrounding the decriminalization of abortion in Brazil. Groups that have often spoken out for the decriminalization are now said to be preparing a suit to be taken to Brazil’s Supreme Court for the authorization for abortion in cases of confirmed Zika infection in pregnant women.

Auxiliary Bishop Leonardo Steiner of Brasilia, secretary-general of the bishops’ conference, said groups are taking advantage of a painful situation to advance the discussion of abortion in the country. He said the Church’s position would always be in favor of life.

Other Christian groups, however, would like to expand the discussion on abortion to other sectors of society and hear what women have to say.

“We understand this is an issue that needs to be discussed with society in a much more open and democratic manner,” said Joel Zeferino, president of the Alliance of Baptists of Brazil. “We need to include in this debate the women who suffer these abortions, the women who live on the outskirts of our cities, the black women, these are the ones who, in fact, resort to illegal abortions.”

Ana Beatriz, a 4-month-old girl with microcephaly, is seen in a photo obtained Feb. 9 in Lagoa do Carro, Brazil. Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff met with members of the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil Feb. 10 in Brasilia to ask for their help in fighting the Aedes aegypti mosquito, which transmits the Zika virus.

(PERCIO CAMPOS, EPA/CNS)
European bishops welcome EU classification of Islamic State ‘genocide’

Manchester, England | A European bishops’ commission has welcomed a move by the European Parliament to classify atrocities and religious cleansing by the Islamic State as genocide.

Father Patrick Daly, general secretary of COMECE, the commission of the Bishops’ Conference of the European Community, said the designation represented progress in halting the persecution of Christians and other minorities in Syria and Iraq.

“Steps to prosecute criminals and bring them to justice are also imperative,” Father Daly said in a Feb. 4 statement.

The statement was issued the same day the European Parliament adopted the resolution proposed by Lars Adaktusson, a Swedish member, which stated that Islamic State was committing genocide.

The Parliament adopted the resolution the week after the Council of Europe, which harmonizes human rights legislation throughout the continent, voted 117-1 in favor of a resolution recognizing genocide. If a similar resolution were adopted by the United Nations, signatories to the convention would have an obligation to bring the activities of Islamic State to an end, to prioritize the protection of the victims, and to prosecute perpetrators once the hostilities were over.

Since 2014 Islamic State, seeking to establish a caliphate, has persecuted Christians against Christians and Yezidis and other religious and ethnic minorities, who do not agree with the so-called ISIS/ Daesh interpretation of Islam, and that this, therefore, entails action under the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.”

The Parliament also recommended that “action should be taken” for the activities of Islamic State to be recognized as genocide by the U.N. Security Council.

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If a similar resolution were adopted by the United Nations, signatories to the convention would have an obligation to bring the activities of Islamic State to an end, to prioritize the protection of the victims, and to prosecute perpetrators once the hostilities were over.

Since 2014 Islamic State, seeking to establish a caliphate, has persecuted anyone who does not share its extreme interpretation of Islam. Terrorists have assassinated church leaders and driven hundreds of thousands of Christians from their homes in a campaign that has included mass murder, torture, kidnapping, sexual enslavement, systematic rape and forced conversions. Many Christian churches, monasteries, shrines and cemeteries have been destroyed.

Alas Francis, during a trip to Bolivia in July, used the word “genocide” to describe the plight of the persecuted Christians.

Campaigns are underway in the U.S. and Britain to persuade political leaders to designate Islamic State crimes as genocide.

Although President Barack Obama is yet to be persuaded, presidential candidates Hillary Clinton, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush have each expressed the view that ISIS is committing genocide.

In Britain, the government has resisted calls to recognize genocide since 2014 Islamic State, seeking to establish a caliphate, has persecuted Christians against Christians and Yezidis and other religious and ethnic minorities, who do not agree with the so-called ISIS/ Daesh interpretation of Islam, and that this, therefore, entails action under the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.”

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The Parliament adopted the resolution the week after the Council of Europe, which harmonizes human rights legislation throughout the continent, voted 117-1 in favor of a resolution recognizing genocide.
Pope sends off missionaries of mercy to help people open hearts to God

**CAROL GLATZ** Catholic News Service

**VATICAN CITY** | Pope Francis marked the beginning of the Church’s Lenten journey by sending off several hundred religious and diocesan priests on their own special path as “missionaries of mercy” in local parishes.

“Look upon your servants, Lord, that we are sending as messengers of mercy, salvation and peace. Guide their steps and sustain them with ‘the power of your grace,’” the pope said during a special Ash Wednesday liturgy in St. Peter’s Basilica Feb. 10. “May Christ’s voice resound in their words and Christ’s heart in their gestures.”

More than 700 of the 1,142 missionaries specially appointed by the pope attended the Mass. Dressed in white vestments and purple stoles, the men received the pope’s mandate to preach about God’s mercy and special authority to pardon even those sins reserved to the Holy See.

Their mission was echoed in the day’s second reading from St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians, in which he proclaims, “We are ambassadors for Christ with God working and speaking through them, imploring people to ‘be reconciled with God.’

In his homily before commending the priests at the end of Mass, the pope said their mandate is to be “signs and instruments of God’s pardon.”

“Dear brothers, may you be able to help open the doors of people’s hearts” as well as bless, heal and raise them up with a father’s love, he said.

God knows the sins, weaknesses, wounds and fatigue people experience in their lives and “he knows how much we need forgiveness, he knows that we need to feel loved in order to carry out the good,” he said.

People cannot keep going on their own, and that is why the apostle Paul doesn’t urge people to “do something, but to themselves be reconciled by God, to allow him to forgive us,” he said.

In fact, the first step on the road of a Christian life is recognizing the need for divine mercy and to pass through that “open door which is Christ,” who offers everyone a new and joyful life.

The problem, the pope said, is there may be many barriers that keep people from ever approaching or opening that door.

