Bishop ordains Father McCalister to the priesthood

Transitional Deacon Drake A. McCalister kneels before Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, at Holy Family Church, Steubenville, Dec. 19, who, in silence, imposes hands upon him and invokes the Holy Spirit. This ancient sign, in conjunction with the prayer of ordination, constitutes the essential rite of ordination to the priesthood. (Photos by Orsatti) • Story/Photos/Page 3

Newly ordained Father Drake A. McCalister is vested with the priest’s stole and chasuble by Msgr. Gerald E. Calovini, pastor of Holy Family Parish, Steubenville. Father McCalister will serve as parochial vicar to Msgr. Calovini, as well as assist with pastoral care at local hospitals and care facilities.

Transitional Deacon Drake A. McCalister prostrates himself before the altar. He affirmed his intention to serve the church in the office of the priesthood, promising respect and obedience to Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton and his successors. The saints are called to intercede for the elect.

News Brief

New UK abortion law is passed

MANCHESTER, England (CNS) — The Catholic bishops of Northern Ireland have asked the U.K. government to include a mandatory waiting period for women who request abortions under a new law.

They also demanded that abortion services, such as access to abortion-inducing pills, are kept out of Catholic schools, and that all medical personnel and pharmacists have the legal right of conscientious objection to involvement in abortion procedures.

They set out their case in a response to a government consultation on the legal framework for abortion ahead of the law coming into force in March.

The five bishops said the law was “unjust” because it “directly and intentionally leads to the killing of an unborn child.”

They told Julian Smith, secretary of state for Northern Ireland, that many women who asked for abortions were often “distressed and in a state of panic” but would sometimes later regret their choice.

“It is our view that urgent consideration be given to the inclusion of appropriate counseling services and a significant time period be provided for careful reflection on the serious nature of a decision to abort the unborn child,” they said in a summary of the response.

They told Smith that before abortions are performed, women should be given “accurate and appropriate information regarding the risks involved in abortion as well as the range of mental and physical conditions that can emerge as a result of having had an abortion.”

Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton has appointed Father Drake A. McCalister parochial vicar to Msgr. Gerald E. Calovini, pastor of Holy Family Parish, Steubenville, and to assist with pastoral care at local hospitals and care facilities, effective Dec. 20.

They result involved a decision services for given choice.

Northern killing because March.

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‘Did You Know?’
Jesus Christ, God and Man

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton

Simon Peter said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16).

It is fitting this Christmas season to reflect on who that little child in the manger is. These words of Simon Peter, the first pope, make it crystal clear the identity of Jesus, namely that he is the son of God. Our faith teaches us that Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, is the eternal son of God, who gave up his life for us, as the very name Jesus means “God saves” in Hebrew.

While the Old Testament used the phrase “Son of God” as afforded to angels, the children of Israel, and their kings, Jesus’ very identity would take us beyond the traditional understanding. Later in this Gospel passage, Jesus acknowledges that God the Father is the source of Peter’s knowledge, for his statement goes beyond the common knowledge of ancient Israel. In fact, there are two solemn moments in which Jesus’ identity is revealed: Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan and Jesus’ transfiguration on Mount Tabor; both times God the Father shares who Jesus Christ is. In fact, at Jesus’ resurrection, his divine sonship becomes manifest in his glorified humanity.

Yes, Jesus is the son of God, who took on our humanity, for Jesus has a soul, which is a spiritual principle for all human beings and a body, which is the temple of the soul.

While many of us may not recall from our religious instruction when we were younger, in Jesus is the union of both the divine and human natures in one divine person which we call the Hypostatic Union (see, Hebrews, Chapter 4, Verses 14-15). Jesus is one person with two natures. In fact, with Jesus being both human and divine, he has the ability to give us his body and blood in the Eucharist. Yes, Jesus is a “historical” person, but he is so much more than simply a person on a mission in ancient Palestine nearly 2,000 years ago. Jesus Christ lives!

With Jesus being both God and man and having given his life for our eternal life, Jesus also has manifested God’s love for us, and that his heavenly kingdom is certainly at hand. Together, in this Christmas season, let us celebrate the two natures of Jesus, as he came into this world for our salvation.

May you and your family have a blessed Christmas season and New Year!

Pope Francis says prayers of the old are powerful

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — On the eve of his 83rd birthday, Pope Francis met with a group of his peers — although many were a few years younger — and told them that “old age is a time of grace.”

“Grandparents, who have received the blessing of seeing their children’s children, are entrusted with a great task: transmitting the experience of life and the history of the family, the community, the people,” the pope told members of the Italian National Association of Senior Workers.

The association represents workers with at least 20 years of seniority in a company, defending the rights of older workers and promoting volunteer service by older people.

Pope Francis, who was born Dec. 17, 1936, told association members that one’s later years should be a “season of dialogue,” because “the future of a people naturally presupposes a dialogue and encounter between the old and young in order to build a society that is more just, more beautiful, has more solidarity and is more Christian.”

As one grows older, he said, “the Lord renews his call to us. He calls us to preserve and hand on the faith; he calls us to pray, especially to intercede; he calls us to be alongside those who are in need.”

“On the future — and this is not an exaggeration — we’ll find dialogue between the young and the old,” he said. “We are all called to fight this poisonous throwaway culture. With tenacity we are called to build a different society, one that is more welcoming, more human, more inclusive, and one where the young aren’t ignored because they aren’t working yet and the old aren’t ignored because people think their financially productive years are over. “Remember,” the pope told them, “talk to young people, not to clobber them, no. To listen to them, to sow something. This dialogue is the future.”

Bishop Monforton

Note: With this edition, Bishop Monforton will begin a new column titled, “Did You Know?” Beginning with the Jan. 24 edition, it will replace his “Ask the Bishop” column and will appear on Page 7.
Bishop ordains Father McCalister

In August 2004, Father McCalister resigned as pastor of his Pentecostal church in Seattle, Washington, after beginning his ministry in Fresno, California. Four months later, he and his wife, and three daughters, at the time, became Catholics and entered the Catholic Church. They moved to Steubenville the following year. In 2007, he was hired at Franciscan University of Steubenville, and began teaching in the theology/catechetical department.

Father McCalister was part of the first diaconate class in the Diocese of Steubenville in 2010, when Bishop R. Daniel Conlon, now bishop of Joliet, Illinois, was shepherd of the diocese. Father McCalister said he “felt the Lord calling him to inquire about a dispensation for the priesthood,” and Bishop Conlon agreed with the idea. The process continued with Bishop Monforton.

While being the first married priest to be ordained in the diocese, he is not the first married priest to serve in the diocese. Father Raymond Ryland, who was a minister of the Episcopal church, who converted to the Catholic faith, was ordained in the Diocese of San Diego and moved to Steubenville, with his wife, in 1998. He served at Holy Family and St. Peter parishes from 1998 until his death in 2014.

Father McCalister’s first assignment as a priest will be parochial vicar to Msgr. Gerald E. Calovini, pastor, Holy Family Parish, as well as assisting with hospital and nursing home ministries. He will also continue his position as coordinator of the catechetical practicum at Franciscan University, helping students get field experience in parishes, schools and the diocese.

