In December, two Marian feasts point toward Christmas

By J.E. Helm
For the Sooner Catholic

December is a month of miracles, culminating in the glorious birth of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Along the way to Dec. 25 are two important Marian feasts: the celebration of the miraculous appearance in Mexico City of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1531 and the feast of the Immaculate Conception, a dogma that was promulgated by Pope Pius IX in 1854 and confirmed by Our Lady herself four years later when she miraculously appeared to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, France, in 1858.

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception defines Mary as being completely free from original sin from the moment of her conception, from the moment her soul was created and entered her body.

The Church teaches that this “singular privilege and grace” was granted to her by God in view of the role she was to play as the mother of Christ. Since original sin never entered her soul, she was preserved from all sin and became, as the poet Coleridge names her, “our tainted nature’s solitary boast.”

Our Lady had been praised as sinless throughout the centuries by the Fathers of the Church. Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine believed her to be most holy and free from sin, and, so, Pope Pius IX, on Dec. 8, 1854, pronounced the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, now celebrated as a holy day of obligation in the United States on the eighth of December.

Three years later, in 1858, Our Lady miraculously appeared to Bernadette Soubirous at Lourdes, France. Mary asked that a church be built on that site to honor her. When Bernadette relayed this request to the archbishop, he directed her to ask “The Lady,” as Bernadette called her, who she was. The Lady answered, “I am the Immaculate Conception.”

A poor girl with little education, Soubirous was likely not familiar with the Church doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. It is doubtful that she even understood the words she carried back to her priest. Thus, Our Lady confirmed the Church teaching.

Another miraculous occurrence took place in 1531 near what is today Mexico City. A young Indian man, Juan Diego, was visited by a beautiful young woman who spoke to him in his native language and, as at Lourdes, asked that a church be built on that site to honor her. Juan Diego believed her to be the Virgin Mary, and he relayed her request to the archbishop who asked for a sign to confirm her identity. Our Lady instructed Juan Diego to gather the flowers growing nearby, red roses blooming out of season on an otherwise barren hilltop, a first miracle. Juan Diego wrapped them in his cloak, or tilma, and took them to the archbishop. When he opened his tilma, the roses fell to the floor, and on the cloak was a miraculously created image—the now well-known image of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Scientists have studied the tilma, which today hangs in the Cathedral in Mexico City. How the image was created cannot be determined. Made of fibers from the cactus plant, the cloak would normally last 20 to 30 years. Pilgrims today visit the Cathedral to view this image which has been miraculously preserved for nearly 500 years.

In Oklahoma City, the Dec. 12 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated in a big way at both Sacred Heart Church and Little Flower Church, both home to large Hispanic communities.

At Sacred Heart, Archbishop Coakley will be at a midnight Mass for the feast. At Little Flower, according to pastor Father Jesus Sanchez, a novena was begun on Nov. 20, marked by a series of talks by Father Juan Angel Lopez, visiting here from Tegucigalpa, the capital city of Honduras.

Each day, parishioners bring roses to the church along with gifts of food for the poor. On the Feast itself, Las Mañanitas, a morning prayer that is sung, will be offered at 5:00 a.m. The church “will be packed,” according to Father Sancho. Mass will be celebrated at 5:30 a.m. Before and after Mass, Father explained, there will be “Matachines, special religious dancing performed only for her feast.”

J.E. Helm is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic and an adjunct professor of English at several area colleges.

Secular commercialization of Christmas challenges Catholics to more intentionally observe Advent

By Anamaría Scaperlanda Biddick
For the Sooner Catholic

By the second week of December, Christmas decorations, songs and sales have all become almost commonplace as Oklahomans begin Christmas preparations and celebrations. For Catholics, these practices cause certain tensions as we, too, prepare for Christmas, but not always in the same way as the secular world during this season of Advent.

George Rigazzi, director of the archdiocesan Office of Family Life, says, “Advent should be a time of reflection, a new beginning, a renewing of our relationship with God and fostering a sense of watching and waiting for the Lord.”