People may be so hardened by sin or pride that “they bolt the lock on the soul,” justifying their errors or believing they are “no worse than others,” thereby remaining “prisoners of evil.”

Another obstacle people face is being ashamed “to open the secret doors of the heart.” While shame is a good sign since “it shows that we want to detach ourselves from evil,” it must never turn into “dread or fear.

The third danger is when people walk away from Christ, becoming distant or isolated by hating themselves up with their own suffering, wallowing endlessly in negative thoughts and sinking into the darkest recesses of the soul, he said.

“Let’s listen to Jesus, who says to those who are weary and burdened, ‘Come to me,’ since ‘only the Lord’s grace liberates us’ and through that ‘open door which is Christ,’ who offers everyone a new and joyful life.”

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“May Lent be a time of a healthy ‘pruning’ back of falsehood, worldliness, indifference: of no longer thinking that everything is fine as long as I am doing well; of understanding that what matters isn’t acceptance, seeking success or approval, but the cleansing of one’s heart and life.”

The pope broke with the tradition of walking from the Benedictine monastery of St. Anselm to the Dominican-run Basilica of Santa Sabina in order to commission the missionaries of mercy from St. Peter’s Basilica. Before the main altar were the mortal remains of St. Padre Pio and St. Leopold Mandic, two Capuchins popular as miracle workers and known particularly for the long hours they spent hearing confessions.

Pope Francis asked the Capuchins to bring the relics of the two saints to Rome for the Year of Mercy, particularly the celebration of Ash Wednesday and the commissioning of the official missionaries of mercy as an encouragement and inspiration to be generous with God’s love.

The pope received ashes on the top of his head from Cardinal Angelo Comastri, archpriest of St. Peter’s, and distributed ashes to a number of cardinals and a small group of laypeople and religious.

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**Pope: Negotiating table is only way to bring peace to Syria**

**CAROL GLATZ** Catholic News Service

**VATICAN CITY** | A negotiated political resolution is the only answer to the crisis unfolding in Syria, Pope Francis said, urging world leaders to do everything possible to kick-start talks.

Inviting people to intensify their prayers, he also asked everyone to be generous in offering the kind of help needed to guarantee the “survival and dignity” of Syrians fleeing the conflict.

“With great concern, I am following the tragic fate of civilians caught up in violent battles in beloved Syria and forced to abandon everything to flee the horrors of war,” he said after praying the Angelus with those gathered in St. Peter’s Square Feb. 7.

The pope launched an “appeal to the international community to not spare any effort in urgently bringing the parties concerned to the negotiating table. Only a political solution of the conflict will be capable of guaranteeing a future of reconciliation and peace.”

He also called for greater efforts in ending human trafficking “by destroying this crime and this intolerable disgrace.”

The International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking Feb. 8, he said, was an opportunity for everyone “to help today’s new slaves break the heavy chains of exploitation and regain their freedom and dignity.”

On Italy’s Pro-Life Day, he also encouraged the country’s bishops and Catholic institutions to renew their commitment to promote human life from conception to its natural end. “Our society should be helped to be healed from all attacks on life, daring inner change, which also is expressed through works of mercy,” he said.

In his Gospel reflection before praying the Angelus, the pope said people recognize and are in awe of Christ’s divinity, it is easy for them to believe they are not worthy enough for God. Just as Peter urged Christ, “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man,” most people “think there should be distance between the sinner and the saint,” the pope said.

However, it is precisely “the sinner’s condition that demands the Lord not distance himself in the same way a doctor cannot walk away from a person who is sick,” he said.

By telling Peter and the apostles to not be afraid and making them into “fishers of men,” Jesus reveals the essence of Christianity — to bring far and wide “the regenerative and freely given love of God.”

Pope Francis asked if people knew how to truly trust in the Lord’s word and not be afraid despite their sins and failings. “In this Holy Year of Mercy, we are called to comfort those who feel like sinners and unworthy before the Lord and discouraged because of their errors.

“Do not be afraid. The father’s mercy is greater than your sins,” he said.

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**Let’s listen to Jesus, who says to those who are weary and burdened, “Come to me,” since only the Lord’s grace liberates us’**

**Pope Francis**
Antonin Scalia, Supreme Court justice, dies

WASHINGTON | Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, the longest-serving justice on the Supreme Court, died of apparent natural causes at a resort in West Texas Feb. 13. He was 79.

Scalia, a Catholic, was appointed in 1986 by President Ronald Reagan. Five of the remaining eight justices also are Catholic.

In a statement, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott called Scalia “a man of God, a patriot and an unwavering defender of the written Constitution and the rule of law.”

“He was the solid rock who turned away so many attempts to depart from and distort the Constitution,” he said in a statement in which he promised to keep the Scalia family in his prayers.

In 1992, Scalia told a group of high school students at Washington’s Georgetown Visitation High School that, as Catholics, they might feel out of step with the rest of the world, but they should learn to accept it and take pride in it.

He said he was raised a Catholic when the religion was not in the mainstream. “When I was the age of you young ladies, the Church provided obtrusive reminders that we were different,” he said, referring to meatless Fridays and Sunday morning fasts before receiving Communion. These practices “were not just to toughen us up” but to “require us to be out of step,” he said.

Scalia noted the sense of "differentness" should have enabled Catholics "to be strong enough on bigger issues" such as abortion, contraception and divorce.

He also spoke of what he called the necessary distinction between church and state. "The business of the state is not God’s business," he said.

In 1994, he was honored by The Catholic University of America with the James Cardinal Gibbons Medal, given for service to the nation, the Catholic Church, or the university.

He was born in Trenton, N.J., March 1936. In 1953, he graduated first in his class from Jesuit-run Xavier High School in Manhattan.

He then attended Georgetown University and Harvard Law School. n

Pope expresses joy after meeting Russian Orthodox patriarch

FROM HAVANA | Though their differences are recognizable and real, Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow emphasized their obligation as Christians and as bishops to encourage collaboration among Christians and charity for all who suffer.

