Christmastide, feast days of the Christmas Season

By Ted King
For the Sooner Catholic

Our commercially-driven, secular culture begins promoting Christmas shopping in early November. Unlike the commercial season that ends the day after Christmas or the next few days for the returning of unwanted gifts, Christmastide begins Christmas Eve and continues to the Feast of the Epiphany on Jan. 3.

Epiphany is about the arrival of the Three Wise Men from the East known as the Magi, who came to honor the child Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh (Matthew 2:11). The meaning of the gifts of the Magi is a matter of conjecture as are the origins and identities of the three men. It is generally believed that the gold represents kingship, frankincense represents deity and myrrh represents death. The Christmas tradition of gift giving has its origin in the Three Wise Men, although we do not wait for January to give, receive and open presents.

In addition to Christmas, Christmastide includes several other feast days.

Saint Stephen
The feast day of Saint Stephen, the first martyr, was Dec. 26 (Acts 7:54-58). His execution by stoning was met with approval by Saul of Tarsus, who hunted Christians to persecute them. One of the miracles in the early Church was the conversion of Saul, who became the Apostle Paul.

Holy Family
The feast day of the Holy Family is Dec. 27. The Church began this continued on page 16

“This when man and his wife made a mistake, God did not abandon them. So great was His love, that He began to walk with humanity, with His people, until the right moment came, and He made the highest expression of love – His own Son. And where did He send his son – to a palace? To a city? No. He sent him to a family. God sent him amid a family. And He could do this, because it was a family that had a truly open heart. The doors of their heart opened... God likes to give his love to open hearts. Do you know what he loves most? To knock on the door of families, and find families who love each other, who bring up their children to grow, and help them move forward.”

O come, let us adore Him.

In one of our most beloved Christmas carols we sing the joyful refrain, “O come, let us adore Him.” In one of our most beloved Christmas carols, we express our desire to adore Jesus just as the wise men did during the first Christmas with the words, “O come, let us adore Him.”

The wise men, or magi, were astrologers from Asia who brought their gifts to Jesus on the day of His birth. They were guided by a star that they had never seen before, which they interpreted as a sign of the birth of a new king. The star guided them to Bethlehem where they found the infant Jesus. The magi worshipped Him, presented Him with gifts, and returned to their own lands. The star that guided the magi is often referred to as the Christmas star. The story of the magi and their journey to Bethlehem is a significant part of the Christmas story and is celebrated in many Christmas carols.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is referred to as the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16). The magi’s journey to Bethlehem is a symbol of the universal nature of the salvation brought by Jesus. The magi, representing people from different cultures and backgrounds, recognized Jesus as the King of Kings and brought Him the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The magi’s journey also reminds us of the importance of welcoming and accepting the good news of Jesus’ birth. We are called to be like the magi and to open our hearts to the message of Jesus, just as they did.

The Christmas story is just one example of how Jesus’ birth is celebrated in different ways around the world. In many cultures, the Christmas season is marked by special traditions and ceremonies that honor the birth of Jesus and his message of love and salvation.

In conclusion, the story of the magi is a powerful reminder of the universal nature of the salvation brought by Jesus. It is a reminder to us to open our hearts to the message of Jesus and to welcome others into our lives as we celebrate the birth of the King of Kings.
Christ the King parishioners build third Habitat for Humanity home

By Sooner Catholic Staff

After helping to translate for U.S. Army Special Forces in Senegal for several years, Father Andrew Ndyoe and his wife, Fatou, decided they needed to move to America to create better opportunities for their young family. For the past 12 years, they have rented a small apartment in an area of Oklahoma City where they didn’t feel safe to let their children play outside. So, they applied for a program through Central Oklaho- ma Habitat for Humanity to work toward home ownership. The family’s home became a reality with a donation of more than $90,000 from Christ the King. They have provided so much for Habitat over the years, and this year they did an excellent job.”

In a thank you letter to Habitat for Humanity and Christ the King, the Ndyoe family wrote: “[They] will finally provide us with what we have been yearning for years. It will allow our family to thrive in a more secure envi- ronment and open avenues… to financial stability.”