This spirit of reflection and renewal of our relationship with Christ should be the central focus of Advent as we await the birth of Jesus. This is often difficult when we are surrounded by early celebrations of Christmas—and focus on the consumer aspects of gift-giving. Rigazzi says, “The reality is we are bombarded by the secular culture and maintaining the proper attitude during Advent can be challenging, especially when Christmas decorations in stores are arriving in September, [with] crass commercialism.”

Consumerism and gift-giving can cause internal friction for many Catholics, for the tradition of gift-giving during the Christmas season stems from sharing the spirit of...
In document, pope lays out his vision for an evangelical church of violent fundamentalism," since "authentic Islam and its proper reading of the Quran are opposed to every form of violence." Pope Francis characteristically directs some of his strongest criticism at his fellow clergy, among other reasons, for what he describes as lessened pastoral care provided for those living in poverty, among other things.

The faithful and "their ordained ministers should not be identified with power," nor "underestimate the power that must allow for the possibility of women in decision-making in religious communities and in the life of the church," Francis said.

Pope Francis gives further examples of what he claims to be "false" visions and actions. In the case of clerical celibacy, for example, Francis said it was "prejudice" that has prevented women from serving the church in the ways they could.

The pope rejected the idea that women were innately inferior to men. Instead, he argued it was the church's focus on the sex of priests that did harm to many women and prevented them from serving in ways they could.

"The church must be realistic about economic realities." Francis said, "Social justice is a priority for social justice." He rejected the idea that women should be restricted to traditional roles and suggested that they should be encouraged to participate in the church's life and ministry.

To read "Evangelii Gaudium," the Joy of the Gospel, go to www.vatican.va.org and click "subscribe" to your email address. Add it to your reading list to accompany Archdiocese of Oklahoma City officials.

After giving his vision for the church, Francis closed his remarks by urging the faithful to "remain true to the Gospel and the love of Jesus Christ." He ended with a prayer that was said aloud by all those present, and then closed the event by saying, "Now, let us pray together."
The Sooner Catholic

People meet there to share ideas, strategies, and for interesting articles and resources that they’ve found helpful.

When the Holy Father’s recent apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel”) was released, a few weeks later, several people were posting live “the parts we read,” and a great conversation ensued with people all over the country participating at once.

Since Archbishop Paul Cooley has set us back on the road to finding your favorite Catholic newspaper, The Sooner Catholic has become a key pastoral priority in the archdiocese, and I may have thought that we had gotten the proceedings off to a great start by exploring the cultural layers below the surface of our favorite secular evergreen, Christmas. I would pass on the name of Bobby George, who couldn’t be more of a man of the people, for example, or the man who died in August, was one of Ronald Reagan’s closest friends, and who served by his philanthropy was “educational freedom” for family-owned companies as well as their rights under RFRA protects a for-profit corporation’s right to provide insurance that excludes coverage of contraceptives, sterilizations and some abortion-inducing drugs. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)

The court agreeing to hear their case is “a major step for the Greens and their family businesses in an important fight against forced religious liberty,” said Kyle Duncan, general counsel of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and lead lawyer for Hobby Lobby. In Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores, the Green family won a U.S. District Court of Appeals that said their “as religious freedom. We are encouraged by the advances in the lower federal courts that part of the Affordable Care Act, that religious freedom in our country should be protected for family businesses as well as corporate entities. In Conestoga Wood Specialties v. Sebelius, another circuit court that recognized the ‘free exercise’ rights of for-profit corporations. The 1993 law, known as RFRA, says that the government shall not substantially burden a person’s exercise of religion unless it offers the least restrictive means to further a compelling government interest.” The legal question raised in the case is whether RFRA protects a for-profit company from having to provide a benefit to which employees are entitled under federal law but to which they have religious objections. The companies also raised the Free Exercise clause as a defense in arguing the mandate invalids on the employers’ right to free from government interference with their religious beliefs. The argument cites the Supreme Court’s ruling in Citizens United that faced a corpor- ate free speech right to participate in the political process through campaign contributions. "The HHS mandate includes an exemption for some religious employers that fits its criteria and has an accommodation for others allowing some employers to use a third-party to provide contraceptive coverage that object. The argument by Peter Flanagan, who has served as Oracle’s general counsel for more than 50 years, and as the leader of the Catholic Church in America during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI, he is a rims were made between a woman and health care provider, ‘medicine’ is forced to provide contraceptives, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs free of charge. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)

Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, pictured second from left, chairman of the U.S. Bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, joins religious leaders at a prayer breakfast to mark the one-year anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Hobby Lobby ruling July 2, 2013. The diverse group of religious leaders urged the U.S. government to “expand conscience protections” and to allow all employers to provide accommodation that requires all employers to provide birth control coverage without having the federal government or for-profits be required to fund contraceptives, sterilization and abortion-inducing drugs. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)

The true test of the current “I want to spend our time in ways that tend to be ‘O Antiphons,’ an ancient series of antiphons specific for Advent and said beginning on Dec. 17, the day before Christmas, the ‘O Antiphons’ from that date until at least after the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord.”

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Meet Our Seminarians

1. What is your home parish? Our Lady of Perpetual Help

2. What seminary do you attend? Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology

3. It is God’s will, what year will you be ordained as a priest?

4. How old were you when you first thought that God might be calling you to the priesthood?

5. What is the most important thing you have learned in the seminary so far?

6. Who is God to you? Our Lady of Perpetual Help

7. Name one thing that every Catholic needs to know.

Every Catholic needs to keep faith and belief in God.

Oblation

Sister Mary deVeres Loughlin, Sister of Mercy, died suddenly on Nov. 7, 2013, at 7:10 a.m., at Oklahoma Health Center, Oklahoma City. She was 91. She was born on Jan. 25, 1922, to the late Frank and Beatrice Loughlin, of Oklahoma City, Okla. Sister had expressed that she felt privileged to have received education from grade one through college. She was educated by the Sisters of Mercy at Mount Saint Mary’s College, Kansas City, where she found the challenge of learning to be exciting and joyful. She helped many13 Sisters of Mercy, Webster Groves, Mo., on Aug. 20, 1948, and made her final vows on March 12, 1951. She received her teaching education and credentialing for St. Mary’s College, Kansas, and the Université Notre Dame, Ind. In 1951, after a 13-year period of teaching, she entered the Congregation of Notre Dame. In 1964, Sister joined the Oblation and became a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. The Catholic Church is actually quite simple. The Orthodox Church is according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, who said that the purpose of prayer and worship is to accept a personal relationship with God unconditionally. Additionally, I am able to bring to God people around me through my good work—serving my brothers and sisters. In other words, people around me really don’t know who God is. I don’t know who God is, so I am trying to help others to understand that God is according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, but people around me will know who God is through my efforts, that is, my good work and prayer.

6. Who is your favorite saint? Saint Joseph

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Advent and the new evangelization converge in the confessional

A little more than a year ago, in November 2012, the U.S. bishops issued an invitation to all Catholics to return to regular celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation. The document, called Penitence and Reconciliation, also called confession, meet the Lord in the confessional to make known our sins and our desire to lead a new life in him, to recover our freedom from sin, with a faithful, earnest, loving, and sincere desire to follow him in the future. To me, to have a good relationship with God is according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, who said that the purpose of prayer and worship is to accept a personal relationship with God unconditionally. Additionally, I am able to bring to God people around me through my good work—serving my brothers and sisters. In other words, people around me really don’t know who God is. I don’t know who God is, so I am trying to help others to understand that God is according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, but people around me will know who God is through my efforts, that is, my good work and prayer.

During Advent, author of new study guide seeks, “help people to meet Jesus”