Father McCalister said the first Catholic church he attended was at Holy Family Church in Ogden, Utah, and it’s only fitting that his first assignment as a priest is at Holy Family in Steubenville. As far as his priestly goals, “In addition to my sacramental duties, I want to engage in the mission of the church to share the Gospel and unite Christians.” Father McCalister reflected on his ordination to the priesthood, stating, “What a blessing it has been to see God’s hand in the years leading up to this exciting day.”

Bishop Monforton’s Schedule

January
1. Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 10 a.m.
2. Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 8:30 a.m. Evening prayer and dinner with seminarians, Steubenville, 5 p.m.
3. Diaconate ordination Mass, Camaldolese Hermit of Monte Corona, Italy, Holy Family Hermitage, Bloomington, 10 a.m.
4. Epiphany Mass, Daughters of Holy Mary of the Heart of Jesus, at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Oratory, Lovers Lane, Steubenville, 10 a.m.
5. Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 7 a.m.
6. Dinner with priests, Steubenville, 5 p.m.
7. Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 8:30 a.m.
8. Catholic Conference of Ohio conference call, 10 a.m.
9. Dinner with priests, Marietta, 5 p.m.
10-11 Retreat

Bishops approve $1.6 million in aid

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Subcommittee on Aid to the Church in Central and Eastern Europe approved $1.6 million in funding for 100 projects in 22 countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

“The Church in Central and Eastern Europe continues to work through the effects of decades of communism and repression. As the church rebuilds and grows in the region, the faithful of the United States stand in solidarity and show our love to our brothers and sisters there through our prayers and generosity,” said Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, chairman of the USCCB’s Subcommittee on Aid to the Church in Central and Eastern Europe.

Pastoral projects approved for funding include:
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, support for the St. John Paul II Youth Centers, whose programs include leadership formation, workshops and summer camps.
- In Lithuania, support for the Journey of Faith project by helping to develop programs that bring adults closer to Christ through the start-up of RCIA courses, programs to strengthen marriages and retreats for parishioners.
- Romania, support for 28 seminarians of the Archdiocese of Bucharest studying at the Inter-Diocesan Seminary in Iasi.
- Financial assistance for the operations of the Russian Federation Bishops’ Conference’s KANA television studio in Novosibirsk, links communities and faithful spread out over the eastern region of the country.
- Contribution toward the construction of Relentless Help of Our Lady Church for the growing Catholic community near Kiev, capital city of Ukraine.

In a 2014 interview, Father Drake A. McCalister, back row, second from left, and his wife, Crystal, back right, stand with their daughters and Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, back row, third from left. In the front row are, from left, Haley, Emiliana, Gemma and Corissa McCalister. Standing to the left of Father McCalister is Madison McCalister.

From Page 1
By Dino Orsatti

STUEBENVILLE — Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton ordained the first married priest in the diocese, Father Drake A. McCalister, in front of many diocesan priests, deacons and seminarians, as well as friends and family who packed Holy Family Church, Steubenville, Dec. 19.

“Finally, I welcome the McCalister family to this most sacred and joy-filled celebration,” Bishop Monforton said, as he emphatically began his homily, addressing the lengthy process for the diocese’s newest priest.

The bishop went on to say, “A priest must first be grounded in his relationship with Jesus Christ and know his own self, both the strengths and the weaknesses.”

Bishop Monforton looked directly at the transitional deacon, saying, “You have just experienced another way to live Jesus’ words, ‘It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to bear fruit that will remain.’”

Father McCalister and his wife Crystal have five daughters, Haley, Madison, Corissa, Emiliana and Gemma. Since 1967, the Holy See has granted dispensations to Protestant clergy converts, on a case-by-case basis.

Crystal McCalister said, “We are excited and blessed that this was able to happen. We are in awe of God’s work and look forward to what the future holds.”

The bishop also thanked Pope Francis for his permission and guidance for the ordination.

The letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to Bishop Monforton Nov. 6 stated that the pope, on Sept. 26, granted the dispensation for the former Pentecostal minister and was subject to the following conditions: “With regard to the church’s traditional discipline of priestly celibacy, it must be ensured that clergy and faithful are helped to understand this exception to the traditional discipline; the candidate must be informed of and agree to the conditions that remarriage, in the case of his wife’s death, will not be possible after ordination; and the candidate will not be permitted to transfer to another country to take up priestly duties without the approval of the Holy See.”
BELLAIRE — The Catholic Church has been present in Bellaire since the early 1830s when Mass was celebrated a few times each year, according to parish history.

St. John Parish, Bellaire, began in 1854. In 1855, Father Michael Kennedy was appointed the first resident pastor. A priest by the name of Father Jacquet came to Bellaire in 1856 and oversaw the construction of the first church on Guernsey St. He also founded a Catholic school.

In 1868, under a priest by the name of Father Daley, the first parish residence and school, at the corner of 31st and Guernsey streets, were constructed. Father Philip Steyle was appointed pastor in 1871. He was able to obtain the Sisters of the Humility of Mary in 1872, as teachers. In 1881, Father Daniel Cull became pastor and replaced the teachers with the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky. By 1886, a high school had been added. In 1894, Father Richard Fitzgerald became pastor following Father Cull’s death. He led the parish with constructing a two-story brick combination church and school on the southeast corner of 37th and Guernsey streets, which later became St. John Central (Grade) School.

In 1896, Father Joseph Wehrle assumed the pastorate. He purchased a convent and a rectory in 1901 and 1902, respectively.

Father Joseph Wittman succeeded Father Wehrle. Father Wittman supervised the construction of the present St. John Church. On April 2, 1924, ground was broken and the cornerstone laid for the new church. Columbus Bishop James J. Hartley dedicated the church Nov. 8, 1925. The church was built with Byzantine architecture, with an altar of Carrara marble and stained-glass windows from Germany.


In 1946, St. John High School became St. John Central High School, serving 13 parishes.

When Msgr. Harris died in 1959, Msgr. Paul E. Metzger succeeded him. Father Raffaele “Ralph” Saliccia was associate pastor at the time and served until his death in March 1997. Msgr. Metzger supervised the painting of the interior of the church.

In 1964, a new convent was built. In September 1985, Msgr. Stanley Z. Zekas replaced Msgr. Metzger, who retired as pastor. During Msgr. Zekas’ pastorate, stained windows were restored in the church, new restrooms were installed in the parish hall and new sidewalks were placed around the church. Property was obtained for a future playground and parking. In March 1986, Msgr. Zekas was also appointed pastor of St. Michael Parish, Bellaire.

Msgr. George W. Yontz became pastor in 1988 and the restoration of St. John’s continued.

In October 1995, Msgr. Gene W. Mullett was appointed pastor. He was given the task of building a new rectory to replace the 102-year-old structure. Construction was completed in 1999. For a third time, the church was painted in 2002. Updates were made in the church hall. A perpetual eucharistic adoration chapel was dedicated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in 2003.

On March 22, 2009, St. Michael Parish closed. Msgr. Mullett served as parochial administrator of Sacred Heart Parish, Neffs, in addition to his pastorate at St. John’s.