We are not only committed to working with Habitat… but also

Anamaria Scarpelans
Stepdaughter
For the Sooner Catholic

Sometimes people will point out: “We euthanize our pets when they suffer illnesses or injuries, because even if they share human qualities, they cannot share our heartbreak.”

That is true of animals, however, we should not be the measure of how we treat fellow human beings. We treat our animals as pets, but in the end, we don’t do the same with humans. We do not want our pets to suffer or sadness, anger and hurt will still be present. True forgiveness leaves us free from suffering caused by turning them into a prayer and providing mercy to those around us.

Anamaria Scarpelans’ sled dog is a freelance writer and columnist for www.archokc.org.

Anamaria Scarpelans

Stepdaughter
For the Sooner Catholic

Finding a way to forgive

The relics of St. Maria Goretti were within walking distance of my house during their U.S. tour. Without thinking much about her, her life and death, I went to vener- ate her. As I walked into the church, I still turned to pray. How differently I would have stood, or prayed, had I known how close she was to me? What was she like as a young teenager, with her love for the Lord? I wish I could have been able to forget those who have caused me pain; only to be able to act in anger at the thought of the offense. Maritn’s article points the way. He says that forgiveness is a choice, an act of the will that can begin regardless of our emotions. Rather than being an absence of anger or hurt, as I have often thought, forgiveness means asking Jesus to enter into the situation and bless the offender. When our negative feelings reappear, as they will do if it is a major offense, our prayer can arise out of these feelings.

Maritn writes that this process of forgiveness only can be done after we acknowledge the violation, rather than minimizing the transgression by pretending it’s “okay.” Many offenses, such as the death of a child or injury to oneself, can never be “okay” or repaired, but forgiveness is still possible in these situations.

In the process of forgiving, Maritn recommends that the victim pray this prayer:

“Jesus, I release [offender’s name] from his debt to me and I give that debt to you. In place of that debt I ask You to give [offender’s name] a blessing instead.”

After this prayer, Maritn recommends communicating forgiveness to the offender, if it is possible and will not subject the victim to more abuse.

This process of forgiveness may, at times, leave us feeling “at peace” about the situation, while other times sadness, anger and hurt will still be present. True forgiveness leaves us free from suffering caused by turning them into a prayer and providing mercy to those around us.

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Anamaria Scarpelans

Stepdaughter
For the Sooner Catholic

Commentary

A higher standard than for cats and dogs

Father Ted Pacholczyk, National Catholic Bioethics Center

Sooner Catholic December 27, 2015  5

As human beings, we reach beyond the limits that suffering imposes by a conscious decision to accept and grow through it like the arrow or the Navy SEAL. We push through the limits of his exhaustion during training. We enter into an awareness of something greater behind the veil of suffering when we come to accept it as an integral component of our human condition.

We also give positive example, strength and encouragement to the younger generation as they witness our response to, and acceptance of, our own suffering. Our trials and tribulations teach us about our reliance on God and the illusions of self-sufficiency.

On the other hand, if our fear of suffering drives us to constant circumvention and relentless avoidance, even to the point of short-circuiting life itself through euthanasia or physicians-assisted suicide, we have missed these myste- rious but privileged moments that invite us to become more resplen- dungly human, with all the mess- age, awkwardness and agencies that are invariably part of that process.

Res. Theodore Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neurosci- ence from Yale and did post-doc- toral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, Mass., and serves as the director of education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia.
Church, archdiocese committed to creating safe environments

Recently, the movie "Spotlight" was released throughout the United States. The movie portrays the 2002 Boston Globe investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. The movie has sparked a renewed interest in addressing the issue of abuse, healing, accountability and prevention of future acts of abuse.

The movie "Spotlight" has been called "a clarion call for faith leaders to pray for the victims’ healing from what they endured." It has been 12 years since the Charter for the Protection of Children was approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to address allegations of abuse. The Charter, along with themovie "Spotlight," portrays the 2002 Boston Globe investigation into allegations of abuse in the Catholic Church, archdiocese committed to creating safe environments for children and vulnerable adults.