By Briana Osborn

The Sooner Catholic

Oklahoma City, Dec. 10, 2013 — In October, Archbishop Paul Coakley released his pastoral letter, “Go, Make Disciples,” which articulated a new vision for how the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City could live, and proclaim the gospel of Christ, in the 21st century. The Office of New Evangelization has released a study guide, authored by the director of new evangelization, Dr. Carole Lewand, OSB, S.T.D. The study guide can be found on the homepage of the Oklahoma City archdiocese: “Alternatively, the guide can also be used by pastoral teams, or parish staff, or just groups of people, or even just a small group of friends who want to have a stronger, more meaningful discussion over the course of a year. The back of the study guide, there is a format for use in groups,” said Brown. When asked about the next steps for Advent, readers are encouraged to use the study guide to examine their lives and “disciple” during this liturgical season. The Office of New Evangelization, we have a chance to help people to meet Jesus, and to have a relationship with him, said Brown. “People who don’t know Jesus often experience a long, lonely, and full of loneliness, an emptiness, a sense that there should be more to life than this. They feel like something is missing. Many of them have been waiting a long time! In that way, we have an opportunity to share our faith, to show what does it impact their own life in Christ, here in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City?” Brown had an important recommendation for anyone who wants to use the study guide. “They should involve people in the discussion on Archbishop Coakley’s message. “Individuals can take 15-20 minutes a day and take one of the themes to pray on each day till you are through it... Maybe even write a little prayer journal and can write out your answers to the questions. Or, a husband and wife could use the questions as the basis for a spiritual conversation together.”

Obituary

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Hungry 4 Justice procession, final blessing cap 11 days of fasting

OKLAHOMA CITY – On a frigid Sunday in November, undeterred by the icy breeze and ominous sky, about 75 people processed more than three miles from the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help to Holy Angels Catholic Church.

As the 11 days drew to a close, fasters told Archbishop Paul Coakley they felt affirmed and encouraged by the turnout for the procession, as well as by the prayerful support they received from pastors and parishioners.

“It just really motivated me to ask, ‘What can we do next?’” Vazquez told The Edmond Sun.

On November 9, deacon aspirants and their wives volunteered their time at the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. There are currently 24 aspirants (this is the term used during the first year in the deacon formation). Working only a few hours their work provided meals for 3,822 children in Oklahoma. “It was a great way to bond and for the aspirants and their wives to get to know each other better,” said Max Schwarz, director of the Permanent Diaconate.

Across the Archdiocese

Hungry 4 Justice began Nov. 22 and concluded Dec. 2 – 11 days for the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States today.

For the entire 11 days, a handful of grassroots leaders from DREAM Act Oklahoma fasted on location at Holy Angels Catholic Church. Fasters Judith Huerta, Fredy Valencia, Jessica Vazquez, Martha Hernandez and Mark McCaslin said they approached Church leaders for permission to fast at Holy Angels because each had experienced the most devastating effect of the current immigration system – separation from family members.

As they fasted, the so-called DREAMers engaged in public through informational workshops, movie screenings, discussions and open mic nights, during which immigrants shared stories of detention, deportation and hope.

Hungry 4 Justice also coincided with a national effort of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to highlight the issue of immigration.

The bishops have articulated the following five basic principles related to migration: (1) Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland, (2) Persons have the right to support themselves and their families, (3) Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders, (4) Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection and (5) The human dignity and human rights of undocumented immigrants should be respected.

On the basis of those principles, they have advocated for comprehensive immigration reform that incorporates global anti-poverty efforts, expanded opportunities to reunify families, a more effective and equitable temporary worker program, broad-based legalization of those in this country without proper immigration documentation and the restoration of due process.

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News on the Fr. Rother Cause

Archbishop Coakley meets with Dr. Ambrosio in October. The position is nearing completion and could be ready for submission before year end. There is no indication how long it may be before it will be reviewed by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Please keep praying for the cause.

Prayer for the Cause of Canonization of Servant of God Father Stanley Rother

O God, fount of all holiness, make us each walk worthily in our vocation, through the intercession of your Saints, on whom you bestowed a great variety of graces on earth. Having grasped Your Church with the life and ministry of your missionary priest Stanley Rother, grant that by his intercession this humble Volk may reach where the brave Shepherd has gone. Grant that Your Church may proclaim him as Martyr and Saint serving in Your presence and interceding for us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

We praise You for all Your gifts to us. We thank You, especially today for Pope Francis. Bless him always in Your love. Help us all to praise You and give You glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Feliz cumpleaños

Buon compleanno

Plurimos annos

Pontifex Franciscum

Χρόνια πολλά

Piękne Francis

Happy birthday

December 17 Pope Francis will turn 77 years young!

