

CHURCH TODAY

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Serving the Diocese of Alexandria, Louisiana Since 1970

December 14, 2015

ON THE INSIDE

Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy begins

The rite of the opening of the Holy Door by Pope Francis was preceded by a Mass with 70,000 pilgrims packed in St. Peter's Square Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception and the beginning of the extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy. Read more on page 3.

Bishop Herzog recommends 10 things to do during Year of Mercy

Bishop Herzog has recommended a list of 10 things the people of the diocese can do during this special holy Year of Mercy. See pages 4-5 for the 10 recommendations.

St. Mary's School competes in the Division IV state playoffs

After a successful season (13-1) the St. Mary's Tigers advanced to the championship game seeking the Division IV title in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans. For details and pictures, go to page 12.



Gloria in excelsis Deo!

ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS. This 17th-century painting titled "Adoration of the Shepherds" by Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione depicts the birth of Christ. The feast of the Nativity of Christ, a holy day of obligation, is celebrated Dec. 25. (CNS/Bridgeman Art Library)

USCCB Migration chair says U.S. should welcome Syrian refugees, work for peace

BALTIMORE -- Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration, issued a statement on Syrian refugees during the Bishops' annual General Assembly in Baltimore Nov. 17.

Full text of the statement follows:

"On behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, I offer my deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the November 13 attacks in Paris, France and to the French people. I add my voice to all those condemning these attacks and my support to all who are working to ensure such attacks do not occur again—both in France and around the world.

I am disturbed, however, by calls from both federal and state officials for an end to the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the United States. These refugees are fleeing terror themselves—violence like we have witnessed in Paris. They are extremely vulnerable families, women, and children who are fleeing for their lives. We cannot and should not

blame them for the actions of a terrorist organization.

Moreover, refugees to this country must pass security checks and multiple interviews before entering the United States—more than any arrival to the United States. It can take up to two years for a refugee to pass through the whole vetting process. We can look at strengthening the already stringent screening program, but we should continue to welcome those in desperate need.

Instead of using this tragedy to scapegoat all refugees, I call upon our public officials to work together to end the Syrian conflict peacefully so the close to 4 million Syrian refugees can return to their country and rebuild their homes.

Until that goal is achieved, we must work with the world community to provide safe haven to vulnerable and deserving refugees who are simply attempting to survive.

As a great nation, the United States must show leadership during this crisis and bring nations together to protect those in danger and bring an end to the conflicts in the Middle East."



Myths & Facts about Syrian Refugees

The following fact sheet is from the U.S. Department of State titled: *Myths and Facts: Resettling Syrian Refugees*.

Myth: All Syrian refugees are dangerous.

Fact: 2,234 Syrian refugees have been admitted to the United States since October 1, 2010 (the beginning of fiscal year 2011), and only after the most extensive level of security screening of any category of traveler to the United States. None have been arrested or removed on terrorism charges.

Refugees are not terrorists. Many refugees are victims of violence in their homeland.

Myth: 70% of the Syrian refugees coming to the United States are young, single, adult men.

Fact: Single men unattached to families comprise less than 2% of all Syrian refugee admissions to date.

Last fiscal year, 1,682 Syrian refugees were admitted. Roughly 77% of them were women and

children. Only 23% were adult men.

Myth: 250,000 Syrians are arriving in the United States imminently.

Fact: This is false. Since the conflict in Syria began in Fiscal Year 2011, the United States has admitted just over 2,200 Syrian refugees. In Fiscal Year 2016, the Administration remains committed to its goal of resettling at least 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States.

Myth: Syrian refugees receive insufficient security vetting.

Fact: All refugees of all nationalities considered for admission to the United States undergo a rigorous security screening involving multiple federal intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies, such as the National Counterterrorism Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Departments of Homeland Security, State and Defense, in order to ensure that those admitted are not known to pose a threat to our

country.

The safeguards include biometric (fingerprint) and biographic checks, and an interview by specially trained DHS officers who scrutinize the applicant's explanation of individual circumstances to ensure the applicant is a bona fide refugee and is not known to present any security concerns to the United States. Mindful of the particular conditions of the Syria crisis, Syrian refugees go through an enhanced level of review.

Myth: It's impossible to thoroughly vet Syrians, given the ongoing conflict.

Fact: We have, for years, safely admitted smaller numbers of Syrian refugees and we have a great deal of experience screening and admitting larger numbers of refugees from other chaotic environments, including where intelligence holdings are limited.

Syrian refugees go through an additional layer of security screening tailored to the particular conditions of the Syria crisis, the classified details of which have been shared with the U.S. Congress, and we continue to examine options for further enhancements for screening Syrian refugees.

For more information, contact the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration at PRM-Press@state.gov or visit <http://www.state.gov/j/prm/>.

*All data current as of November 18, 2015.



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Holy Year is reminder to put mercy before judgment, pope says

By Junno Arocho Esteves
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- On a cloudy, damp morning, Pope Francis' voice echoed in the atrium of St. Peter's Basilica: "Open the gates of justice." With five strong thrusts, the pope pushed open the Holy Door, a symbol of God's justice, which he said will always be exercised "in the light of his mercy."

The rite of the opening of the Holy Door was preceded by a Mass with 70,000 pilgrims packed in St. Peter's Square Dec. 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception and the beginning of the extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy.

As the sun broke through the clouds, heralding the start of the jubilee year, the pope bowed his head and remained still for several minutes in silent prayer.

Amid a crowd of dignitaries and pilgrims, a familiar face was also present at the historic event: retired Pope Benedict XVI, who followed Pope Francis through the Holy Door into St. Peter's Basilica.

During his homily, Pope Francis emphasized the "simple, yet highly symbolic" act of opening the Holy Door, which "highlights the primacy of grace;" the same grace that made Mary "worthy of becoming the mother of Christ."

"The fullness of grace can transform the human heart and enable it to do something so great as to change the course of human history," he said.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception, he continued, serves



OPENING THE DOOR OF MERCY. Pope Francis opens the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica to inaugurate the Jubilee Year of Mercy at the Vatican Dec. 8. (CNS photo/Maurizio Brambatti, EPA)

as a reminder of the grandeur of God's love in allowing Mary to "avert the original sin present in every man and woman who comes into this world."

"This is the love of God which precedes, anticipates and saves," he said. "Were sin the only thing that mattered, we would be the most desperate of creatures. But the promised triumph of Christ's love enfolds everything in the Father's mercy."

The Year of Mercy, the pope stressed, is a gift of grace that allows Christians to experience

the joy of encountering the transforming power of grace and rediscovering God's infinite mercy toward sinners.

"How much wrong we do to God and his grace when we speak of sins being punished by his judgment before we speak of their being forgiven by his mercy," he said.

"We have to put mercy before judgment, and in any event God's judgment will always be in the light of his mercy. In passing through the Holy Door, then, may we feel that we ourselves are part

of this mystery of love."

Fifty years ago, he said, the church celebrated the "opening of another door," with the Second Vatican Council urging the church to come out from self-enclosure and "set out once again with enthusiasm on her missionary journey." The council closed Dec. 8, 1965.

Pope Francis, the first pope to be ordained to the priesthood after the council, said the council documents "testify to a great advance in faith," but the council's importance lies particularly

EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE
YEAR OF
Mercy
DECEMBER 8, 2015 - NOVEMBER 20, 2016

in calling the Catholic Church to return to the spirit of the early Christians by undertaking "a journey of encountering people where they live: in their cities and homes, in their workplaces. Wherever there are people, the church is called to reach out to them and to bring the joy of the Gospel. After these decades, we again take up this missionary drive with the same power and enthusiasm."

Shortly after the Mass, as thousands of people waited in St. Peter's Square for a chance to walk through the Holy Door, Pope Francis led the midday Angelus prayer.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception has a special connection to the start of the Year of Mercy, he said, because "it reminds us that everything in our lives is a gift, everything is mercy."

Like Mary, the pope continued, Christians are called to "become bearers of Christ" and to "let ourselves be embraced by the mercy of God who waits for us and forgives everything. Nothing is sweeter than his mercy. Let us allow ourselves to be caressed by God. The Lord is so good and he forgives everything."

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A festive advertisement for Flynn Building Specialties. It features a string of warm white lights at the top. The text reads: "Merry Christmas", "May all the blessings of Christmas touch you and those you love in a very special way", and "Flynn Building Specialties".

Bishop Herzog's 10 recommendations for the Year of Mercy

Now that the extraordinary "Jubilee Year of Mercy" has begun, we may be asking ourselves, "what now?"

What do we, as people of the Diocese of Alexandria, do during an extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy?

"In this Holy Year, we the people of God, are requested to focus on being merciful like the Father in Heaven," said Bishop Ronald Herzog.

According to Bishop Herzog, Pope Francis' recent papal bull *Misericordiae Vultus #14*, the pope mentions three scriptural themes that he would like us all to focus on and search for a better understanding of:

- God is rich in mercy (Eph. 2:4)
- God's justice is God's mercy (Ex. 34:6)
- Receive and share God's mercy in this world.

"In the next 12 months, your parish priest will likely be using these themes in his homilies to give you a better understanding of what they mean. Listen and learn," he said.

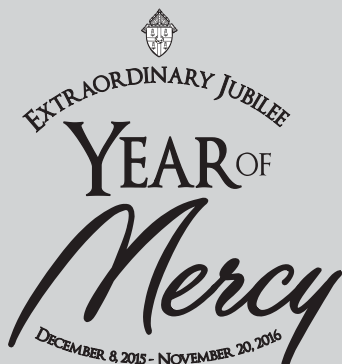
Bishop Herzog has recommended a list of 10 things the people of the diocese can do during this special holy year.

1. Pray the Prayer of Mercy

Pray the Prayer of Mercy daily at home, and on weekends as a church family, until November 20, 2016.

Prayer Cards are available to you upon request from either your parish or from the diocesan office that will have the official Year of Mercy logo and the Diocese of Alexandria crest on them.

A copy of the prayer is also printed in this issue (next page).



(Window decal - pictured above - available from the Diocese of Alexandria, while supplies last)

1. Pray the Prayer of Mercy daily
2. Pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy
3. Practice Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy
4. Display YOM decals on your car
5. Participate in YOM events
6. Evangelize
7. Plan a Pilgrimage
8. Go to Confession
9. Spend time in Prayer
10. Seek a Conversion of the Heart

2. Pray Divine Mercy Chaplet

Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet as often as you can during the year. But especially on Sundays at 3:00 pm in your church parish. If you are unable to attend in person, pray the chaplet at home, as a family or an individual.

3. Practice Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy

Make a personal commitment to practice any of the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy during this holy year.

Corporal Works of Mercy:

- To feed the hungry
- To give drink to the thirsty
- To clothe the naked
- To harbor the harborless
- To visit the sick
- To ransom the captive
- To bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy:

- To instruct the ignorant;
- To counsel the doubtful;
- To admonish sinners;

- To bear wrongs patiently;
- To forgive offenses willingly;
- To comfort the afflicted;
- To pray for the living and the dead

4. Display YOM decal

Year of Mercy window decals are available from your parish or the diocese for anyone who would like to display one on your car. The decals adhere to glass, but can be easily removed. Let the Year of Mercy travel wherever you go.

5. Participate in YOM events

Participate in any Year of Mercy events offered by the diocese, your parish or nearby parish. Events like Mercy Tours and Year of Mercy missions may be offered in a parish near you. Look for schedules of diocesan events on the diocesan website and for parish events in your Sunday bulletin.