“I felt an interior joy that truly came from the Lord,” the pope told reporters traveling with him Feb. 12 as he flew to Mexico from Havana, where he met the patriarch. The Vatican had told reporters on the plane that the pope would not be speaking to the press after the meeting, but the pope said he wanted to share what he was feeling.

“It was a conversation of brothers,” Pope Francis said. The conversation was marked by freedom and “complete frankness,” he said.

Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, director of foreign relations for the Moscow Patriarchate, were present for the meeting, along with two translators, the pope said.

Together, they discussed concrete proposals for working together, “because unity is made by walking,” the pope said. Even if the goal of full unity is not reached in this lifetime, he said, “at least when the Lord comes, he’ll find us walking.”

Pope Francis said the joint statement he and Patriarch Kirill signed in the presence of Cuban President Raul Castro “is not a political statement, it’s not a sociological statement; it is a pastoral declaration.”

While the two leaders insisted on the need to stop the persecution of Christians in the Middle East and North Africa and condemned abortion and euthanasia, they used much more careful language to discuss two issues that made their meeting so surprising: the life of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and the war in Eastern Ukraine.

For more than 25 years, Russian Orthodox patriarchs have refused to meet a pope because of what the Moscow Patriarchate claims is “proselytism” on the part of Ukrainian Catholics, one of the Eastern churches in full union with Rome.

The Church was outlawed under the Soviet Union and its rebirth with Ukrainian independence has meant a loss of both buildings and faithful for the Russian Orthodox.

In their statement, Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill said all Christians — Catholic or Orthodox — are called to preach the Gospel. “This mission entails mutual respect for members of the Christian communities and excludes any form of proselytism. We are not competitors but brothers, and this concept must guide all our mutual actions as well as those directed to the outside world,” the two said.

Without providing specific examples or any clarification, the statement denounced “disloyal means” used “to entice believers to pass from one church to another.”

The pope and patriarch said they hoped their meeting would “contribute to reconciliation” wherever there is tension between Orthodox and Eastern-rite Catholics, who share the same spiritual and liturgical heritage.

Using language similar to that found in a 1993 document of the International Roman Catholic-Orthodox theological dialogue, the two leaders said “unianism” — incorporating one portion of a church into another — “is not the way to re-establish unity.”

However, the two leaders, like the 1993 document, acknowledged that “the ecclesial communities which emerged in these historical circumstances have the right to exist” and do what is necessary to minister to their faith.

As for the Russian-supported war in Eastern Ukraine, Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill said, “We deplore the hostility in Ukraine that has already caused many victims, inflicted innumerable wounds on peaceful inhabitants and thrown society into a deep economic and humanitarian crisis.”

They called on their churches “to refrain from taking part in the confrontation and to not support any further development of the conflict.” n

CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT | Though their differences are recognizable and real, Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill of Moscow emphasized their obligation as Christians and as bishops to encourage collaboration among Christians and charity for all who suffer.

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Rescuing the Poor in Uncertain Times

American Catholics are embracing God’s economy as they help the poor in Latin America

Sandra Maria goes to work each day even though she knows it is slowly killing her. Maria, a mother of five and a grandmother, spends each day scavenging in a city garbage dump in northern Nicaragua for recyclables, which she later sells for money to buy food. The work is hard — toxic fumes rising up from the mounds of putrid garbage, flies piling on her skin and burning her throat as hordes of mosquitoes buzz around her body — but not having food for her family is harder.

“The smoke is killing us and we bathe in dirty water,” says Maria, who lives in the shanty town inside the garbage dump with her family. “We would do anything to get away from the dump, but right now it is the only way for us to make money to survive.”

Maria’s family is one of hundreds who scrape out a living each day in Chinandega’s 20-acre garbage dump. In many Latin American countries, the poor flock to city garbage dumps because it is often the only steady work they can find and they can at least earn enough to guarantee their children a meal. Still, the pay is meager — the equivalent of between $2 and $10 U.S. dollars a week.

The dire situation in Chinandega is just one example of the intense poverty plaguing Latin America. A 2011 World Bank report found 28 percent of Latin America’s population living on less than $2.50 a day, while 26 percent lacked access to basic sanitation. The fact that families are turning to garbage dumps for survival, shows the severity of the need.

“Garbage dumps and dirty streets are terrible playgrounds for children to be growing up in,” says Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, whose ministry supports several aid programs across Latin America for families struggling to survive intense poverty. “If we don’t do something to break the vicious cycle of poverty these children are trapped in, they are doomed to become adults still living in the same deadly environment.”

Despite the dismal statistics and fear over the future of an uncertain economy, dozens of local outreach ministries run by strong Catholic missionaries are tapping into God’s economy to help the poor in Latin America. And, already, they’ve seen great returns as lives are being restored.

One such life is that of Maria Elena. The mother of four used to work in the horrific 42-acre garbage dump in Managua, Nicaragua. She barely made enough money to feed her children, let alone send them to school. They often came to work with her in the dump, which she hated because it made them sick.

Maria Elena is now part of a jewelry-making program run by a local Catholic ministry where she earns enough money making necklaces and bracelets from recycled material to help support her family — even send her children to school.

“This program has been a great help,” she says. “I don’t know what we would have done without it.”

The simple program that changed Maria Elena’s life is one of several projects in Latin America supported by Cross Catholic Outreach. Thanks to contributions provided by its U.S. donors, Cross Catholic Outreach is able to partner with Catholic ministries in the field who are running great programs but don’t have the funds to sustain them. Support from American Catholics keeps these important projects up and running.

“We’re amazed by the unwavering compassion and generosity of these donors. Even at a time when people are hurting here in the U.S. because of the economy, they are still giving to help the poor around the world,” says Cavnar. “They show great faith, and we are seeing the positive returns of that faith in the lives of the poor.”