In their initial report, the auditors praised the Church and the parishes for their efforts to provide safe environments and to follow the protocols set forth to protect young people. The report has made progress in dealing with the serious issue of abuse, and we must continue to be vigilant. We pledge as a Church and as an archdiocese to continue to protect and heal, to educate children and adults so that together we may protect our children and vulnerable adults. Archbishop Coakley asks for your continued help, support and prayers as we promote healing and reconciliation with victims/survivors of sexual abuse, respond to allegations of sexual abuse, and protect the faithful in the future. We humbly invite anyone who may have experienced abuse to please come forward. To watch a Safe Environment video from the USCCB, go online to https://yout.be/IIC64WVpIA

Sister Catherine Powers is Safe Environment coordinator for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

Sister Eunice Ballmann, O.S.B.

Sister Eunice (Marie Gerard) Ballmann, O.S.B., 88, a Benedictine sister of Mount Saint Scholastica in Atchison, Kan., died Dec. 12, at the monastery.

Sister Eunice was born March 6, 1927, the first of six children of August and Agnes Bange Ballmann. She grew up in Elsberry, Mo., attending high school in Saint Louis while working in a Catholic hospital.

She entered Saint Joseph Monastery in 1947 in Atchison, and her sister, Sister Marie, would follow.

She earned a college degree in elementary education and taught primary grades in Catholic schools for 41 years. In 1956, she became part of the newly founded Red Plata Monastery in Oklahoma City (later Piedmont). With graduate work in education and religious studies, she continued teaching and directing religious education, and became oblate director in 1991. In 2007, she joined to Atchison as her community joined the Mount Saint Scholastica community. She held a memorial Mass for her at Mount Saint Scholastica College in Atchison, Kan., and in 1999, she named a master’s degree in elementary education at Oklahoma State University. She taught, tutored or served as principal or paraprofessional in the classroom for 46 years in Kansas and Oklahoma.

Donations in her memory may be made online at www.adorers.org or by mailing them to Adorers of the Blood of Christ, U.S. Region Mission Center, 4233 Sulphur Ave., St. Louis, MO 63109.

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Foundation scholarship aids family with Catholic education

By Sally Linhart

For Tony and Christy Gianino of Norman, providing a Catholic education to their three children was an important priority as well as an overwhelming financial burden. That could have been avoided if Montessori education tuition combined with state scholarships and federal loans made the effort to send their four children to Catholic schools more challenging.

The Gianino children – Hannah, 15, Noah, 12, and Christy, 6 – have attended All Saints Catholic School in Norman with the help of generous assistance: from Saint Mark the Evangelist Church and the Catholic Schools Opportunity Scholarship, awarded through the Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma.

Christy Gianino, a second-grade teacher at All Saints, was ecstatic to learn that her children had been awarded the scholarship.

“I love where I work, and that’s where I want my kids to be. It takes a village to raise a child, and we are honored, privileged and proud to claim All Saints as part of our village,” Tony Gianino, an attorney at the postal transit company, said.

“The Gianinos wanted the Catholic faith to be engrained in their children’s lives, not just through their own teaching, but from other sources as well,” said Tony Gianino.

“When they grow up, we want them to always be able to return to a home in the Catholic Church,” Christy explained.

The Catholic Schools Opportunity Scholarship Fund, with the guidance and approval of the archdiocesan superintendent of Catholic schools, accepts applications from Catholic students who have been nominated for this scholarship by their principal. The scholarships are income-based.

“The goal of the scholarship is to help their children to continue their faith education, and allow them to have the opportunity to learn about their Catholic faith,” said Christy Gianino.

The Gianinos want the Catholic faith to remain an important part of their family, and they hope their children will develop the faith to trust in God’s plan for them and allow Him to work through them to serve others.”

Sally Linhart is a freelance writer for the Norman Catholic.

For more information about need-based scholarships for Catholic schools and how you can help, call the scholarship fund office at (405) 721-4115 or go online at www.cfok.org.

