

CHURCH TODAY

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December 15, 2014

ON THE INSIDE

Papal Blessings are still available, but only through the Vatican

On page 7 of the Nov. 17 issue of the Church Today, an article titled, "Vatican ends sale of Papal Blessings" was published. It was not entirely accurate. Effective Jan. 1, 2015, the Vatican has indeed ended the sale of Papal Blessings among independent vendors, however, Papal Blessings will continue to be offered at the Vatican, through the Office of Papal Charities. For details on how to obtain a Papal Blessing, see page 2.

Tis' the Season for Pilgrimages

Two groups in the diocese recently travelled abroad on pilgrimages. One group from the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception visited Rome and the Vatican and another group of confirmation students from St. Mary's in Winnsboro visited the Vatican and sites in Italy. Read more about these trips on pages 14-17.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year in 2015!



2014 Vatican Christmas stamp jointly issued with Argentina. The 2014 Vatican Christmas stamp is a joint issue with Pope Francis' native Argentina. The Nativity scene is from a painting by Argentine artist Raul Soldi (1905-1994). (CNS photo/courtesy Vatican Philatelic and Numismatic Office)

Papal Blessings are still available through Office of Papal Charities

(Editor's note: On page 7 of the Nov. 17 issue of the Church Today, an article titled, "Vatican ends sale of Papal Blessings" was published. It was not entirely accurate. Effective Jan. 1, 2015, the Vatican has indeed ended the sale of Papal Blessings among independent vendors, however, Papal Blessings will continue to be offered at the Vatican, through the Office of Papal Charities. If you would like to request a Papal Blessing, go to www.elmosineria.va. A downloadable request form is available at the website; or follow the instructions on the right.)



(Vatican Radio) Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, the head of the Holy Father's Alms-giving office ("Elmosineria"), has confirmed that as of Jan. 1 2015, Papal Blessings will no longer be available from stores and businesses outside the Vatican. The Vatican's Office of Papal Charities will now be the only place where an authentic Papal Blessing may be obtained.

In a note, the Apostolic Almoner recalls that the Alms-giving office is tasked with carrying out "works of charity for the poor in the name of the Supreme Pontiff" and that the resources needed to do so derive from donations raised from the blessings.

In the past, the office had collaborated with stores and institutions outside the Vatican to permit a greater number of faithful to obtain the blessings. In recent years, however, the faithful have been able to order blessings directly from the charitable office after obtaining information from its website www.elmosineria.va.

(Click on the English site.)

The scrolls can be ordered directly in the Vatican, or by sending a special order form via mail or by fax. The scrolls are shipped almost anywhere in the world.

Msgr. Krajewski notes that as of last September, Pope Francis also extended to apostolic nuncios the right to grant Papal Blessings on parchment paper.

He confirms that the decision will not affect the jobs of calligraphers who draw up the blessings. The Alms-giving office has a staff of 12 and relies on a group of 17 outside specialists for assistance.

This tradition of papal alms-giving goes back to the earliest centuries of the Church. The website of the Apostolic Alms-giving office gives some historic reference points: Originally one of the immediate responsibilities of the Deacons, responsibility for the Pope's charities was later exercised by one or more members of the papal household with no particular hierarchical dignity,

which was granted later. A Bull of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) mentions the post of Almoner as already in existence.

The first Pope to organize the Office of Papal Charities was Blessed Gregory X (1271-1276), who set down the duties of the Almoner. In a Bull of 1409, Alexander V laid down guidelines and regulations for the Office, which has always functioned as an expression of the constant concern of the Roman Pontiffs. The Almoner of His Holiness has the rank of Archbishop; he is a member of the Papal Family and as such takes part in the Holy Father's liturgical celebrations and official audiences.

Pope Leo XIII, as a means of helping to fund the charitable works carried out by the Office, delegated the Almoner to grant the Apostolic Blessing by parchment certificate: these parchments, in order to be authentic, must bear the Almoner's signature and the seal of his Office.



How to request a Papal Blessing

I. By letter or fax

Requests for Papal Blessings on parchment can be sent to the Elmosineria Apostolica - Office of Papal Charities only by regular post or by fax (but not by e-mail). (A downloadable request form is available online at www.elmosineria.va)

If you don't use the request form, a written request should include:

- the name, surname and address of the person making the request;
- the name and surname of the person(s) for whom the blessing is being requested;
- the reason or occasion prompting the request;
- the date, the name of the Church and the address are required when the blessing is requested for the celebration of a sacrament, a religious profession or an anniversary;
- the address of where to send the parchment and payment details.

The payment should be made after you receive the Papal Blessing. It is possible to make the payment in one of two ways:

- via a bank transfer (the banking coordinates will be sent to you in the same parcel as the parchment)
- or by online credit card payment via our website.

The fee includes the cost of the parchment (cost varies depending on the requirements of the occasion) and the postage costs.

The time required for receiving the parchment is approximately one month from the date when the request is received.

Requests made by telephone are not admitted.

A Papal Blessing is granted for the following occasions:

1. Baptism, First Communion, Confirmation
2. Marriage
3. Priestly Ordination
4. Religious Profession
5. Secular Consecration
6. Ordinations of Permanent Deacons
7. Marriage Anniversaries (10, 25, 40, 50, 60 years)*, Priestly Ordination Anniversaries, Religious Profession Anniversaries
8. Birthdays (18, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100)*
9. Catholic individuals or families (with name and surname of the spouses united in a religious marriage).

The asterisk (*) indicates the need for the approval of ecclesiastical authority. Requests for papal blessings for other occasions will not be accepted.

Mail requests to:
Elmosineria Apostolica
Parchment Office
00120 Vatican City

Fax requests to:
(+39) 06.69883132
(Fax machines are open
24 hours)

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Police officer leans on Catholic faith during Ferguson crisis

By Dave Luecking
Catholic News Service

ST. LOUIS (CNS) -- Among the iconic images of the 9/11 tragedy, photographs of policemen and firefighters stand out: The first responders were entering the doomed World Trade Center as most everyone else was filing out.

They embraced the danger of the moment, most going ultimately to their death, because the job requires it. First-responders sign up for this risk; they accept it as part of their service.

Similarly, in the situation that has become known as simply "Ferguson," Sgt. John Wall of the St. Louis County Police Department knew in the second week of August that the time had come to stand up and be counted. Peaceful protests after the Aug. 9 shooting death of Michael Brown by a police officer during a confrontation had devolved into rioting and looting.

A QuikTrip near the shooting site had been looted and burned. Police had lobbed tear gas and shot rubber bullets to disperse crowds, presumably while real bullets flew in their direction. The situation was fraught with danger.

But did Wall think twice about going into it? Nope.

"I volunteered," he said, on a recent morning at a coffee shop.

"I volunteered; it was kind of 'all hands on deck,' so everybody had to work it at some time," he explained, matter-of-factly. He added, "I was fortunate enough to work it the entire time."

Wall, a 50-year-old married father of a teenager, not only volunteered for duty, willfully taking the risk, but counted himself as



ST. LOUIS COUNTY POLICE OFFICER LEANS ON CATHOLIC FAITH DURING FERGUSON CRISIS. Sgt. John Wall poses outside of the St. Louis County Police Department in Clayton, Mo., Nov. 21. Wall has relied on his Catholic faith during the ongoing crisis in Ferguson, Mo., which began with the fatal shooting of a black teen by a white police officer Aug. 9. The St. Louis County prosecutor announced Nov. 24 a grand jury determined there was not enough evidence to indict Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown. (CNS photo/Lisa Johnston, St. Louis)

fortunate for being there.

This from a man who in 12-hour shifts on his two weeks of voluntary duty was spit on, was hit by rocks, bricks and bottles of urine, and was berated -- with protesters calling him every name in the book.

"In those two weeks, I was called more things than in the 25 years I've been in this business," said Wall, who became a police officer in 1989 and joined the county force in 1998. "I've worked narcotics, I've worked homicide and I've never been talked to like that. Ever."

In those moments, his Catholic faith guided Wall, particularly

the part about loving thy neighbor.

"Faith comes into every aspect of this job," said Wall, who became a Catholic in 1991. "You have to forgive. I can't personally hold a grudge against any of these people; they were not screaming at me as an individual. I understand, and most of us understand, they're looking at a uniform and not a face. They don't know me and everything that I stand for."

"You have to have forgiveness in your own heart," he told the St. Louis Review, the archdiocesan newspaper, in an interview some days before the grand jury handed down its decision

that there would be no indictment of the police officer who killed.

When Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson, who is white, fatally shot 18-year-old Brown, an African-American, racial unrest in the St. Louis suburb led to protests. Some demonstrators looted and burned local businesses.

When it was announced that after three months of looking at the evidence and hearing more than 70 hours of testimony, the grand jury declined to indict Wilson, violent protests followed. Protests have continued in Ferguson and across the country.

From the beginning, Wall

Prayer for Policemen

O Almighty God,
whose great power and eternal
wisdom embraces the universe,
watch over all policemen and
law enforcement officers
everywhere.

Protect them from harm
in the performance of their duty
to stop crime, robbery,
riots and violence.

We pray, help them keep our streets
and homes safe, day and night.

We commend them to your loving
care because their duty
is dangerous.

Please God, protect these brave
men and women. Grant them
strength and courage
in their daily assignments.

Grant them your almighty protection,
Unite them safely with their families
after duty has ended. -- Amen.

and fellow officers have leaned on the pastoral care of county police chaplains. Chaplains started each shift with a prayer before the officer's role call and briefing at the police command center. Catholic priests served among chaplains of many religions.

"No one went to church for two weeks either; you're working the whole time. So, it was very helpful to have the chaplains there," Wall said.

The prospect of having Mass or other religious services at the command post was out of the question. Work consumed the officers, for one, and it wasn't safe anyway. Bomb threats prompted Gov. Jay Nixon to call out the National Guard to protect the command center and make it a safe haven for officers.

The scene of the unrest on the quarter-mile stretch of West Florissant in Ferguson was unsafe. A native of St. Louis, Wall describes the venom directed at him and other officers in Ferguson as "unbelievable," particularly since he knew, or at least recognized, some of the people hurling insults.

"The people we took it from were ... people I had good relations with," he said, adding that

See POLICE OFFICER, pg. 4



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The Season of Advent is well under way. It is a rich and multifaceted time, much like a fine jewel. While only four weeks in length, it challenges us take the time to ponder its diversity.

