Parish reductions are planned in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati

CINCINNATI — The Archdiocese of Cincinnati this week announced plans for groupings of parishes, called “families,” which will greatly reduce the number of parishes in the archdiocese during a multi-year consolidation process.

The announcement follows a period of public comment on the plan, during which the archdiocese says it fielded some 8,000 comments.

Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr said the consolidation process, dubbed “Beacons of Light,” is an effort to “ensure that all our resources – human, physical and financial – are properly ordered to missionary discipleship.

“I am convinced that ‘Beacons of Light,’ born of great hope, will enable us to form stronger parishes, centered on the Eucharist, that radiate the love of Christ and joy of the Gospel in a world that is frequently indifferent or even hostile,” Archbishop Schnurr wrote.

Under the plan, existing parishes in the Cincinnati Archdiocese – of which there are currently more than 200 – have been grouped together into 53 “families,” of between five to seven on average. The archdiocese serves some 440,000 Catholics in 19 counties.

The next stage in the process will be the implementation of the new “Families of Parishes,” set to be completed by July 1, 2022.

The consolidation process could eliminate more than 70% of active parishes.

Father Michael W. Gossett, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Wintersville, pictured at right, stands with parishioners in front of the parish’s outdoor Nativity scene after it was placed on the rectory’s lawn. (Photo provided)

Parishioners display Nativity

Synodal sessions begin in the Diocese of Steubenville

Cincinnati’s Synodal sessions begin in the Diocese of Steubenville

MILTONSBURG — Father Virgil L. Reischman died Dec. 6 at the age of 78.

He was born July 3, 1943, in Miltonsburg, one of four children of the late Raymond and Edith Kress Reischman.

Father Reischman attended St. Sylvester Central School, Woodsfield, and St. John Vianney Seminary, Bloomingdale. He received a bachelor’s in history from the College of Steubenville and a bachelor’s in theology from the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.

Father Reischman was ordained May 17, 1969, at Holy Name Cathedral, Steubenville, by Bishop John King Mussio.

His assignments included St. Peter Parish, Steubenville, 1969; St. Mary Parish, St. Clairsville, 1969; St. John Central High School, Bellaire, 1971, instructor; St. Mary Parish, Shadyside, 1972; St. Joseph Central High School, Ironton, principal; St. Mary Parish, Pine Grove, administrator; and St. Peter Parish, 1976.


He was appointed chaplain of St. John Central School, Churchtown, in 2013.

Father Reischman retired from active parish ministry July 8, 2017.

Private funeral arrangements are being planned.

Father William D. Cross, pastor of St. Joseph Parish, Tiltonsville, and judicial vicar for the Diocese of Steubenville, opens a parish listening session for the Synod on Synodality, Dec. 5, at St. Joseph Church hall. Parishes, schools, communities and institutions throughout the diocese are participating in the synod, which was initiated by Pope Francis for the universal church. The theme is “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.” For additional information, visit: www.diosteub.org/synod. (Photo by DiCenzo)

Pro-lifers hopeful about outcome of Dobbs case

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the U.S. bishops’ pro-life committee Dec. 1 urged Catholics, people of other faiths and all people of goodwill to unite in prayer that the U.S. Supreme Court will overturn Roe v. Wade in its eventual ruling on Mississippi’s ban on most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy.

His statement was issued the same day the court heard oral arguments in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, an appeal from Mississippi. Its ban was struck down by a federal District Court in Mississippi in 2018 and upheld a year later by the New Orleans-based U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit.

The Mississippi law is being challenged by the state’s only abortion facility, the Jackson Women’s Health Organization.

It’s the first major abortion case the court has heard in decades.

A group from Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, is seen near the U.S. Capitol in Washington Dec. 1 the day Supreme Court justices heard oral arguments in a case about a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks of gestation. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)
Pro-lifers —

From Page 1

“In the United States, abortion takes the lives of over 600,000 babies every year,” said Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities. “Debbs v. Jackson Women’s Health could change that.”

“We pray that the court will do the right thing and allow states to once again limit or prohibit abortion, and in doing so protect millions of unborn children and their mothers from this painful, life-destroying act,” he added. “We invite all people of goodwill to uphold the dignity of human life by joining us in prayer and fasting for this important case.”

If the court’s ruling, expected in July, upholds the ban, it possibly also could overturn Roe and send the abortion issue back to the states to decide laws on it. Archbishop Lori directed people to www.prayfordobbs.com for Catholic and ecumenical prayers and resources for community engagement and action “as we await the court’s decision in this case.”