6. Evangelize

Take time this year to give a

personal invitation to anyone who has left the church to experience God's Mercy. Pope Francis in his exhortation "Joy of the Gospel" said the church which 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice.

An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, He has loved us first (1Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take initiative, go to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the cross roads and welcome the outcast.

Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruits of its own experience of the power of the Fathers' infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved (# 24)."

7. Go on a Pilgrimage

The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in this Holy Year, because it represents the

journey each of us makes in this life (*Misericordiae Vultus # 14*). St. John Paul II, St. Faustina, and St. Maximilian Kolbe stand out as the models for this Year of Mercy in the recent times. Explore more about their lives and consider a pilgrimage to their holy places. The diocese plans to conduct a Year of Mercy pilgrimage to these holy sites as well as to local sites. The details will be available soon.

8. Go to Confession

All Friday evenings during Lent, in all churches in our diocese, a minimum of one hour for the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be designated following a national USCCB campaign *The Light is On*. "The light is on" means priests are in the confessional. Use this time well.

9. Spend time in Prayer

Whether you choose to pray the Prayer of Mercy, the chaplet of Divine Mercy, or just words from your heart, commit to a time of prayer every day. Even if it's only a few minutes, set aside a time of prayer and conversation with Our Lord.

10. Seek Conversion of Heart

Seek a Conversion of the Heart -- after all, that's the whole purpose of this special year. During your prayer time, seek out the distractions of your life that are keeping you from a full communion with Christ and seek to replace those distractions with things or people that draw you closer to Jesus.

For more information, go to diocesealex.org and click on the Year of Mercy for the updated information; or call the Office of Religious Formation and Training at 318-445-6424, ext 251 or email at emccoulough@diocesealex.org.

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How to pray the Chaplet of Divine Mercy



Use an ordinary Rosary:

1. Make the *Sign of the Cross*
2. Pray an *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* & *Apostles' Creed*
3. On the *Our Father* beads say:
Eternal Father, I offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.
4. On the *Hail Mary* beads, say:
For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.
5. Repeat for the five decades.
6. Conclude by repeating this prayer 3 times:
Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.



Prayer of Mercy

Pope Francis asks us to pray it daily during Year of Mercy

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him.
Show us your face and we will be saved.

Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew
from being enslaved by money;
and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things.
You made Peter weep after his betrayal,
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
of the God who manifests his power above all
by forgiveness and mercy.

Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us
with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy
may be a year of grace from the Lord.

Send your Spirit so that your Church, with renewed enthusiasm,
may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,
and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy,
you who live and reign with the Father
and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.
Amen.



Corporal Works of Mercy

- To feed the hungry
- To give drink to the thirsty
- To clothe the naked
- To harbor the harborless
- To visit the sick
- To ransom the captive
- To bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- To instruct the ignorant;
- To counsel the doubtful;
- To admonish sinners;
- To bear wrongs patiently;
- To forgive offences willingly;
- To comfort the afflicted;
- To pray for the living and the dead

By the time you read this, Christmas will probably be less than five days away.

If you're like many of us, you've made your gift shopping lists, your grocery list, and mailed out all the Christmas cards. Perhaps you're expecting company this holiday season and you've been hard at work getting the house ready for your guests.

Another way to look at this busy time of year is: *There's less than five days left of Advent. Am I ready?*

Does my "to do" list include: Go to confession. Meditate on my Daily Advent reflection prayers. Spend 3-5 minutes in quiet prayer every day. Call the kids to con-



ONE IN THE LORD

Most Rev. Ronald P. Herzog
Bishop of the Diocese of Alexandria

firm they will be meeting us for Midnight Mass. Find the family Bible and bookmark the story of Christmas to read to the kids tonight. Bring out the Baby Jesus figurine and have it ready to put in the empty manger on Christmas Eve.

Christmas (Advent) IS a wonderful time of year, but do try to make an effort to include the Lord Jesus Christ in your plans.

If you joined us this past Sunday (Dec. 13) at the 11 a.m. Mass at St. Francis Xavier Cath-

edral, you would have witnessed the opening of the Door of Mercy for the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. The coming year will be an excellent opportunity to focus and to learn more about the unfathomable mercy of God.

I encourage you to check your parish bulletins each Sunday for any announcements about events specifically planned for the Year of Mercy. (There is a partial list of events on page 4 that are already planned or are in the works).

I also encourage you to learn to pray the chaplet of Divine Mercy and to pray it often during the upcoming year. (Instructions on how to pray the chaplet is also in

this issue on page 5.)

Finally, let us reflect on this past year and what we've learned from it. Pope Francis made the year 2015 extra special for us with his personal visit to the U.S. in September and by his designation of the Year of Mercy that started Dec. 8, 2015. A truly remarkable year!

May the God of mercy be with you as we continue our faith journey through Advent, Christmas and the beginning of the Year of Mercy.

A blessed Christmas and a merciful New Year!

The best Christmas present you will ever receive

By Tony Rossi
The Christophers

"If I knew things would no longer be, I would have tried to remember better." That's a line from the 1990 movie "Avalon," which comes to mind every Christmas season because it's a time of year that prompts me to reflect on the past and the best gift I ever received.

It was December 24, 1980, and the wait was grueling. My 11-year-old self had asked for the popular "large size Star Wars action figures" for Christmas, and I couldn't wait to find out whether they would be under the tree.

There were already a couple of gifts there so, being a little sneaky, I put saliva on my finger and rubbed it on the wrapping paper thinking it would become more transparent. No luck. My mother is a gift-wrapping ninja

who encased my presents in so much paper, not even Superman's x-ray vision could see through it. The only solution was to wait it out. A nap would be a good idea, I thought, so I lay in bed telling myself to fall asleep. That worked as well as it does today when I'm suffering from occasional insomnia. I wound up staring at the clock and thinking, "Time sure does pass slowly."

Finally, it was time to go to the Christmas Eve Vigil Mass with my mother, father, and maternal grandparents, who lived a few doors down from us. Despite difficult challenges, like my grandfather's advancing Parkinson's Disease, we always went to church as a family. It was never seen as a burden, but as something special and necessary to live a good life. Also, my family had survived some harrowing experiences in Yugoslavia after World

War II before they immigrated to the United States, and they attributed that to God.

Mass was so festive that it distracted me from my preoccupation with presents. We got to sing carols instead of Advent songs—and a feeling of palpable joy emanated from everyone wearing their finest garb in an overflowing church.

After Mass, we made the traditional rounds: first to my paternal grandparents, then to my maternal grandparents, and finally back home. Sure enough, I hit the action figure motherlode. There were Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Chewbacca, and more. At the time, I thought those were the greatest presents I ever received.

Adulthood brings a different perspective, though. While the toys provided me with hours of fun, it's the memories that I truly treasure because they were

grounded in love. God blessed me with two grandmothers who loved to bake, so their affection was displayed through crescent cookies, made out of ground almonds and dusted with sugar—and through apricot cakes and linzer cookies that made the house smell divine.

I'm also overwhelmed by everything my mother and father did for me that Christmas and throughout my childhood. They worked hard to support our family: my father as a customs broker at Kennedy Airport, and my mother as a coat-check attendant

at the Waldorf Astoria. I never lacked love growing up and I know now that gave me a great advantage in life. I'm grateful to still have my parents with me.

Middle age has also taught me that time actually passes very quickly, not slowly, like my 11-year-old self believed. So when you gather with your family and friends to celebrate Christmas this year, take it all in, even the smallest details. In other words, "remember better." Those moments will be the best Christmas gifts you'll ever receive.



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Mass Schedules for Christmas, New Year's Day

Mass Schedules for the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Christmas Eve Vigil Mass, Thursday, Dec. 24, 2015

4:00 p.m. -- (Children's Mass) OL of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 4:00 p.m. -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
 4:00 p.m. -- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches
 4:00 p.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus Church, Woodworth
 4:00 p.m. -- Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Fifth Ward
 4:00 p.m. -- St. Martin of Tours Church, Belledeau
 4:00 p.m. -- St. Joseph Church, Marksville (Children's Mass)
 CCD Christmas Play -- 3:30 p.m.
 4:30 p.m. -- Mater Dolorosa Church, Plaquemine
 4:30 p.m. -- Immaculate Conception Church, Dupont
 4:30 p.m. -- St. Francis of Assisi Church, Waterproof
 5:30 p.m. -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
 6:00 p.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 6:00 p.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini

Church, Alexandria
 6:00 p.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus Church, Woodworth
 6:00 p.m. -- St. Joseph, Marksville
 Note: There will be no 8:00 a.m. Mass at St. Rita on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Midnight Masses

Midnight, Dec. 24 -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 Midnight, Dec. 24 -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
 Midnight, Dec. 24 -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
 Midnight, Dec. 24 -- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches (Caroling at 11:30 p.m. before Mass; Wine & Cheese and Toast to the Christ in the Rectory after Mass)
 Midnight, Dec. 24 -- Mater Dolorosa Church, Plaquemine
 Midnight, Dec. 24 -- St. Joseph Church, Marksville

Christmas Day, Friday, Dec. 25, 2015

7:00 a.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 7:00 a.m. -- (Latin) St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
 7:30 a.m. -- Our Lady of Lourdes



For an updated list of Mass Schedules go to www.diocesealex.org

Church, Fifth Ward
 8:00 a.m. -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
 8:00 a.m. -- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches (Traditional Latin Mass)
 8:00 a.m. -- St. Joseph Church, Marksville
 8:15 a.m. -- Immaculate Conception Church, Dupont
 9:00 a.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 9:00 a.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
 9:00 a.m. -- St. Martin of Tours Church, Belledeau
 9:30 a.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus Church, Woodworth
 9:30 a.m. -- Mater Dolorosa Church, Plaquemine
 10:00 a.m. -- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches

10:00 a.m. -- St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph
 10 a.m. -- St. Joseph, Marksville
 11:00 a.m. -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
 5:30 p.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria

Mass Schedule for the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God (January 1, 2016)

New Year's Eve, Thursday, December 31, 2015

4:00 p.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 4:30 p.m. -- Immaculate Conception Church, Dupont
 4:30 p.m. -- St. Francis of Assisi Church, Waterproof
 5:00 p.m. -- Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Fifth Ward
 5:30 p.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
 5:30 p.m. -- St. Joseph, Marksville
 6:00 p.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus Church, Woodworth
 6:00 p.m. -- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches
 6:00 p.m. -- St. Martin of Tours Church, Belledeau