We thank You especially today for Pope Francis. Bless him always in Your love. Help us all to praise You and give You glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assumption Church
Keep Christ in Christmas Craft Bazaar
Archbishop: Immigration tied to American identity

By Tina Korbe Dzurisin

In the 127 pithy, profound pages of “Immigration and the Next American Identity,” Archbishop Joseph H. Gomez presents to the core of the great debate about America’s future — and urges Americans to harness the power to renew the soul of the nation.

“Immigration is about more than immigration,” the archbishop reminds readers repeatedly. To craft a wise and constructive immigration policy, then, requires the recovery of the fullest possible understanding of what it means to be an American.

In his quest to aid readers in understanding immigration, Archbishop Gomez roots them in an all-too-forgotten foundation: the Americanization of the American by Spanish Catholic missionaries.

Two hundred years before any of the Founding Fathers were born, this land’s people were being baptized in the name of Christ,” he writes (p. 4). “The people of this land were called Christians before they were called Americans.”

The archbishop observes this earlier American founding not to support a nativist legacy but as a subsequent founding of the United States that affirms the importance of faith to the American identity.

The United States was founded by men who followed the tradition of the Enlightenment, and early on, the Catholic bishops recognized this, but Archbishop Gomez provides the historical evidence that the Founding Fathers, too, built the national identity on essentially religious principles.

The American Creed includes these three (1) God is ultimately sovereign (i.e. the world is governed by natural law, which trumps manmade law), (2) Men and women are created by God for God, (3) The rights of man come not from the state, but from God (i.e. the government exists to secure justice, defined as the promotion and protection of God-given “unalienable” rights).

“This is the genius of America,” Archbishop Gomez says. “Our institutions and traditions are universal because they are recovered by any one culture. They are based on the sovereignty of the human person,” he writes — the belief that those who came to this country even prior to European settlement were somehow superior or more equal than those who came after and those who are still coming — is a perversion of the creed.

Archbishop Gomez acknowledges, though, that various religious and civic principles “do not lead to obvious conclusions on public policy” (p. 92).

Archbishop Gomez is not like the fundamental moral issues of abortion, marriage equality and immigration. Immigrants should be welcomed within a civic framework built on a common American story and universal values. We should be promoting broad expectations for prosperity, not the narrow vision of standing that individual rights pressure common duties; and that every generation must do what we can to keep the dream alive, but not at the expense of our good.


“The Best Christmas Pageant Ever,” by Barbara Robinson (HarperCollins, 2015 reprint) Though the title page lists only a story, this is an elementary school level, the perfect book for your children’s interest in the true Christmas spirit in any age. The Sunday school teacher Mr. Appleby list six Herdman children — bullies, misfits and delinquents — the lead roles. There’s a cigar-smoking Santa Claus, who is a great message for kids about an important virtue: humility. God is a plan for all of us, though it might not be our plan. As a bonus, the story can be read during Christmas, Ordinary Time and the Easter season.

“The Four Wise Men” (Paulist Press, 2015) A retelling of the Story of the Other Wise Men” by Carolyn Meyer. A Maryknoll laywoman who entered the Conceptionist Sisters in 1974, she was the ideal person to work with children. She has a special gift for writing stories that will become a family favorite. It tells the story in a moving and powerful way that children of all ages will understand and adults will find moving. It begins with Jesus being born in a stable in a small town, a small herd, a small town, the animals in the stable do not understand the star above it all. This is a book that you can read over and over again. It willERO and laugh and you’ll cry when you read the touching conclusion.

“The Star of Bethlehem” (MPower Pictures, 2007): A documentary of a lyric who starting school of wonder. He uses Scripture and a new computer program that can trace the movement of the stars and planets to find the star. The film traces one point in Scripture that he used to find the star. Many of these signs we know by heart. It rose in the East, it was the brightest star in the sky and it stopped over the town of Bethlehem, in a set of the few points. This is an eye-opening and awe-inspiring movie. This is movie is available in the archdiocesan library.

Joy,” his rich, orotund voice soars above it all. This is an eye-opening and awe-inspiring movie. This is movie is available in the archdiocesan library.