Pro-life advocates and supporters of keeping abortion legal gathered outside the Supreme Court rallying for their respective positions on the issue as the justices heard oral arguments in the case inside the court.

Beyond the court building’s steps, statements about the Mississippi law and predictions about the outcome of the case came from all quarters.

U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., predicted there would be a “revolution” if Roe v. Wade is overturned.

Shaheen, who is on record as a supporter of widespread access to abortion, said that young people in particular would find it unacceptable if the court strikes down the legal precedent set by Roe in 1973 legalizing abortion nationwide.

U.S. Rep. Rosa Delauro, D-Conn., called on the Senate to Pass the Women’s Health Protection Act. The measure, passed by the House Sept. 24, codifies Roe and establishes the legal right to abortion on demand at any stage of pregnancy in all 50 states under federal law.

“The Mississippi case brought before the Supreme Court is a product of Republican attacks on reproductive rights spanning decades,” said DeLaura, a Catholic. If Roe is overturned, the court will be “depriving individuals across the country of their right to choose to have an abortion,” she said.

Many pro-lifers hoping Roe will be overturned emphasized how many scientific advances have been made in the nearly 50 years since that decision was handed down, advances they argue that have led to unprecedented information on the

People in Washington gather outside the U.S. Supreme Court Dec. 1, the day justices heard oral arguments in a case about a Mississippi law that bans abortions after 15 weeks of gestation. (CNS photo/Tyler Orsburn)

developmental stages of the unborn child from conception to birth.

Father Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life, pointed to what he called the “utterly weak and time-worn arguments” that he said were made by Justices Stephen Breyer, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor, considered the liberal members of the court.

Among their comments was Sotomayor’s claim that only “fringe” doctors believe in the existence of fetal pain as a reason to restrict abortion.

“They do not acknowledge that the changes in science are real, or that the confusion thrust upon judges and legislators by the court’s approach to abortion is also real,” Father Pavone said in a statement.

“These and other objective reasons have led us to the day when Mississippi, and other states, believe it is time to enact stronger protections for the unborn, and for unelected judges to stop imposing policies that the legislatures should be responsible for instead,” he said.

At the rally outside the court, Grazie Pozo Christie, a radiologist and a senior fellow with The Catholic Association, similarly commented that “incredible advances in science and fetal medicine have rendered viability a totally incoherent legal standard.”

“Science and common sense tell us children in the womb are asundeniably human as the rest of us,” remarked Brian Burch, president of Catholic Vote, an independent political advocacy group. “We know for instance that by 15 weeks they already have beating hearts, can suck their thumbs, and even feel pain.”

“It is time to overturn Roe and allow Americans to once again pass laws that reflect these basic values,” he said in a statement.

He added that “millions of faithful Catholics across the nation are hopeful after today’s oral arguments that the Supreme Court of the United States will restore sanity to its abortion jurisprudence which has enabled over 62 million American children to be aborted since 1973 when Roe v. Wade was decided.”

“Protecting innocent life is the preeminent moral issue for Catholics but it is also the condition of any just society, and abortion robs our most vulnerable citizens of that most basic human right,” Burch said.

Not all eyes on the court were in the nation’s capital.

In Illinois, Tom Burcha, president and founder of the Thomas More Society, said the country has “the first real legal opportunity in over a decade to topple Roe,” which “has left a tragic trail of human carnage: more than 62 million dead children and countless broken families and wounded souls.”

He said the Thomas More Society, a public interest law firm, has assisted thousands of clients, including some of the nation’s leading pro-life figures, “all of whom have either spoken to the opportunity now facing the Supreme Court or are actually engaged in the cry to ‘Overtur Roe.’”

Louisiana Right to Life associate director Angie Thomas said that while no one can predict the outcome of a Supreme Court case on the basis of oral arguments, she was heartened that at least six of the nine justices asked questions that seemed to support Mississippi’s ban.

In a news conference outside the pro-life organization’s New Orleans headquarters, Thomas noted that Justice Brett Kavanaugh stressed the court should remain “scrupulously neutral” on issues “that are just this complicated and this divisive,” allowing those issues to be decided by individual states and their elected representatives.

In addition, Thomas said, Justice Samuel Alito interjected during the nearly two hours of oral arguments that the rights of the unborn child had to be considered along with the rights of the mother.