Those positive returns are especially visible in the fight against world hunger. For example, monthly financial support from Cross Catholic Outreach allows Las Mercedes Nutrition Center in Honduras to feed more than a hundred poor, malnourished children who they find abandoned in garbage dumps and in the streets. Cross Catholic Outreach also feeds thousands of poor children through the support of school feeding programs and food shipments to countries such as Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.

“It is amazing what God can do when you trust him,” said John Bland, executive director of Amigos for Christ, a Nicaraguan ministry serving the rural poor and people living in Chinandega’s city garbage dump. With help from Cross Catholic Outreach, his ministry built homes for families living in the dump — families who have spent much of their lives wondering if they’d be able to collect enough plastic bottles to buy food.

“The poor have unbelievable faith, as do these Catholic ministries serving in the field, helping them each day,” Cavnar says. “We count it a privilege to help them and, in doing so, live out our faith.”

To make a tax-deductible contribution to Cross Catholic Outreach and its work with Catholic ministries overseas, either use the enclosed postage-paid brochure or send donations to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01204, PO Box 97168, Washington DC 20090-7168.

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Your help is needed for Cross Catholic Outreach to bring Christ’s mercy to the poorest of the poor. To make a donation, use the enclosed postage-paid brochure or mail a gift to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01204, PO Box 97168, Washington DC 20090-7168.
Catholic college leaders urged to promote school charisms

CAROL ZIMMERMANN

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON | The best way for Catholic colleges to move forward is to look back, said speakers at the annual meeting of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities.

They were not stressing the need to reminisce, but instead emphasizing the importance of tapping into the charisms particular to the orders that founded many Catholic colleges and universities, and making sure they are understood and embraced by school communities.

“Our charisms should be revered as much as possible,” said Mercy Sister Susan Sanders, founding director of the Center for Religion and Public Discourse at St. Xavier University in Chicago.

Sister Sanders, a member of the leadership team of the Mercy Sisters’ Midwest Community, gave the closing address Feb. 1 at the ACCU meeting in Washington attended by Catholic college presidents and leaders from around the country.

Speaking at a podium in front of pictures of the men and women religious who founded many of the religious congregations that sponsor Catholic colleges nationwide, the Mercy sister emphasized that charisms of each school set them apart and provide a distinctive campus culture.

But they are also meant to do more, she said, noting that these specific gifts, as she called them, can help students understand how faith is lived out concretely and also can move beyond campuses, particularly in service work around the world.

Charisms stem from the teachings of the orders’ founders and reflect what those in that order strive to do in their ministry. For example, a charism of the Vincentians, an order founded by St. Vincent de Paul, emphasizes humble service to others, especially the poor, so this same spirit is likely to be emphasized at Vincentian schools such as DePaul University in Chicago or St. John’s University in New York.

Sister Sanders said the late Chicago Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin described charisms as fundamental to religious life and touchstones to help them in their ministry.

As she sees it, they are not stagnant from one to another and time, but instead are mobile and can provide modern responses to cultural issues on immigration and race for example. They also provide something that unchurched students, students of different faiths or even unaffiliated students want the support of the administration, faculty and local partners, she said.

The key to getting interfaith efforts on the ground is to gain allies. You need the support of the administration, faculty and local partners, she said.

And Colleen Kuhl, director of campus ministry at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, said any interfaith efforts have to go beyond the campus. At Loras, she said the students learn about other faiths primarily through service projects.

“Like others, we have institutional commitment to service,” she said, noting that “it is nothing new to any of us: The idea of helping people at the margins is common to all faiths.”

Jay Worrall, director of the Holzeran Center for Community Engagement at Alvernia University, said the interfaith efforts at his campus are different than at other colleges because the emphasis is not on accommodating or working with students of other faiths, since most of the students on campus are Catholic.

Instead, the challenge is to help Catholic students understand about different faiths, which happens through lectures, service work and participation in a community-run interfaith program.

“We have a lot going on trying to make connections,” he said.

‘It’s in our DNA to be open to other religions. We’ve done something, but we have long way to go.’

— Mark Laboe

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Students wait in line March 3, 2015, outside the Basilica of the Sacred Heart on the campus of the University of Notre Dame to pay their respects at a wake for Holy Cross Father Theodore Hesburgh, former Notre Dame president, who died last February. (BARBARA JOHNSTON, UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME | CNS)

Colleges are learning about more successful interfaith efforts

CAROL ZIMMERMANN

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON | Many Catholic colleges seem to value interfaith work and are willing to keep learning how to do this more successfully.

This is true for big universities, like DePaul in Chicago with an enrollment of nearly 24,000, and small campuses, like Alvernia in Reading, Pa., with about 2,400 students, even if their approach is different.

“It’s in our DNA to be open to other religions,” said Mark Laboe, associate vice president of university ministry at DePaul, who said the university has Muslim and Jewish chaplains and provides sacred spaces for prayer for many faiths.

“We’ve done something, but we have long way to go,” he said. Jan. 29 during a conference sponsored by the Interfaith Youth Core in conjunction with the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities’ meeting in Washington. The Interfaith Youth Core is Chicago-based organization that works with college campuses on religious diversity issues.

On the first day of the gathering, college leaders shared what has worked on their campuses: primarily service projects involving students from many different faiths and informative sessions so students can learn more about other religions and break down stereotypes they might have.

Laboe noted that the campus has many students from different faiths and also, an even bigger challenge — the rise of religiously unaffiliated students. “We’re starting at different places” with these students, he noted.

Sister Carol Ziegler, a Sister of Notre Dame and chief mission officer and executive director of the Abrahamic Center at Notre Dame College in South Euclid, Ohio, said the key to getting interfaith efforts off the ground is to gain allies. You need the support of the administration, faculty and local partners, she said.

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‘It’s in our DNA to be open to other religions. We’ve done something, but we have long way to go.’