New Year's Day, Friday, January 1, 2016

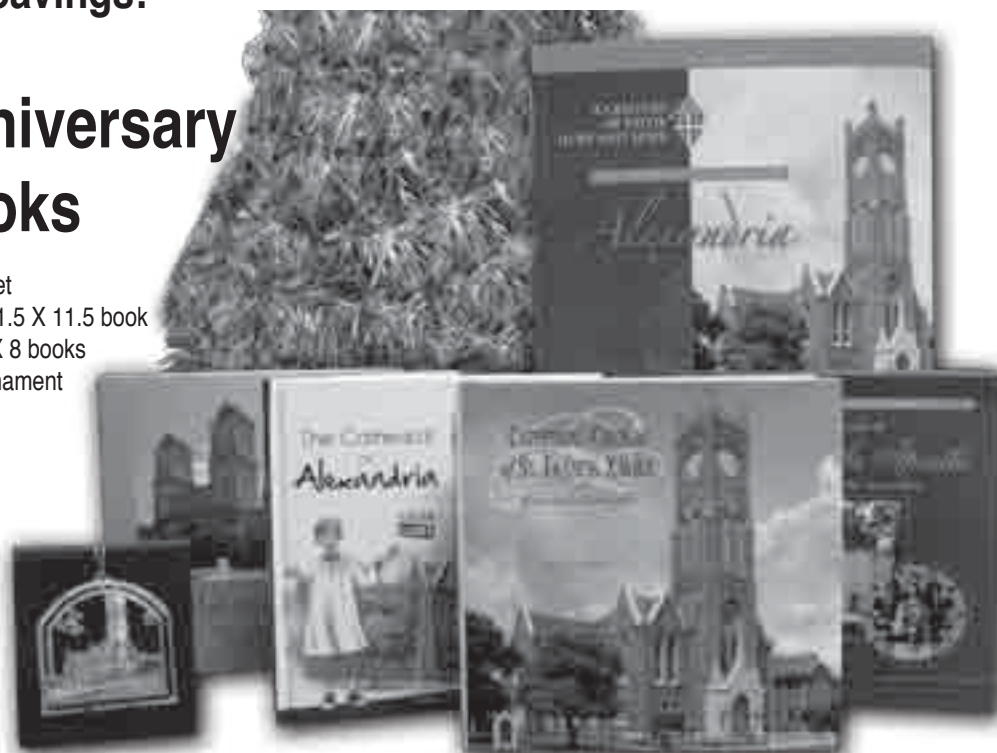
6:30 a.m. -- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches
 7:00 a.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 7:00 a.m. -- (Latin) St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
 7:00 a.m. -- Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Fifth Ward
 8:00 a.m. -- St. Martin of Tours Church, Belledeau
 8:00 a.m. -- St. Joseph, Marksville
 8:15 a.m. -- Immaculate Conception Church, Dupont
 9:00 a.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 9:00 a.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
 9:30 a.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus Church, Woodworth
 10:00 a.m. -- St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph
 10:00 a.m. -- St. Joseph, Marksville
 10:30 a.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 5:30 p.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church, Alexandria
 5:30 p.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
 6:00 p.m. -- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches

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Tribunal signs 16 judgments Dec. 8 after new anullment process goes into effect

It was a historic day, Dec. 8 in the Tribunal Office when Father Bruce Miller, JCL, Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Alexandria, signed 16 judgments as a result of the recent changes made by Pope Francis in the anullment process.

Effective Dec. 8, 2015, a "declaration of invalid marital consent," (or commonly known as an anullment) requires only a single sentence (judgment) followed by a 15-day waiting period (to see if it is appealed before it becomes final) and a couple is free to marry.

The last time a single judgment was allowed to determine invalidity was in 1741.

On Nov. 3, 1741, Pope Benedict XIV determined that it was no longer sufficient to allow only a single affirmative judgment to leave couples free to remarry. He appointed a "defender of the bond" and created a process that required not one -- but two -- courts to hear a case.

During the next 274 years,

several variations in requirements and procedures were issued, but in most cases, a second judgment was always required.

Prior to the recent changes, the validity of a marriage was determined first at the initial trial in Alexandria and then had to be heard in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, where a new hearing was conducted by a second court. If the two courts were in agreement, the anullment was granted.

This process was time-consuming and often left couples frustrated with the process.

Now that the second judgment has been eliminated, the process has been made more simple.

In addition to eliminating the second court, the new provisions also allow the diocesan bishop to issue an anullment, in limited cases. (See diocesan website for details).

For more information about anullments, go to www.diocesealex.org/offices-ministries/tribunal



HISTORIC DAY AT THE TRIBUNAL. Father Bruce Miller, JCL, Judicial Vicar for the Diocese of Alexandria, signs 16 judgments on Tuesday, Dec. 8 as a result of the recent changes made by Pope Francis in the anullment process. Effective Dec. 8, 2015, decisions now require only a single sentence (judgment) followed by a 15-day waiting period (to see if it is appealed) before a couple is free to marry. This last time a single judgment was sufficient for a decision was in 1741. Pictured are (from left) Father Miller, Father Jim Ferguson, JCL, Defender of the Bond; Pat Thomas, Moderator of the Tribunal; and Kathy Cole, notary and transcriptionist.

Former Alexandria native Sister Margaret Riche, CDP dies at age 87

Sister Margaret Riché, CDP, formerly known as Sister Bernard Joseph, entered eternal life Nov. 30, 2015 at the age of 87.

Born February 9, 1928, in Alexandria, La., to Bernard and Mary Josephine (Pinchenat) Riché, she joined the Sisters of Divine Providence at age 16 and professed first vows on June 22, 1947. Sister Margaret began her ministry as an educator in 1947 at Sacred Heart School in El Reno, Oklahoma.

Sister cherished her education at Providence Academy in Alexandria where she was taught by the Sisters of Divine Providence. She was always around the Sisters, so entering the convent was a natural transition for her. The joy and support she experienced as a student continued throughout her life.

Sister Margaret received her BA in English from Our Lady of the Lake College and MJ in Journalism from UT Austin. She was an elementary and high school teacher in various schools in Oklahoma, Louisiana and Texas and a principal in Lawton, Okla., her alma mater in Alexandria and finally at Providence H.S.

in San Antonio. She also taught English at Our Lady of the Lake University in 1987-1995. In her final teaching position, she taught GED classes as Las Palmas Adult Education Center.

Other calls to service were interwoven throughout her years as educator/administrator. She was elected as secretary to the General Council, was a convent coordinator, overseeing the needs of the resident Sisters, became the CDP Archivist and volunteered to assist her fellow Sisters until her



Sister Margaret Riche, CDP

recent move into McCullough Hall Nursing Center. Sister Margaret always left a positive impact wherever she served through building relationships, spreading the Good News and having fun. Her reflection during her 60th jubilee in 2007 sums up her life: "I believe I touch the heart of God when I reach out to others,... A smile, a listening ear, a bit of time, can say, 'I care.' My God is a tender, loving, compassionate God who shows me the way; I seek to follow that way."

Survivors are nieces: Rhonda (Vincent) Brocato, Bernadette (John) Germany; nephews: Michael (Charlotte) Riché and Scott (Bonnie) Riché and all her Sisters of Divine Providence. She was preceded in death by her parents Bernard and Mary Josephine Riché and brother and sister-in-law, Robert and Patricia Riché.

Contributions may be made to the Sisters of Divine Providence, 515 S.W. 24th Street, San Antonio, TX 78207-4619.



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What is a Liturgical Calendar?

Know exact dates of Church feast days, holy days of obligation, and celebrations of saints

The liturgical year, also known as the church year, consists of the cycle of liturgical seasons in Catholic churches that determine when feast days, including celebrations of saints, are to be observed, and which portions of Scripture are to be read either in an annual cycle or in a cycle of several years.

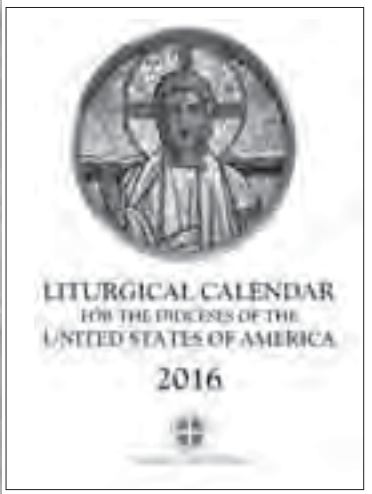
The Liturgical year begins with Advent (this year Nov. 29, 2015) and ends with the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (Nov. 20, 2016.)

This year's Liturgical Year will follow Cycle C of the Scriptural Readings (writings of St. Luke).

The liturgical cycle divides the year into a series of seasons, each with their own mood, theological emphases, and modes of prayer, which can be signified by different ways of decorating churches, colors of vestments for clergy, Scriptural readings, themes for preaching and even different traditions and practices often observed personally or in the home.

In churches that follow the liturgical year, the scripture passages for each Sunday (and even each day of the year in some traditions) are specified in a lectionary.

The Catholic Church sets



**Download a free
USCCB Liturgical Calendar
(45 pages)
at www.usccb.org**

2015-2016 SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS OF THE CHURCH YEAR - LECTIONARY YEAR C

Date	Sunday	Feast	First Lesson	Psalm	Second Lesson	Gospel	Color
12/27/15	Immaculate Conception	Immaculate Conception	Isaiah 7:10-14	Psalm 113:1-4	Isaiah 7:10-14	Matthew 1:18-24	White
12/28/15	St. John the Evangelist	St. John the Evangelist	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
12/29/15	St. Thomas the Apostle	St. Thomas the Apostle	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
12/30/15	St. Andrew the Apostle	St. Andrew the Apostle	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
12/31/15	St. Stephen	St. Stephen	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/1/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/2/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/3/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/4/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/5/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/6/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/7/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/8/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/9/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/10/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/11/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/12/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/13/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/14/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/15/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/16/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/17/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/18/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/19/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/20/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/21/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/22/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/23/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/24/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/25/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/26/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/27/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/28/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/29/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/30/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red
1/31/16	St. Basil	St. Basil	Isaiah 60:1-6	Psalm 144:1-2	Isaiah 60:1-6	John 1:1-9	Red

aside certain days and seasons of each year to recall and celebrate various events in the life of Christ.

Advent

In its Roman Rite the liturgical year begins with Advent, the time of preparation for both the celebration of Jesus' birth, and

his expected second coming at the end of time.

Christmas

This season lasts until December 24 (Christmas Eve). Christmastide follows, beginning with First Vespers of Christmas on the evening of December 24

and ending with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

Lent

Lent is the period of purification and penance that begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Thursday.

Easter Triduum

The Holy Thursday evening Mass of the Lord's Supper marks the beginning of the Easter Triduum, which includes Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. The days of the Easter Triduum recall Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples, death on the cross, burial, and resurrection.

Easter

The seven-week liturgical season of Easter immediately follows the Triduum, climaxing at Pentecost. This last feast recalls the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' disciples after the Ascension of Jesus.

Ordinary Time

The rest of the liturgical year is commonly known as Ordinary Time.

There are many forms of liturgy in the Catholic Church. Even putting aside the many Eastern rites in use, the Latin liturgical rites alone include the Ambrosian Rite, the Mozarabic Rite, and the Cistercian Rite, as well as other forms that have been largely abandoned in favour of adopting the Roman Rite.



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U.S. bishops conclude week of business in Baltimore

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) gathered in Baltimore Nov. 16-19 for the annual fall general assembly which included discussion of political responsibility, religious freedom, pornography and other topics.

More than 237 bishops from across the country attended the 4-day meeting, which opened with an address by USCCB President Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, Ky.

In the face of “the heartbreaking crises and challenges in our world,” Archbishop Kurtz, called on his fellow bishops to imitate the “pastor’s presence” exhibited by Pope Francis during his recent U.S. visit, “touching the hearts of the most influential, the forgotten and all of us in between.”

Noting the upcoming Year of Mercy that begins Dec. 8, Archbishop Kurtz said a ministry of “presence means making time and never letting administration come between me and the person. It’s seeing the person first.”

A summary of the decisions made during the assembly are:

Outreach to refugees

Church resettlement programs in the U.S. will continue to aid refugees who are fleeing violence and social ills despite calls that the country’s borders should be closed to anyone but Christians.

The church’s response is focused on people in need of food, shelter and safety and not their particular faith, said Archbishop Kurtz.

Archbishop Kurtz explained that any assistance provided to refugees and immigrants is carried out under government contracts and that the vetting of newcomers will have been completed by government agencies long before church agencies become involved.