For most people, attention centers on the preparations to celebrate the historical birth of Jesus. And for good reason. That event changed the course of human history, especially salvation history. No one anticipated that God would enter into the world in human form.

The longing for the Messiah was very important to the Israelites, but their expectation centered around a new David, one



ONE IN THE LORD

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

who would bring peace and prosperity, conquering all enemies, most notably the Romans who rule Palestine.

It is not surprising that Jesus was misunderstood and rejected by many because, during his public ministry, he did not live up to

those expectations. He brought a very new and different message. He announced a spiritual kingdom.

As important as the birth of Jesus was, the days of Advent invite us to consider other aspects of the Lord's 'coming.' At the

beginning of our Advent journey, the Church asks us to focus our attention on the second coming of the Lord. We hear the message to prepare, to be ready. Considering that the time of his return is not known, it takes time and energy to keep vigilant. How do we prepare? The Gospel readings seem to offer clues. We prepare by recognizing Jesus in those in need around us.

As we make this annual journey of preparation and anticipation, we need to devote at least some of the time to the days of Jesus' public ministry announced by John at the Jordan. John guides us in looking for the Lord

in our midst, during this Advent of 2014.

What a rich season we live, asking us to open our eyes to more than an historical event or a future one.

Advent is now! Let us celebrate it well, guided by Isaiah, John and even Mary and Joseph.

May the Lord bless you during these days of Advent and Christmas! May the new year of 2015 be even more rich in the Lord's graces and blessings!

Police officers

Continued from pg. 3

he gave those people the benefit of the doubt. "There were people that just got caught up in the heat of the moment."

The protesters "came from all walks of life -- young, old, ministers," Wall said, noting that one woman among the latter "really laid into me, saying things like how we mistreat people, how we beat people, how we should be ashamed of ourselves, and all the people that I've killed. I was just looking at her. I haven't killed anybody. I haven't fired my gun in 25 years as a police officer.

Been shot at, though."

It's a tough time for the men and women in uniform and their families, but Wall's attitude is to grin-and-bear it. "You just have to gut through it."

For all of the bad Wall has experienced in Ferguson, he also has experienced much good, starting with people closest to him -- "family members, friends and people of the parish."

People also have come up to him while he's in uniform and thanked him for being a police officer.

In the meantime, Wall's wife

and daughter worry about his safety in Ferguson.

"My family has worried way more than I'd like them to," Wall said, adding, "I know how to take care of myself and take care of my people. They don't need to worry about me."

Thoughts of his wife and daughter are with Wall at all times; he has only to look at the

two rings he wears on the little finger of his right hand. From his wife, he has a ring with crosses. From his daughter, he has a rosary ring. He also carries a rosary in his duty bag, hands out St. Michael the Archangel prayer cards and wears a St. Michael pendant that his wife gave him 24 years ago. St. Michael is the patron saint for policemen, and even

non-Catholic officers wear the medals and carry the prayer cards in their pockets.

"Almost every policeman will have a religious trinket of some kind," Wall said. "Faith is huge in the police department, and in the military, too. It's a big presence."

"Like a minister, a policeman is there for good."

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Celebrating 'holidays' doesn't hold same meaning as celebrating Christmas

By Pete Sheehan, editor
The Catholic Exponent
Youngstown, Ohio

When I was growing up in Youngstown, Ohio there was no St. Patrick's Day Parade. When radio personality Pete Gabriel -- of Greek ancestry -- came to Youngstown, he couldn't believe there was no St. Patrick's Day Parade. So, he started one, reasoning that almost everyone, no matter their ethnic or religious background, enjoys celebrating St. Patrick's Day.

Such is the case with Christmas. Doesn't everyone enjoy celebrating Christmas, no matter their ethnic or religious background?

Such beloved Christmas songs as "White Christmas," "Silver Bells" and "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" were written by Jewish composers. John Lennon, an atheist, wrote "And So This is Christmas." I personally know Jewish people and even atheists who enjoy celebrating Christmas. Someday, someone will write a doctoral dissertation about when the movement against mentioning Christmas began. I call it the "Never Christmas" campaign, from a phrase in C.S. Lewis' "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe."

I first noticed it during the 1986 Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Santa Claus, who traditionally winds up the parade, proclaimed: "Ho, ho, ho. Happy Holidays." That went on for a few years until, I assume in response



TRUE STORY ABOUT WWI SOLDIERS IN 1914 WHO CAME TOGETHER AT CHRISTMAS IS A YOUTUBE VIDEO. To view this video, go to YouTube and search for "Sainsbury's Official Christmas 2014 Ad."

to protests, Santa began just silently waving.

Nevertheless, the Never Christmas campaign began to dominate TV, movies and everyday conversation. Advertisements full of Christmas decorations -- the tree, Santa, etc. -- and instrumental versions of Christmas songs appealing to you for your Christmas shopping scrupulously avoid mentioning Christmas.

"Happy Holidays" is a bland, obligatory, evasive greeting -- as though the idea of Christmas is something to avoid.

In recent years, there seems to be some letup, though most national advertisers and some individuals still avoid mention-

ing Christmas, the way that some pro-Iraq War advocates in 2003 began calling French fries "Freedom fries."

It's easy to criticize that Never Christmas mentality-- and believe me, I have. This aversion, according to some surveys, is felt by only five percent of the public, but that five percent has been able to foist this odd sort of intolerance on the rest of the country in the name of tolerance and inclusion.

Of course, I'm all for being sensitive to minorities and being inclusive. Yet the irony is that Christmas is perhaps the most inclusive of holidays.

People of different religious

beliefs or no beliefs are free to enjoy the sights and sounds of the season without anyone really caring about their beliefs. They can enjoy it while those of us who believe in Christmas are making the preparations.

You can listen to Handel's "Messiah" or Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker"; "Silver Bells," "Silent Night" or "Go Tell It on the Mountain." You can watch "It's a Wonderful Life," "A Christmas Carol," "The Nativity Story" or "A Christmas Story." You can wish people "Merry Christmas," "Joyeux Noel" or "Feliz Navidad."

Christmas is so inclusive that parallel celebrations of Hanukkah

or Kwanzaa are welcome. In fact, Knights of Columbus councils have invited Jewish congregations to set up menorahs by their Nativity scenes. Ironically, the Never Christmas crowd doesn't seem to mind explicit celebrations of Hanukkah or Kwanzaa.

Of course, the religious dimension to Christmas -- the true source of Christmas joy -- must never be lost, but anyone can share in that joy without believing.

No one is forced to celebrate Christmas any more than anyone is forced to go to a Super Bowl party. And if you're at the Super Bowl party, you don't even have to watch the game.

Trying to reduce Christmas to "the holiday" is really the opposite of pluralism and multiculturalism. It is trying to hide something that has touched hearts in a way that the "the holidays" can't.

There's that wonderful story from World War I, when on Christmas Eve 1914, soldiers in the trenches began singing Christmas songs.

Soon, soldiers on both sides were crossing the trenches into the enemy camp, making Christmas decorations, giving presents and playing a game of makeshift soccer. Eventually, hostilities resumed, but that brief shining moment will forever offer hope for something more.

I doubt that celebrating "the holidays," would have touched the battle-hardened soldiers' hearts so deeply.

Merry Christmas to all.



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Christmas Season is Dec. 24 - Jan. 11

12 Days of Christmas is extended a little due to the way dates fall on the calendar

We all know that the Christmas season officially begins on Christmas Eve, but when does the Christmas officially end?

On the Feast of the Epiphany (celebrated either on Jan. 6 or on the Sunday between Jan. 2 and Jan. 8), the Church celebrates the event where the Magi, also called the Three Wise Men or Three Kings, traveled from the East to pay homage to the newborn King, Jesus Christ. Many Catholics believe that this is the date when the Christmas season officially ends, being the end of the 12 days of Christmas.

However, according to the Roman Catholic Liturgical Calendar for 2014-15, Ordinary Time doesn't officially begin until the Monday after the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which falls on the Sunday after Epiphany. This means that this year, the Christmas season actually extends beyond the "Twelve Days of Christmas."

In older traditions (which are still kept in the liturgical calendar of the Extraordinary Form of the Mass) Christmas lasted until Candle-mas, or the Feast of the Purification of Mary and the Presentation of the Lord, which isn't until Feb. 2. This marked the end of a long 40 day "Christmastide" that corresponded to the 40 days of Lent.

On Feb. 2 the Church celebrates the day that Mary entered the temple with the Child Jesus when her days of purification after giving birth were fulfilled (according to the Mosaic law) and when Simeon made his well-known prophecy about Mary and the Child. It is called "Candle-mas" because of Simeon's prophecy of Jesus being a light for the Gentiles.

The 'Octave' of Christmas

Another element to throw into the mix is that the "octave" of Christmas ends on the eighth day after Christmas, which is Jan. 1 and the Feast Day of Mary, the Mother of God. Major feast days



are usually celebrated not just during 24 hours, but given the honor of an octave (8 days) which is a custom that traces its roots to Old Testament feasts.

The end of the octave can be seen as the end of the Christmas feast proper, after which begins the longer Christmas season that extends either to the Baptism of the Lord for the Ordinary Form (this year Jan. 12, or the Sunday after Epiphany) or the Presentation of the Lord for the Extraordinary Form (Feb. 2). However this understanding of a proper Christmas 'feast' in some traditions is also associated with the 12 Days of Christmas which culminates on Epiphany.

So, When Does Christmas End?

When Christmas ends depends on the Rite (Latin or Eastern), the liturgical calendar, and whether you're looking for the end of the Christmas 'feast' or the end of the Christmas 'season'. But overall, here is what sounds good to me:

The Christmas feast itself ends on the final day of its octave, which is the feast of Mary, the Mother of God, on Jan. 1. Keep your feasting and merriment go-

ing for the full 8 days.

The 'peak' of the Christmas 'season' is Epiphany, the end of the 12 Days of Christmas. Jesus is now revealed as a light to the Gentile nations. Keep your Christmas decorations, especially your Christmas lights, up at least until this day is over; or better, 8 days for the full octave.

The official end of the Christmas season is the Baptism of the Lord the following weekend (the end of the octave of Epiphany), after which Ordinary Time begins. Keep your nativity scene displayed up through this day or until the Presentation of the Lord on Feb. 2.