— Mark Laboe
FROM GANGS TO GOD:
Ciudad Juarez youths express hope for pope

DAVID AGREN
Catholic News Service

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico | Es- teban Alanis, 23, once ran with a lo- cal gang known as “Los Parqueiros,” which would accost people for their cash and cellphones in a working- class neighborhood of the north- east Ciudad Juarez. He called the crimes “easy money,” while gang activities offered a sense of belonging and an abundance of parties, girls and un- derage drinking.

Then Alanis survived a shootout in 2010 outside his home, and he turned his life to God, got out of the gang and likely saved himself from further involvement in the cycle of violence consuming Ciudad Juarez.

“That’s when it all started,” he said recently outside Corpus Christi Parish, where he teaches catechism classes. “I prayed to God, if I survived, I would give up gang life.”

When Pope Francis visits Ciud- ad Juarez Feb. 17, he is expected to address issues such as migration, victims of violence and conditions in the factory economy. Alanis and others working with young people expressed hopes the pope will have positive words for them, too, as they go about working with a population still somewhat scarred by the vio- lence that claimed more than 10,000 lives between 2008 and 2012.

Ciudad Juarez was once murder capital of the world, an image now out-of-date, according to statis- tics from the citizen-run Security Roundtable of Ciudad Juarez, which shows a 92 percent decline in the homicide rate since 2010.

Rival drug cartels once clashed over a corridor for trafficking con- traduct to the United States. Gangs in the city, previously preyed on the local population, carrying out crimes such as kidnapping, robbery and extortion, likely to finance the conflicts’ cost, security officials say. They also preyed on young people, who became “cannon fodder” for a conflict. An attack by gangsters on a birthday party in 2010 killed 15 young people, an atrocity that out- raged the country even more after then-President Felipe Calderon erroneously said the victims were mixed up in illegal activities.

“Organized crime attracted a lot of young people,” said Mario Dena, the roundtable president, who said he believes that so many people were killed or imprisoned that it partially caused the crime rate to plunge. “They wrongly thought it would be easy money. That’s why there were so many victims.”

Church officials say the problem persists in a lesser level.

“We see that there are kids, probably 12 years, who are being approached by them (organized crime),” said Salesian Father Juan Carlos Quijarro, who also participates in the security roundtable. Kids “don’t see many other op- tions, and they mythologize these figures,” he added. “They (crimi- nals) always have access to easy money, they have power, it’s se- ductive. Hence, it’s not easy to say, ‘Study. If you do, there’s a career.’”

At Corpus Christi Parish, crime was so problematic that thieves stole the bell and cars were robbed during Sunday Mass. Father Ro- berto Luna responded to the rising insecurity in the neighborhood of factory workers — 80 percent origi- nally from other Mexican states — by doubling down on outreach.

It including getting to know young people in the parish area.

“The way to promote belong- ing is to make people feel that this is their home and they are in their home,” Father Luna said, adding that the approach is so successful he re- moved the bars protecting the building and leaves the doors unlocked. “Pope Francis spoke of a Church with open doors. I said, ‘That’s it! I’m going to open up the church.’ … And nothing has hap- pened.”

He also put a priority on catech- ism classes, which are no longer scheduled just on Saturdays, when many workers were having a hard time taking their children to attend. “They have no excuse for missing catechism with me, because I have catechism every day to accommo- date the varying factory schedules,” he said.

The pastoral approach of cre- ating a sense of belonging and Father Luna’s incessant outreach and fondness for informality keep people coming to church.

“He always attends our youth meetings,” said engineering stu- dent Daniel Terrazas, who helps teach youth programs. “He says Mass in a way that’s dynamic, that isn’t boring,” said Francisco Ramos, 20, who credits the youth ministry for his return to high school after he dropped out. He said it also helped improve his relationship with his parents after a tumultuous childhood.

On a recent Sunday, 23 young people attended catechism classes for confirmation led by Alanis, who was a volunteer gang member, engineering and works in an auto parts factory. His life was not al- ways so ordered. Alanis recalls being eager to go to every corner of his neighborhood.

“It was a situation be the aggressor or be the victim,” he recalled. “All my friends were in the gang. They were popular and admired.”

Alanis went through an ini- tiation of lighting another person, then started robbing people in the neighborhood. “If they resisted, we put the boots to them,” he recalled.

Church wasn’t a priority, though he showed up initially for “girls” in the youth group. Then the shootout occurred, and he be- came committed to Church life. Like many in Ciudad Juarez, he’s eagerly awaiting the pope’s ar- rival.

“I hope the pope will give me more encouragement in my work with young people,” Alanis said.

College students spread abstinence message during True Love Week

NANCY BARTHEL
Catholic News Service

GREEN BAY, Wis. | True love. It’s what every person entering into the sacrament of marriage yearns to realize.

In the days leading up to Valen- tine’s Day, two groups of Wisconsin college students spread the mes- sage that true love is possible and can be found by practicing “right dating relationships.”

Students from the Newman Catholic Student Community and Phoenix Students for Life at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay told fellow students that ab- stinence is not only possible, but would lead those who practice it to their true love.

The student groups sponsored events around that theme during the week-and-a-half leading up to Valentine’s Day, dubbed True Love Week.

Franciscan Sister Laura Zelten, campus minister at the university, said the goal of the True Love Week was to spread the message that stu- dents have choices when it comes to dating.

She said the week was organized to offset Sex Week on campus to be held the week of Valentine’s Day. The university’s Student Health Office offers programs on safe sex during that week.

The first event of True Love Week was Feb. 3, when students handed out fresh roses to fellow students with messages of chaos- tity and abstinence during an annual all-campus event called “OrgSmorg,” where many campus organizations have an opportunity to promote membership to their groups.

“We thought it would be really lovely to hand out roses,” said Les- lie Trochill, a senior and secretary of the Newman Club.

On Feb. 8, they presented the popular Christian movie “Fire- proof.” The film tells the story of a firefighter whose job is to rescue others but is faced with having to save his marriage. The 2008 film starring Kirk Cameron has become popular as a conversation-starter in many Christian churches.