On July 1, 2010, Father Daniel Heusel was named pastor, as parochial administrator of Sacred Heart Parish. Father Heusel was named pastor of Sacred Heart Parish Jan. 13, 2016. Sacred Heart Parish closed Oct. 7, 2018. The parish was absorbed into St. John Parish, and Father Heusel became pastor of St. Mary Parish, Shadyside, in addition to his pastorate in Bellaire.

In 2019, St. John Central (Grade) School and St. John Central High School closed, due to low enrollment.

SHADYSIDE — St. Mary Parish, Shadyside, was the first parish established after the founding of the Diocese of Steubenville. Prior to its establishment as a parish, St. Mary was a mission of St. John Parish, Bellaire.

In the beginning, the Catholic people in Shadyside went from home to home collecting nickels, dimes, quarters and occasional dollars for the purchase of property, according to parish history.

In 1934, a chapel was built from materials salvaged in the demolition of a structure on the property that had been bought. Msgr. William C. Hayes, pastor of St. John Parish, celebrated the first Mass at St. Mary Mission April 21, 1935.

On Feb. 20, 1946, Bishop John King Mussio, the first bishop of Steubenville, issued a decree stating St. Mary would become a parish March 1, 1946.

Father Peter V. Sartori was named the first pastor of St. Mary Parish.

Father Sartori oversaw the building of a rectory, which was completed in 1948 at an estimated cost of $25,000. In December 1950, ground was broken for a new church. At first, only the basement was completed, and Masses were celebrated in the lower level for seven years.

In June 1956, a contract was signed to build the upper part of the church. It was completed at a cost of approximately $125,000. Father Sartori laid the cornerstone of the church in November 1956. Mass was first celebrated at the new church on Pentecost Sunday, June 9, 1957. Bishop Mussio dedicated the church July 14, 1957. From 1958-63, assistants to Father Sartori included Father Mitchell A. Wilamowski, Father Francis X. McCarthy, Msgr. James A. Boehm and Father Richard C. Conrath.

When the old church was torn down, it was discovered that its boards were filled with termites. Parish history reads it “was a wonder that the church hadn’t collapsed.”

Throughout the years, parishioners continued to maintain their parish. A garage was built to house two buses, which were purchased in 1963 for transporting children to and from St. John Central Grade and High schools, Bellaire.

In 1964, ground was broken for a cathechetical center, which was completed in September 1965.

In 1968, the sanctuary was renovated. In 1971, a convent for the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Kentucky, was constructed. From 1965-79, priests who served St. Mary Parish as assistant included Father Frank P. Manieri, later named a monsignor, Father Edward Struzinski, Father Virgil L. Reischman, Father Charles E. Moran, Father Charles L. Calabrese, Father John Price and Father Richard J. Tuttle. In 1979, Father John B. Nazdam became a full-time assistant and retired in 1986. A Marian shrine was built in 1984. After Father Sartori celebrated his 45th anniversary to the priesthood, he retired July 1, 1985. St. Mary Church basement was renamed Sartori Hall. Msgr. Manieri succeeded Father Sartori as the second pastor of St. Mary Parish.

On Sept. 29, 1993, Father Paul D. Welton was appointed pastor. He also served as parochial administrator of St. John Vianney Parish, Powhatan Point, which was clustered with St. Mary Parish in 1999. Father Welton served until his unexpected death in 2000.

On Aug. 16, 2000, Father Francis C. Cronin was appointed pastor of the parishes.


Father Thomas A. Chillog, pastor of St. Mary Parish, St. Clairsville, served Shadyside and Powhatan Point as administrator pro tem until it was announced St. John Vianney Parish would close. The last Mass at St. John Vianney was celebrated Oct. 6, 2018.

Father Daniel Heusel was named pastor of St. Mary Parish Oct. 7, 2018, while continuing to serve as pastor of St. John Parish, Bellaire.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This series of historical parish profiles is offered as part of the commemorating of the Diocese of Steubenville’s 75th jubilee year. The diocese was founded Oct. 21, 1944, and consists of 13 counties in southeastern Ohio.
Celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe held in Marietta

Msgr. John Michael Campbell, rector of the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, celebrates Mass on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dec. 12. Msgr. Campbell, top left photo, is pictured center with the feast of Guadalupe roses; Permanent Deacon Lee V. Weisend is pictured at right. Students at St. Mary School, Marietta, top center, line up for the flag procession prior to Mass, as students Sofia Villarruerta and Maria Nutter, lower center, from left, lead the procession. Also taking part in the Mass are the Guadalupe dancers, top right, symbolic of the Indians who danced in 1533, when a chapel was consecrated in Mexico City, in honor of Mary and students Zuria Budar and Yeraldi Marquez, lower right. Traditional Mexican food is prepared and served in the basilica undercroft for parishioners throughout the diocese, lower left. (Photos by Tammi Bradley)
St. John Paul II
Peter: Teacher

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon

The essential command, the “Great Commission” that Jesus gave to the Apostles, was to continue his own mission by telling the world the “good news,” God’s plan for his human creatures and their part in it: that God created us to share his life – forever! “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

“Teach them”: St. Paul has an interesting comment on this. That’s not surprising. As “apostle of the Gentiles (all non-Jews),” he had to know what he was about. He put it this way: “But, how can they call upon him whom they have not believed? And, how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And, how can they hear without someone to preach? And, how can people preach unless they are sent?” The meaning of the word “apostle” is “one who is sent” – like an emissary or ambassador. The work of Christ’s Apostles and their successors is to convey the word – to tell – to preach!

The address that Peter gave at the first Pentecost, after being enlightened by the Holy Spirit, is a good example of the primitive catechesis that was used. Since it was a Jewish feast day, it was to a crowd of Jews that he reminded them of the wonders that was used. Since it was a Jewish feast day, it was to a crowd of Jews that he reminded them of the wonders that had preceded the birth of Jesus. He then calls attention to Jesus and the wonders that he had performed as well.

St. Paul tells us: “Feed my lambs, tend my sheep,” does not express a doctrinal mission explicitly, but rather implies it. Tending the flock means providing it with the solid food of the spiritual life, and this food imparts revealed doctrine to nourish the faith. As universal pastor, the pope has the mission to proclaim revealed doctrine and to promote true faith in Christ throughout the church. This is the integral meaning of the Petrine ministry.” Jesus said to the Apostles, “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21). These words were addressed particularly to Peter as head and “point man” of the apostolic group. The saving message of the Gospel is intended for the whole world until the end of time. This is the apostolic mission, this is the work that Peter and his successors have been given. They are to be teachers of the Gospel – inviting mankind to faith.

The pope says: “Vatican II speaks of the pope as pastor of the entire church having “full, supreme and universal power” (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, “Lumen Gentium,” Paragraph 22). That power is primacy over all, both pastors and faithful (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, “Lumen Gentium,” Paragraph 22). The individual bishops, insofar as their own discharge of their duty to preach, are obliged to enter into a community of work among themselves and with the successor of Peter ...