These are just suggestions of course. The varying Christmas traditions reflect the universal nature of the Church (all tribes and tongues!) which has been going strong for 2,000 years. Everyone is on the same page generally speaking in keeping the feast of Christmas, even though there have naturally arisen differences over the millenia in exactly how this is done from place to place.

Source: *The Catholic Company* -- <https://www.catholiccompany.com/blog/does-christmas-end-on-epiphany>

Advent Penance Services

Tuesday, Dec. 16

5:30 p.m. -- St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph
6:00 p.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus, Woodworth
6:30 p.m. -- St. Joseph Church, Marksville
6:30 p.m. -- Mater Dolorosa Church, Plaquemine

Wednesday, Dec. 17

6:00 p.m. -- St. John the Baptist, Cloutierville

Friday, Dec. 19

6:00 p.m. -- Sts. Francis and Anne, Kolin

Christmas Mass Schedules

If your church is not listed, contact your parish office for dates and times.

Christmas Eve Vigil Mass, Wednesday, Dec. 24, 2014

4:00 p.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Alexandria
4:00 p.m. -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
4:00 p.m. -- Sacred Heart, Pineville, Children's Mass (Pageant at 3:30 p.m.)
4:00 p.m. -- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches
4:00 p.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus, Woodworth
4:00 p.m. -- St. Anthony of Padua, Bunkie
4:00 p.m. -- St. Joseph, Marksville, Children's Mass (CCD Play at 3:30 p.m.)
4:00 p.m. -- Sacred Heart Church, Moreauville
4:00 p.m. -- Mater Dolorosa Church, Plaquemine
5:00 p.m. -- Sts. Francis and Anne, Kolin
5:00 p.m. -- St. Peter Church, Bordelonville
5:30 p.m. -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
5:30 p.m. -- Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Pineville, Mass with Youthful Choir
5:30 p.m. -- St. Francis of Assisi, Waterproof
6:00 p.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Alexandria
6:00 p.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
6:00 p.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus, Woodworth
6:00 p.m. -- St. Joseph Church, Marksville
6:00 p.m. -- St. Anthony of Padua, Bunkie

Christmas Midnight Masses

Midnight, Dec. 24 -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Alexandria
Midnight, Dec. 24 -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
Midnight, Dec. 24 -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
Midnight, Dec. 24 -- Sacred Heart, Pineville (Carols at 11:30 p.m.)
Midnight, Dec. 24 -- Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches (Caroling at 11:30)
Midnight, Dec. 24 -- Mary, Mother of Jesus, Woodworth
Midnight, Dec. 24 -- St. Joseph Church, Marksville
Midnight, Dec. 24 -- Sacred Heart Church, Moreauville
Midnight, Dec. 24 -- Mater Dolorosa Church, Plaquemine

Christmas Day, Thursday, Dec. 25, 2014

7:00 a.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Alexandria
7:00 a.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria (Latin Mass)
8:00 a.m. -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
8:00 a.m. -- Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches (Traditional Latin Mass)
8:00 a.m. -- St. Joseph Church, Marksville
8:00 a.m. -- St. Michael Church, Rexmere
9:00 a.m. -- Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Alexandria
9:00 a.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
9:00 a.m. -- Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Pineville
9:00 a.m. -- Sacred Heart Church, Moreauville
9:30 a.m. -- Mary, Mother of Jesus, Woodworth
9:30 a.m. -- Mater Dolorosa Church, Plaquemine
9:30 a.m. -- St. Joseph Church, St. Joseph
10:00 a.m. -- Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Natchitoches
10:00 a.m. -- St. Joseph Church, Marksville
10:30 a.m. -- Sts. Francis and Anne, Kolin
10:30 a.m. -- St. Anthony of Padua, Bunkie
11:00 a.m. -- St. Rita Church, Alexandria
5:30 p.m. -- St. Frances Cabrini Church, Alexandria
6:00 p.m. -- Sts. Francis and Anne, Kolin

For updated list, go to www.diocesealex.org.

Keeping Christ in Christmas

8 ways to keep Christ in Christmas and to focus on the real “reason for the season”

By Jeannie Petrus
CT editor

Now that Black Friday has been moved to Thankless Thursday for some people, the Christmas rush begins much earlier and the focus on Jesus has become much less.

Instead of complaining about how “others” choose to feed into the frenzy, try focusing on how you and your family can stay focused on keeping Christ in your Christmas celebrations.

Start with Advent

It's not too late to use these last few days before Christmas to still do something in your spiritual life to prepare yourself for the birth of Jesus.

If you or someone in your family were expecting a baby to be born this Christmas wouldn't you be getting yourself ready for its arrival?

Clean your house (go to confession), make sure you have all the equipment you need (spend time in prayer, attend Mass), and get some rest before the big day (stop rushing around, be still, and give yourself some quiet time to listen to God).

Shop early

OK. That may sound hypocritical, but you know you will do shop anyway. But keep it simple!



Spend less, and try put more thought into a more personal (and perhaps a spiritual) gift.

Consider shopping early (before Thanksgiving or Black Friday) so that you can enjoy the spirit of the season. You may not save as much, but it makes for a much more relaxed season.

During your quiet prayer time, think about what you can give to Jesus for His birthday. Maybe you could commit to spending more time with God daily. Or maybe there is something God has asked you to give up. Make this your most important gift of the season.

Decorate

There's absolutely nothing

wrong with having a Christmas tree, but how about taking off some of the Santa ornaments and replacing them with stars, wise men, and a Baby Jesus? The brightest shining star or a heavenly angel on the top of the tree will be a much better reminder of the “reason for the season” than a snowman.

Display a Nativity

Every Catholic family should have a nativity scene displayed prominently in the home during Christmas (Dec. 25 - Jan. 6). As often as you can during season, families with young children (or grandchildren) could gather around the Nativity scene to talk about the Nativity story, to say a

quick prayer, or sing to Baby Jesus. If the pieces are not too fragile, allow young children to use the figures while telling you the story.

Know the true story

Pick up the Bible and read the beginning of the Gospels of Mathew (1: 18-25 and 2: 1-15), Luke (1:5-56 through 2:1-20), and John (1:1-5). Each Gospel writer gives a slightly different perspective of the birth of Jesus. Even if you've done this before, do again -- a refresher course never hurts.

Watch the 2006 release of The Nativity Story, starring Keisha Castle-Hughes as Mary. It's a very realistic account of the

true story.

Send “Christ”-mas cards

Send Christmas cards that convey a spiritual message. This is an easy way to share your faith at Christmastime. If you've already bought the reindeer cards — no problem! Just write a Bible verse and include a personal message with each card.

Do something for others

Helping others doesn't always require money. Do you have an elderly neighbor in need of home repairs or yard work? Visit someone in the nursing home. Take a group Christmas caroling at a nursing home or a children's hospital. Buy a small gift for a child or donate to a local Christmas charity project or food bank.

Make time for Jesus

The night before Christmas, read the Christmas story to your self or to the young children in your home. If you are alone this Christmas or don't have family living near you, invite a friend or a neighbor to join you.

Before opening the gifts, take a few minutes to gather together as a family in prayer.

Attend Mass. What better way to celebrate the birth of Jesus than to attend the Holy Mass where Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist.

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Nov. 30, 2014 - Feb. 2, 2016

Church launches Year for Consecrated Life

By Laura Ieraci
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The first Sunday of Advent, Nov. 30, marking the start of the new liturgical year, will also inaugurate the Year for Consecrated Life.

The yearlong observance is dedicated to renewing hope in religious life and instilling it more profoundly with a prophetic witness of the Gospel.

Msgr. Jose Rodriguez Carballo, secretary of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, told Vatican Radio the first Sunday of Advent was selected as the launch date because Advent represents "the time of hope par excellence." He said the congregation would like the entire year "to be lived with the hope that must always characterize consecrated life."

A number of international meetings have been planned in Rome over the course of the year. At the start of 2015, a three-day ecumenical conference of religious will take place Jan. 22-25.

A seminar for formation directors will take place April 8-11.



DOMINICAN SISTER DISCUSSES LAUNCH OF YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE. Dominican Sister Marie Bernadette Thompson, council coordinator for the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, discusses initiatives focused on bringing together men and women religious and families, particularly young adults, during an Oct. 1 press conference in Washington. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn) See YEAR-CONSECRATED Oct. 1, 2014.

And a workshop for young consecrated men and women has been organized for Sept. 23-25.

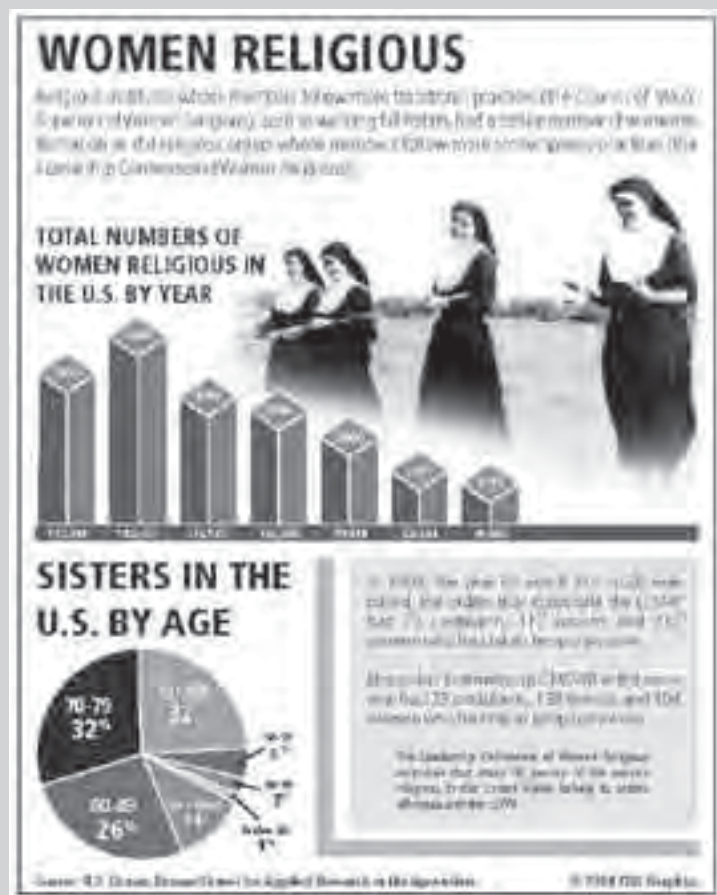
The observance will actually extend beyond one liturgical year and wrap up with a weeklong conference in early 2016, from Jan. 26 to Feb. 2.