Top, the Gianino family. Above, Fr. Jim Guinn visits with All Saints students, including a young Gianino. Photos provided.

Sister Evarista Dulker, A.S.C.

Sister Evarista Dulker, A.S.C., a professed Adorers of the Blood of Christ for 62 years, died Dec. 12, in Wichita, Kan. She was 99.

She was the first child of England and Stephanie Dulker, baptized Juliana Marie at Saint John Baptist Church in Spencer, Kan.

She graduated high school from Saint John’s Academy in Wichita in 1936, pronounced first vows in August 1939, and final vows five years later. She attended Sacred Heart College (now Newman University) and earned her bachelor’s degree in education in 1948 at Mount Saint Scholastica College in Atchison, Kan. In 1969, she named a master’s degree in elementary education at Oklahoma State University. She taught, tutored or served as principal or paraprofessional in the classroom for 46 years in Kansas and Oklahoma.

Donations in her memory may be made online at www.adorers.org or by mailing them to Adorers of the Blood of Christ in Atchison.

The Gianinos want the Catholic faith to remain an important part of their family, and they hope their children will develop the faith to trust in God’s plan for them and allow Him to work through them to serve others.”

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Top, the Gianino family. Above, Fr. Jim Guinn visits with All Saints students, including a young Gianino. Photos provided.

Sister Evarista Dulker, A.S.C.
Holy Doors opened throughout archdiocese


Below, Fr. Long Phan blesses the Holy Door at St. Wenceslaus in Prague, home of the National Shrine to the Infant Jesus of Prague. Hundreds of parishioners and pilgrims attended the unsealing of the Holy Door. Photo provided.

Holy Doors in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City:
1. The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, OKC
2. Saint Joseph Old Cathedral, OKC
3. National Shrine of the Infant Jesus of Prague, Prague
4. Holy Cross, Madill
5. Saint Mary, Ponca City
6. Saint Gregory’s Ashing, Shawnee
7. Saint Peter, Woodward
8. Blessed Sacrament, Lawton


How to Go to Confession...

May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints, whatever good you do and suffering you endure, heal your sins, help you grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life.

Go in peace.

—Rite of Penance, no. 93

1 PREPARATION: Before going to confession, take some time to prepare. Begin with prayer, and reflect on your life since your last confession. How have you—in your thoughts, words, and actions—neglected to live Christ’s commands to “love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,” and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37, 39)? As a help with this “examination of conscience,” you might review the Ten Commandments or the Beatitudes (Ex 20:2-17; Dt 5:6-21; Mt 5:3-10; or Lk 6:20-26).

2 GREETING: The priest will welcome you; he may say a short blessing or read a Scripture passage.

3 THE SIGN OF THE CROSS: Together, you and the priest will make the Sign of the Cross. You may then begin your confession with these or similar words: “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [give days, months, or years] since my last confession.”

4 CONFESSION: Confess all your sins to the priest. If you are unsure what to say, ask the priest for help. When you are finished, conclude with these or similar words: “I am sorry for these and all my sins.”

5 Penance: The priest will propose an act of penance. The penance might be prayer, a work of mercy, or an act of charity. He might also counsel you on how to better live a Christian life.

6 ACT OF CONTRITION: After the priest has conferred your penance, pray an Act of Contrition, expressing sorrow for your sins and resolving to sin no more. A suggested Act of Contrition is:

My God,
I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In his name, my God, have mercy.
(Rite of Penance, no. 45)

7 ABSOLUTION: The priest will extend his hands over your head and pronounce the words of absolution. You respond, “Amen.”

8 PRAISE: The priest will usually praise the mercy of God and will invite you to do the same. For example, the priest may say, “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.” And your response would be, “His mercy endures for ever” (Rite of Penance, no. 47).