Sacramental Confession and the Certainty of Forgiveness

By Bishop Arthur Serratelli

A few years ago, Paul Croituru and his young son went out treasure hunting near their native village in Romania. During war time, nations often resort to counterfeit money by telling the world the “good news,” God’s plan for his human creatures and their part in it: that God created us to share his life – forever! “Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

During World War II, the Nazis made prisoners in their dollar by flooding the market with shamers (fake dollars). War, Great Britain attempted to devalue the continental currency. During World War II, the Nazis made prisoners in their camps forge British pounds and American dollars to destabilize their enemies’ economies and destroy them. Satan constantly attempts to entice individuals into counterfeit religion where the forged currency is believing in God, while denying sin. The devil would have everyone forget that sin is a reality. In this way, he can render ineffective in us the work of Christ, who came to take away our sins. Failure, weakness, mistakes, psychological pressures. Social customs. All these labels the devil uses to disguise sin. But, sin itself remains a fact.

Science always prides itself on beginning every research project with a fact. True religion, likewise, begins with the fact of sin, that sin is a reality. In this way, he can render ineffective in us the work of Christ, who came to take away our sins. Failure, weakness, mistakes, psychological pressures. Social customs. All these labels the devil uses to disguise sin. But, sin itself remains a fact.

The Steubenville Register
Biweekly publication of the Diocese of Steubenville
P.O. Box 969, 422 Washington St.
Steubenville, OH 43952-969
email: register@diosteub.org
Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, publisher
Dino Orsatti, editor
dorsatti@diosteub.org
Janice M. Ward, circulation/advertising
jward@diosteub.org
Matthew A. DiCenzo, staff writer, social media coordinator
mdicenzo@diosteub.org

Telephone (740) 282-3631; FAX (740) 282-3238
Subscription rate $15 per year in state of Ohio; $17 per year outside the state of Ohio; $24 per year to all foreign countries
Periodicals postage paid at Steubenville, OH 43952 ISSN 0744-771X

St. John Paul II comments further: “To fulfill Christ’s will, the successor of Peter must assume and exercise the authority he receives in a spirit of humble service and with the aim of ensuring unity. ... (H)e must imitate Christ in serving and bringing into unity those called to be part of the one fold. He will never subordinate what he has received for Christ and his church to his own personal aims.”

The question arises now: What about “infallibility?” How does that come in? The pope will take that up next.
Deep Incarnation - Another Meaning of Christmas

By Father Ron Rolheiser

Some years ago, at a religious conference, a man approached the microphone and after apologizing for what he felt would be an inappropriate question, asked this: “I love my dog. When he dies will he go to heaven? Do animals have eternal life?”

That sort of thing might come as a surprise to many of us, but, looked at through the eyes of Christian faith, yes, his dog can go to heaven. It’s one of the meanings of Christmas. God came into the world to save the world, not just the people living in it. The Incarnation has meaning for humanity, but also for the cosmos itself. We don’t know exactly what that means, and our imaginations aren’t up to the task of picturing it, but, because of the Incarnation, dogs, too, can go to heaven. Is this fanciful? No, it’s scriptural teaching.

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus and see in his birth the beginning of the mystery of the incarnation unfolding in history, the mystery of God becoming human in physical flesh, in order to save the world. What we tend to struggle with though is how we understand what’s meant by Christ saving the world. Most of us take that to mean that Christ came into the world to save the people, those of us with self-awareness and eternal souls.

That’s true, but our faith also asks us to believe that God’s saving activity in the Christ extends to more than only human beings and more than even animals and other living things. God’s saving activity in Christ reaches so deep that it saves creation itself – the oceans, the mountains, the soil that grows our food, the desert sands and the earth itself. Christ came to save all of those things, too, not just us, the people.

Where, you might ask, does Scripture teach this? It teaches it most everywhere in implicit ways, though it teats it quite explicitly in a number of different places.

For example, in the epistle to the Romans (see, Romans, Chapter 8, Verses 19-22), St. Paul writes: I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

This may come as a surprise to us since, until quite recently, our preaching and catechesis has not often made this explicit. However, what St. Paul is saying here is that physical creation itself, the cosmic world, will, at the end of time, be transformed in some glorious way and enter into heaven, just as human beings do. He’s also saying that, like us, it too somehow senses its mortality and groans to be set free from its present limits.

We need to ask ourselves this question: What do we believe will happen to physical creation at the end of time? Will it be destroyed, burnt up, annihilated? Or, will it simply be abandoned and left empty and deserted like a stage after a play has ended, while we go on life elsewhere? Scripture informs us otherwise, that is, it tells us that physical creation itself, our planet earth, will also be transformed (“liberated from its bondage to decay”) and enter into heaven with us. How will this happen? We can’t imagine it, just as we can’t imagine our own transformed state. But, Scripture assures us that it will happen because, like ourselves, our world, physical creation, is also destined to die, and, like us, it intuits its mortality and groans under that sentence, aching to be set free from its limitations and become immortal.

Science agrees. It tells us that physical creation is mortal, that the sun is burning out, that energy is ever so slowly decreasing and that the earth as we know it will someday die. The earth is as mortal as we are and so if it’s to have a future it needs to be saved by Something or Someone from outside itself. That Something and Someone are revealed in the mystery of the incarnation within, which God takes on physical flesh in Christ, in order to save the world – and what he came to save was not just us, the people living on this earth, but rather, “the world,” the planet itself, and everything on it.

Jesus assured us that nothing is ever ultimately lost. No hair falls from someone’s head and no sparrow falls from the sky and simply disappears forever, as if it had never been. God created, loves, cares for and ultimately resurrects every bit of creation for all eternity – including a beloved dog.

Father Rolheiser, a Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate priest, is president of the Oblate School of Theology, San Antonio, an author, a retreat master and a newspaper columnist. More information about Father Rolheiser’s ministry is available on his website at www.ronrolheiser.com.

The Crown’ and the Primacy of Grace

By Bishop Robert Barron

Like, I daresay, most of the English-speaking world, these past couple of years I’ve been watching episodes of “The Crown,” the beautifully filmed, marvelously written program on the life and times of Queen Elizabeth II. The series deals with the psychological dynamics within the royal family, as well as with the cultural changes and political challenges that the queen has faced in the course of her long reign. But, what has been, at least to me, most surprising has been the insightful and sympathetic way in which it has addressed issues of faith. Especially in the first season, we saw the fairly frequent conflicts between Elizabeth’s devotion to her family and her role as head of the Church of England. In season two, there was a deeply affecting episode on the visit of Billy Graham to the United Kingdom in the mid-50s. We saw that, despite reticence regarding the American evangelist on the part of some in the British establishment, the queen found his preaching illuminating and uplifting.

But, in season three, the religious theme has emerged with particular and surprising clarity, especially in connection with the figure who, for my money, is the most fascinating supporting character in the series – namely, Prince Philip’s mother, Princess Alice. An heiress related to most of the royal families of Europe, a first-class eccentric (possibly schizophrenic), a mystic and toward the end of her life, a Greek Orthodox nun dedicated to the poor, Alice could certainly be the star of her own feature film. After political unrest in Greece, the princess-nun is spirited to Buckingham Palace for her own safety, and there she beguiles and/or confounds most of those around her.