“Our efforts are going to be to reach out to people and to serve them,” the archbishop said.

Pornography

The U.S. bishops approved a formal statement on pornography, titled, “*Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography*,”

The statement declares that pornography is a “mortal sin” and urges Catholics to turn away from it.

Bishop Richard J. Malone, of Buffalo, NY, chair of the bishops’ Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, described pornography as a “dark shadow in our world today.”

He added that pornography is a “particularly sinister instance of consumption” where men, women and children are “consumed for the pleasure of others.”

Revised voting document

The 2015 version of political responsibility document, “*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*,” reflects on long-held concerns related to abortion and the needs of poor people.

It also references emerging issues related to court decisions on same-sex marriage, public policies that affect religious freedom, and a rising concern for the environment as climate change affects more people around the world.

The most vocal critic was Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego, who said he was concerned that because poverty and the environment did not receive the same priority as abortion and euthanasia, that some people “outside of this room” would “misuse” the document and claim other issues did not carry the same moral weight.

Revised plans & priorities

The bishops approved the revised priorities and plans for 2017-20. The plans emphasize their upcoming focus in five major areas: evangelization, family and marriage, human life and dignity, religious freedom and voca-



BISHOP RONALD HERZOG prays during a break at the fall general assembly held in Baltimore Nov. 16-19. More than 237 bishops gathered in Baltimore for the annual meeting to discuss issues and priorities.

tions and ongoing formation.

The revised plans include the same headings but feature some different wording in the “emphasis areas,” which provide more detailed explanations.

National collection approved

A one-time only national collection for decorating the central dome of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington was approved.

Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington told the bishops that the decoration of the shrine’s central dome with mosaic art would complete an architectural plan that began in 1920 with the plac-

ing of the building’s cornerstone.

The cardinal, said the central dome would depict the Holy Trinity and Mary under the title of the Immaculate Conception, with “a procession of saints” associated with the shrine or the United States surrounding them. These would include St. John Paul II, St. John XXIII, Blessed Teresa of Kolkata and St. Junipero Serra, he said.

Displaying a sketch of the completed project, he told his fellow bishops that “you can see that it is going to be a strikingly beautiful way to complete the last remaining part” of the national shrine.

Adapted Roman Missal

The bishops endorsed “*Excerpts from the Roman Missal: Book for Use at the Chair*” by a vote of 187 to 27, with three abstentions.

Concerns about young altar servers’ weak arms and older priests’ weak eyes prompted the U.S. bishops to support an adapted version of the Roman Missal to be used during the times at Mass when the celebrant is seated.

The book would contain no new texts and no new translations. It would be about one-third of the size of the Roman Missal, by including only the texts needed at the president’s chair.

The full Roman Missal would continue to be used at the altar, he said.

Sainthood causes approved

The U.S. bishops Nov. 17 endorsed the sainthood causes of three candidates: Father Aloysius Ellacuria, a Claretian Missionary priest; Antonia Cuipa and more than 80 companions; and Augustinian Father William Atkinson.

In other business

As part of a series of elections, the bishops elected Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr of Cincinnati as treasurer-elect. They also elected Msgr. J. Brian Bransfield as the new general secretary; he has been associate general secretary for five years. He will succeed Msgr. Ronny Jenkins, who has served two three-year terms.

The bishops also voted on a number of chairmen-elect for standing committees. These “elect” positions mean the winning bishops will take office at the conclusion of the 2016 fall general meeting.



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VISITING THE SEMINARIANS. Deacons Ted Moulard, Greg LeBlanc, and Ray Gibson recently went on retreat to St. Joseph Abbey in Covington. While they were there, they visited the three seminarians currently studying at St. Joseph. Pictured are (front row) seminarians Thomas Kennedy, Andrew Flynn, and Bryce Veillon. Back row: Deacons Ted Moulard, Greg LeBlanc, and Ray Gibson.

EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM. Nine people from the Diocese of Alexandria were invested as new members of the Southeastern Lieutenancy of the U.S. Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem during the annual meeting Nov. 6-9 in New Orleans. Pictured are Bishop Ronald Herzog, seated front and center; (front row standing) Lady Margaret Carter, LGCHS; Lady Ona Wilson, LHS (new); Lady Roz Allemond, LGCHS; Lady Judy Kinberger, LGCHS; Lady Charlotte Cull, LHS; Lady Connie Stemmann, LHS (new); and Sir Preston Stemmann, KHS (new). Back row standing: Sir Harry Hawthorne, KCHS; Lady Cindy Hawthorne, LCHS; Sir Terry Aubin, KHS (new); Sir Leonard Wilson, KHS (new); Sir Henry Kinberger, KCHS; Sir Fred Cull, KHS; Sir Billy Carter, KCHS; Sir Pierre Allemond, KGCHS. Not pictured, but recently vested are Lady Marilyn Norem, LHS; Lady Lil Villemez, LHS; Rev. Ken Michels, KHS; Rev. Ricky Gremillion, KHS. For more information about becoming a member of the EOHSJ, contact Roz or Pierre Allemond at 318-452-6443 or by email at eohsjalexandria@gmail.com

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Father Bruce Miller Burse	
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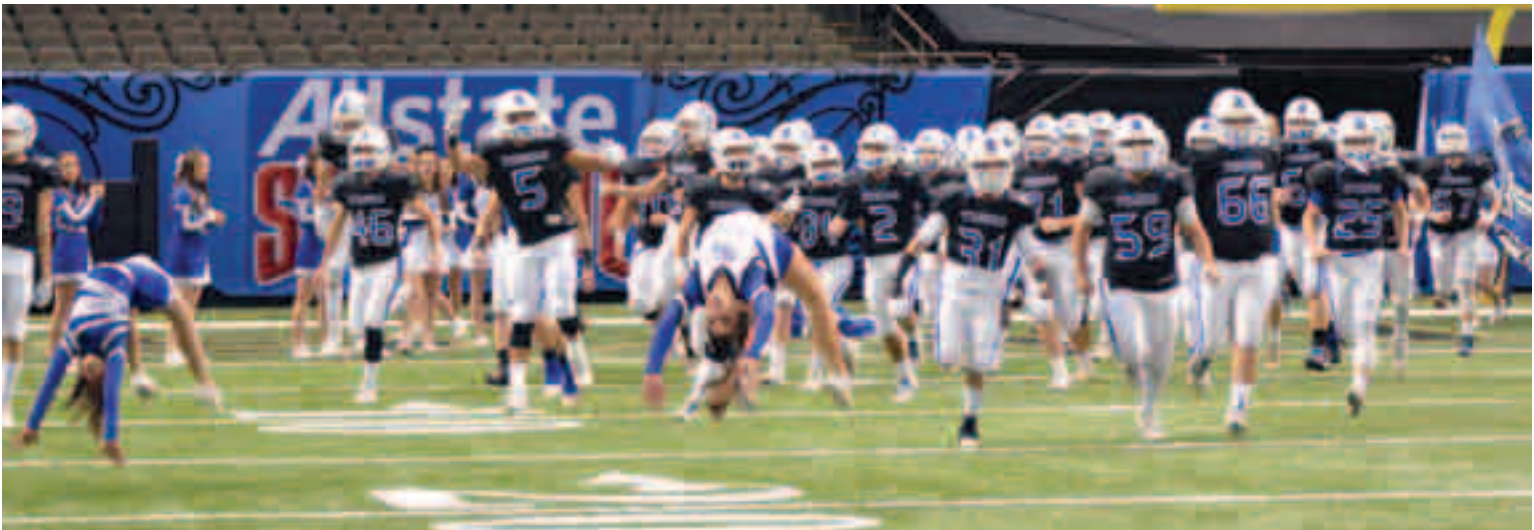
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St. Mary's Tigers clinches Division IV State Runner-up title



ST. MARY'S SCHOOL CLINCHES STATE RUNNER-UP TITLE. For the first time since 1980, the St. Mary's Tigers earned a spot to battle it out in the finals of the Louisiana High School Athletic Association's championship game in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome in New Orleans

Dec. 3 against Southern Lab of Baton Rouge. In the end, the Tigers were defeated by a score of 36-2. But the Tigers enjoyed one of their most successful seasons (13-1) in recent years and have a lot to proud be of. Congratulations to the Tigers and Head Coach Lee Doty, on a great season!



All photos by
Kevin Shannahan



SAS 4H POSTER CONTESTANTS. 4H students who participated in the recent Poster Contest

4H students elect officers at SAS

By Bekah Naquin
SAS 4H Reporter

This year the St. Anthony 4H club has many events going on.

Newly-elected officers are Kelsey Spencer, president; Jay Earles, vice president; Mary Grace LeDoux, treasurer; Morgan Aaron, secretary; Tristan Sonnier, parliamentarian; PJ Earles, health reporter; Bekah Naquin, reporter; Kate Webb, chaplain; Jacob Dickens, recreational leader; and Sam Jusselin, recreational leader.

The 4H club also attended 4H training camp on Oct. 7 at the

Avoyelles Parish 4H Center.

Earlier this month, Jacob Dickens and Sophia Hebert entered the pet show. Jacob placed third and Sophia placed 4th. P.J. Earles and Austin Bordelon participated in shooting sports.

The 4H club also hosted a Pink Out day. Students, faculty and staff were able to wear a pink shirt for \$1 and all proceeds will go to the Susan G. Komen organization to help find a cure for breast cancer. Another awesome thing we did was a can food drive in November to help the needy.

Thank you for supporting the St. Anthony 4H club.



ST. FRANCES CABRINI DUKE SCHOLARS. Three students from St. Frances Cabrini School in Alexandria were recently recognized by the Duke Scholars Program after they scored above the 95 percentile on the standardized tests. The program is open only to students in grades 4-6 who achieve a qualifying score. Participants receive a variety of benefits to nurture their academic talent, including customized publications, online activities, and access to challenging educational programs and resources designed especially for gifted students.



CHRISTMAS AT THE NEST. Close to 200 kids attended the second annual Christmas at the Nest Dec. 1 at Holy Savior Menard High School. The children were able to take pictures with Santa, create an ornament, and listen to Christmas stories.

MENARD BETA CLUB PACKS GIFT BOXES FOR KIDS. Holy Savior Menard Junior and Senior High Beta Club members collected and packed more than 80 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child. Inside the boxes are a variety of items such as socks, toothbrushes, shirts, crayons, pencils, coloring books and many more items. The senior Beta member dropped off the boxes at a local shipping company before the Thanksgiving holidays. The boxes are expected to arrive in time for Christmas to children in Africa!





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Menard's new Robotics teams making a mark in first year of competition

The Holy Savior Menard Junior High and High School new Robotics Teams (also known as the Steel Eagles) are off to a great start in their first year of competition.

Junior High Team

According to team sponsor Tonya Shepherd, the junior high team just finished their season in the FIRST LEGO League (FLL). They won 2nd place in their regional competition on Nov. 14 and advanced to the state championships which were held in New Orleans on Dec 5.

At the state championship they placed 17th, which gave them a rank of 17th in the state out of the 186 teams which compete in FLL in Louisiana!

The FIRST LEGO League is an international competition organized by FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) for elementary and middle school students (ages 9-14 in the USA and Canada, 9-16 elsewhere).

In September of each year, a new challenge is announced that focuses on a different real-world topic related to the sciences. Each challenge within the competition then revolves around that theme.

The robotics part of the competition revolves around designing and programming Lego Mindstorms robots to complete tasks. The students work out solutions to the various problems they are given and then meet for regional tournaments to share their knowledge, compare ideas, and display their robots.