“Alito mentioned that the fetus has an interest in life, too, when the other side was talking about the women’s interest,” she said. “He mentioned how there are two interests there that actually are difficult to hold together.”

“These justices are really digging into the difficult issues of where there is an objective line of protection (for the unborn child) and how do you truly balance these interests, and should the court even be doing that?” Thomas said after the news conference. “It’s more important that the Supreme Court just remain neutral and allow the states to work this out.”

“New York is going to be very different than Louisiana, but it is the power of the people to make that decision,” she told the Clarion Herald, newspaper of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Thomas said advances in science have proven beyond a shadow of a doubt about the humanity of the unborn child from its earliest stages.

“At 15 weeks, the child is moving, the child has a beating heart and the child’s organs are formed,” she said.

“We have the chance to protect that child... We could have a significant change in abortion law in America today,” Thomas added. “And, if that change happened, in Louisiana we are ready to be a post-Roe, abortion-free community where women are truly helped and babies are protected.”

Join us

New Year’s Eve Party 2022

Friday, Dec. 31, 2021
9:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Knights of Columbus Msgr. Joseph F. Dooley Council 4361 Hall
117 Legion Drive, Mingo Junction, OH 43938

The evening will include music, lights and a photo booth by DJ Chelsea; hors d’oeuvres and snacks: pork, sauerkraut and potatoes at midnight; and two drink tickets per guest and party favors. A cash bar and 50/50 raffle will be available for those who wish to participate.

Tickets cost $65 for singles and $100 for couples and can be purchased beginning Nov. 1.

Note: Tickets sold at the door will be $85 for singles and $125 for couples.

Checks can be made payable to Columbian Club.

For additional information, telephone (740) 535-8037
Brooklyn, New York, following his installation as the eighth bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn Nov. 30. Bishop Brennan, 59, previously the bishop of Columbus, Ohio, succeeds Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, 77, whose retirement became effective Sept. 29, the day Pope Francis named Bishop Brennan to lead the diocese. (CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

BROOKLYN, N.Y. (CNS) — Members of the student orchestra of St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School in West Islip, New York, Bishop Robert J. Brennan’s alma mater, played holiday music outside the Co-Cathedral of St. Joseph in the Prospect Heights section of Brooklyn as people, including Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton, arrived to witness the installation Mass of Brooklyn’s eighth bishop Nov. 30.

Bishop Brennan, 59, previously the bishop of Columbus, Ohio, succeeds Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, 77, whose retirement became effective Sept. 29, the day Pope Francis named Bishop Brennan to lead the diocese. Bishop DiMarzio was Brooklyn’s shepherd for 18 years.

“I must admit, coming back this way, there is something familiar, even comfortable,” Bishop Brennan told reporters ahead of his installation.

He is a native New Yorker who was born in the borough of the Bronx and raised in Lindenhurst, New York, in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, where he was an auxiliary bishop from 2012 until his appointment to Columbus in 2019.

“The whole world is found here in Brooklyn and in Queens,” said the new shepherd of a diocese with more than 1.3 million Catholics. “Every language, every nationality. We are truly the diocese of immigrants.”

New York Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the papal nuncio to the U.S., and Bishop DiMarzio concelebrated the Mass with Bishop Brennan in front of a congregation of 1,800, including his parents, Patricia and Robert, who is a retired NYPD officer, and other family members.

His nephew Tom Brennan told New York’s CBS2 that seeing his uncle installed in Brooklyn was “a very special opportunity” because the family has seen him “become a priest, and then a monsignor, then an auxiliary bishop and now he’s the bishop of Brooklyn.”

Bishop Brennan, whose episcopal motto is “Thy Will Be Done,” has pledged to strengthen the Catholic schools and academies in Brooklyn and Queens, and work with and support the immigrant communities. He does speak Spanish.

The prelate also said he wants to focus on evangelizing Catholics through various means of communication and social media.

Among the highlights of his time in Columbus was the institution of the diocesan-wide “Real Presence, Real Future” evangelization and planning initiative, a two-year process involving clergy, lay ecclesial ministers, parish volunteers and the faithful. He also traveled regularly to meet and engage people in that diocese’s 23 counties.

When Pope Francis named him to head the Brooklyn Diocese, he said he was “ready and eager to embrace the people of Brooklyn and Queens as their pastor. Knowing we are loved by Jesus, we will strive to show others his face, bearing the joy of the Gospel and the splendor of truth.”

On the national level, Bishop Brennan has served as a member of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Administrative Committee as well as a member of the bishops’ Catholic education and priorities and plans committees.