When Philip comes to see her, it seems for the first time in quite a while, she inquires as to the prince’s well-being. At the end of their brief conversation, she wonders about his faith. After he gives a diffident response, she looks at him and says, “You must find your faith; it will help you.” But, then, realizing immediately the inadequacy of her characterization, she looks wistfully into the middle distance and insists, “No, it doesn’t just help. It’s every-thing.” I cannot think of a better way to express the all-determining, all-embracing quality of authentic religious belief. Though modern etiquette dictates that faith be one feature of a person’s private life, the great masters of the spiritual tradition know that such a compartmentalized religion is no religion at all. It’s everything, or it’s a waste of time.

Now, two episodes later, the series flashes forward a few years to 1969. Princess Alice has just died, and her son, the prince, finds himself in a midlife funk; depressed, convinced that his royal activities are trivial, utterly dismissive of religion. At the same time, he’s preoccupied with the exploits of the American Apollo astronauts – Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins – making their way that summer to the moon. They strike Philip, himself an accomplished pilot, as models of healthy activity, scientific ingenuity and courage. He begins to feel that somehow associating himself with them and their kind of heroism will restore him to psychological health, peace of soul. As the Apollo 11 mission is underway, Philip is invited to visit a group of Anglican clergymen, who are experiencing burnout and depression in their ministry. Joining their circle of discussion, he hears tales of woe, hopelessness and unrealized dreams. Showing not an ounce of sympathy, he launches into a purely Pelagian exhortation, urging these sad men to be like “Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins,” finding their purpose through achievement and self-determination and to stop wasting their time with morbid introspection. To the utter consternation of these suffering clergymen, the prince then leaves their company in a huff of pitiless condescension.

After the moon landing, the Apollo astronauts pay a formal visit to Buckingham Palace and, more than a little starstruck, the prince asks to see them privately. Face to face with his heroes, he asks not about the technicalities of flying, but about meaning, vision and what they learned – in the deepest sense of that term – when they were on the moon. Surely, these paragons of achievement will give him what he wants. Instead, they tell Philip that they just didn’t have time to muse on such matters – at which point they commence, with childlike enthusiasm, to inquire about the perks and privileges of the royal life. With that, something shifted in the prince — something gave way. He seemed to realize that his program of vigorous activity and self-assertion, which he had boldly advocated to the suffering
Heartache to hope: Mom shares journey of her son’s mental illness, suicide

HERMITAGE, Pa. (CNS) — Betty Koscinski of Notre Dame Parish in Hermitage, in the Diocese of Erie, Pennsylvania, spends much of every year shedding light on mental illness and suicide.

In the following first-person account, she shares the memory of her son, Joseph, who died by suicide three years ago at age 41. Mental illness had plagued him since college and finally claimed his life one spring afternoon in 2016:

We got “the call” about 2:30 in the afternoon on Sunday, April 3, 2016. The police officer on the other end of the phone peppered me with questions: Do you have a son? What’s his name? How old is he? What’s his approximate height and weight?

Pacing frantically, my heart pumping I learned that my son, Joe, 41, had jumped to his death from the viaduct in Sharon, Pennsylvania, not more than a mile from our home.

How could this be? One moment I was having brunch with my son and two hours later we were gone. But the 20-year journey that led to this crushing moment was filled with a mix of heartache and hope.

Joe is the oldest of my children: four girls and two boys. Joe and I raised them in Hermitage. They all attended St. Joseph School.

Joe was happy-go-lucky and a bit mischievous. He kept his brother and sisters in an uproar with his silly antics. As he grew into a young man, he had tons of friends, the girls loved him and he had an active social life. Teachers and classmates remembered Joe for his never-ending smile and his caring nature. If you were down, he would lift you up.

That was before the enemy called mental illness stole away his happiness, even the twinkle in his eye.

Joe’s troubles first began when he was a sophomore at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. He nearly died after falling from a trestle and busting his mandible in 10 places.

In critical condition for several days, he had his jaw wired shut for eight weeks. Then, a painful, nasty infection developed. No doctor has been able to directly connect this experience to Joe’s ensuing mental illness, but it marked the noticeable beginning of his trials.

Then, a painful, nasty infection developed. Then, a painful, nasty infection developed. Then, a painful, nasty infection developed.

In the fetal position. The doorbell rang. Joe was not home.

Joe’s self-harm continued over the years, he was hospitalized more than one of the great fault lines in Christ’s body, the church. The act of confession – and then humbly asks for forgiveness – and then humbly asks for forgiveness – and then humbly asks for forgiveness.

We asked him to stay with us, hoping it would give him some comfort.

Joe, committed suicide at age 41 in 2016. Mental illness had plagued him since college and he spends much of the year shedding light on mental illness and suicide. (CNS photo/Rick Klein, courtesy Betty Koscinski)

He took a leave of absence from school and then sank into a deep depression. Concerned with his appearance and the scabs from the fall, he turned to alcohol. In subsequent counseling, he was diagnosed not only with alcoholism, but with bipolar disorder.

Over the years, diagnoses went from bipolar to schizoaffective disorder, to full-blown paranoid schizophrenia. Joe was hearing and responding to voices that he could not silence.

At one point, following the 9/11 tragedy, he drove in a manic state to New York City to help first responders. EMs found him wandering the streets and took him to a hospital.

Once, on a whim, he headed for California to visit his sister. When his car broke down, he continued on foot without regard for his own safety or any care of where he had left his vehicle.

It was heartbreaking for our family to see Joe this way. For periods of time, he would seemingly recover and try to return to school or get a job, but then he’d relapse.

Over the years, he was hospitalized more than 40 times. The night before Joe died, we sensed that he was scared to be alone in his apartment.

We were overwhelmed with this gift. Judy stayed with me for a while and we shared stories of the “Joe” she remembered in her fifth-grade class.

It’s so amazing how God continues to send living angels to me. They appear when I am at my worst, drowning in grief. I say drowning because that’s what it feels like. A huge wave washes over your head as you struggle to breathe.

When you lose someone to suicide, there is no handbook that tells you how to muddle through the grief.

One of my nicest coping skills was to stay busy. I’d ride my bike for miles out into the country, allowing myself to cry, even scream. I’d exercise and clean like there was no tomorrow.

Each of us can do something when someone we know is experiencing such grief. Don’t shy away from talking to a friend in pain. Those of us who have lost children appreciate it when others speak our child’s name; it lets us know that they’ve not been forgotten.

I pray that my son is finally at peace, running through brightly colored fields and feeling the joy that defined him as a child and as a young man. I hope that the shackles that bound his mind have – at last – been set free.

**The Crown**

From Page 7

clergymen, would never, in fact, answer the questions that had welled up in his own soul. In a remarkably moving scene, the prince subsequently returns to the circle of priests in crisis, whom he had previously mocked and chastised, and makes a kind of confession – and then humbly asks for their help.