As Sister Zelten explained, the film “gives the students an aware- ness of struggles that happen in re- lationships and the work it takes to make things work out for both par- ties in a very healthy and positive way without separation.”

On Feb. 9, they also sponsored a panel discussion featuring Phil and Maggie Kuczinski of Wis- consin Rapids, who speak about right relationships. The parents of four, with one on the way, use the writings and examples of the saints as well as the ancient teach- ings of the Catholic Church to help individuals acquire the necessary skills they need to resist tempta- tion, persevere in prayer and grow in discipleship.

A panel discussion taking place on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 10, focused on living a chaste life in the midst of a world with mixed messages.

True Love Week on the Green Bay campus had been in the plan- ning stages since November.

Sara Schmitz, who teaches nu- trition and dietetics at the uni- versity, is also the adviser for the university’s Phoenix Students for Life organization, named after the university’s mascot, the phoenix.

“The students have really been on fire in terms of coming up with these ideas. They were really the creative force on how they want this True Love Week to look,” she said, “The Compass, newspaper of the Diocese of Green Bay.”

She also noted that the group is very courageous to spread their message on campus. “It’s very heartening to say our side of the story, to say that there is another option out there,” she said.

True Love Week invited students to know there are alternatives to secular world values, said Sister Zelten.

“That’s the bottom line,” she added. “This group of students isn’t going to go with the mainstream thoughts.”
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A commitment to merciful hearts

MIKE NELSON
Catholic News Service

As we Catholics are well aware, Lent is a season of sacrifice and good works. And in some minds perhaps, a season of drudgery. Yet some of us seem to have forgotten that we call to sacrifice or “give up” something, although I would guess not many of us relish going without something we like for six weeks. (I have been known to reply, when asked what I am giving up for Lent, “Making commitments I can’t possibly keep.”)

The drudgery comes from believing that we do the same-old, same-old, year after year: fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, abstaining from meat on Fridays, Sunday readings we hear every three years, purple everywhere.

The reality, though, is that we are not doing the same thing — not that, is if we are truly people of faith. People of faith know they are not the same people this year that they were last year or three years ago.

Let’s take, as an example, excerpts from the liturgical readings for Wednesday of the fourth week of Lent, this year on March 9. They appear in the Book of Common Prayer.

The first reading is from the Epistle to the Romans: “The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. If it begins with us, what will happen to those who do not obey the gospel of God? For this is the will of God, that out of the kindness he has given they may repent and have their sins forgiven.” Romans 1:16-17.

The second reading is from the Gospel According to John: “They travelled in companies, walking and talking. The Lord was walking ahead of them and was talking with them.” John 11:1-4.

The sermon for the day is based on the subject of pastoral care and how parishioners should be our neighbors and his image of people going to confession and Eucharist being our neighbors and his image of people going to confession and Eucharist.

The message is that we are called to be people with hearts of mercy all the time. (Lindsie Karnaby, EPA / CNS)

New Lent initiatives aim to help enrich prayer, giving

WASHINGTON | What do a new social media campaign, a new fundraiser and new features for a popular app have in common? Launched by different Catholic organizations for Lent, the three efforts aim to help Catholics enrich their Lenten prayer experience, sacrifice to help others in need and learn more about the Church’s penitential season overall.

Chicago-based Catholic Extension announced development of a social media campaign that will create a video chain of Lenten mercy prayers. “The three pillars of Lent are fasting, prayer and charity,” it said, and the new campaign “is promoting the second pillar and asking American Catholics to focus their Lenten prayers on mercy” during the Church’s Jubilee Year of Mercy.

Extension’s “National Year of Mercy Prayer” — launched Feb. 10, Ash Wednesday, and running all through Lent — is asking people to share their prayer intentions through short digital videos.

The website www.mercypray.org invites Catholics to use their smartphones to record short videos — about 45 seconds long — of themselves stating a simple prayer intention followed by “Lord, have mercy.”

A short introductory video posted on the website asks people to “help us harness the power of prayer to change the world.” Examples in that video include: “For college students and young adults seeking to discern their place in the world, Lord have mercy”; “For the wisdom to see Christ in the strangest, Lord have mercy”; “For my family and the unity of all families, Lord have mercy.”

Your intention can be as general or specific as you would like,” the announcement says. But it also tells people “to remember that it will be cloak ourselves in the most powerful Scripture of the year, in which Jesus, dying on the cross, proclaims his greatest act of mercy: ‘Father, forgive them; they know not what they do’ (Lk 23:34).

These are words we are called to be people with hearts of mercy all the time. (Lindsie Karnaby, EPA / CNS)

The app and website will include tips for a new Lenten app by the Knights of Columbus. The app, called Lentsanity, features short video clips and a variety of content related to the Lenten season.

The app and website will include tips for the app of the Stations of the Cross. The app also can be accessed at focus.org/lentsanity.

Launched in 2014, the FOCUS app shares several illustrated guides to the Catholic faith — including on topics such as Lenten fasting and abstinence; “lectio divina,” the prayerful reading of Scripture; solemnities, feasts and memorials; and the triduum. Three new guides are set to be released for the app on the Stations of the Cross (Feb. 18), confession (Feb. 21) and acts of mercy (March 7).

The app and website will include a Confession FAQ and Examination of Conscience megapost with links to different types of examinations.
Focusing upon God’s love for us

Daniel S. Mulhall
Catholic News Service

Lent is a penitential season. It is a time for reflecting on our lives and seeking to understand how we grow closer to God. During this Year of Mercy, perhaps our focus should be on understanding what God has done and will do for us, and then consider what changes we must make in our lives so that we can do for others what God has done for us.

As Jesus says in the Gospel, “If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (Jn 13:14-15).

Following his baptism, Jesus went into the desert to pray. Mark 1:12 says that “the Spirit drove him out into the desert.” Following this time of 40 days of fasting and prayer, Jesus emerged from the desert with a passionate message of God’s love and mercy.