When his successor was named, Bishop DiMarzio called the appointment “a historic moment for the Diocese of Brooklyn which is a very active diocese, and Bishop Brennan’s energy makes him a perfect choice.”

“I ask for God’s blessings on this transition,” he said, “so that the work of God, in service to his people, can effectively continue” for the Catholics of Brooklyn and Queens, the two New York boroughs that make up the diocese.

Writing his last column for The Tablet, Brooklyn’s diocesan newspaper, the now-retired bishop said: “As my journey comes to an end as the seventh bishop of Brooklyn, I am filled with thankfulness in all we have accomplished together during these past 18 years.”

“Still, we need to continue to put out into the deep and not be afraid. Continue fishing for that encounter with Jesus, despite day-to-day routine as well as our sufferings,” he said in the Nov. 27 column. “We should continue to focus our lives around him, use our God-given gifts in service to others, and live the Gospel. In doing so, he will never abandon us.

“Please know that I will remember each and every one of you in daily prayer and in the celebration of the Eucharist.”

Bishop Monforton’s Schedule

December

11 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 4 p.m., livestreamed and recorded (Triumph of the Cross Parish and diocesan Facebook pages)
12 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 11:30 a.m.
14 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 7 a.m.
15 Diocesan Information Solutions Community (DISC) conference planning meeting, 3:30 p.m.
16 U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs virtual meeting, 3 p.m.
17 Building Commission meeting, Mingo Junction, 6 p.m.
18 Diocesan Information Solutions Community (DISC) regular board meeting, 3:30 p.m.
19 Pastoral Planning Zoom meeting, 1:30 p.m.
20 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 4 p.m., livestreamed and recorded (Triumph of the Cross Parish and diocesan Facebook pages)
21 Mass, Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, noon
22 Mass, Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, 7:45 a.m.
23 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 7 a.m.
24 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 8:30 a.m.
25 Christmas Eve Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 4 p.m., livestreamed and recorded (Triumph of the Cross Parish and diocesan Facebook pages)
26 Christmas Midnight Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville

Diocese benefits from AmazonSmile

STIEUBENVILLE — The Diocese of Steubenville can benefit from purchases made while using AmazonSmile. The same items available on www.amazon.com are available on smile.amazon.com. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to charitable organizations. For the diocese to receive the donation, search “Diocese of Steubenville” in charitable organizations on AmazonSmile.

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FDIC
God dreams of a world where all are welcomed as family, pope says

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

NICOSIA, Cyprus — Pope Francis told migrants that, like them, God dreams of a world where everyone recognizes each other as brothers and sisters.

God “asks us not to be content with a divided world, divided Christian communities, but to journey through history drawn by his own dream: the dream of a humanity freed of walls of division, freed of hostility, where there are no longer strangers, but only fellow citizens,” he told migrants during an emotional ecumenical prayer service Dec. 3 in the Church of the Holy Cross in Nicosia.

Thamara da Silva, who came from Sri Lanka, told the pope: “Every day, I have to reduce everything that I may be, or hope to be, or want to become, into a check mark next to a box on a form. I have to use a word or two to explain myself to one of the few who might choose to ask or to acknowledge that I am even here. What do I say? Usually I must choose ‘xenos,’ ‘foreigner.’”

“But, what I want to scream is ‘person,’ ‘sister,’ ‘friend,’ ‘believer,’ ‘neighbor,’” she said.

The Holy Cross Church compound, which includes the Vatican nunciature and the offices of Caritas Cyprus, is on the U.N.-patrolled green line separating the largely Greek Cypriot southern two-thirds of the island from the predominantly Turkish Cypriot northern third.

Cyprus also has the European Union’s highest per capita number of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Many of them travel across the sea from Turkey, landing in the north where there are no border controls, then try to sneak across the green line.

Tensions and frustration have increased because of the combination of increasing migration and suspicion that Turkey is promoting it, along with the economic challenges COVID-19 has posed to an island reliant on tourism.

Reaffirming the Dec. 2 statement of Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades, the internal affairs ministry said Dec. 3 that Pope Francis had arranged for 50 asylum-seekers to be transferred to Italy.

Included in the group who will be moving, the ministry said, are Enjei Grace and Daniel Ejabe, both from Cameroon, whose story has been told in newspapers around the world. Thinking they could enter Europe through northern Cyprus, they have been living in a tent on the green line since May — with neither side willing to take them in.