High School Team

The high school team at Menard is in the middle of their season in FIRST Tech Challenge Robotics. They compete in the Baton Rouge League and have finished 1st in their last two meets. This means that they are currently ranked #1 in the Baton Rouge FTC League.

They will have one more meet in January and then should advance to the State FTC Championship which will be held in

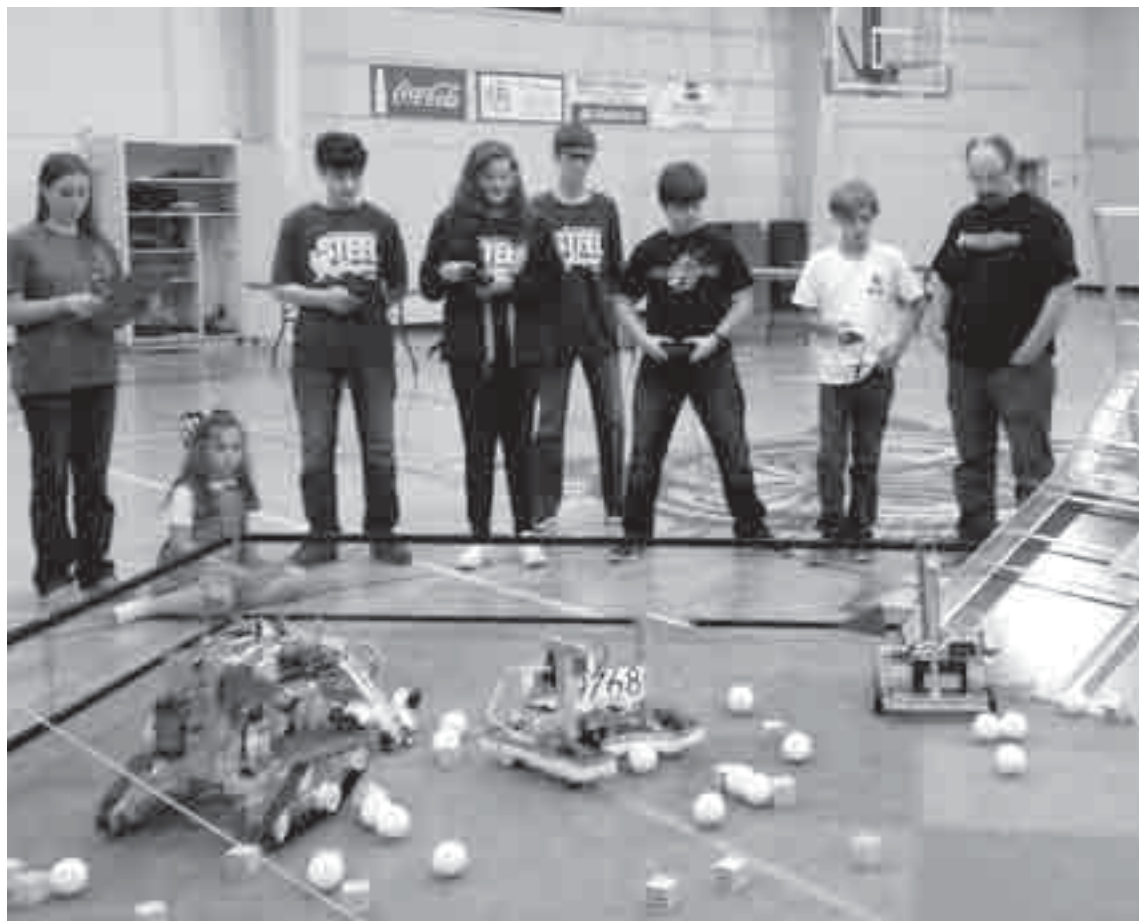
New Orleans on Jan 23.

The FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) is the premier engineering challenge for high school students. Teams of students, working closely with teachers and volunteer mentors, have six weeks to conceptualize, design, build, program, modify and test a robot to participate in a competition that changes each year.

Every January, FIRST unveils the competition or "game" at an annual kick-off event that is simulcast to locations around the world. Teams receive a "kit" of common parts that are used to build the core systems of the robot, but they won't find an instruction manual!

Students work with hundreds of components, including engineering mainstays such as programmable radio controllers, motors, electrical circuitry and mechanical parts.

Congratulations Steel Eagles!



MENARD HIGH SCHOOL ROBOTICS TEAM RANKED 1ST IN FTC ROBOTICS LEAGUE. The newly organized High School Robotics Team at Holy Savior Menard is currently ranked 1st in the Baton Rouge FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Robotics League. The team has placed first in the last two meets and should be competing in the state championship meet in New Orleans on Jan. 23. The team has six weeks to conceptualize, design, build, program, modify and test a robot to participate in the competition that changes each year.



MENARD JUNIOR HIGH ROBOTICS TEAM RANKED 17TH IN THE STATE.

Members of the Junior High Robotics Team competed in the state championship of the FIRST LEGO League in New Orleans on Dec. 5. At the state championship, they placed 17th, which gave them a rank of 17th in the state out of the 186 teams that competed in the FLL in Louisiana!



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State offers new scholarship option for Catholic students

By Jeannie Petrus
CT editor

A new source of tuition funding is being called a win-win situation for parents needing tuition assistance to afford a Catholic school education for their children and for those wanting to donate money to support it.

Called the Louisiana Tuition Donation Rebate (TDR) program, it is a source for nonpublic school scholarships gained from donations by Louisiana taxpayers that the state made available in 2013-14 school year to give more school choice to parents of qualified students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

"This is a great program," said Thomas E Roque, superintendent of Catholic Schools, referring to the Tuition Donation Rebate Program. "This past year was the first year we offered the program and it has proven to be very successful."

According to Roque, 43 students qualified for and received assistance from the TDR program for this current school year



LOUISIANA TUITION DONATION REBATE (TDR) is a new source of tuition funding for parents needing tuition assistance to afford a Catholic school education for their children and a great investment for those wanting to donate money to support it.

and are attending three of the Catholic schools in our diocese -- Holy Savior Menard, St. Frances Cabrini, both in Alexandria; and Sacred Heart in Moreauville.

"This program is not to be confused with the Louisiana

Scholarship Program, first established in 2008 to give low-income families a choice in education for their children," said Roque. "The TDR program offers additional benefits over the Louisiana Scholarship Program."

State scholarships vs TDR

While both scholarships are awarded quarterly, there are differences between the state scholarship program and the new TDR program, including:

1. The state awards state-

funded scholarships to Louisiana students entering kindergarten or enrolled in a public school with a C, D or F grade ranking; school tuition organizations award Tuition Donation Rebate (TDR) scholarships to qualifying students who wish to attend a private school with private donations.

2. The Louisiana Scholarship Program covers all tuition and fees; parents receiving Tuition Donation Rebate scholarships may be required to pay the difference between the scholarship and school's actual tuition and fees.

3. Parents apply to the state for the Louisiana Scholarship Program; parents apply to Student Tuition Organizations (STOs) for the Tuition Donation Rebate Program. There are currently two organizations that parents can apply to: ACE Scholarships and Arete Scholars.

4. Schools that accept students through the Tuition Donation Rebate Program can impose their admission standards. That is not the case with scholarship students.

See **NEW OPTION**, pg 16

are named All-Cenla Cross Country MVPs

By LaMar Gafford
The Town Talk
Reprinted with permission

Cross country is all about pace and striking at the right time.

Menard eighth-grader and St. Mary's did exactly that after racing to top five finishes at the LH-SAA state cross country meet in Natchitoches in November. Both runners also posted the top times for their respective genders, as was the lone girls runner to crack the 20-minute mark and stood alone in recording a sub 17-minute time.

Those accomplishments earned them the honors as the outstanding female and male runners on the Town Talk's All-Cenla Cross Country Team.

As an eighth grader, already has an accomplished resume. After nabbing a fifth place finish at the LHSA state meet last year, she shaved 37 seconds from her time as she nabbed third and her second straight girls' most

outstanding runner award.

"It feels really good," said. "Working as a team me a stronger runner, especially running with the boys. Working hard can pay off."

played a key role on the L agles' squad that finished as runners-up to St. Thomas Aquinas at the LHSA meet November in Natchitoches.

"Teamwise, we're really close to each other," said. "We're like friends and inside of cross country. We have a really good bond and we go to different camps during the summer to help team bonding. It works really well."

It also helps to have a coach as established as Menard coach Wally Smith around.

Smith thinks that has a special talent and she that he is her coach.

"Coach Smith knows a lot about running," said. "He's really good rd the team. He's hardcore, but in the end, he's a great coach."



CROSS COUNTRY MVPs.

Menard and St. Mary's are All-Cenla Cross Country MVPs. (Photo by Melinda Martinez/The Town Talk)

St. Mary's senior gritted through ck to claim third at the LHSA Class 1A boys race in his hometown of Natchitoches with a time of 16 minutes and 59.6 seconds.

"I was happy amid all of the injuries," said. "I cramped up dur middle of

the race, but to get on the podium was exciting. It was short of what I wanted. I wanted to win it all my senior year, but I have to get back out there for track season."

A skilled runner for St. Mary's — not just in the 3-mile cross country race, but in t - and 2-mile races in track —

has a legacy to uphold.

His father, Chris, ran for the Tigers in the late 1970s before going to Northwestern State.

For , who signed with Louisiana h in November, his father was a big reason on why he decided to run.

"We ran one race together and I did well in it," said. "It kind of took off from re. He's coached me all these years and that's how I really started."

While cannot wait to be a Bulldog, h ll has some unfinished business to tend to during track season in the 1- and 2-mile events.

"I want to break the school record for both," said. "I broke the 2-mile re last year and I want to break that."

I want to break Dan Ahren's record of 4:28 (in the 1-mile) and I'm at 4:31 right now. I'm hoping to break that and win state."

As for the All-Cenla honor, it is something he has been wanting to win. "It's a huge honor," said



FOUNDER'S DAY AT ST. JAMES MEMORIAL CHURCH. The Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver Court and Council # 91 celebrated Founder's Day on Nov. 8 at the 10 a.m. Mass at St. James Memorial Catholic Church in Alexan-



dria. They were established in 1943, -- 72 years ago. One of the original founders, Mrs. Bertha LeGras was honored. She is 99 years young! Pictured are (far left) Grand Lady Millie Price with Mrs. Bertha LeGras. Pictured (far right) are members of the Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver assembled at the 10 a.m. Founder's Day Mass.

New tuition assistance option

Continued from pg. 15

"This (TDR) program is more attractive, especially by our high schools, because they can apply their admission standards," Roque said. "No one wants to admit a child that they know is academically deficient and won't be successful. We don't want to set kids up for failure. We want to set them up for success."

5. While STOs review performance, the participating schools don't get graded by the state as they do in the scholarship program. Using their own standards, STOs have the authority to stop sending tuition if a school isn't meeting established standards.

6. Students enrolled in private schools through the Louisiana Scholarship Program are required to take state assessments in science, social studies, math and English and language arts. Students receiving scholarships through the Tuition Donation Rebate Program are required to take state assessments in English and language arts and math.

Benefits for donors

Donors who make an investment in the TDR program will receive -- from the Louisiana Department of Revenue -- a 95-per-

cent rebate of their money after the end of the school year, usually within a year or so from the time the donation is initially made, Roque said.

Up to 5 percent of every donation pays for administrative costs, according to the website Louisiana Believes (<https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/school-choice/brochure---tuition-donation-rebate-program-for-donors.pdf?sfvrsn=4>).