The theme of the conference will be "Reproduce in yourself,

as far as possible, 'that form of life which He, as the Son of God, accepted in entering this world.'"

The quotation is from St. John Paul II's 1996 apostolic exhortation "Vita Consecrata" ("Consecrated Life").

A papal Mass on the Day for Consecrated Life, Feb. 2, 2016, will conclude the year.



STATISTICS ON WOMEN RELIGIOUS. A study by Georgetown's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate analyzes some of the ways women's religious orders have adapted to declining numbers since the 1960s. (CNS graphic/Anthony DeFeo)



The Church Today is planning to feature the choirs in our diocese in the January 2015 issue.

If your choir(s) would like to be pictured in this special section of the Church Today, please send a good clear (high resolution) picture of your choir(s) to jpetrus@diocesealex.org or mail to Church Today, 4400 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria, LA 71303. The deadline to submit a picture is **Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2015.**

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The Diocese of Alexandria is seeking a dynamic professional for its Director of Development position. Candidates must possess a minimum of 3 years of direct or related experience in development, marketing and stewardship and be able to demonstrate a proven track record of success.

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'A Nun's Life' website becomes a growing vocations ministry

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

(CNS) -- What started out as a blog, at a time when few people knew about blogs and hardly anyone was familiar with Twitter, is now a living and growing ministry run by two women religious who are Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Sisters Julie Vieira and Maxine Kollasch oversee their website "A Nun's Life" from Toledo, Ohio, which is a quick drive from their order's motherhouse in Monroe, Michigan.

Soon they will be joined by a third sister because the Internet ministry continues to expand. Blogs have been joined by podcasts and heart-to-heart question-and-answer message boards for women -- and men -- thinking about religious life and whether it is something they should pursue.

And early in 2015, A Nun's Life, found online at anunslife.org, will launch a redesigned website tailored to be more user-friendly, particularly for smartphone users.

Sister Julie, in a Nov. 19 interview with Catholic News Service, said she and Sister Maxine both professed final vows with their order in 2006, and A Nun's Life has been their ministry ever since.

In thinking of the missionary sisters "of today and yesterday, and all the things they had to do -- build a house, find water" -- it seems that what they are doing with A Nun's Life is not all that different, she said.

She and Sister Maxine were



A NUN'S LIFE WEBSITE, started out as a blog about religious vocations for women. Today it is a living and growing ministry run by two women religious who are Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The website is helping others be faithful to themselves as they explore vocations. Pictured above (in the inset) is Sister Julie Vieira who answers questions online from others (men and women) around the world who might be thinking about pursuing a vocation in the religious life. For more information, go to www.anunslife.org.

"both technically savvy," she added. "We were looking (online) for stuff on nuns, sisters, religious life. All we found were caricatures. It was very problematic. ... No one was out there defining who we are as Catholic sisters."

A Nun's Life came from a joint realization by Sisters Julie and Maxine along with their religious superiors that the order's newest members had some know-

how in the online world, and that their own order -- and many others besides -- could benefit from an online presence.

"Facebook was just growing in 2006. Twitter started in 2006," Sister Julie said. "We started small, very small, with a free WordPress blog."

Back then, she added, the prevailing attitude was, "Oh! You're Catholic sisters. Oh! You

have computers! Oh! You're using the Internet!"

A Nun's Life was "asking, 'What's it like to be a sister?'" and bust(ing) some stereotypes," Sister Julie said. "Then it became, 'What's it like to pray when God isn't there?'"

She added that her favorite story from A Nun's Life is that of a young man who took vows as a Dominican novice in the

Netherlands. He gave much of the credit to A Nun's Life for aiding his discernment. "You're the ones who helped me, let me ask all the dumb questions," she said he told A Nun's Life. "You let me see that religious are people, and now I am one, too."

Sister Julie herself had no access to any kind of online vocation or discernment website before she entered religious life in 1997. A native of Rochester, New York, she was working for a Catholic publishing house and studying theology in graduate school.

"I never imagined myself as a sister," she told CNS, adding she thought all nuns fit the popular stereotypes of women in full habits and teaching in schools.

In her studies, she said she found herself "captivated by the theology of (Father) Karl Rahner. ... It got to the point, 'Why is this affecting my prayer life?'"

When Sister Julie approached her professor about this, he said she might benefit from spiritual direction. "I was, 'What?'" she remembered reacting.

The spiritual director turned out to be an Immaculate Heart of Mary sister. "After several months, I was listening to her ... talking about 'my sisters'" with a warmth and love one would expect about blood sisters," Sister Julie recalled.


It convinced her to explore religious life "to be faithful to who I am as a Catholic woman," she said. "I felt I had to do it, at least to cross it off my list."

And now Sister Julie is helping others be faithful to themselves as they explore vocations.





Happy holidays from your ABM team!



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FOURTH DEGREE KNIGHTS SERVE AT VETERAN'S DAY CEREMONY. The Fourth Degree Knights from the Msgr. S. J. DeKeuwer General Assembly #2078 of Natchitoches served as Honor Guard at the Veteran's Memorial Park dedication ceremony in Natchitoches on Nov. 11. The keynote address was by David LaCerte, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs. The ceremony included reading the names of all those from Natchitoches Parish who died in our nation's wars, from World War I to the present. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Knights served as Honor Guard for the raising of the American flag in the park. Pictured in front of the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception are (front row) Sir Knights Tim Felchle, Bufford Grappe, Eddie Richard, Mike Menou, and John Dobernig. Back row: Sir Knights Robert Watson, Gary Racine, and Mike Yankowski.

HOLE IN ONE WINNER. Thad Weber, winner of the 2014 Bishop's Invitational Golf Tournament Hole-in-One contest, is presented with a check for \$2,000 from Bishop Ronald Herzog and Dr. Ed and Marie Michael, of Cruise with Me, sponsors of the hole in one contest. Congratulations to Thad for his winning hole-in-one shot at the tournament held on Oct. 13, and thank you to Dr. Ed and Marie Michael, who have been sponsors of the Bishop's Invitational Tournament for the past 19 years.



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WORK CONTINUES AT MARYHILL. Demolition workers are busy at Maryhill Retreat Center in Pineville removing old buildings and clearing the land of some of the trees, in order to make way for the new housing units. In the last few weeks, three buildings -- including the old seminary administration building -- have been torn down on the north side of the lake.



2014 WOMEN'S CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC CONFERENCE. "Be Not Afraid" was the theme for the 2014 Women's Catholic Charismatic Conference held Nov. 22 at Maryhill Renewal Center. The speakers, Aggie Neck and Leslie Bertucci, encouraged the ladies with their inspirational talks. The day ended with a Vigil Mass celebrated by Father John Pardue, diocesan liaison to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

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IMPROVEMENTS AT ST. FRANCIS.

Fr. Peter Kuligowski, pastor, blesses the new parking lot at St. Francis of Assisi, Waterproof. More than eight truck loads (120 tons) of gravel were used to resurface the parking lot. The church steeple was refinished and waterproofed, two metal doors were installed to replace wooden ones, and the door frames were refitted and painted. Special thanks to all who donated their time or funds.



DUKE TIP TALENT SEARCH. Twenty-nine 7th graders from Holy Savior Menard Junior High School have been chosen to take part in the Duke TIP Talent Search. Those chosen for the program are



SACRED HEART SCHOOL (Moreauville) THANKSGIVING MASS. Sacred Heart School celebrated its annual Thanksgiving Mass Nov. 21, at Sacred Heart Church. The Mass began with a procession of students and teachers bearing various symbols of gifts and talents that they, as a school, are thankful for. Pictured are (front row)

. Back row:

, Mrs. Karen Guillot, Mr. Dan Soldani,

, Mrs. Marcy Center (religion teacher),

RAPIDES PARISH LIBRARY BOOKMARK WINNERS FROM OLPS. The Rapides Parish Bookmark contest is held each year to promote library use, reading among children, and cooperation between schools and the public library. More than 1,000 Rapides parish students enter the bookmark contest each year. Congratulations to the following OLPS students who placed on the parish level in the 31st Annual Rapides Parish Bookmark contest: 1st grade, 2nd place - ; 2nd grade, 2nd place - ; 3rd grade 2nd place - ; 4th grade, 1st place - ; 5th grade, 1st place - ; 6th grade, 2nd place - . Pictured are (front row) , (parish winner),



(parish winner), (parish winner), and . Middle row: (parish winner), and . Back row: (parish winner), (parish winner), and .

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ST. NICHOLAS VISITS ST. RITA CHURCH. St. Nicholas (Father Taylor Reynolds) reads the Christmas Story to the children at the annual St. Nicholas Party at St. Rita Church in Alexandria. Julie Thiels Dekeyzer leads the children in singing a few familiar Christmas carols.



CHRISTMAS AT THE NEST. More than 100 families attended Holy Savior Menard's first annual "Christmas at the Nest" held Dec. 2. Students, ages Pre-K to 6th grade were invited an evening of family fun that featured Christmas storytelling by professional storyteller, Sylvia Davis. Kids were also able to make their own Christmas ornaments and take pictures with Santa. This is the first year Menard has hosted Christmas at the Nest. Organizers look forward to making this an annual event.



ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA SCHOOL (Bunkie) CELEBRATES FEAST OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. The students at St. Anthony School in Bunkie celebrated the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception Dec. 8 with a special school-wide Mass. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception is a Holy Day of Obligation.



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30 Immaculate Conception pilgrims visit Rome

Sites include the Vatican, Assisi, St. Peter's Cathedral, St. Paul

By Kent Hare
IC Parishioner &
NSU history professor

After a year of preparation both physically (walking) and spiritually (prayer, fasting, and confession) Father Ryan Humphries (pastor) and 30 parishioners from the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Natchitoches embarked on a pilgrimage to Italy Oct. 20-29.

After gathering at St. Mary's School for a 3 a.m. Mass, we began the journey with a bus ride to Dallas. From Dallas, we boarded an overnight flight to Italy.

We arrived at the Rome airport soon after sunrise and immediately boarded our bus where we met Debra, our delightful tour guide. Debra commenced a narrative that literally did not stop for the next nine days, immersing us in the culture and deep religious history of Italy. It was charming.