9 DISMISSAL: The priest will conclude the sacrament, often saying, “Go in peace.”

If it has been a while since your last confession, remember, “Do not fear” (Is 41:10). The priest will help guide you. And feel free to take this how-to guide with you! (For more information, visit www.usccb.org/confession.)
Poet says journey to Catholicism, quest to see Vermeer’s art led to joy

By Carl Peters
Catholic News Service

CAMDEN, N.J. — After his parents divorced, Michael White briefly lived with his mother, but she would regularly make him ask his father to “take” him. “She’d dial his number,” he recalls, “then hand over the heavy black receiver. He always said: ‘Tell her no.’” So, when Michael turned 13, his financially struggling mother simply dropped him off outside his father’s house and left him there, spending away despite his protests. His father wasn’t home and the boy sat on the curb for hours waiting for him.

Now, an established poet and professor at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, White recounts this episode in his new memoir, “Travels in Vermeer.” The slim volume, in which he chronicles his yearlong transcontinental quest to see all the known paintings – fewer than three dozen – by the Dutch master Johannes Vermeer, has met with critical praise, even landing on the prestigious “Editor’s Choice” list in The New York Times Book Review.

In addition to his Vermeer quest, White also tells tales of his childhood; his alcoholism (“I was a classic, low-bottom drunk”) and recovery; his experiences with Match.com; his first wife, who died of cancer; and his divorce from his second wife and their latter childbirth battle.

Despite her abandonment of him, White expresses no bitterness toward his mother and his spiritual growth both led to joy, he comes to see.

In AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) this is something that we discuss frequently; it is empowering to understand that we can change our orientation to the world by thought and especially by deed,” he said. “Of course, we are grateful for the gift however it is received.”

White speaks frequently of gratitude. Even in discussing Jackie’s sickness and death, he says that the power of faith can lead to acceptance and "even a kind of gratitude in response to suffering.”

Connecting gratitude and suffering may sound contradictory, but White, a poet, expects no less from a life of faith. He said he was attracted to Catholicism for several reasons, including the example of Jackie’s paradigms of life and death that he witnessed in his childhood church where he’d even remotely felt at home.”

Recalling going to Mass with his mother and siblings and stopping on the way home for cherry phosphates, he writes, “We were never more a family than on those Sunday mornings.”

White’s conversations with a kind nun at the kind nun at the St. Catherine of Sienna in Delaware, who passed away in 2014. Karen Carter, principal at Christ the King, accepted the blankets from the middle school House Captains and Principal Alicia Vasques. Photo provided.

Middle school classes at St. James the Great School made a total of 48 fleece blankets to donate to Birth Choice this month. Before starting the service project, each student said a prayer for the baby that would use their blanket. Ruth Blyth of Birth Choice left accepted the blankets from the middle school House Captains and Principal Alicia Vasques. Photo provided.

Students make blankets for Birth Choice

Each year, middle school students and those in confirmation preparation at St. John the Baptist in Columbus, Mo., collect and hand out blankets to those in need. This year, the school collected 48 blankets. The effort began 10 years ago with 12 bags and has grown to as many as 500. These bags are then delivered on Christmas Day by Rick Bryan, founder of Hot Dog’s for the Homeless. Photo provided.

Serving the homeless at Christmas time

Parishes throughout archdiocese hold Guadalupe celebrations

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City partnered with Oklahoma Family Services this month to provide Christmas gifts to local families. Catholic Charities throughout the area donated new toys and gifts to stock St. Nick’s Shoppe. Families picked out gifts for their children, and volunteers helped wrap and load the gifts. Top right: A family looks at toys held up during a display of super heroes and action figures. Photos Cara Koenig.

Sooner Catholic December 27, 2015

A Very Giving Christmas from Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, in partnership with Oklahoma Family Services this month to provide Christmas gifts to local families. Catholic Charities throughout the area donated new toys and gifts to stock St. Nick’s Shoppe. Families picked out gifts for their children, and volunteers helped wrap and load the gifts. Top right: A family looks at toys held up during a display of super heroes and action figures. Photos Cara Koenig.

In Enid, parishioners put on a Guadalupe play.