He went throughout Galilee “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people” (Mt 4:23).

In his teaching about the good news of the kingdom, Jesus used parables to explain God’s great mercy. Many of Jesus’ parables make a similar point.

The image of God as merciful is not unique to Jesus. It is found frequently in the Old Testament, in many examples in the Psalms.

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed God’s never-ending love for us in one of the most beautiful passages in the Bible:

“Sing out, heavens, and rejoice, earth, break forth into song, you mountains. For the Lord comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted. But Zion said, ‘The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.’ Can a mother forget, I will never forget you” (Is 49:13-15).

So, for Lent this year perhaps our focus should be on practicing that teaching of Jesus found in Luke 6:27-36:

“But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. … But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the most high, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as (also) your Father is merciful.”

FAITH ALIVE and SCRIPTURE

**Faith Alive: Lent**

**Friday, Feb. 19**

*Ez 18:21-28; Ps 139:1-8; Mt 5:20-26*

**Saturday, Feb. 20**

*Dn 26:16-19; Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8; Mt 5:43-48*

**Sunday, Feb. 21**

*Second Sunday of Lent

*Gn 15:5-12, 17-18; Ps 27:1-7; Mt 1:21*

**Monday, Feb. 22**

*Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, Apostle

*Ps 23:1-3a, 4-6; Mt 16:13-19*

**Tuesday, Feb. 23**

*Is 1:10, 16-20; Ps 50:8-9, 16b-17, 21, 23; Mt 23:1-12*

**Wednesday, Feb. 24**

*Jer 18:18-20; Ps 31:5-6, 14-16; Mt 20:17-28*

**Thursday, Feb. 25**

*Jer 17:5-10; Ps 7:1-4, 6; Lk 16:19-31*

**Friday, Feb. 26**

*Gn 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Ps 105:16-21; Mt 21:33-43, 45-46*

**Saturday, Feb. 27**

*Ps 7:14-15, 18-20; Ps 103:1-4, 9-12; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32*

**Sunday, Feb. 28**

*Third Sunday of Lent

*Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15; Ps 103:1-4, 6-8, 11; 1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12; Lk 13:1-9*

**Monday, Feb. 29**

*2 Kgs 5:1-15b; Ps 42:2-3; 43:3-4; Lk 4:24-30*

**Tuesday, March 1**

*Dt 3:25, 34-43; Ps 25:4-5b, 6, 7bc, 8-9; Mt 18:21-35*

**Wednesday, March 2**

*Dt 4:1, 5-9; Ps 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20; Mt 5:17-19*

**Thursday, March 3**

*St. Katharine Drexel

*Jer 7:23-28; Ps 95:1-2, 6-9; Lk 11:14-23*

**Friday, March 4**

*Ps 14:2-10; Ps 81:6c-11b, 14, 17; Mk 12:28-34*

**Saturday, March 5**

*Ps 6:1-6; Ps 51:3-4, 18-21b; Lk 18:9-14*

**Sunday, March 6**

*Fourth Sunday of Lent

*Jos 5:9a, 10-12; Ps 34:2-7; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32*

**Monday, March 7**

*Is 65:17-21; Ps 30:2, 4-6, 11-12a, 13b; Jn 4:43-54*

**Tuesday, March 8**

*Ex 32:7-14; Ps 106:19-23; Jn 5:1-16*

**Wednesday, March 9**

*Ps 49:8-15; Ps 145:8-9, 13c-14, 17-18; Jn 5:17-30*

**Thursday, March 10**

*Ex 32:7-14; Ps 106:19-23; Jn 5:1-16*

**Friday, March 11**

*Ps 2:1a, 12-22; Ps 34:17-21, 23; Jn 7:1-12, 10, 25-30*

**Saturday, March 12**

*Jer 11:18-20; Ps 7:2-3, 9b-12; Jn 7:40-53*

**Sunday, March 13**

*Fifth Sunday of Lent

*Is 43:16-21; Ps 126:1-6; Phil 3:8-14; Jn 8:1-11*
Put your trust in God

Sunday, Feb. 21
Second Sunday of Lent
Go 5:12-16; 17-18; Ps 27:1-7; 9-13-14; Phil 3:17-21; 1:30-41; 2:12-13: 10
Lk 9:38-43

The word “retirement” is not in the Bible. Just ask Abram and Sarah. In the age when the pharaohs were building the pyramids, Abram and Sarah moved a thousand miles across desert from their ancestral home in Mesopotamia, which is now modern Iraq, to the land of Canaan. To escape famine in Canaan, they moved to Egypt. Moving back again to Canaan, Abram lied about the identity of his wife. On one occasion, he put together a posse of 300 men and rescued his nephew Lot from an enemy king.

It was not impossible to break away from the culture that had built the Tower of Babel in an attempt to become their own gods. He became the father of faith of the three monotheistic religions of Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

Abram did all of this after he was old enough to retire. He was 75 years old and had lived a long life in the same place as his father, grandfather and great-grandfather. What changed?

The Lord God had taken Abram outside his tent. Together they looked up into the endless night sky over the desert sand. “Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so,” the Lord added, “shall your descendants be.” Abram and Sarah were old and barren. They had no children. How could their descendants be as many as the stars in the sky? Yet they trusted the Lord’s promise. “Abram put faith in the Lord” (Gen 15:6).

Friendship is built on trust. Abram’s trust in the Lord God made him a friend of God. Even though he was old, had no children, and did not know where he was going, Abram trusted the Lord.

To you who are retired, your friendship may seem to be mainly with your parishioners if they could tell me where we have removed the reproach of Egypt. The word “retirement” is not in the Bible. Just ask Abram and Sarah, friends of God?

You have the faith that comes from a lifetime of experience. You know the times when the Lord has been there for you. You have seen his promises kept. You know the Lord. Having been given friendship with the Lord, you can share that friendship with your family.