There is so much more going on here than mere psychological insight or development—and God bless the writers of “The Crown” for presenting it. Throughout this episode, Prince Philip stands on one of the great fault lines in Christianity – namely, the divide between auto-salvation and salvation through grace. In referring above to the “Pelagian” quality of the leads on “The Crown,” I was thinking of the fifth-century theologian Pelagius, who opined that we can save ourselves through a heroic exercise of the free will. St. Augustine spent the last years of his life opposing Pelagianism and insisting that peace of soul, happiness, salvation — call it what you want — comes not through self-striving, but precisely through a surrender that takes place at the limit of all possible achievement. It comes, as Prince Philip rather slowly and painfully realized, not through any conscious effort, but as his mother clearly knew, through faith—a surrender to what can only be called grace. The primacy of grace, it has been argued, is the central teaching of the Bible. How wonderful that it’s also a key lesson in an episode of one of the most popular television programs of our time.

Bishop Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. He is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, headquartered in Des Plaines, Illinois. A nonprofit global media apostolate, additional information is available at www.wordonfire.org.
Pope lifts secrecy obligation for those who report having been abused

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has abolished the obligation of secrecy for those who report having been sexually abused by a priest and for those who testify in a church trial or process having to do with clerical sexual abuse.

“The person who files the report, the person who alleges to have been harmed and the witnesses shall not be bound by any obligation of silence with regard to matters involving the case,” the pope ordered in a new “Instruction On the Confidentiality of Legal Proceedings,” published Dec. 17.

In an accompanying note, Bishop Juan Ignacio Arrieta, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, said the change regarding the “pastoral secret” has nothing to do with the seal of the sacrament of confession.

“The absolute obligation to observe the sacramental seal,” he said, “is an obligation imposed on the priest by reason of the position he holds in documenting the sacrament of confession and not even the penitent can free him of it.”

The instruction was published by the Vatican along with changes to the already-updated “Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela” (“Safeguarding the Sanctity of the Sacraments”), the 2001 document issued by St. John Paul II outlining procedures for the investigation and trial of any member of the clergy accused of sexually abusing a child or a vulnerable adult or accused of acquiring, possessing or distributing child pornography.

In the first of the amendments, Pope Francis changed the definition of child pornography. Previously the subject was a person under the age of 14. The new description of the crime says, “The acquisition, possession or distribution by a cleric of pornographic images of minors under the age of 18, for purposes of sexual gratification, by whatever means or using whatever technology.”

In describing the procedural norms for how the tribunal of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to be composed and conducted, Pope Francis has removed the requirement that the legal representative of the accused be a priest. The law now reads: “The role of advocate or procurator is carried out by a member of the faithful possessing a doctorate in canon law, who is approved by the presiding judge of the college.”

But the abolition of the pastoral secret over the entire Vatican process is the greatest change made. And, not only are victims and witnesses free to discuss the case, the amended law specifies that the still-effect obligation of Vatican officials to maintain confidentiality “shall not prevent the fulfillment of the obligations laid down in all places by civil laws, including any reporting obligations, and the execution of enforceable requests of civil judicial authorities.”

Archbishop Charles Scicluna, adjunct secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Vatican’s chief abuse investigator, told America Magazine the new law makes clear that “anybody who discloses misconduct or a crime and anybody who is impacted by the misconduct or the crime, and the witnesses, should never be subject to a vow or a promise of silence on the fact that they have reported.”

The new law, he said, explicitly states people’s “moral duty” to cooperate with civil authorities in reporting and investigating the crime of abuse. Moreover, there is an obligation not to bind people who disclose misconduct or crimes by any promise or vow of silence,” he explained.

In a separate interview with Vatican News, Archbishop Scicluna described as an “epochal change” the pope’s decision to drop the “pastoral secret” — the highest level of confidentiality. “That means, of course, the question of transparency now is being implemented at the highest level,” he said.

The new rules do not mean that documents from Vatican abuse investigations and trials will be made public, he said, but “they are available for authorities, or people who are interested parties, and authorities who have a statutory jurisdiction over the matter.”

In the past, when a government or court asked the Vatican for information on a case, the response usually was that the material was covered by “pastoral secret.” Now, Archbishop Scicluna said, once “all the formalities of international law” are fulfilled, communication with other authorities “and the sharing of information and documentation are facilitated.”

In September 2017, members of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors asked Pope Francis to reconsider Vatican norms maintaining the imposition of “pontifical secret” in the church’s judicial handling of clerical sex abuse and other grave crimes.

The secret ensures cases are dealt with in strict confidentiality. Vatican experts have said it was designed to protect the dignity of everyone involved, including the victim, the accused, their families and their communities.

But when Pope Francis called the presidents of the world’s bishops’ conferences to the Vatican for a summit on the abuse crisis in February, victims and experts alike Urged a revision of the policy.

Linda Ghisoni, a canon lawyer and undersecretary for laity at the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, told the summit removing the pontifical secret from abuse cases would reverse a situation or the impression of a situation where secrecy “is used to hide problems rather than protect the values at stake,” including the confidentiality of the victims and the right of an accused to a fair trial.

Cardinal Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising, Germany, told the summit that removing the pontifical secret would promote transparency in a scandal where the lack of transparency has meant “the rights of victims were effectively trapped underfoot and left to the whims of individuals.”

In his commentary, Bishop Arrieta noted that already in May with the publication of “Vos Estis Lux Mundi” (“You are the light of the world”) on procedures for handling allegations of abuse or of the cover-up of abuse, Pope Francis already banned imposing confidentiality agreements on victims.

The bishop also took pains to note that the abolition of absolute secrecy — the “pastoral secret,” which is invoked with an oath — was not the same thing as removing all obligations for confidentiality.

The “secrecy of the office” still applies to Vatican officials and others involved in an investigation or trial of a cleric accused of abuse or of a bishop or religious superior accused of cover-up. Except for sharing information with civil authorities, the basic professional secrecy serves, as the new law says, to protect “the good name, image and privacy of all persons involved.”

Pope accepts archbishop’s resignation

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Archbishop Luigi Ventura, the nuncio to France, who has been under investigation for sexual misconduct in France and in Canada.

A statement released by the nunciature in Paris said Pope Francis accepted the resignation “for reasons of age.” Archbishop Ventura turned 79, the age at which bishops must offer their resignations, Dec. 9.

A French judicial official confirmed in February that the prosecutor’s office in Paris had opened an investigation into an allegation of “sexual aggression” by Archbishop Ventura.

The French newspaper, Le Monde, reported that the archbishop was suspected of having sexually molested a young male employee at the Paris city hall Jan. 17.

A few weeks after the French court report, the apostolic nunciature in Ottawa, Ontario, confirmed it received a complaint of sexual misconduct concerning Archbishop Ventura, who was the Vatican’s ambassador to Canada from 2001-09.

Vatican News reported that in France four accusations, “three for presumed sexual molestation,” have been filed against him.

A preliminary investigation in France concluded the Vatican announced that it had waived the archbishop’s diplomatic immunity.

The Vatican said the move was “an extraordinary gesture that confirms the will of the nuncio, to cooperate fully with the French judicial authorities responsible for the case.”