Mount students remember teacher with donation

The Mount St. Mary School Council presented a donation check for $3,707 to Catholic Charities on behalf of their beloved teacher, Tom Carter, who passed away in 2014. Karen Carter, principal at Christ the King, and Patrick Raglow, executive director of Catholic Charities, accepted the donation Dec. 17. Photo provided.

*“Bambinelli Sunday” at St. Francis of Assisi* On the Third Sunday of Advent, children at St. Francis of Assisi in Oklahoma City were invited to bring the baby Jesus from their menorah to the home of the one who is taught during all Masses. Father William Nevar, pastor, taught the Italian tradition to the parish this year as a way to emphasize the connection of what is celebrated at church and what is taught in the home. It is called “Bambinelli Sunday” to commemorate the blessing of the baby Jesus. Photo provided.
En uno de nuestros villancicos más queridos cantamos el estribillo alegre, "Venid, adorámenos.

La Navidad invita a todos los fieles a un renacer espiritual de adoración y asombro ante el misterio que celebramos: el Verbo se ha hecho carne. Dios se ha convertido en un hombre con una nación de la Virgen María. Su nombre es Jesús. ¡El nació para nosotros y para nuestra salvación en el silencio y la pobreza del establo de Belén! 

La beatitud de Dios que está representada de manera cosmovisera en el pesalvo evoca adoración y asombro a nuestros corazones impulsa al silencio ante un grano de arena e inesperada regocijo. El Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica enseña: "Nadie, pastor o un hombre sabio, puede acercarse a Dios absolutamente sino arrodillándose ante el pesalvo de Belén y adorando a Dios exaltado en la defilidad de un niño recién nacido." (CSC 561)

En los hermosos relatos evangélicos de la temporada de Navidad, los ángeles anuncian el nacimiento de Jesús con nuevas de gran gozo. Descubrimos que lo que hemos recibido como un don tenemos que dar como regalo. Nos conviertimos en discípulos misioneros de la misericordia para los demás. Todo estos misterios convergen muy bien en la liturgia eucarística, la Misa, que es la terapia del amor, la misericordia, la humildad y el perdón. 

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No es fácil la vida familiar y matrimonial. No importa la época, o el país, vivir en una comunidad de vida y amor, según la voluntad de Dios. 

Llega la Navidad y nos invita a acercarnos a Dios aquí abajo, a acercarnos a Dios, no arrodillándose al pie de la cruz de Cristo sino mezclándose con aquellos que buscan el amor en el ambiente que se les da en este mundo. Ellos, quienes vienen a nosotros en la pobreza, tienen la sangre limpia de Cristo. Para ellos no hay más que el permiso de Dios, para acercarse a Dios. Jesús sigue dando a sí mismo por nosotros y se pone a nuestra disposición para alimentarnos de su carne y su sangre en el momento de nuestra necesidad. 

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Participants are asked to register with the office of Fr. Froehle, spiritual director and founder of the Spirituality Retreat, Saturday, Jan. 23, beginning at 9 a.m. at the Catholic Pastoral Center, 2301 Northwest Expressway, OKC. Sign up will end Friday, Jan. 16, at 3 p.m. Retreat opens Saturday, Jan. 17, at 3 p.m. Call (405) 778-1107.

Save the date

The Knights of Columbus Council of St. Eugene is hosting its annual省内 Italian sausage meatball dinner on Saturday, Jan. 10, from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. in Room Hall, 2400 W. Herber Rd. The dinner benefits Friends of Bolivia mission. Tickets are $10 for adults; $5 for kids ages 6-12. Kids age 5 and under are free. Contact Steve Chastain at (405) 470-2045.

Save the Date - Retreat for religious men and women

Come and hear Sr. Ann Shields, Catholic missionary and record-

ing artist. More information coming soon. Contact Thomas at (405) 306-5187, thomaschastain@gmail.com.

Activity coordinator

St. Gregory’s University seeks qualified applicants for a nine- month tenure track position in psychology/counseling, with the possibility of becoming a full-time faculty member. Applicants must have a Ph.D. and be licensed in the state of Oklahoma. Applications may be sent electronically to stggreg@stgregory.edu.