You might say, “Father, I put my kids through Catholic school. They got all of their sacraments. Now not one goes to Mass. They all have been divorced at least once. Most of the grandkids aren’t even baptized.” Don’t worry about it. Take care of the grandkids. Teach them their prayers. Pray with them before meals. Read the Bible with them. Help them understand how to give their talent, time and treasure without counting the cost.

Above all, don’t lose hope. When did the Lord tell you that you would see the fruits of your lifetime?

Abram and Sarah died long before Jacob his grandson became known as Jacob and father of the 12 tribes of Israel. They never saw their descendants in faith as numerous as the stars in the sky. God’s promise was not realized in Abram’s lifetime.

This Sunday’s Gospel about the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor is not just about Jesus. It promises your own extreme makeover into a friend of God. It begins with a leap of trust.

To take to prayer: Ask the Lord to use this Lent as he did for Abram to do an extreme makeover for you and your family. m

Father Scotchie is pastor of Most Precious Blood Parish in Oviedo. His most recent book is “A Prayer for Hope.” He can be reached at fdrdavidscotchie@gmail.com.

It’s decision time

Sunday, Feb. 28
Third Sunday of Lent
Ex 3:1-8; 13-15; Ps 103: 1-4, 6-8, 11; 1 Cor 10: 1-4; 10: 12; 13: 10

William Williamson tells the story of the time he and his wife went to a funeral at a little, hot, crowded, off-brand Baptist country church in rural Georgia. The ushers had scarcely wheeled the coffin in when the preacher started his sermon. He shouted and waved his arms and jumped around.

“It’s too late for Joe,” the preacher screamed. “He might have wanted to do that, but it’s too late for him now. He’s dead. It’s all over for him. He might have wanted to straighten his life out, but he can’t now. It’s over.” William sat in his pew and rolled his eyes. What a comfort this sermon must be for the family.

The preacher bawled, “But it ain’t too late for you. People drop dead every day. So why wait? Now is the day for decision. Now is the time to make your life count for something. Give your life to Jesus.”

Driving home with his wife, Williamson ranted. “That was the worst funeral sermon I had ever heard. It was manipulative, cheap and inappropriate.”

His wife agreed. “Yes, it was manipulative, cheap and inappropriate. The worst part of all,” she added, “is that what he said wasn’t true.”

What the preacher said was true. One day you will drop dead. Now is the day for decision. Now is the time to make your life count for something.

The preacher was only saying what Jesus himself had said about a fig tree. An orchard owner had ordered a fruitless fig tree cut down. Why should it take up space in his orchard? When the gardener, angry for time and promised to fertilize the tree, the owner gave a one-year reprieve. The gardener promised that, the next harvest, he would inspect the fig tree. If the fig tree had no fruit, he would command the gardener, “Cut it down” (Lk 13:6,9).

After Mass one Sunday, the priest was greeted at the door. The priest had mentioned in his homily his work with recovering alcoholics. A couple in their late 30s came up to him. The man remarked that he had once had a drinking problem, but he didn’t drink excessively anymore. “Not usually,” he mumbled.

Then he raised his voice, “The real problem with people the world today is that all the young people aren’t acting like they should.”

The man was judging other fig trees. His own problem with his own life was a real problem. One day it will be the fig tree of yours. It will be the fig tree of someone you love. It will be God’s fig tree. It will be you. It will be your family. It is your decision. It is your decision. It is your decision.

Don’t worry about it. Take care of the grandkids. Teach them their prayers. Pray with them before meals. Read the Bible with them. Help them understand how to give their talent, time and treasure without counting the cost.

Above all, don’t lose hope. When did the Lord tell you that you would see the fruits of your lifetime?

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Father Scotchie is pastor of Most Precious Blood Parish in Oviedo. His most recent book is “A Prayer for Hope.” He can be reached at fdrdavidscotchie@gmail.com.

Consider what the prodigal son did when he decided to return home (Lk 15:1-32). He made the decision to return home, saying, “I will go up to my father” and beg for forgiveness. “That was the worst funeral sermon I had ever heard. It was manipulative, cheap and inappropriate.”

His wife agreed. “Yes, it was manipulative, cheap and inappropriate. The worst part of all,” she added, “is that what he said wasn’t true.”

What the preacher said was true. One day you will drop dead. Now is the day for decision. Now is the time to make your life count for something.

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Return your love to the Father’s love

Sunday, March 6
Fourth Sunday of Lent
Jos 5:9a, 10-12; Ps 34:2-7; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Lk 15:1-3,11-32

Back when I was pastor, I would sometimes challenge my parishioners if they could tell me where we had prints of a Rembrandt painting in the church. I’d be willing to bet most of your parishes might have the same problem. I mean, artwork. You may be able to check out your own parish church and see.

The painting I’m referring to is “Return the Prodigal Son,” and at least in my former parish, the place to look for it is in the little rooms in the back of the church with green and red lights over the doors. Even if the paintings aren’t inside, the experience inside could very much be the experience of the Prodigal Son, returning home to the Father’s love.

Consider what the prodigal son did when he decided to return home (Lk 15:1-32). He made the decision to return home, saying, “I will...
WITNESS THE MANHUNT THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF HUMAN HISTORY

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This Lent please join the FLORIDACatholic and make a difference in the lives of our poor brothers and sisters in Christ.

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Clean USED or NEW cotton shirts (LONG AND SHORT SLEEVE)

Running Feb. 10-March 24

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For info on collection site locations
• Visit www.thefloridacatholic.org
• Call Tammy at 407-373-0085
• Email tosborne@thefloridacatholic.org

This Lent please join the FLORIDACatholic and make a difference in the lives of our poor brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you prefer to make a monetary donation in support of this drive, please make your check payable to the FLORIDACatholic and mail to:

Long Sleeve Relief
P.O. Box 4993
Orlando, FL 32802-4993

Thank you for your support in this Year of Mercy.