THE DIOCESE OF STEUBENVILLE

PRESENTS

"JOURNEYS OF FAITH 2020"

Celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Diocese of Steubenville by participating in an inspiring journey of faith:

* Holy Pittsburgh – March 6
* Philadelphia and Emmitsburg – April 27-30
* Historic Marietta – June 24
* Washington D.C. and Baltimore – Oct. 21-23

Informative travel presentations outlining these memorable pilgrimages are scheduled as follows:

- Monday, Jan. 13, 10:30 a.m., Holy Rosary Church Marian Room, Steubenville
- Wednesday, Jan. 15, 10 a.m., Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta
- Wednesday, Jan. 15, 1:30 p.m., St. Benedict Church, Cambridge

For additional information, telephone Wendt Touring (740) 282-5790 or toll-free at (877) 565-8687
Marietta — Scrip card buyers will have a chance to win a $25 gift card of their choice at a drawing, which will take place the week of Jan. 6, at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption. First-time gift card buyers will be entered in a “First-Time Drawing”; for every $25 spent, your name will be entered into the “Large Purchase Drawing.” Scrip is sold before and after the celebration of Masses at the basilica. For additional information, telephone (740) 373-3643.

St. Clairsville — “Discovering Christ,” the first step of ChristLife – Catholic Ministry for Evangelization, will begin Jan. 6 at Holy Rosary Church. The seven-week program inspires attendees “to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ, by learning and growing in the basic disciplines and truths practiced by Christians since the early church,” according to www.christlife.org. For additional information or to register, telephone (740) 695-9993.

Steubenville — A First Saturday Cenacle will be held following the 8:30 a.m. Mass, Jan. 4, at Holy Rosary Church Marian Room. The discussion will be based on Mary, the mother of God. Light refreshments will be available.

“Following Christ,” the second step of ChristLife – Catholic Ministry for Evangelization, will begin Jan. 6 at Holy Rosary Church. The seven-week program inspires attendees “to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ, by learning and growing in the basic disciplines and truths practiced by Christians since the early church,” according to www.christlife.org. For additional information or to register, telephone (740) 264-0155. Deadline for registration is Dec. 30. Snacks will be provided.

Steubenville — On Jan. 9, “Discovering Christ,” the first step of ChristLife – Catholic Ministry for Evangelization, will begin at Holy Family Church. The program, which includes dinner, is free. For additional information or to register, visit www.holyfamiliesteubenville.com/christlife or telephone (740) 457-7357.

Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton will celebrate a Respect Life Mass, with the praying of the rosary, at 11 a.m., Jan. 19, at Holy Family Church. For additional information, contact Joseph A. Schmidt, director, diocesan Office of Marriage, Family and Respect Life, by emailing jschmidt@diosteub.org or telephoning (740) 516-9270.

Around and About

Bloomingdale — The Apostolate for Family Consecration will host a “Duo in Altum” youth retreat at Catholic Familyland, 3375 Jefferson County Road 36, Feb. 14-17. The theme of the retreat is based on John, Chapter 15, Verse 4: “Remain in me, as I remain in you.” The retreat will include eucharistic adoration and confessions, spiritual discussions, games, a movie and food. For additional information, visit the Apostolate for Family Consecration website at www.afc.org.

Lattrobe, Pa. — Mark Schultz, a Christian artist, will perform at 7:30 p.m., Jan. 21, at St. Vincent Archabbey Basilica, 300 Fraser Purchase Road. For more information, telephone (724) 805-2177.

Steubenville — Knights of Columbus St. John Neumann Council 11828 will sponsor a breakfast following the 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Masses, Jan. 5, at St. Peter Church, to benefit March for Life. The breakfast will include eggs with cheese, pancakes, homestyle potatoes, ham, applesauce, fruit cocktail, milk, juice and coffee.

Steubenville — Applications for summer 2020 and fall 2020 terms at Franciscan University of Steubenville School of Spiritual Direction are being accepted. Classroom sessions, facilitated by faculty and grad students from the university will focus on topics that lay the foundation for spiritual direction. To register, visit www.franciscan.edu/school-spiritual-direction or email ssd@franciscan.edu.

Christmas program at St. Benedict School

Students at St. Benedict School, Cambridge, are pictured singing during their annual Christmas program, Dec. 12, at St. Benedict Church, Cambridge. The program, “It’s All About the Child,” was written and directed by Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity Carol Juckem. (Photo by Sister Sharon Paul)

BJKM students present Christmas program

Kindergarten through fourth-grade students at Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School, Steubenville, present their Christmas program to more than 700 people at Berkman Theater, Lanman Hall, at Catholic Central High School, Steubenville. This year’s program was titled, “Jesus Means Christmas to Me.” (Photo by Orsatti)

Obituaries

Nora Miravalle Thomas — the mother of Permanent Deacon Mark Miravalle — passed away Dec. 12. She was 94 years old.

Born Feb. 28, 1925, in San Francisco, Thomas was the daughter of the late Isidoro and Luigia Dezzana Miravalle. She was a resident of Hopedale.

Suriving, in addition to Deacon Miravalle, is another son, Lawrence Gianni, Chatsworth, California; 10 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

A funeral Mass was celebrated at St. Casimir Church, Adena, by Msgr. John C. Kolesar, pastor of St. Casimir Parish and St. Adalbert Parish, Dillonvale. Burial took place at Hopedale Cemetery, Hopedale.

Norma Cavicchia, 93, St. John, Bellaire, Dec. 6.

Sam Fortunato, 72, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Dec. 6.


Charlotte Heatherington, 75, St. Mary, Shadyside, Dec. 6.


John W. Metcalf, 90, Steubenville, Holy Family, Nov. 21.

Catherine M. Ralston, 92, St. Clairsville, St. Mary, Dec. 7.

James T. Runkel, 80, Martins Ferry, St. Frances Cabrini, Colerain, Nov. 20.


Rose Marie Ziemba, 96, St. Clairsville, St. Mary, Dec. 8.
ERIE, Pa. (CNS) — Bishop Lawrence T. Persico of Erie, Pennsylvania, announced Dec. 17 the opening of the canonization cause for Gertrude Agnes Barber, a renowned Erie educator and Catholic woman of faith who dedicated her life to serving children and adults with intellectual disabilities/autism and their families.

“It is an honor to open the cause for sainthood for Dr. Gertrude Barber,” the Erie bishop said. “Her family members, and the thousands of families who have been touched by the work she initiated in her lifetime, are surely thrilled to be part of this historic moment.

“But, I am particularly pleased that the good work of Dr. Barber, motivated by her Catholic faith and undertaken on behalf of those in need,” he continued, “will now be known more fully by those throughout our region and beyond.”

Bishop Persico made the announcement during a gathering of supporters and members of the Barber family with staff, students and adults at the Barber National Institute. Five days earlier, on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, he issued a formal decree opening the cause.

A diocesan news release said the decree will be shared in Catholic churches across the Diocese of Erie the weekend of Dec. 28-29. It also can be found at www.DrBarber.org.

Barber (1911-2000) was born in Erie and lived with her family on Newman Street, a short distance from what is now the Barber National Institute, while she attended Villa Maria Academy, Erie.

She earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees and a doctorate in education at Pennsylvania State University, and a doctor of laws degree from Catholic-run Gannon University, Erie. She also had a doctorate of pedagogy from Edinboro University, Edinboro, Pennsylvania.