Later, the Vatican announced Pope Francis would help move a dozen migrants from Cyprus to Italy before Christmas. A spokesman for the Vatican said that did not rule out more following later. News agencies were reporting that the others would follow in January and February.

While he did not mention taking the migrants, Pope Francis told the group in Holy Cross Church that the Cypriot government cannot be blamed for knowing that it cannot welcome, house and provide for all those arriving in the country; others must help.

Elizabeth V. Kassinis, executive manager of Caritas Cyprus, told the pope the Catholic charity is trying to respond to the needs of the migrants, which includes the Vatican nunciature and the offices of Caritas Cyprus, is on the U.N.-patrolled green line separating the largely Greek Cypriot southern two-thirds of the island from the predominantly Turkish Cypriot northern third.

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Clergy comfort students, community after tragic high school shooting

By Michael Stechschulte
Catholic News Service

LAKE ORION, Mich. — Many were not Catholic, but they arrived at St. Joseph Catholic Church the night of Nov. 30 nonetheless – first a trickle, then a steady stream. Soon, a sea of varsity jackets and sweatshirts emblazoned with Oxford High School’s mascot, the Wildcats, overwhelmed the vestibule of the Lake Orion church.

Hugs were exchanged and cathartic tears were shed. Friends separated in fear hours earlier reunited, and parents consoled one another in their grief.

Earlier in the day, a gunman – alleged by authorities to be a 15-year-old Oxford High sophomore – took the lives of four Oxford students and wounded seven other people in the worst school shooting in Michigan history.

As the community came together at St. Joseph, the closest Catholic parish to Oxford, just 4.4 miles away in neighboring Lake Orion, the parish’s regularly scheduled Tuesday evening liturgy became an impromptu occasion of healing for a community that will need plenty of it in the coming weeks and months.

“This is truly what a strong community does. We come forth. We bond together. We hug one another,” Father Jim Kean, pastor of St. Joseph, told the nearly 1,000 parents, students, parishioners and community members who gathered for the Mass. “We turn to those words that on a day like today aren’t particularly easy to say: ‘I love you.’

‘How are you?’ ‘Are you OK?’

Even as the Mass was celebrated, lights and sirens could be seen and heard outside as the investigation into the shooting continued to unfold.

Authorities responded to multiple 911 calls around 12:50 p.m. at the public high school, located about 45 miles north of Detroit in northern Oakland County, as reports of an active shooter began to leak out into the community.

According to police, the suspect – fired 15 to 20 rounds from a semiautomatic handgun in approximately five minutes before surrendering to authorities.

Ethan Crumbley has been charged in the shooting, along with his parents, Jennifer and James Crumbley, who were apprehended and arrested Dec. 4. The teen faces charges of first-degree murder and terrorism, while his parents face charges of involuntary manslaughter.

Authorities identified the four students who were killed – 14-year-old Hana St. Juliana, 17-year-old Madisyn Baldwin, 16-year-old Tate Myre and 17-year-old Justin Shilling.

The seven others wounded – including six students and a teacher – were transported to nearby hospitals. Two remain in critical condition as of Dec. 1.

As panicked parents frantically tried reaching their children at the school, many turned to social media for information.

John Wurges, who attended the Mass at St. Joseph, said his daughter, an Oxford High student, was home from school Nov. 30 after breaking up with her boyfriend.

“She and I were in the living room talking when she looked at her phone and saw what was going on,” a visibly shaken Wurges, who isn’t Catholic but attended the Mass out of a sense of solidarity with the community, told Detroit Catholic, news service of the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Wurges said a fellow parent was having difficulty reaching his own daughter, one of Wurges’ daughter’s friends, and asked for help. After a few text messages, the girl was discovered to be safe, having hidden in a closet at the school.

“It’s crazy what’s going on. For this to hit our community is just devastating,” Wurges said. “We’re gonna have to stick together. We’ve got to find a way to keep our kids safe.”

In the aftermath of the shooting, students were evacuated to a nearby Meijer supermarket, which subsequently closed to customers and served as a hub for parents to pick up their children.

After hearing of the shooting, Father John Carlin, associate pastor at St. Joseph – which locked down its own grade school as a precaution – went to the supermarket to offer whatever spiritual and emotional support he could.

“Something told me as a priest, as a father to the community, that I was supposed to be there,” said Father Carlin, who celebrated the Nov. 30 Mass.