We drove across the stunning countryside from Rome into the hills of Umbria to Assisi, seeming to go back in time to the medieval world of Sts. Francis and Clare. We soon realized the wisdom

of Magnificat's urging that we prepare ourselves physically for a steep, brisk, uphill walk from the bus parked at the bottom of the city to our hotel – learning quickly that everything in Assisi is literally uphill. Both ways!

A quick chance to check into the Hotel Giotto was followed by the beginning of the spiritual component of our pilgrimage with a short ride back to the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels in the valley by Assisi. There we heard our first daily Mass in Italy and marveled at the first of many beautiful, ancient churches we would see.

Like just about everything else we would encounter, St. Mary of the Angels is of immense historical significance. In this case, the existing 16th-century basilica completely encloses the famous Porziuncula, the little, delapidated ninth-century chapel which St. Francis restored, in which he and his first followers created the Order of Friars Minor in 1209, and where he would a few years later receive Clare into the religious life and thus begin the Poor Clares. The aura of holiness was tangible in that basilica.

As tired as we were, we nonetheless enjoyed an early (by Italian standards – only 7 p.m.) three-course dinner back at our hotel before individually reflecting on our first day in Italy and collapsing into our beds.

Early the next morning, we rose for breakfast followed by another uphill walk, to the Basilica of St. Francis, the headquarters of the Franciscan Order. Built into the side of a hill, this huge basilica actually contains two churches – Upper and Lower – directly atop each other above the tomb of St. Francis in the crypt below.

Before our local tour guide Marco conducted us through the complex, we heard Mass in the basilica's "Peace Chapel." Marco's exuberance was infectious as he explained the famous frescoes by Giotto and others, before leading us out and up (of course) a long street to the plaza in front of the Basilica of St. Clare.

At that point, just after noon,



GELATO! MMM! Carol Green with Becky and Larry DeBlieux in a gelato shop. (Picture provided by Anne Hare)

the group split up for a little free time. In addition to lunch and shopping while exploring the town at our leisure, many of us individually toured St. Clare's and viewed the original painted crucifix from San Damiano's Church which famously spoke to Francis and urged him to "Rebuild my Church," as well as St. Clare's incorrupt body. My wife and I were blessed to witness the Poor Clare nuns briefly close the curtains in the viewing area and sing the afternoon Office. Absolutely beautiful.

Late in the afternoon, those of our group who wished (the majority, it turned out), made an optional excursion to San Damiano's Church itself, further up the hill overlooking Assisi. A statue of St. Francis sitting there, looking off the bluff, epitomized the tranquility of the place.

Every day thereafter began and ended the same – a hearty breakfast and a three-course dinner, with a barrage of religious sites in between. Mass was sometimes in the morning, sometimes in the evening.

Thursday brought a day trip to the picturesque town of Orvieto, built atop a flat volcanic butte a couple of hours from Assisi. Inside the Duomo (cathedral), we

the Duomo, and view many important works of Renaissance art in the very epicenter of the Italian Renaissance, at the Uffizi Gallery.

From Florence, we took a long bus ride back to Rome, where our lodging, the Hotel Cicerone, was within walking distance of St. Peter's Square.

Our time in Rome began on Sunday morning, with Mass in the sister basilica of our own minor basilica, the Major Basilica of St. Mary Major, concelebrated in Italian by Fr. Chris Decker of Baton Rouge. St. Mary Major is the largest Marian church in Rome, and was built during the fifth century, immediately after the 431 Council of Ephesus proclaimed Mary "Mother of God." Next, we went to St. Peter's Square, where we – and hosts of pilgrims from all over the world – were part of Pope Francis' weekly Angelus service.

In the afternoon, we traveled outside the ancient city-walls of Rome to tour the Catacombs of St. Callixtus, artifacts of the very first age of the Church, when the Faith was still outlawed and persecuted, containing both tombs where some of our earliest Fathers in the Faith once reposed and some of the earliest Christian iconography.

In the evening, back in the city, we briefly toured the Pantheon, one of the most ancient surviving buildings in Rome, from just before the BC-AD divide, a pagan temple to all the Roman gods which later became



Anne and Kent Hare by a statue of St. Francis in Assisi. The turtledove is real. (Picture provided by Anne Hare)



Brenda and David Stamey in Florence. (Picture provided by Brenda Stamey)



PILGRIMS FROM MINOR BASILICA OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (Natchitoches) AT ST. PETER'S SQUARE, VATICAN CITY. Front row: Becca Rodriguez, Charlie Vienne, Ethan Wold, Scott Wold, Dennis Gordon; Jason Methvin, David Stamey, Burley Johnson, Foy Melder, Raymond Chauvin, Wayne Waguespack, Larry DeBlieux, Kent Hare, Hulen Rodriguez, and Buddy Giering. Row 2: Manuel Lopez, Nita Doughty, Rosemary Troquille, Jessica Rodriguez, Linda LaCaze, Sharon Gordon, Christa Rodriguez, Donell Adams-Welch, Brenda Stamey, Cecile Hymel,

Cynthia Johnson, Eva Coleman, Patsy Melder, Donna Loustaunau, Adele Scott, Jane Chauvin, Anne Hare, Melanie Johnson, Rebecca DeBlieux, Carol Green, Ashley Hebert, Beverly Giering, Zella Lopez, Kathy Hollier, and Rita Fontenot. Back row: Roberta (Roman guide), Lisa Johnson, Debra Mallinson (Italian escort), Alexis Darbonne (Magnificat representative), Fr. Chris Decker, and Fr. Ryan Humphries. Not pictured are Rick Johnson and Denise Johnson.

a Christian church dedicated to St. Mary and the Martyrs of Rome. Then we were "let loose" in the Piazza Navona, one of the centers of Roman night life, for our only evening meal on our own. A group of about ten of us had dinner at an excellent open-air restaurant to the sounds of a jazz band in the plaza.

Of course, even there we had the opportunity for more "religious tourism," viewing the relics of the young Roman martyr St. Agnes in her immediately adjacent church. There are hundreds of churches in Rome, each of them with their own fascinating significance. We

could only see a fraction.

Monday was primarily spent at the Vatican. First, we heard Mass in St. Peter's Basilica – actually two Masses, according to our preferences: most heard Mass in English, said by Fr. Chris; a few heard Fr. Ryan Humphries say a Traditional Latin Mass at a small altar within sight of the main Papal altar. It was wonderful, moving beyond words.

After Mass, we met our Roman guide, Roberta, who would be with us for two days. She was quite good – a perfect balance of knowledge and piety. From Michelangelo's Pietà, past various shrines, chapels, altars,

and tombs – including that of St. John Paul II – then out and around to the Vatican Museums, a vast repository of artistic treasure culminating in the Sistine Chapel. It was magnificent, standing there beneath some of the most famous paintings in the world, knowing that is where the Cardinals assemble in conclave to elect each new Pope.

Late in the afternoon, we visited St. Paul Outside the Walls, perhaps the most visually stunning of the churches we saw, with palm trees in the front courtyard and the golden shimmer of mosaics on the façade that put me in mind of something out of the Caribbean. The similarly idiosyncratic interior has as one of its most notable features several

ranks of circular medallions high around the periphery, bearing the visages of all 266 Popes to date – and room for at least five more.

Our last day began at St. John Lateran, the oldest and the Pope's own cathedral in his capacity as Bishop of Rome. In the Lateran Palace immediately adjacent, we were privileged to climb the Scala Sancta, the very steps from the Praetorian Palace in Jerusalem that Our Lord scaled after he had been scourged. We did so according to indulgenced custom – on our knees. Many in our group found the experience the most moving part of their pilgrimage.

At the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, we venerated several relics of the Passion

including fragments of the True Cross brought back to Rome by St. Helena, mother of the first Christian Emperor Constantine the Great just after AD 300. After lunch (which was near the Trevi Fountain -- unfortunately under restoration), we visited the Colosseum before walking to our final church – and final Mass in Rome – at the Basilica of St. Peter in Chains. There we saw Michelangelo's famous "horned" statue of Moses.

The final day ended with the "surprise" with which Debra had been teasing us for several days. It was a Farewell Dinner hosted in Le Terme del Colosseo ("The Baths of the Colosseum"), a great arched hall that was once part of the water system for the Roman baths adjacent to the Colosseum. A trio of singers serenaded us between every other course of the best Italian dinner we had, with plenty of wine to go around. Everyone had a great time, including Fr. Chris who ended up joining the show!

The next 24-hours were spent on our journey back home to Louisiana. It was a most memorable pilgrimage, one that we will cherish all of our lives!



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33 pilgrims from St. Mary Church in Winnsboro visit Italy, Vatican

11 Confirmation students, 2 priests, 20 adults visit historical Church sites

Eleven Confirmation students from St. Mary Church in Winnsboro and its mission church St. John Chapel in Columbia, spent the Thanksgiving holidays (Nov. 21-29) on a 9-day pilgrimage to Italy and Vatican City.

Under the direction of Carmen Sims, director of Youth Ministry and Confirmation teacher at St. Mary's, the pilgrimage group included the 11 Confirmation students, as well as Father James Nellikunnel, CMI, pastor; Father Taylor Reynolds, vicar parochial for St. Rita Church in Alexandria; and 20 adults. It was the fourth trip in 12 years for Confirmation students from St. Mary's.

"Every three years, at the end of our 3-year Confirmation class, our parish takes the students on this pilgrimage to Italy and Vati-

can City," said Sims. "It's something the kids (and parents) look forward to during their Confirmation catechesis."

Among some of the sites the group visited was the Shrine of St. Padre Pio in the San Giovanni Rotondo, the Shrine of Monte Sant' Angelo and the Cave of St. Michael the Archangel, the site of the Eucharistic Miracle in Lenciano, Forum ruins in Rome, and two of the four major basilicas including St. Mary Major and St. Paul Outside the Walls.

While at the Vatican, the group met up with Alexandria seminarian Daniel Hart at the North American Pontifical College and for Thanksgiving, the group shared a meal with Father Luke Melcher and Father Peter Faulk, both Alexandria diocesan

priests who are currently studying in Rome.

Father Taylor celebrated Mass on the altar at St. Mary Major and on the hill at Assisi. Father James celebrated Mass on the altar of St. John Paul II's shrine. At St. Paul Outside the Walls, the group received a special guided tour by Cardinal James Harvey, an American Cardinal from Milwaukee, who is currently serving as the archpriest of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.