Books for Advent, Christmas, new and old favorites to entertain and inspire

By Tina Korbe Dzurisin

For Advent, suffering and work, humility is the key. How do you fill the Advent and Christmas seasons, the book offers a Scripture reading, an excerpt from Householder’s writings, a meditation and a prayer. There’s great virtue in practicing patience in small things until the heart is more open to the other virtues.

“The Christmas Cart” (Decca Records, 2013): An angelic choir of adults and children sing some of the familiar and beloved Nativity carols. This is an eye-opening and awe-inspiring movie. The book is a perfect introduction to the Christmas season."
Yo diría que, además de su perdón de los pecados, ésa es una de las funciones principales de la Iglesia. Sin embargo, no todo se reduce a eso. La Iglesia tiene otras funciones asimismo importantes. Por ejemplo, la Iglesia es un lugar donde los fieles se encuentran entre sí, se apoyan y se consuelan. Es un lugar donde se celebran los sacramentos y se da históricamente la comunión de los fieles. Es un lugar donde se reflexiona sobre la fe y se busca la verdad. Es un lugar donde se practica la caridad y se busca el bien común.

En resumen, la Iglesia es un lugar donde se busca la verdad, se busca la fe y se busca el bien común. Es un lugar donde se reflexiona sobre la existencia y se busca la respuesta a las preguntas fundamentales de la vida. Es un lugar donde se celebra la fe y se da la comunión de los fieles. Es un lugar donde se practica la caridad y se busca el bien común. Es un lugar donde se busca la verdad y se busca la fe.
Saint James Children’s Choir showcases talent, character through music, and the inspiration from music directs within the church.

The children’s work ethic and ability to take directions and show positive impact on their person. The main concern I have received from parents in that choir has instilled a great deal of confidence within their children’s feelings toward me, Stang. “I have many times heard, ‘I didn’t know my child could do that!’ and ‘He/she is so shy. How did you get them to do that?’ The children are excited about the opportunities choir has presented, an excitement you can hear when they sing and when they talk about the role of choir in their lives.”

“Before I joined this choir I didn’t know my life because I love to sing and it’s probably the best thing I’ve ever been a part of.”

Saint James’ Children’s Choir is growing every year, with many new choir programs on the calendar. “Very often the choir remains what it was in the beginning, to sporty boys. By simply being who they are, the children spread joy and make a difference within our community. They combine their innocence with music, I don’t know if I can say ‘beauty’ in the end, the more joy they spread and the more smiles, the greater the mission behind Saint James’ Children’s Choir is accomplished.”

Carol’s Lullabies at 7 p.m. including “A Ceremony of Carols” by Benjamin Britten and “Christmas in the South” by her students will be performed by Dr. Vicki Schaeffer, Conductor. www.oklahomacatholics.org/10

10 Catholic War Veterans (of any war/conscription) will meet the second Tuesday of each month in the community room in the Saint Mary Retirement Center at 7 p.m. For more information contact P. Price Oweal at 405-567-3404.

10 Catholic War Veterans USA The Oklahoma National Guard Post 159 will hold their monthly meeting at 7 p.m. in the Sunnyvale Family Center located at 3900 S 29th St in Del City, every second Wednesday. For more information contact Ken at (405) 230-0023 or e-mail kdenegri@mountstmary.org.

10 The Oklahoma Master Choir and Orchestral present "O! Holy Night" to benefit the Salvation Army. For more information contact Diane Wilson at dswilson@mountstmary.org.

The Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma, Inc.
P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City, OK 73123

Please Remember the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City in Your Estate Plans

Don’t Let Dec. 31 Sneak Up on You

Please remember the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City in Your Estate Plans

15 Christmas Bazaar, 9 a.m.–2 p.m., St. Gregory’s Church, Prague, 4th St. and Jim O’Donnell Rd., Attic Treasures, Numerous Gift Vendors, fresh baked cookies, homemade cinnamon rolls, Lunch: Chef Patti Pei or Chef Jamie in Torilla Soup with drink, $5. Raﬄ e Drawings, grand prize $1500 Country Club gift card. Proceeds to our shopping and we enjoy the day.