During his homily, Father Carlin consoled students and families, assuring them that God hears their prayers and cries and that nothing is stronger than Jesus’ victory over death.

“Every time we experience a loss of friends or loved ones or something we don’t understand, the Lord wants not only to walk with us in that darkness, but to let us know that He is there,” Father Carlin said. “He’s not going anywhere, and He never will.”

After the liturgy, several remained inside the parish for eucharistic adoration, while Father Kean, Father Carlin and clergy from St. Joseph counseled students, parents and parishioners and offered confessions to those who wanted it.

At the end of the Mass, Father Kean acknowledged the difficulty of facing friends and loved ones in the aftermath of a tragedy, even mustering the courage to say, “I love you.”

“We recognize that these words are hard because of the love we feel surrounding us,” Father Kean said. “He’s not going anywhere, and He never will.”

Among those praying was Gage Harris, an alumnus of St. Joseph School who has friends in the Oxford community.

“May Our Blessed Mother wrap all those wounded – physically, emotionally or spiritually — in her loving mantle and offer them consolation in the difficult days ahead.”

Shortly after news of the shooting, Archbishop Vigneron said in a statement: “I am heartbroken to hear of the horrific tragedy at Oxford High School. On behalf of the clergy, religious, and faithful of the Archdiocese of Detroit, I offer heartfelt prayers for the victims, their families, and all those affected in our community.

“May Our Blessed Mother wrap all those wounded – physically, emotionally or spiritually — in her loving mantle and offer them consolation in the difficult days ahead.”

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“May Our Blessed Mother wrap all those wounded — physically, emotionally or spiritually — in her loving mantle and offer them consolation in the difficult days ahead.”
St. John Paul II

On Voluntary Poverty

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon

St. John Paul, in speaking of the three vows taken by religious, refers to the Gospel passage that tells of Our Lord’s temptations by Satan, before he began his public life. (It’s the Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent, we may recall.) Christ appeared before the devil as a mere man at this point, so Satan dealt with him as a man. It’s not clear whether Satan knew Christ’s actual identity at this point. He was probing to find out. The temptations follow the three most common weaknesses of mankind: physical or animal appetites, the attraction of material possessions and self-adulation.

The first temptation was about bread. (Jesus had not eaten after a 40-day fast. We don’t recommend that for everyone!). Satan suggested that he turn stones into bread and eat up. That confirmed man’s animal appetites (food, sex, sleep, etc). Jesus pushed that aside with the observation that man does not exist on food alone.

The second temptation was a publicity stunt: throw himself from the top of the temple (where there would usually be a crowd to see it) and have the angels catch you. Notice that, in each case, Jesus answered as man, not God. He could have zapped the devil with no more than a glance, but he preferred to play the devil’s own game and beat him at it – as man, just as any of us can do and should! And, what is the devil’s game? One of them is to dangle before our eyes the attraction of things – things to be had, to be possessed, to be owned. Greed is as old as humanity itself! Giving in to that urge is the victory of greed. Resisting it is the virtue of poverty or detachment.

It is one of the vows taken by religious to offset the urge for having, for owning, for accumulating things of one’s own. For the rest of us, it is a virtue that guards against greed.

John Paul says: “It is important for the church that many Christians have a deep awareness of Christ’s love for the poor and of the urgent need to come to their aid.” This is the virtue of poverty as it applies to each of us. To want wealth to aid those in need is perfectly legitimate. There are many in the world in need of help, particularly in the underdeveloped countries. We call that the “Third World.” The “First World” is composed of people in our own, democratic and with free economies and relatively rich as a result. The “Second World” is those living under an authoritarian style of government that controls all resources. They are relatively not as well-off as the “First World,” but point to the poor in the free countries and the gap between the rich and the poor as a proof that free economies don’t work either.

They are right about the gap between the rich and the poor. In the U.S.A., we have new millionaires appearing every year, but still people on welfare or government hand-outs. But, there are poor people in every country and every people. Travel through the slums of Latin America, which are usually at the fringes of cities, not the inner-city. People are living in sheet-iron dwellings or cardboard shacks and dressed in rags. Visit the poor sections of American cities and the people live quite often in government “projects,” have automobiles (run-down, of course), often with air-conditioning and TV, not to mention iPods and the like. It’s a different kind of poverty. One way to describe it would be to say it’s a relative poverty compared to people in the suburbs with guard houses at the entrances.