Barber “had a natural desire for learning; she was a successful scholar and built her career around education by passing on her message and practically applying that all individuals have a right to develop to their fullest potential,” according to her biography on the website www.barberinstitute.org.

She began her career as a teacher and then worked as a home and school counselor, psychologist, coordinator of special education programs and finally as assistant superintendent of the Erie School District.

“This position presented many challenges when it became her job to tell parents of children with special needs that no services were available to educate their children in the community,” her biography reads.

“Barber decided it was time to make a change. In 1952, with the help of a group of dedicated teachers and parents, she established the first classroom for children with developmental disabilities.”

This was the founding of the Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Center. In 2003, the center name was changed to Barber National Institute, which currently serves 5,370 children and adults annually in locations across Pennsylvania. It has about 2,600 employees.

The institute provides services in the areas of autism, deaf and hearing impairment, behavioral health diagnosis and intellectual disabilities.

With the formal opening of her sainthood cause, Barber now has the title “Servant of God.” A formal inquiry will begin a review of her life, work and holiness. Bishop Persico has approved the appointment of Msgr. Thomas McSweeney to serve as diocesan postulator for the cause. He is a retired priest and former director of Erie’s diocesan Office of Evangelization for Communications.

Msgr. McSweeney will be the main point of contact for the gathering of documentation and formal interviews with anyone who wants to discuss interactions they had with Barber during her lifetime. The testimony will become part of the official documentation for the canonization process, all of which will eventually be sent to the Vatican.

Although Barber died years before Bishop Persico’s 2012 appointment to head the Diocese of Erie, he noted he had heard about her good works and her faith commitment from his earliest days in the diocese. He said he has visited the Barber National Institute many times and offered Mass there. “I know the family and staff is deeply committed to carrying out the mission she established.”

Bishop Persico first recognized the Association for the Cause of Gertrude A. Barber, a public association of the faithful, in August 2019. The association’s members include the parent of a child with a disability, staff members of the Barber National Institute and Barber family members.

The association formally submitted a petition for the cause to the bishop in October. John Barber, a nephew of Gertrude Barber, is the current chief executive officer of the institute. He said his aunt’s spirit lives on through the many children she has helped.

He said: “If you really want to feel her spirit, walk through the halls here, visit a classroom, go and have dinner with some of our people who live in group homes.”
More than $2.2 million pledged to 2019 Diocesan/Parish Share Campaign

DPSC figures as of Dec. 17

98% of $2.2 million pledges received

DPSC Goal: $1,340,000

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<td>17,494</td>
<td>155%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother of Hope Deanery Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>442,878</td>
<td>644,119</td>
<td>145%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nativity of Mary Deanery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nativity of Mary Deanery</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>% of goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christ the King Athens</td>
<td></td>
<td>39,650</td>
<td>55,281</td>
<td>139%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Paul Athens</td>
<td></td>
<td>35,016</td>
<td>56,863</td>
<td>162%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Ann Chesapeake</td>
<td></td>
<td>23,185</td>
<td>35,805</td>
<td>154%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Louis Gallipolis</td>
<td></td>
<td>34,620</td>
<td>31,719</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Cross Glaston</td>
<td></td>
<td>11,614</td>
<td>11,116</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Joseph/St Lawrence Ironon</td>
<td></td>
<td>32,345</td>
<td>199,088</td>
<td>616%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary Nelsonville</td>
<td></td>
<td>7,420</td>
<td>18,060</td>
<td>243%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary Pine Grove</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,111</td>
<td>7,220</td>
<td>232%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacred Heart Pomeroy</td>
<td></td>
<td>20,197</td>
<td>29,195</td>
<td>145%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nativity of Mary Deanery Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nativity of Mary Deanery Totals</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>% of goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>207,159</td>
<td>444,357</td>
<td>215%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Presentation Deanery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Deanery</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>% of goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>St Casimir Adena</td>
<td></td>
<td>13,744</td>
<td>19,394</td>
<td>141%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption Barnsville</td>
<td></td>
<td>26,628</td>
<td>87,900</td>
<td>330%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John Bellaire</td>
<td></td>
<td>24,986</td>
<td>36,315</td>
<td>151%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Anthony Bridgeport</td>
<td></td>
<td>12,019</td>
<td>18,872</td>
<td>157%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Joseph Bridgeport</td>
<td></td>
<td>21,041</td>
<td>23,850</td>
<td>113%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Frances Cabrini Colerain</td>
<td></td>
<td>19,921</td>
<td>27,938</td>
<td>140%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Adalbert Dillonvale</td>
<td></td>
<td>19,531</td>
<td>28,745</td>
<td>147%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary Martins Ferry</td>
<td></td>
<td>18,323</td>
<td>34,797</td>
<td>190%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary Shadyside</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,857</td>
<td>21,170</td>
<td>195%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary St Clairsville</td>
<td></td>
<td>95,014</td>
<td>151,309</td>
<td>159%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary Temperanenceville</td>
<td></td>
<td>7,059</td>
<td>7,335</td>
<td>104%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Joseph Tiltonsville</td>
<td></td>
<td>13,605</td>
<td>26,460</td>
<td>194%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Lucy Yorkville</td>
<td></td>
<td>4,015</td>
<td>7,074</td>
<td>178%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Presentation Deanery Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Deanery Totals</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>% of goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>285,856</td>
<td>491,159</td>
<td>172%</td>
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</tbody>
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Visitation Deanery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitation Deanery</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>% of goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corpus Christi Belle Valley</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,204</td>
<td>12,515</td>
<td>123%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Bernard Beverly</td>
<td></td>
<td>25,447</td>
<td>51,216</td>
<td>201%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Stephen Caldwell</td>
<td></td>
<td>34,637</td>
<td>41,573</td>
<td>120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Our Light Cambridge</td>
<td></td>
<td>74,417</td>
<td>65,705</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Michael Carlisle</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,422</td>
<td>12,350</td>
<td>118%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John Churchtown</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,752</td>
<td>70,453</td>
<td>310%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immaculate Conception Fulda</td>
<td></td>
<td>20,048</td>
<td>52,481</td>
<td>262%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Henry Harringtonville</td>
<td></td>
<td>8,064</td>
<td>13,657</td>
<td>173%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Ambrose Little Hocking</td>
<td></td>
<td>40,550</td>
<td>76,731</td>
<td>189%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Lady of Mercy Lowell</td>
<td></td>
<td>19,981</td>
<td>29,429</td>
<td>147%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Mary Marietta</td>
<td></td>
<td>96,385</td>
<td>153,032</td>
<td>159%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St James Mccnnelsville</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,460</td>
<td>9,447</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John Miltonsburg</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,989</td>
<td>12,160</td>
<td>122%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St John Bosco Sardis</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,799</td>
<td>3,150</td>
<td>175%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Sylvester Woodfield</td>
<td></td>
<td>18,354</td>
<td>22,590</td>
<td>123%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Visitation Deanery Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visitation Deanery Totals</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>% of goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>404,107</td>
<td>626,489</td>
<td>155%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

GRAND TOTAL ALL DEANERIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>% of goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,340,000</td>
<td>2,206,124</td>
<td>165%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>