FIDE associate

FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs) is responsible for promoting chess. The organization has different ranks for chess players, ranging from beginner to master. The highest rank is grandmaster.

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Music director

St. Philip Ner, Midwest City, is seeking a director of music. Responsibilities include planning and coordination of music for liturgical services, as well as the organizational tasks and logistical aspects of preparing music for services.

Local

Staff

St. Gregory’s University students celebrate Christmas with Herondelle Elementary

The Good Shepherd Catholic School at Mercy is a collaborative school for children with autism.

St. Gregory’s student athletes celebrate Christmas with Herondelle Elementary

The Good Shepherd Catholic School at Mercy is a collaborative school for children with autism.

State awards grant to Good Shepherd Catholic School

The Good Shepherd Catholic School opened in 2011 to serve children with ASD and other similar neurological disorders.

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Shawnee - The Don and Jeanne Good Shepherd Scholarship was transformed into the North Pole Fund recently as student athletes from Saint Gregory’s University welcomed 35 children from Herondelle Elementary School to the campus for an early Christmas celebration.

This was so much more than I expected,” said Tiffany Oliver, kindergarten teacher from Herondelle. “A lot of our kids don’t have a lot, so getting to come to a university and see where they could play ball and be warm was really amazing.

This was a great event for the students and the community.

Ends/

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Music director

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Married life and family life are not easy. No matter the time, or the country, living in a community of life and love, according to the will of God, is a laborious uphill struggle.

Problems and doubts begin while the couple is just dating. Is this person for me? Do I really love this person? Does this person love me? Will he/she be faithful? Can we both make a good home? Will our future home be a place where God’s presence is honored?

And, after the wedding, the doubts and problems continue. Can I be flexible and live in peace in my married and family life despite the many small imperfections of each day? Can I stick with my partner or will I be one of those seeking to flee as soon as the doubts or difficulties arise? Will our family be welcomed in our new neighborhood? Will we have money to pay our debts and have what is necessary for our children? Can we live peacefully in our own country or will we have the need to migrate to another country? Will we have good communication skills in our marriage and with our children?

And, when the children arrive, what kind of parent will I be? Will I be a good example for my children? Can I bring them closer to God? Can I make a home that is like a small church, a school of love and mercy? If it should happen that my spouse were to die, could I raise my children by myself? When my children grow up and become adults, will they still be able to count on me? Will I be able, in my old age, to count on them?

There are many doubts and questions that may arise about marriage and family life, and for my part I can assure you that I do not have all the answers, but I know one thing, the Holy Family of Nazareth went through all of this, and a lot more, and they can be an example for us.

During Mary and Joseph’s betrothal, doubts arose. If God had not sent him an angel, Joseph would have continued with his plan to abandon Mary since he was convinced that she had been unfaithful and was expecting a child by another man. The angel said to Joseph in a dream that child was by the Holy Spirit and that the child was the Son of God.

The Holy Family suffered rejections in various neighborhoods, remember, there was no room in the inn. They suffered poverty; baby Jesus was born in a stable. This Holy Family fled to Egypt because of political persecution. It is for this reason that they are patron saint of migrants.

Proven in various gospel accounts, we can see how this family experienced problems in their ability to communicate. The best example of miscommunication is when Jesus was lost and later found in the temple.

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The feast day of the Holy Innocents is Dec. 28, when we honor the male children age 2 or younger who were slaughtered at the order of King Herod, who wanted to eliminate the child Jesus as a rival king (Matthew 2:16-18). Today, the feast day of the Holy Innocents also is a reminder of the slaughter of innocent children by abortion.

Solemnity
Jan. 1, New Year’s Day, is the Solemnity, meaning dignified and serious, of the Mother of God, which like Christmas Day is a holy day of obligation. New Year’s Day was established as the Solemnity of Mary in 1974 by Pope Paul VI in the Apostolic Letter “Marialis Cultus,” subtitled “The Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

The great joy of Christmas is that the Word, who is God, became flesh and dwells among us (John 1:14) and is in us, body, blood, soul and divinity, through the Holy Eucharist.