1 The Benedictine Oblates of Red Plains Monastery will meet from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m. in Room 123 at the Pastoral Center, 7500 NW Expressway in Oklahoma City. For more information, contact Fr. M. Price at (405) 343-9661 or e-mail tortilla@okcatholic.com, or Sandy Pierce at (405) 951-3556 or e-mail sandypierce@okcatholic.com.

15 Third Sunday of Advent

Job Box

Service oklahoma

Kevin Pierce General Agent 405-514-7660 kevin.pierce@kofc.org

Don’t let Dec. 31 sneak up on you.

Securing Your Retirement

KOF CATHOLIC GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS

All KofC members (and their family) are eligible for these great health insurance benefits.

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15 Director of Youth Ministry St. James the Greater Catholic Church, Oklahoma City, seeks a full-time Director of Youth Ministry to direct the youth activities for grades 7-12. The ideal candidate will be energetic, passionate about the Catholic faith and inspire a collaborative effort to engage youth in activities from both public and parochial schools. For full job description: www.okcatholic.com/jobs. Apply online or send resume to Pastor@stbenedictok.org. Troy Snow (405) 721-0832 or by e-mail at Okl-church@bellsouth.net.

14 Adriana Gamboa

17 Jody Sadower

19 Michael Calhoun

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High school students attend National Catholic Youth Conference

By Sarah Cooper
For the Sooner Catholic

David Rodriguez, youth minister at Saint Peter the Apostle parish in Guymon, Okla., wanted the high school youth in his program to recognize that there are a lot more Catholics in the world than just the few they encounter living in the panhandle of Oklahoma.

To help them realize this, Rodriguez and 18 high school students from Saint Peter’s, along with 220 teens and adults from around the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, traveled to Indianapolis to join 18,000 teenagers for the largest gathering of Catholic youth in the United States at the National Catholic Youth Conference.

“A lot of our teens are ashamed of their faith because they do not see teens out talking about their Catholic faith. I want them to know that they are not alone,” said Rodriguez. “Now they can take what they learned at the conference and go out and teach others in their schools about Catholicism.”

During NCYC, which took place Nov. 21 to Nov. 23, high school students were moved by energetic speakers, service projects and a dynamic closing Mass at Lucas Oil Stadium.

“I was inspired by how the speakers talked about how God truly changed their lives,” said Marlin Carbajal, an attendee from Saint Peter the Apostle parish. “Their experiences helped me to realize that, even when you feel like no one is there, God is always there.”

The biennial conference included morning and evening sessions with all of the attendees in the stadium, in addition to a menu of afternoon workshops from which participants were able to choose.

“The teens loved what the workshops had to offer this year,” noted Rodriguez. “They helped them to understand their faith and now they are excited to participate in parish life.”

Father Joseph Irwin, pastor at Saint Francis Xavier parish in Enid, Okla., accompanied 11 teens from his parish to this year’s conference. The conference is a way for his youth to experience Christ’s inspiring love for us.

“I love seeing the Holy Spirit inspire them in ways I could never have envisioned for them as their pastor. When they come home inspired to lead and do things in the parish. When they tell me about how they stood up for their faith against people who want to put Catholics down. This is amazing to me,” said Father Irwin. “We have great reasons for hope in our young people in the church.”

By the conference’s end, many of the youth of Saint Francis Xavier parish had gained a radically new relationship with Christ.

“The highlight of NCYC for me was the Eucharistic adoration where more than 18,000 teens were worshipping Christ at once,” said Grayson Fiest, a participant from Saint Francis Xavier parish. “This made a huge impact on my prayer life. I now want to lead others to Christ and show them how their faith can help them with the issues they are facing.”

The organizers of NCYC hope that the teens who heard the conference’s message will take their enthusiasm back to their parishes to inspire others to fully live their faith.

“The theme this year was ‘Signed, Sealed and Delivered.’ The ‘Delivered’ part is most interesting to me,” added Father Irwin. “I hope they will be the ones delivering the powerful love and truth of Jesus and the church to the world.”

Sarah Cooper is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.