The Louisiana Department of Education verifies that the STO used the money to fund student scholarships, then issues a receipt to the taxpayer for the rebate.

For example, he said, a

\$10,000 donation would reap a rebate of \$9,500.

"It gives people an opportunity to contribute to something that will make a difference in the lives of kids," Roque said.

Tuition money is available on a first-come, first-served basis and is capped at \$4,147 per school year for students in kindergarten through eighth grade, and \$4,667 for students in ninth-12th grade.

How to apply

The basic qualifications to receive a scholarship from the TDR program are:

- student has to live in Louisiana;

- students has to have attended a state public school in the previous year or is entering kindergarten for the first time;
- student's family has to meet income guidelines (250 percent of the federal poverty guideline, which is \$59,625 for a family of four).

Local parents do not apply for tuition scholarships through the state or the Office of Catholic Schools. They apply through two tax-exempt, nonprofit school tuition organizations -- ACE Scholarships Louisiana and Arete Scholars -- approved by the state Department of Education and the Board of Elementary and Second-

ary Education.

School tuition organizations provide parents with a list of participating schools approved by state Board of Education.

The Office of Catholic Schools encourages interested parents to apply for both the state Scholarship Program and the Tuition Donation Rebate program and decide, once approved, which of the two tuition programs best suits their situation.

Applications for awards for the 2016-17 school year will be accepted beginning in January 2016. For details about the TDR program, contact Thomas Roque at 318-445-6424, ext. 224.

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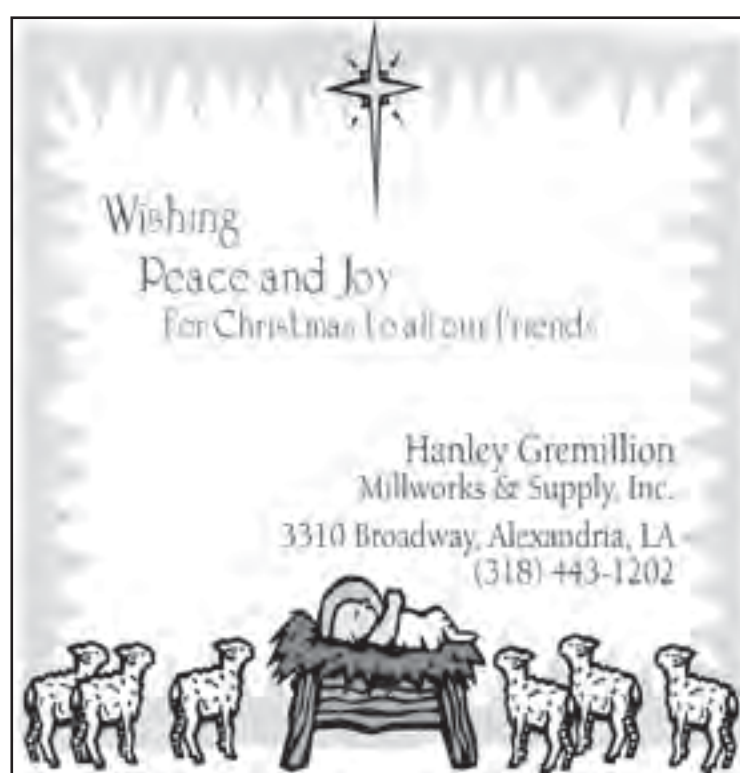
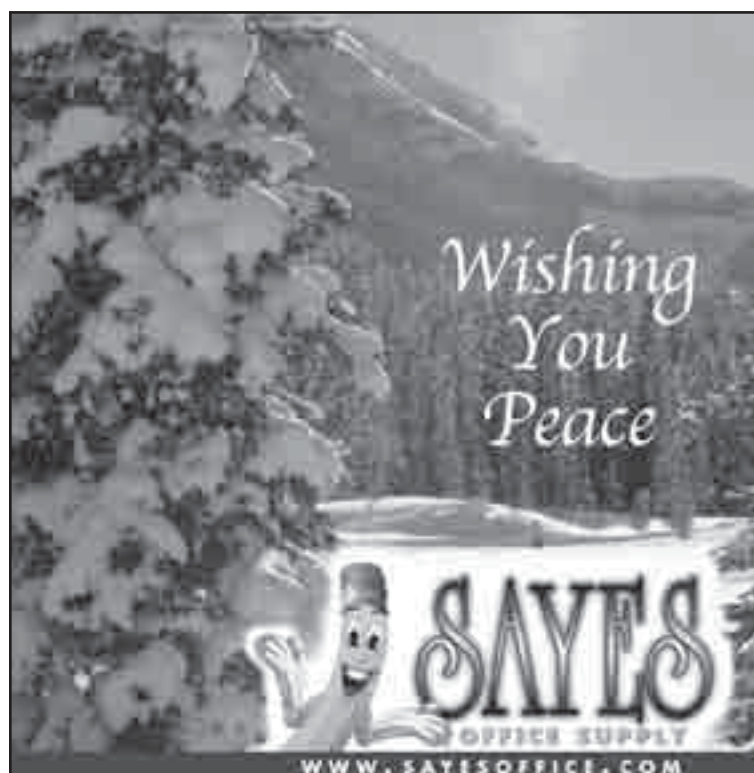
FOUNDER'S DAY AT ST. JULIANA CHURCH. The St. Juliana Catholic Church (in Alexandria) Knights of Peter Claver #268 and the Ladies Auxiliary Court #268 celebrated Founder's Day Nov. 8 during Mass. The Knights of Peter Claver Council was established in 1985 and the Ladies Auxiliary in 1986.



SACRED HEART (Moreauville) THANKSGIVING MASS. Sacred Heart School in Moreauville celebrated the annual Thanksgiving school Mass Nov. 19, which is also the feast day of Blessed Elizabetta Renzi, foundress of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows. Sacred Heart School was very blessed to have Mother General Carla Bertani from Rome, Italy present to celebrate with the students at the special Mass. Faculty, staff and students brought up gifts that they were blessed and grateful for. Some of these gifts included patriotic items, religious items, talent and club items, and food items. Pictured are OLS Mother General Carla Bertani, Sister Kalen Sarmiento, Sister Sandra Norsworthy (principal), and Sister Porimolla Murmu.



OL of LOURDES, Fifth Ward, THANKSGIVING MEAL FOR SENIORS. A group of ladies at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Fifth Ward prepare the food for the Thanksgiving dinner they served on Nov. 18 for the seniors in the community. These ladies, and others not pictured, cook and serve a meal every month for more than 75 seniors in the community, regardless of their religious affiliations. And the best part -- these ladies have been doing this for the past 10 years! Thank you ladies, for a job well-done! "Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40). Pictured are Cynthia Romano, Lilly Dubea, Gloria Lemoine, Elaine Bordelon, Dotrice Lemoine, Cilta Carmouche and Martha Bringol. Not pictured is Shirlev Guillot and Sharon Flash.



Calling all pro-lifers to participate in Cenla's first Life March

Mark your calendar now for Saturday, Jan. 30, 2016, when Alexandria will host its first Louisiana Life March.

That's right -- no need to travel to the North event in Shreveport/Bossier or the South event in Baton Rouge. It's all happening right here in Central Louisiana and is expected to attract a huge crowd.

The march will be held from 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. beginning on the campus of Louisiana College in Pineville and ending in downtown Alexandria.

Start now by organizing your church, youth ministry, Catholic organization, or just a group of family members or friends to participate. Participants need not register, but are asked to gather at Louisiana College no later than 9:45 a.m.

According to a press release from Ben Clapper, executive director of Louisiana Right to Life, the 2016 theme of the march is "Life is Priceless!"

"Our vision for every event is to unite the pro-life people of Louisiana from across denominational lines and mobilize them to make a difference in their communities," said Clapper.

The events are family-friendly and open to all.

With horrendous videos highlighting Planned Parenthood's sale of baby body parts, we must remind the world that

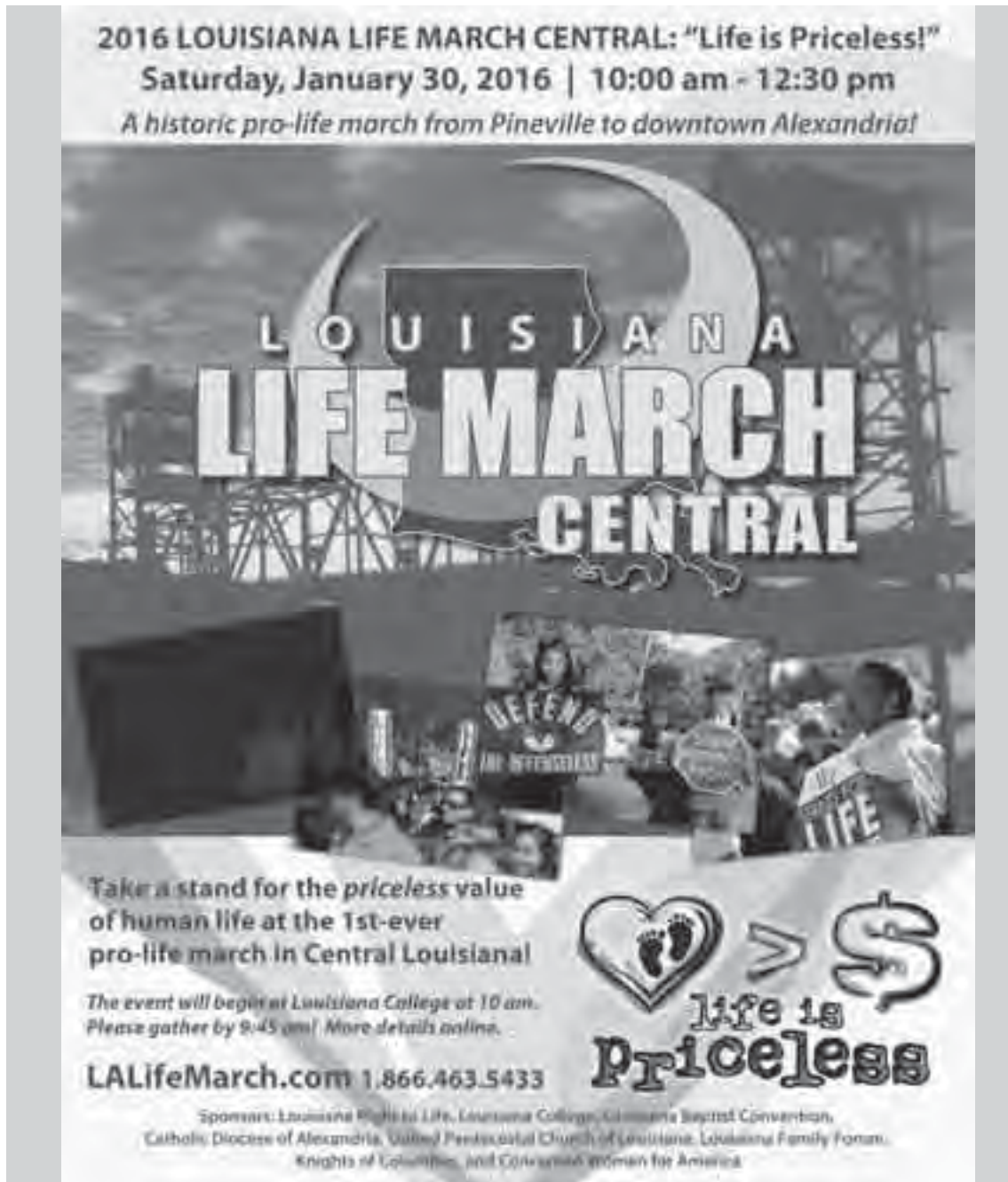
human lives are valuable and priceless. In Luke 12:6-7, Jesus reminds us the value of each human life: "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

Plan to march with others in 2016 and take a stand for the priceless value of every human life.