"We were so fortunate to experience so many sites and visit with so many special people," she said. "At St. Peter's Basilica, we were able to go on the Scavi Tour, an archaeological tour of excavations below the Vatican Basilica (not usually open to tourists), which includes 14 papal crypts."



MASS ON THE HILL IN ASSISI. Father Taylor Reynolds celebrates Mass "on the Hill" in Assisi with 11 students from St. Mary's, St. John's, Menard, and St. Frederick's. Assisi is a small medieval town of about 25,000 people perched on a hill in Umbria, the heart of Italy. Famous as the birthplace of St. Francis, Assisi holds religious, historical, and artistic significance.



VISITING THE FORUM RUINS. Italian guide Giovanni talks to the pilgrims from St. Mary's in Winnsboro about the ruins of the Roman Forum. In the 8th century BC, The Forum was the center of Roman public life: the site of triumphal processions and elections; the venue for public speeches, criminal trials, and gladiatorial matches.

"It was a blessed trip for all of us," she said. "But I think it was particularly impressive to the students who could see their faith brought to life through history."

Funds for the pilgrimage were provided by a St. Mary's-sponsored golf tournament and by a generous donor, who matched the funds raised by the golf tournament.

The Confirmation students who attended are Chase Masters and Derrick Rials from from St.

John Mission in Columbia; Alizabeth Guillot, AnnaGrace Guillot, Anna Claire Romero, Dakota Stephens, Wyatt Williamson, and Aaron Yelverton, from St. Mary Church in Winnsboro; Tristan Kramer from Holy Savior Menard High School in Alexandria; and Elaine Ezell and Callie Ezell from St. Frederick High School in Monroe. Garrett Kramer, from St. Mary Church in Winnsboro was unable to make the trip due to the birth of his baby sister.

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SITE OF EUCHARISTIC MIRACLE IN LANCIANO. The students visit the site of the Eucharistic Miracle in Lanciano, where a consecrated host became real flesh and the wine became real blood. The actual flesh and blood is still preserved even after being exposed to the natural elements for 12 centuries.

VISITING WITH CARDINAL HARVEY. U.S. Cardinal James Harvey of Milwaukee, and now the archpriest of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, visits with the students when they visited the basilica.



NATCHITOCHES RESIDENTS WILL TAKE \$3,400 TO NEPAL FOR EDUCATION OF YOUNG GIRLS. Students from St. Mary's School in Natchitoches in grades 6-12 raised \$3,400 for an organization, Empower Nepali Girls Foundation. Shaun Wheat, an SMS parent, talked to the student body about this non-profit group that works to educate young girls of Nepal who are usually sold into slavery in order to feed their family. In the country of Nepal, women face an uphill battle in equal rights within the family and community. Empowering women as wage earners within the family affords them status and rights to decide on the welfare of themselves and their family. Funding one girl's education for an entire year costs just \$150. Every donation goes towards school fees, books, uniforms, and materials for young girls' education in the most needed communities in Nepal and food for their family for one year. With money raised, the students will be able to offer 23 scholarships!

Mrs. Wheat and some other Natchitoches residents, Mike and Patrice Moulton, will be traveling to Nepal during the Christmas holidays to bring the scholarship money and small gifts to the girls. Each section of religion in middle school and high school were challenged to bring in one gift of \$10 (or 40 quarters in a small M & M container) so that each section will fund one scholarship. Besides just raising money, the girls in the classes wrote encouraging notes that will be shared with the scholarship recipients. The boys in the classes made small friendship bracelets and prepared short videos that will show the young ladies what life in an American school is like. Pictured are Dr. Michael Moulton, Dr. Patric Moulton, high school religion teacher Mrs. Tara Whitehead, middle school religion teacher Mrs. Jennifer Maggio, and SMS parent Mrs. Shaun Wheat.

EOHSJ offering pilgrimage to Holy Land Feb. 4-14

The Equestrian Order of The Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Southeastern Lieutenancy, is offering a pilgrimage to the Holy Land Feb. 4-14, 2015 at a cost of \$3,456 per person, double occupancy.

The trip departs Newark, New Jersey, non-stop to Tel Aviv and includes first class hotels, private motor coach transportation, breakfast and dinner and all fees and taxes. Upon arrival in Tel Aviv, we will be met by Fr. Peter

Vasko, O.F.M., and president of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land who will be our spiritual leader throughout the trip.

Fr. Peter has lived in Jerusalem for the past 29 years and is internationally known for his work in the Holy Land. You do not need to be a member of the Order to go on the pilgrimage.

For a brochure covering the pilgrimage in more detail, please contact Pierre or Roz Allemond,

lieutenancy pilgrimage coordinators, at 318-452-6443 or e-mail eohsjalexandria@gmail.com with your name, address, and telephone number. You can also view details on our webpage at sleohs.com and at the news/events drop-down, click pilgrimages.

A group just returned from the November pilgrimage and at no time did they, or any of the pilgrims traveling with them, feel threatened or insecure during the 10 days in the Holy Land.

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Diocese of Alexandria

Plan now to attend Louisiana Life March in either BR or S'port

Join the Louisiana Right to Life Federation in January at either the Louisiana Life March SOUTH held in Baton Rouge or the Louisiana Life March NORTH in Shreveport-Bossier.

Louisiana Life March North Bossier City

The Louisiana Life March North will be held Saturday, Jan. 17 from 10 a.m. - noon beginning at the Louisiana Boardwalk in Bossier City and ending at Shreveport's Festival Plaza.

At Festival Plaza, nationally-known speakers and local music groups will lead prayer and presentations. After the gathering, a "Life Ministry Mobilization" area will plug you into all the pro-life efforts in your communities.

The LLM North is a chance for the citizens of Shreveport, Bossier City, Ruston, Monroe, Natchitoches, and all of North Louisiana to stand together for an abortion-free Louisiana.

The march from the Boardwalk to Festival Plaza is 1.2 miles.

For those that cannot make the march, please gather at Festival Plaza.

Limited transportation will be available to return people from Festival Plaza to the north lot of the Boardwalk.

For more information, call our Shreveport office at 318.300.3533. You can also request promotional materials to be sent to your church or group.

Louisiana Life March South Baton Rouge

The Louisiana Life March South will be held Saturday, Jan. 24 from 10 a.m. - noon beginning at the LSU Greek Theater on the LSU campus and ending at the



2014 LOUISIANA LIFE MARCH SOUTH. Thousands marched down the streets in Baton Rouge toward the Louisiana State Capital during last year's Louisiana Life March South including KC Council #8029 from Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in Alexandria. This year's march in January is expected to draw even larger crowds.

Pete Maravich Assembly Center.

The Life March South is usually held in downtown Baton Rouge with a rally at the state Capitol, but due to construction at the Capitol, as well as The Response Louisiana event already planned the same day on the LSU campus, Life March South is moving there, too.

Activities connected with Life March South will begin at 8:30 a.m. at the LSU Greek Theater, located on Dalrymple Drive next to the College of Music and Dramatic Arts. The Rally for Life will begin at 10 a.m., and at 11 a.m. the March for Life will be-

gin, concluding at the Pete Maravich Assembly Center at 11:30 a.m.

At that point participants will march into the Maravich Center, and Life March South will merge with The Response Louisiana and begin a 15-minute prayer for life.

The Response Louisiana is being sponsored by Gov. Bobby Jindal, who has called Louisiana and the nation to a day of prayer for America. The event is from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and people of all ages, denominations and ethnic and racial backgrounds will gather to fast and pray for a historic breakthrough for our coun-

try and a renewed sense of moral purpose.

By partnering with The Response Louisiana, Louisiana Right to Life has a great opportunity to further spread the pro-life message and unite with thousands of other Louisianians in prayer.

While Life March South officially ends following the 15-minute prayer for life, we hope participants will remain in the Maravich Center for The Response Louisiana event.

For more information about either march, go to www.prolifelouisiana.org



Pro-Life Camps available for high school students

Louisiana Camp Joshua (LCJ), a weekend pro-life camp to train high school students to be pro-life leaders,

Dates for Camp Joshua 2015:

- Baton Rouge: March 13-15
- Baton Rouge: April 10-12
- Covington: May 1-3
- Shreveport: May 15-17

At Camp Joshua, you will experience top-notch workshops, classes, and activities, and you'll learn from the nation's leading pro-life experts. You'll also make great pro-life friends and have a ton of fun! More than just listening and observing, you'll get hands-on interaction and experience in pro-life work.

Some of the Camp Joshua activities include Workshops, Pro-life persuasion, True Color, Abortion 101, Abortion 201, The Impact of Abortion, The Importance of Pro-life Leadership (Legislator Talk), Pro-life, Pro-Chastity, as well as Games/Activities, LCJ Coffee House, and Field Trips to the Governor's Mansion or State Capitol (Baton Rouge only), Crisis Pregnancy Center, and an LCJ Night Out on the Town.

More questions? Contact Kandace Landreneau of LA Right to Life, at 1.866.463.5433 or kandace@prolifelouisiana.org

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To pre-register, go to virtus.org, and click on Registration (on left side of screen). For more information, call 318-445-6424 x 213.

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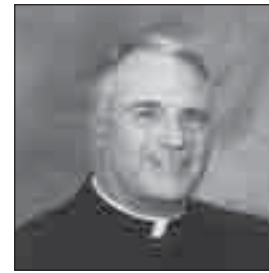
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ST. JAMES CELEBRATES WORLD YOUTH DAY. Father Gabriel Uzundu, pastoral administrator for St. James Memorial Church in Alexandria, celebrated World Youth Day in October with a special World Youth Day Mass.



Bishop Herzog



Fr. Chad Partain



Dale Deperrodil



Kelly Lombardi

Ignite Confirmation Rally to be held Jan. 24

The annual Ignite Confirmation Rally, sponsored by the Office of Religious Formation and Training will be held Saturday, Jan. 24 from 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. at Holy Savior Menard High School.

Presenters include Bishop Ronald Herzog, Father Chad Partain, pastor of St. Frances Cabrini Church in Alexandria; Cooper Ray, popular musician, worship leader and retreat facilitator, who also serves as director of Youth Ministry for the Diocese of Baton Rouge; Kelly Pease Lombardi, popular Christian singer, music

minister, and music worship leader; and Dale dePerrodil, youth ministry conference host.