Mark Twain (no lover of religion) after a trip around the world remarked, “God must certainly love the poor. He made so many of them!” It’s true. There are many poor, starving, people in the world. But, that’s not due to the lack of food that’s available. It’s the fact that mankind has not yet found the way (or the will?) to distribute it equitably. Some people like Karl Marx had solution based on government force. Unfortunately, his system has been tried in many places, but has always failed. And, people are still starving there.

There is an interesting passage in John’s Gospel that may be apropos to this discussion about the poor: It seems that newly raised from the dead Lazarus and his sisters invited Jesus to a dinner at their house along with his Apostles. Mary, one of the sisters, came in while the men were in another room carrying on one of their discussions. It’s best to tell it just as John wrote it: “Mary took a liter (about two quarts) of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then Judas, the Iscariot, one of the disciples, and the one who would betray him, said, “Why was this oil not sold for 300 days’ wages and given to the poor?” He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions. So Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”

Several questions and observations may be made here:

When Jesus said, “You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me,” was that a sentence or a prophecy about the human race? Did Jesus know that we would never find a solution to that of the poor of the world? And was that judgment due to a love of money, and of things it can buy? Is the human race guilty of the same vice as that of Judas – greed?

Sacred Silence

By Father Nicholas S. Ward

For the past few weeks, the choir at Blessed Sacrament has been busily preparing for our Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols to be held the evening of Sunday, Dec. 19. One of the choristers asked me if I take requests for article topics (which I do, apparently), and suggested “Sacred Silence.” The subject is season-appropriate I think. We are usually aware of how hectic the holidays can be, certainly due to the pressure of Christmas preparations, but also the many different kinds of stressors and anxieties we can experience in this time so closely associated with family and religion. A little quiet, a little peace is more often than not what we need in our lives and especially that interior quiet in which we meet Our Lord in prayer.

In “The Power of Silence,” Former Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship Cardinal Robert Sarah talks about how the “dictatorship of noise” created by the modern world threatens the inner silence we each must cultivate in order to hear the voice of God. To find God and to be with God, we have to be listening, and listening requires us to seek that solitude with God, which is the silence of the heart, emptied of all concerns, distractions and desires which lead from him. He says: “No prophet ever encountered God without withdrawing into solitude and silence. Moses, Elijah and John the Baptist encountered God in the great silence of the desert.” He continues: “It is necessary to leave our interior turmoil in order to find God. Despite the agitation, the business, the easy pleasures, God remains silently present.”

The silence is not only where we find God, but also where we find ourselves, the self which we so often try to distract ourselves from. “Silence always forces man to reflect on his own life” he says. Cardinal Sarah notes that not only does silence allow man to reflect, but also transform: “In silence, man conquers his nobility and grandeur only if he is on his knees in order to hear and adore God. It is in the silence of humiliation and self-mortification, by quieting the turmoil of the flesh, by successfully taming the noisy images, by keeping at a distance the dreams, imaginations and roaring of a world that is always in a whirl, in order to purify himself of all that ruins the soul and separates it from contemplation, that man must make himself capable of looking at God and loving him.” This is the beauty of the interior life: the carefully nurtured silence of the soul in which one learns to hear the voice of God. Jesus himself teaches us to seek God in the secret silence of our hearts in prayer: “But, when you pray, go your own way.”

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Three Comings of Christ Prepare Us for Advent

By Bishop Robert Barron

Many years ago, in the context of a high school religion class, a very wise Benedictine nun gave me a template for understanding Advent that I’ve never forgotten. It is simply that Advent calls to mind three “comings” of Christ: the first in history, the second now, and the third at the end of time. Meditating upon each of these is a helpful preparation for the holy season upon which we are embarking.

Let us first look back. Fulton Sheen said that Jesus is the only religious founder whose coming was clearly predicted. And, indeed, we can find throughout the Old Testament indications and anticipations of the arrival of the Messiah. How often the New Testament authors use the language of fulfillment and insist that the events around Jesus occurred “kata tas graphas” (“according to the Scriptures”). They appreciated Jesus, this particular figure from two thousand years ago, as the one who brought to full expression all of the institutions of Israel. His rising from the dead demonstrated that he is the New Temple, the New Covenant, the definitive prophet, the Law or Torah in person. Furthermore, they understood that Jesus had brought all of history, in a very real sense, to its climax. The turning point of the human story is not, therefore, the emergence of modernity, not the revolutions of the 18th century, but rather the dying and rising of Jesus, the Messiah of Israel. If we turn Jesus into a mythic or legendary figure or we construe him simply as an inspiring religious teacher, we miss this crucially important truth. Every single New Testament author testifies to the fact that something happened in connection with Jesus, indeed something so dramatic that all of time should be understood as falling either before him or after him. And so, during Advent, we look back with deep interest and spiritual attention to that first coming.