In addition to the first Life March in Central Louisiana, the other two Louisiana Life Marches (North in Shreveport-Bossier and the Life March South in Baton Rouge) will (for the first time) both be held simultaneously on the same day, Saturday, Jan. 23 from 10 a.m. - noon.

Sponsors of the event include Louisiana Right to Life, Catholic Diocese of Alexandria, Knights of Columbus, Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops, Louisiana College, Louisiana Baptist Convention, United Pentecostal Church of Louisiana, Louisiana Family Forum, and Concerned Women for America.

If you would like to request promotional materials for your church or organization, please contact the Louisiana Right to Life office at 1.866.463.5433 or info@prolifelouisiana.org. We have posters and flyers available now!



2016 LOUISIANA LIFE MARCH CENTRAL: "Life is Priceless!"
Saturday, January 30, 2016 | 10:00 am - 12:30 pm
A historic pro-life march from Pineville to downtown Alexandria!

LOUISIANA LIFE MARCH CENTRAL

Take a stand for the *priceless* value of human life at the 1st-ever pro-life march in Central Louisiana!

The event will begin at Louisiana College at 10 am. Please gather by 9:45 am! More details online.

LALifeMarch.com 1.866.463.5433

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Blessed Virgin Mary featured on cover of National Geographic

Cites Our Blessed Mother as 'the Most Powerful Woman in the World'

(CNA/EWTN News).- Our Lady. Blessed Mother. Virgin Mary. Queen of Peace. Theotokos. Handmaid of the Lord. Mother Mary.

These are just some of the titles used to describe the young woman to whom an angel appeared some 2,000 years ago with the message that she would conceive and bear the Savior of the World.

Mary has very few recorded words in the New Testament, but her worldwide devotion spans across time, cultures and even religions.

In the December 2015 issue of National Geographic, "How the Virgin Mary Became the World's Most Powerful Woman," Maureen Orth explores the worldwide phenomenon of devotion to the Mother of God in anticipation of the Dec. 13 National Geographic Channel special, "The Cult of Mary."

In her piece, Orth spoke with Marian scholars and experts and even followed pilgrims to Marian apparition sites to learn more about this "most powerful woman."

"We see the relationship of Mary with us isn't just any relationship - it's sacred," María Enriqueta García, who did her sacred theology dissertation at the International Marian Research Institute at the University of Dayton, told Orth.

The idea of Mary as an in-

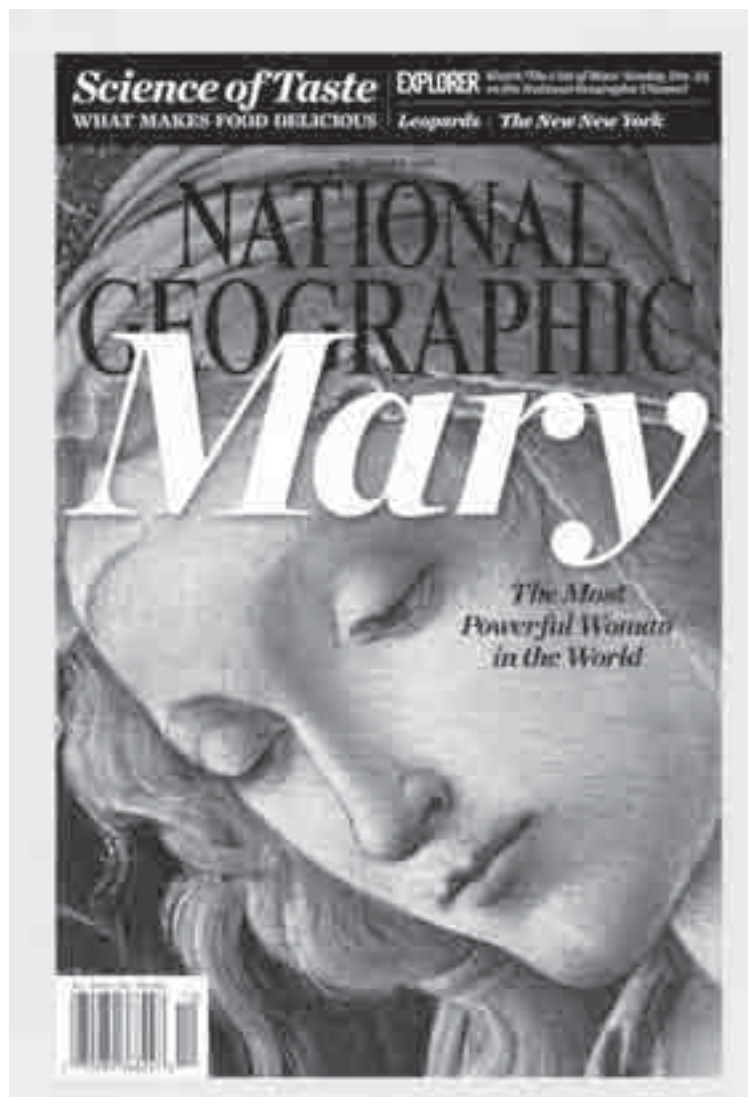
tercessor before God comes from scripture at the Wedding Feast of Cana, when Jesus performs his first miracle after his mother's prompting of, "They have no wine" followed by her instruction to the servers to, "Do whatever he tells you."

"Since then no other woman has been as exalted as Mary," Orth said. "As a universal symbol of maternal love, as well as of suffering and sacrifice, Mary is often the touchstone of our longing for meaning, a more accessible link to the supernatural than formal church teachings. Her mantle offers both security and protection."

For her story, Orth accompanied pilgrims around the world to Marian apparition sites including Lourdes, Kibeho, Mexico City, and even Medjugorje - where apparitions are said to still be occurring and the Vatican has not yet ruled on its authenticity.

In Kibeho, Rwanda she met with Anathalie Mukamazimpaka, one of the young women to whom the Virgin Mary appeared from 1981 to 1983 with the message of repentance and foretold the events of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide.

"The first time she appeared," Anathalie said, "I was reciting the rosary, and she called me by my name ... She never told me why she chose me. She said she appears to anyone she wants, anytime she wants, anywhere she wants," Anathalie said. "She only



THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY on cover of the Nov. 8 issue of National Geographic magazine.

asks us to love her as much as she loves us."

Mary even helped give a na-

tion their identity, Orth said, in the case of Our Lady of Guadalupe with Mexico.

"Anyone witnessing the outpouring of love and devotion that pilgrims demonstrate for their beloved Madre on the days leading up to the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe ... can see that the Virgin Mary is deeply embedded in Mexican hearts and souls," Orth said as she followed pilgrims to Mexico City where St. Juan Diego's tilma bearing the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is still intact and on display.

In addition to Christians, Muslims hold the Blessed Mother in high regard, Orth said, noting that her name appears more in the Koran than in the New Testament.

"So the Virgin Mary is not at all strange to Muslims," Fr. Johann Roten, director of research and special projects at the University of Dayton's Marian Library, said.

"In fact, wherever there is a connection between Christians and Muslims - or any two groups that know and love her - there is a common value in the covenant mother."

In Egypt, Orth spoke with Muslims who were drawn to churches because of their devotion to Mary.

"Her story tells us a lot of things," a young Muslim woman praying outside the Abu Serga church on Easter said. "She is able to face lots of hardships in her life because of her faith, her belief in God."



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Hollywood searches for 'comfort and joy' in *Love the Coopers*

No mention of Savior's birth, but big on crude language, tasteless jokes

By Joseph McAleer
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) -- There's just no way to "Love the Coopers" (CBS Films), a vulgar comedy about four generations of a dysfunctional family gathered for Christmas Eve.

A Norman Rockwell painting this is not. The cast of characters is uniformly disagreeable and ill-mannered, from octogenarian Aunt Fishy (June Squibb), whose dementia has lewd overtones, to 5-year-old Madison (Blake Baumgartner) who habitually repeats an obscene phrase -- to the evident glee of many on screen.

But hey, 'tis the season! And in Hollywood that means conspicuous consumerism and borderline gluttony, with nary a mention of the Savior's birth.

Director Jessie Nelson ("I Am Sam") and screenwriter Steven Rogers do throw one "angel" into the mix: Joe (Jake Lacy), a soldier on holiday leave. He's the token Christian, but he might as well have a target on his back, as he becomes the butt of many lame gags.

The film is narrated, fittingly, by the Coopers' dog (voice of Steve Martin). He watches the day unfold as his owner, Charlotte (Diane Keaton), awaits the arrival of her extended clan.

"I want everyone to have the memory of a perfect Christmas," she tells her husband of 40 years, Sam (John Goodman).

Fat chance. Behind the scenes, Charlotte and Sam are about to divorce. Their son, Hank (Ed Helms), dad to potty-mouthed Madison, has already split with his spouse, and is struggling -- obviously -- with single parenthood.

Charlotte and Sam's single daughter, Eleanor (Olivia Wilde), is off the rails, having an affair with a married man. Flying home for Christmas, she meets Joe in an airport bar. In between ridiculing his faith and values, Eleanor begs this complete stranger to pose as her boyfriend, and join her at home.

"Calm down, man up and lie to my parents," she insists.

Adding to the mayhem are



LOVE THE COOPERS. Ed Helms, Alan Arkin and John Goodman star in a scene from the movie "Love the Coopers." Don't waste your money on this one. Even the on-line critics give it a low score of 3.7 out of 10. The privileged characters are stereotypical and gather at Christmas to whine. (CNS photo/CBS Films and Lionsgate)

Charlotte's ditzy sister, Emma (Marisa Tomei), a kleptomaniac under arrest, and kindly, but waywardly romantic, grandpa Bucky (Alan Arkin). Bucky is smitten --

to supposedly comic effect -- with the much younger Ruby (Amanda Seyfried), a depressed waitress at his favorite diner.

A slender message about the

enduring bonds of family as well as the value of tolerance and forgiveness snaps easily under the weight of tasteless and occasionally blasphemous jokes.

MOVIE REVIEW

Joe is the only ray of light -- and his influence can be felt in the generally moral wrap-up, a conclusion that just barely pulls this project back from complete offensiveness. Yet it's characteristic of the screenplay that, when Joe dutifully reminds his newfound family to say grace before the big holiday meal, and begins to lead them in prayer, he's interrupted by an outbreak of canine flatulence.

Ho, ho -- humbug.

The film contains pervasive indecent and some sacrilegious humor, an anti-Christian tone, fleeting approval of homosexuality, implied premarital sex, adult banter and occasional profane and crude language.

The CNS rating is L -- limited adult audience. The Motion Picture Association rating is PG-13 -- parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.

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Mother Theresa's life story, struggles revealed in *The Letters*

By John Mulderig
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK (CNS) -- As the elaborate procedures that precede the Catholic Church's decision to declare someone a saint amply demonstrate, genuine holiness can be difficult to pin down or identify in real life.

When it comes to capturing sanctity on screen, the elusiveness of a person's interior union with God becomes even more apparent, even when that bond is testified to by extraordinary outward achievements.

There's also a significant aesthetic challenge to consider: As every reader of poet John Milton's Bible-based epic "Paradise Lost" soon realizes, evil is -- on the face of things, at least -- far more interesting than goodness.