All confirmation candidates and their parents and/or sponsors are invited to attend. A parent/sponsor session with candidates will be held at 3 p.m., followed by the celebration of Mass at 4 p.m.

The cost of registration is \$20 per person by Jan. 5 and \$25 after Jan. 5. Lunch is included.

To register, go to www.diocesealex.org/youthministry. Parishes must provide one chaperone per eight candidates. For more info, call 318-445-6424, ext 221.

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Attention All Church Choirs in the Diocese of Alexandria PLEASE Send us a photo of your choir!

The Church Today is planning to feature the choirs in our diocese in the January 2015 issue. If you would like to have your choir pictured in this special section of the Church Today, please send a good clear, high quality picture of your choir to jpetrus@diocesealex.org

or mail to Church Today, 4400 Coliseum Blvd., Alexandria, LA 71303.

The last day you can submit a picture is Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2015.

Many choirs will be performing special programs during the upcoming Christmas season. What a perfect time to dress up in your choir robes and have a special group picture taken of your choir.

Please find your own photographer to take the picture.

Send it to us anytime, but we must receive it no later than Tuesday, Jan. 6, 2015.

If you have any questions, please call 318-445-6424, ext 255 or email jpetrus@diocesealex.org

Christian children's books make perfect gifts for giving at Christmas

Reviewed by Regina Lordan
Catholic News Service

(CNS) -- The following books are suitable for Christmas giving:

"Bambinelli Sunday: A Christmas Blessing" by Amy Welborn, illustrated by Ann Kisanen Engelhart. Franciscan Media (Cincinnati, 2013). 33 pp., \$15.99.

"Bambinelli Sunday" tells a Christmas tale of a lonely little boy who finds joy in his family and in sharing the baby Jesus with others. Beautifully illustrated scenes of water-colored Italian streets will keep the attention of little readers, and the Christian lesson is appropriate for all ages. Ages 4-8.

"A Girl Called Problem" by Katie Quirk. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers (Grand Rap-



ids, Mich., 2013). 256 pp., \$8.

When an entire village moves to a new community to help build a free Tanzania, conflict arises. But are the problems the result of evil curses from disgruntled ancestors or is something -- or someone -- else causing the disruption? Set in mid-1960s Tanzania, "A Girl Called Problem" is a



wonderful introduction to historical fiction that will teach young readers about the crossroads of tradition and modernization, culture and science. Readers will fall in love with the main character, a spunky young girl who teaches her village that when girls are allowed to go to school, an entire community benefits. Ages 10-14.



"Grumbles From the Forest: Fairy Tale Voices With a Twist" by Jane Yolen and Rebecca Kai Dotlich, illustrated by Matt Mahurin. WordSong (Honesdale, Pa., 2013). 40 pp., \$16.95.

This collection of poems dedicated to beloved fairy tales is witty and smart. Enchanting illustrations and charming poems will

tickle the imagination of young children and adults alike. The book will allow readers to revisit their favorite fairy tales and think about them in a new way. This is one of those books that will be pulled from the shelf time and again. Ages 5 and up.

"The Prayer of St. Francis" illustrated by Giuliano Ferri. Paulist Press (Mahwah, N.J., 2013). 34 pp., \$12.95.

This children's picture book is the St. Francis' prayer depicted in soft illustrations of a fox treating his furry friends with kindness, forgiveness and love. Although the prayer actually was written long after the beloved saint died, this simple and beautiful prayer along with the book's pictures will help young children learn about St. Francis' mission and what they are called to do as children of God. Ages 3-5.

Authors explore theological, populist roots of Christmas traditions

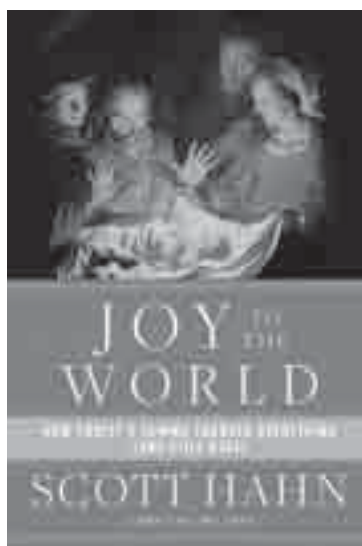
Reviewed by Mitch Finley
Catholic News Service

"Joy to the World: How Christ's Coming Changed Everything (and Still Does)" by Scott Hahn. Image (New York, 2014). 192 pp., \$23.

In his slim volume, "Joy to the World," Scott Hahn reflects on the meaning of Christmas.

Masterfully leaving behind the academic theologian's technical language and tendency to ask questions the average person is likely to find boring, Hahn speaks from his own experience and to the experience of the average person. At the same time, in everyday English he shares with readers insights from his many years of study--biblical and theological.

"Joy to the World" explores the personages who populate the Gospels' narratives about the birth and meaning of Jesus. These include, of course, Joseph, Mary, Herod, angels and the Magi. But Hahn also draws on insights from the letters of St. Paul and the Johannine literature. He helps the reader see that the entire New Testament, not just the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke, is about the meaning of Christmas. Hahn also draws upon and quotes the works of other



Scripture scholars, theologians, preachers and popes including Pope Leo XIII, Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis and, yes, the Rev. Billy Graham.

Hahn even reminds us of the



original meanings of such common Christmas traditions as baking Christmas cookies ("because the Messiah has come to lead us into a land flowing with milk and honey."); decorating a Christmas

tree ("to recover the tree of paradise, which was restored by the tree of Calvary"); and giving gifts ("because God has given himself to us as a gift, wrapping his divinity in true humanity.")

"Christmas: The Sacred to Santa" by Tara Moore. Reaktion Books (London, 2014). 224 pp., \$30.

Christmas has histories both sacred and secular, and you can learn a great deal about both from Tara Moore's "Christmas: The Sacred to Santa." In fact, priests and deacons looking for material to liven up a Christmas homily would be wise indeed to read this book.

Moore teaches in the writing program at Penn State York, and her academic credentials are evident in this book. Still, this isn't a

book written only for academics. Most reasonably well-educated readers will find it an informative and intriguing page-turner. If there is anything to be known about Christmas you will find it here.

Moore writes that her book explores "how past generations have felt about Christmas, how people in the same neighborhood might look at it in different ways, and how a simple birth in Bethlehem continues to make waves across the continents."

Topics the author addresses include how Christmas came to be dated on Dec. 25; what the earliest Christmas celebrations looked like; how Christmas has been portrayed in art and in various cultures; when Christmas was outlawed; and the commercialization of Christmas.

Merry Christmas!

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Exodus: Gods and Kings fails to give God credit for miracles

Visual effects are great, but writers should have stayed true to Bible facts

(Editor's Note: After Hollywood's latest ill-attempt of recreating a Bible story in Aronofsky's *Noah* earlier this year, Christians are hesitant to recommend anything Hollywood has to say about its interpretation of the Bible. *Exodus: Gods and Kings* is no exception.

Once again, Hollywood fails to give God credit for doing anything miraculously, so it has to come up with a "reasonable explanation" for how some of the events could have happened -- the Nile turns red as a result of savage crocodiles attacking humans and the parting of the Red Sea is the result of a raging storm.

God is depicted as a spoiled, cruel, and unforgiving child who prefers widespread acts of genocide over compassionate discourse. Literally, he's depicted as a small boy in the film.

While the special effects have received great reviews, the "creative liberties" that the writers injected into the script, make it less acceptable to Christians. Below is a review of *Exodus: Gods and Kings*, but it's from a Hollywood perspective, not a Christian. It's the best I could do without having seen the movie myself.)

by The Hollywood Reporter

2014 marks the resurgence of the Old Testament at the movies. After Darren Aronofsky turned to Genesis to unleash *Noah*, Ridley Scott moves forward to the Book of Exodus to revisit the story of Moses.

Exodus: Gods and Kings is this century's answer to Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, but it already looks to be



EXODUS: GODS AND KINGS. Joel Edgerton is Ramses and Christian Bale is Moses in the epic adventure of *Exodus: Gods and Kings*. Rated PG-13 for violence including battle sequences and intense images.

more controversial than that pious 1956 opus. Spectacularly filmed and intermittently well acted, though not quite as much campy fun as the DeMille version, the picture looks likely to attract a substantial audience even if some religious leaders voice protests.

Scott did a great job reviving the Roman sand-and-sandals epic when he made the Oscar-winning *Gladiator*. This Egyptian saga is not quite in the same league, but it confirms the director's flair for widescreen imagery. *Exodus* has the added kick of 3D technology, and it has enough eye-popping set pieces to please adventure fans.

Unlike the DeMille rendering, this one does not begin at the beginning but plunges us into the middle of the action, with Moses (Christian Bale) as an adult in the

royal court. We eventually learn the backstory of how the Jewish child managed to find a home among the kings, but we're introduced to him as a warrior and best friend of Ramses (Joel Edgerton).

The first part of the movie cribbs rather shamelessly from *Gladiator*, which began by sketching the rivalry between the emperor's son and his favorite warrior. Here the aging Pharaoh, played by John Turturro, prefers his adopted son Moses to his own son Ramses.

An early battle scene against the Hittites, modeled very closely on the climactic battle scene between Arabs and Turks in *Lawrence of Arabia*, suggests that Moses is the superior warrior, which prepares for his eventual banishment once Ramses suc-

ceeds his father on the throne. But the friendship between the two soldiers is not well established in the opening scenes, so the film stumbles out of the gate.

Four writers — Adam Cooper, Bill Collage, Jeffrey Caine and Oscar winner Steven Zaillian — are credited with the screenplay, and they haven't been able to craft an elegant narrative from the biblical text. The dialogue is often cringe-worthy, as when a surly Moses tells God, "Nice of you to come."

When Moses learns his true identity, he is reluctant to play the role of savior, and he finds a comfortable home in a remote village, where he marries and has a son. But his destiny calls when he comes upon the famous burning bush and is approached by God to

MOVIE REVIEWS

lead his people out of slavery.

Here is the film's most controversial choice, for God appears to Moses as a fierce child. Although this may offend some devout viewers, it's actually far more interesting than the booming offscreen voice that DeMille used in his version of the story. This divine child seems angry and vengeful rather than a benign Buddha figure, but one could argue that this is in keeping with the Old Testament God of wrath.