Partly that has to do with the disordered mindset resulting from original sin. But it's also undeniable that wickedness often expresses itself in dramatic events and gestures whereas persevering fidelity to God's will -- although it can be inspired by a sudden, even sensational, moment of conversion -- is a lifelong process to be pursued day in and day out.

The launching of wars, the trampling down of enemies, the liquidation of vast numbers of innocents; all these deeds have the built-in quality of spectacle. Hours of solitary prayer, the patient acquisition and perfection of the virtues; although admirable in themselves, these activities, by contrast, are likely to strike even a well-disposed observer as yawn-inducing.

So the filmmakers behind



THE LETTERS. Juliet Stevenson stars in a scene from the movie "The Letters," a story about the life, work, and struggles of Mother Teresa. While critics claim the movie is "not exciting enough," others claim the movie accurately depicts the struggles she suffered for decades from a potentially paralyzing sense of God's complete absence, as revealed in the letters she wrote to her spiritual director over the course of 50 years. Rated PG. (CNS photo/MPRM Communications).

"The Letters" (Freestyle), a biography of Blessed Teresa of Kolkata (1910-1997), have set themselves a daunting task. All the more so, since the posthumous publication of their subject's correspondence -- the documents from which the movie takes its title -- startlingly revealed to the world that she suffered for decades from a potentially paralyzing sense of God's complete absence.

The woman born Anjeze Gonxhe Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Macedonia (in what was then the

Ottoman Empire), thus found herself in a paradoxical position. As the world's most saintly celebrity, she was a figure committed to -- and acclaimed for -- spiritually inspired works of mercy, many of which made no sense whatever from a purely worldly perspective. Yet within her own soul, her faith had become almost entirely a matter of abstract theory.

How she carried on in the face of such desolation might provide a rich subject for the most psychologically perceptive of novelists. Expressing her di-

lemma in a compelling way for moviegoers, however, proves too much for writer-director William Riead -- and for his film's star, Juliet Stevenson.

Riead frames his story via a retrospective conversation between Fathers Celeste van Exem (Max von Sydow), the famed nun's spiritual director, and Benjamin Praagh (Rutger Hauer), the church official charged with investigating her life with a view to her possible canonization.

But Riead uses this narrative device awkwardly, with the result

MOVIE REVIEW

that the facts surrounding Mother Teresa's courageous ministry -- as well as her tenacious spiritual struggle -- are alternately spoon-fed to the audience through dialogue and dramatized in a way that fails to spark interest.

Riead focuses primarily on Teresa's momentous decision to leave the Sisters of Loreto, the cloistered teaching order in which she began religious life, and dedicate herself instead to the work of serving the most afflicted of her adopted city's slum dwellers.

He successfully conveys the obedience with which she submitted her personal convictions about her altered vocation to the judgment of the church -- her patience being further tried by the persistent but ultimately futile opposition of her former superior, played by Mahabanoo Mody-Kotwal. Yet Riead otherwise fails to delve below the surface.

Given its inspiring subject matter, and the absence of any really problematic content, this appreciative but poorly handled profile makes suitable fare for all but the youngest viewers.

The film contains some tense scenes of conflict and potentially disturbing medical situations. The Catholic News Service classification is A-II -- adults and adolescents. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is PG -- parental guidance suggested.



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ST. PETER MISSION, in Elmer hosted a retreat Nov. 14. Fr. Remi Owuamanam, pastor of St. Juliana Church in Alexandria, blessed the statue of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane during the retreat.

Jan. 5-8: Feast of OL of Prompt Succor

You are invited to join the Ursuline Sisters in honoring the Solemnity of Our Lady of Prompt Succor with the Annual Mass of Thanksgiving on Friday, Jan. 8 at 4 p.m. at the National Votive Shrine of Our Lady of Prompt Succor in New Orleans. The Mass will be celebrated by Archbishop Gregory Aymond and Auxiliary Archbishop Fernand Cheri, III, O.F.M., homilist. A reception will follow. In addition, Brother Louis M. Couvillion, S.C., will speak Jan. 5-7 at the 5 p.m. Masses. The public is invited.

Jan. 7-9: Gulf Coast Faith Formation Conference

The 34th annual Gulf Coast Faith Formation Conference will be held Jan. 7-9 at the Pontchartrain Center in Kenner. Passionist Father Doanld Senior, one of the country's foremost Scripture scholars, will discuss "Life as God's Gift". About 1,500 Catholic school religion teachers, parish catechists and other catechetical leaders are expected to attend the conference, formerly known as the Johannes Hofinger Conference. Early registration is available through Dec. 18 at www.gcffc.org.



ST. JULIANA CHURCH HONORS VETERANS. St. Juliana Church in Alexandria honored Veterans Nov. 11 during a Mass celebrated on Veteran's Day. Pictured are Patricia Hicks (Air Force), Gilbert Martin (Air Force), Don Metoyer (Army), Father Remi, Joseph Patterson (Army), Winston Bell (Air Force), and Tommy Milo (Air Force).

DIOCESAN BRIEFS



ST. JULIANA TASTE OF CREOLE. St. Juliana Church in Alexandria held its annual Taste of Creole Oct. 17 to a crowd of almost 2,000 people. It was one of the largest turnouts for the 11 years that they have been doing the event. Pictured are Brenda Norris, Gwen Milo and Janice Reed. For one price, attendees sampled dozens of entrees including grilled pork steaks, assorted bean dishes, pasta dishes, stewed okra, Cajun rice dressing, smoked sausage, boudin, tamales, hot dogs, and lots of desserts.

Jan. 8-10: Retroville Weekend

Retroville (pronounced retro-vi) has helped tens of thousands of couples at all stages of disillusionment or misery in their marriage. This program can help you too. For confidential information about or to register for the program beginning with a weekend on Jan. 8-10, 2016, at Maryhill Renewal Center in Pineville, call 1-800-470-2230 or visit: www.HelpOurMarriage.com

Jan. 9-10: SALT Retreat

Dates for the Spring Salt Retreats in 2016 are: Jan 9-10, Feb 6-7, and March 5-6. For more information, call Sacred Heart Church in Pineville at 318-445-2496.

Jan. 10: Search for Longest Married Couple

Worldwide Marriage Encounter is searching for the Longest Married Couple in America and the Longest Married Couple in each state. To nominate someone who has been married a long time, send the name of the couple, their wedding date, and where they currently reside -- plus a contact phone or email address of the person nominating the couple to: Dick & Diane Baumbach, 8924 Puerto Del Rio Drive, Suite 402, Cape Canaveral, FL 32920 or email wwmelmc2015@gmail.com, or call 321-613-5180. Nominations must be received by Jan. 10, 2016.

Jan. 30: Ignite Confirmation Rally

The Diocese of Alexandria will host IGNITE Confirmation Rally on Saturday, Jan. 30 from 8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. at St. Frances Cabrini – Activities Building. Cost is \$20 per person by Jan. 18; then \$25 after Jan. 18. Lunch is included. To register, go to www.diocesealex.org/youth-ministry. Parish must provide one chaperone per 8 candidates. For more information, call 318-445-6424, ext 221.

Jan. 23-24: Married Couples Retreat

The Diocese of Alexandria will host a Retreat for Married Couples beginning Jan. 23 at 9 a.m. and ending Jan. 24 at noon at Maryhill Renewal Center (Ducote Hall). Whether you are looking for something to bolster your marriage or need tangible skills to help you through some troubled times, this is the retreat is for you. Come and discover the mysteries of Marriage and the grace that flows from this great Sacrament! Mario Sacasa, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and director of counseling services at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, will speak on "Living the Gift of Marriage." Open to all married couples. Cost is \$120 per couple, which includes one night stay and meals. For more info, call 318-445-6424, ext. 221 or go to www.diocesealex.org/young-adult-ministry.

Catechetical Quiz Bowl

The annual diocesan Catechetical Quiz Bowl will be held in April at the St. Joseph Catholic Center in Alexandria. The quiz will consist of questions from the books of Exodus and Mark in the Bible. Questions and answers are now available from the Office of Religious Formation and Training at the Diocese Center by calling (318) 445-6424 ext. 251 or emailing emccullough@diocesealex.org, so that students may begin studying. A parish or school can have any number of teams. A team is made up of four members, 6th, 7th, and/or 8th grade students from Catholic Schools and from Parish CCD programs. There is a registration fee of \$10 per team. Dress is casual. First place is a cash award of \$500 and a trophy. Second place is \$200 and a trophy. Lunch will be provided.



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December - January

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<div>14</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. R. SHOURY</div>	<div>15</div> <div>Red River Chorale Concert 7:30 p.m. St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. P. SIERRA-POSADA</div>	<div>16</div> <div>Advent Bible Study 5:30 p.m. St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. L. SKLAR</div>	<div>17</div> <div>Advent Reflection 6:00 p.m. St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria</div> <div>Lessons & Carols 6:30 p.m. Trinity Episcopal Church, Natchitoches</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. S. SOARES</div>	<div>18</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. I. ST. ROMAIN</div>	<div>19</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR MSGR. S. TESTA</div>	<div>20</div> <div></div> <div>FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT PRAY FOR FR. K. TEXADA</div>
<div>21</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. THOMAS</div>	<div>22</div> <div>Christmas Concert 7:00 p.m. St. Martin Church, Lecompte</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. A. THOMPSON</div>	<div>23</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR MSGR. J. TIMMERMANS</div>	<div>24</div> <div></div> <div>CHRISTMAS EVE PRAY FOR FR. A. TRAVIS</div>	<div>25</div> <div></div> <div>SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY of the LORD (CHRISTMAS) (Holy Day of Obligation) PRAY FOR FR. G. UZONDU</div>	<div>26</div> <div></div> <div>FEAST of ST. STEPHEN PRAY FOR FR. A. VARGHESE</div>	<div>27</div> <div></div> <div>FEAST of the HOLY FAMILY of JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH PRAY FOR FR. V. VEAD</div>
<div>28</div> <div></div> <div>FEAST of the HOLY INNOCENTS PRAY FOR FR. A. VELEZ</div>	<div>29</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. N. VIVIANO</div>	<div>30</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. XAVIER</div>	<div>31</div> <div></div> <div>NEW YEAR'S EVE PRAY FOR FR. K. ZACHARIAH</div>	<div>JANUARY 1</div> <div></div> <div>SOLEMNITY of MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER of GOD (Holy Day of Obligation) FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR BISHOP R. HERZOG</div>	<div>2</div> <div></div> <div>FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR FR. A. AELAVANTHARA</div>	<div>3</div> <div></div> <div>SOLEMNITY of the EPIPHANY of the LORD PRAY FOR FR. W. AJAERO</div>
<div>4</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. T. ALLEN</div>	<div>5</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. ANTONY</div>	<div>6</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. S. BRANDOW</div>	<div>7</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. D. BRAQUET</div>	<div>8</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. BROCATO</div>	<div>9</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. S. CHEMINO</div>	<div>10</div> <div></div> <div>FEAST of the BAPTISM of the LORD (End of Christmas season) PRAY FOR FR. D. COOK</div>
<div>11</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. D. CORKERY</div>	<div>12</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. CUNNINGHAM</div>	<div>13</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. W. DECOSTE</div>	<div>14</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. D. DEJESUS</div>	<div>15</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. B. DESHAUTELLE</div>	<div>16</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. DESIMONE</div>	<div>17</div> <div></div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. P. FAULK</div>

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