The film hits its peak in the sequence recounting the 10 plagues. The savage crocodiles were not in the Old Testament, but as they attack humans as well as fish, they turn the Nile blood red, which is at least an ingenious explanation of how the river might have turned to blood. Frogs, boils and locusts are truer to the text and are rendered in luscious visual detail.

The climactic chase to the Red Sea is equally spectacular. Although *The Ten Commandments* won the Oscar for its visual effects, the parting of the Red Sea in DeMille's film was laughably tacky. Scott comes up with a somewhat more credible portrayal of how the Israelites managed to cross the sea before a monumental storm drowned the Egyptians.

This sequence is visually thrilling. The movie should have ended there, but Scott and the writers seem to have felt obliged to include a few of the later parts of the story, including the delivery of the Ten Commandments and a scene of an aged Moses finally arriving near the land of Canaan. But while these events are integral to the biblical story, they come off here as the worst kind of anticlimax.

Don't expect any acting nominations for the picture. Bale garbles a few too many of his lines, but he has an imposing physical presence.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
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Holy Spirit Teen, Young Adult Retreat

The Catholic Charismatic Renewal of New Orleans (CCRNO) will sponsor its annual Holy Spirit Teen and Young Adult Retreat, better known as January Retreat, Jan. 2-4, 2015 at the Landmark Hotel in Metairie. The retreat will include talks, skits, music, worship, Mass, confessions, and fellowship.

Speakers include Fr. Tim Hedrick, Fr. Jonathan Hemelt, Sr. Tracey Dugas, Timmy McCaffery, Matt Bourgeois, Alex Lorio, Deacon Larry Oney and Chantelle Hudachek. Music will be provided by Leslie Bertucci and NoLoud-Rocks.

This is a great retreat for Confirmation preparation. Cost is \$170. To register, visit www.ccrno.org or contact CCRNO at youth@ccrno.org

Holy Spirit Women's Retreat

Sister Brieg McKenna, OSC, and Fr. Kevin Scallon, CM, will be the featured speakers at the annual Holy Spirit Women's Retreat from Jan. 16-18, 2015 at the Hilton Hotel in Lafayette. The theme is "I Thirst." This retreat is sponsored by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal of New Orleans (CCRNO). Weekend and Saturday commuters are welcome. Register online at www.ccrno.org or call (504) 828-1368.



CONFIRMATION, ST. PATRICK, Ferriday. Dalton Hopkins and Tayman Stampley were confirmed in July by Fr. Bruce Miller. Also pictured is Deacon Bill Shaidnagle and Fr. Louis Sklar.

DIOCESAN BRIEFS

Bible Quiz Bowl questions are ready

Questions and answers for the third annual Catechetical Quiz Bowl that will be held on Saturday, March 14, are now available from the Office of Religious Formation and Training at the Diocese Center. To receive a copy of the study questions and answers, call (318) 445-6424 ext. 251 or email emccullough@diocesealex.org.

The questions and answers are made available to teams early, so that students may begin studying. The quiz will consist of questions from the books of Genesis and Matthew in the Bible.

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.

The cost to register is \$10 per team, which includes lunch. First place winners will receive a cash award of \$500 and a trophy and second place winners will receive \$200 and a trophy.

Christmas Concerts

- Dec. 16: Red River Chorale will perform *Celebrating Christmas* at St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Alexandria at 7:30 p.m. Admission: \$15 for adults; \$5 for students
- Dec. 17: Our Lady of Prompt Succor (Alexandria) adult and youth choirs will perform *Lessons and Carols* at OLPS Church, 2120 Elliott Street, Alexandria at 6:30 p.m. Admission: Free.

Sacred Heart Christmas production

Enjoy the talents of the students from Sacred Heart School in Moreauville as they present a special Christmas production of *The Greatest Gift of All* on Thursday, Dec. 18 at 6 p.m. at the Mari Center in Marksville. Prepare to be



ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL CHURCH (Leesville) celebrated a Day of the Dead Mass.

entertained by Christmas music in various languages, as the show highlights Christmas traditions around the world. Donation offerings accepted.



St. Martin Cookbook for Sale

St. Martin Church in Lecompte is selling its parish cookbook titled "*...and these Thy gifts.*" It makes a great gift idea for Christmas. It includes 980 recipes, 458 pages in a hard-bound, ring binder. Cost is \$25. To purchase a copy, call the church office at 318-776-9480, Tuesday - Thursday, between the hours of 8 a.m. - noon.

Retrouvaille Marriage Help

Retrouvaille (announced 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 to be held on Jan. 23-26 at Maryhill Renewal Center in Pineville, call 1-800-470-2230 or visit: www.HelpOurMarriage.com



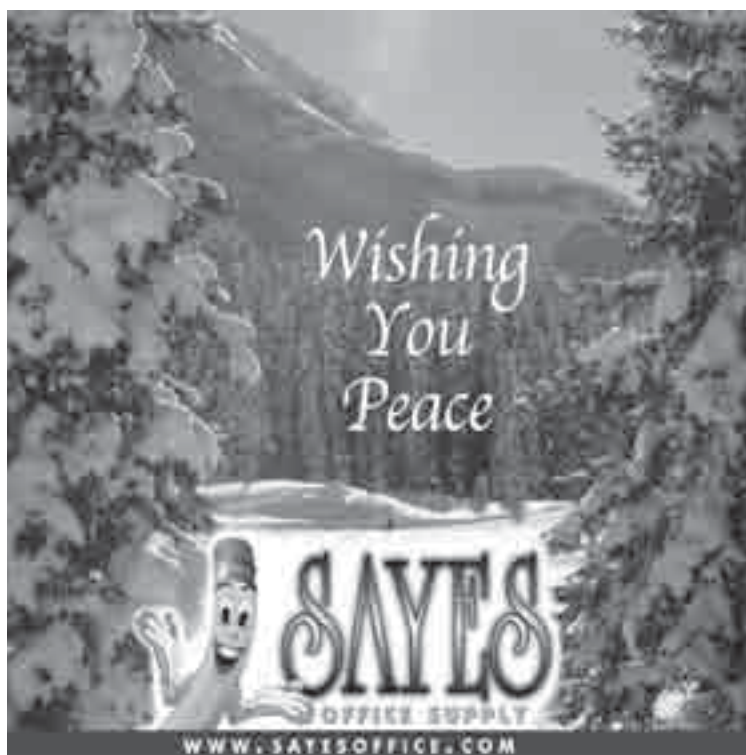
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FORMER SOCIAL SECURITY JUDGE

PETER J. LEMOINE

Social Security Disability Law

Offices in Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Cottonport
Adjunct Professor (1994-1997), Northwestern State University

MEMBER: Louisiana State Bar Association, American Bar Association, Baton Rouge Bar Association, Avoyelles Parish Bar Association, National Organization of Social Security Claimant Representatives, Legal Services for Purposes of Disability Committee (Louisiana State Bar Association).

PUBLISHED ARTICLES: "The Worn-Out Worker Rule Revisited," "Significant Work-Related Limitations of Function Under §12.05C," "Questionable Retirement and the Small Business Owner," "Crisis of Confidence: The Inadequacies of Vocational Evidence Presented at Social Security Disability Hearings."

318-876-3174

December - January

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<div>15</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. RYAN</div>	<div>16</div> <div>Red River Chorale 7:30 p.m. St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Alexandria</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. C. SCOTT</div>	<div>17</div> <div>OLPS Choirs Lessons & Carols 6:30 p.m. Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Alexandria</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. R. SHOURY</div>	<div>18</div> <div>NSU Choirs Lessons & Carols 6:30 p.m. Trinity Episcopal, Natchitoches Sacred Heart School Production 6:00 p.m. Mari Center, Marksville</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. P. SIERRA POSADA</div>	<div>19</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. L. SKLAR</div>	<div>20</div> <div>Christmas Festival 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. Natchitoches</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. S. SOARES</div>	<div>21</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. I. ST. ROMAIN</div>
<div>22</div> <div>PRAY FOR MSGR. S. TESTA</div>	<div>23</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. THOMAS</div>	<div>24</div> <div>CHRISTMAS EVE PRAY FOR FR. A. THOMPSON</div>	<div>25</div> <div>Diocesan Offices closed SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY of the LORD (CHRISTMAS) (Holy Day of Obligation) PRAY FOR MSGR. J. TIMMERMANS</div>	<div>26</div> <div>FEAST of ST. STEPHEN PRAY FOR FR. E. TIRKEY</div>	<div>27</div> <div>FEAST of ST. JOHN the APOSTLE PRAY FOR FR. A. TRAVIS</div>	<div>28</div> <div>FEAST of the HOLY FAMILY of JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH PRAY FOR FR. G. UZONDU</div>
<div>29</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. A. VARGHESE</div>	<div>30</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. V. VEAD</div>	<div>31</div> <div>NEW YEAR'S EVE PRAY FOR FR. A. VELEZ</div>	<div>JANUARY 1</div> <div>Diocesan Offices closed SOLEMNITY of MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER of GOD (Holy Day of Obligation) PRAY FOR BISHOP R. HERZOG</div>	<div>2</div> <div>FIRST FRIDAY PRAY FOR FR. N. VIVIANO</div>	<div>3</div> <div>FIRST SATURDAY PRAY FOR FR. J. XAVIER</div>	<div>4</div> <div>SOLEMNITY of the EPIPHANY of the LORD PRAY FOR FR. R. YOUNG</div>
<div>5</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. K. ZACHARIAH</div>	<div>6</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. A. AELAVANTHARA</div>	<div>7</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. T. ALLEN</div>	<div>8</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. S. BRANDOW</div>	<div>9</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. D. BRAQUET</div>	<div>10</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. BROCATO</div>	<div>11</div> <div>FEAST of the BAPTISM of the LORD (End of Christmas season) PRAY FOR FR. A. CATELLA</div>
<div>12</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. S. CHEMINO</div>	<div>13</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. D. COOK</div>	<div>14</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. D. CORKERY</div>	<div>15</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. CUNNINGHAM</div>	<div>16</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. W. DECOSTE</div>	<div>17</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. D. DEJESUS</div>	<div>18</div> <div>PRAY FOR FR. J. FERGUSON</div>



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ADMINISTRATOR

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WISHING YOU and your family a happy, healthy, holiday season.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