Jesus came in time, long ago, but we must attend to the second dimension of Advent – namely, his coming to us in the here and now. We might think of that famous painting of Jesus knocking at the door. This is the Christ who presents himself every day, seeking entry into our hearts and minds. In his first coming, he appeared in the context of Israel. In this present-day Advent, he appears through the witness of the saints, through the Eucharist especially, and through the poor who cry out to be cared for. We recall his words, “Whatsoever you do to the least of these, you do to me.” Now just as many rejected him when he came in history long ago, so, sadly enough, many reject him today. Can we see that the most important decision we will ever make – more important than decisions regarding job, family, livelihood, etc. – is whether we allow Christ to become the Lord of our lives? During the season of Advent, we are meant to stop and pay close attention. How is Jesus coming to us and how precisely are we dealing with his arrival?

And finally, Advent calls to mind Christ’s definitive coming at the end of time. One of the peculiar marks of Christianity is the belief that time is going somewhere. It is not just “one damn thing after another,” as the cynical adage famously has it, nor simply an endless cycle, nor the “eternal return of the same.” Rather, time has a direction, moving toward its consummation, when God will be all in all. The church identifies this final culmination as the “second coming of Jesus,” and the Gospels speak of it often. Here is just one example from the Gospel of Luke: “Jesus said to his disciples, ‘There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay... People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world...’ And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.’” What this remarkable language conveys is the conviction that, at the close of the age, the old order will give way and God will renew the great structuring patterns of reality. At this second coming of Christ, all of the seeds that had been planted throughout nature and history will bear fruit, all of the latent potentialities of the cosmos will be actualized, and God’s justice will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The church’s belief – and it governs the whole of its life – is that we are living in the in-between times; that is to say, in between the culmination of history in the cross and Resurrection and the definitive fulfillment of history in the second coming of Jesus. In a sense, the war against sin and death has been won, and yet mop-up operations continue. The church lives in that middle zone where the final stage of the battle is still being fought. Pay attention, especially during the Advent season, to our daily Gospels at Mass. I think you’ll be surprised how often they reference the second Advent of Jesus at the end of time. I might offer just two well-known examples: “We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again,” and “As we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.” This is how the church speaks during the in-between times. Though we are beset on all sides by failure, pain, sin, sickness and the fear of death, we live in joyful hope, for we know that history is going somewhere, that God has won the decisive battle and will win the war.

Therefore, this Advent, look back; look around; and look forward. With each glance, you will see the Christ who comes.

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.
Sacred Silence

From Page 6 inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And, your Father who sees in secret will repay you” (Mt 6:6). In the public prayer of the church, the sacred liturgy, we also find God in sacred silence.

“Sacred silence is not only truly human and Christian reaction to God when he breaks into our lives,” Cardinal Sarah says. Just as God entered silently into the weary world at his birth, so he enters silently into the Mass.

When the sacred Host is raised by the priest, Christ is silent, as are the people who kneel in adoration and wonder. The liturgy begins and ends with silent recollection, first with a call to “acknowledge our sins,” and lastly in Thanksgiving for the mystery we have received.

There are many places in the liturgy where silence exists, not as an awkward break in the action (and certainly not as an opportunity for chatter), but as an essential part of the liturgy itself and an invitation to pray. In “The Spirit of the Liturgy,” Pope Benedict writes “the greater mystery, surpassing all words, summons us to silence. It must, of course, be silence with content, not just the silence of speech and action. We should expect the liturgy to give us a positive stillness that will restore us. Such stillness will not be just a pause, in which a thousand thoughts and desires assault us, but a time of recollection, giving us an inward peace, allowing us to draw breath and rediscover the one thing necessary.”

Silence serves an essential purpose in the liturgy, to exercise interiorly what we have been expressing exteriorly, and gives us an opportunity to fill our quieted hearts with the praise we have been thus far expressing with our lips. The quiet reverence we experience at Mass should also translate into our personal prayer, to make ourselves constantly receptive of God’s Word no matter how noisy our lives become.

The third verse of “O Little Town of Bethlehem” came into my head as I began writing, and to me expresses perfectly the joy of someone who enters into the “Silent Night” of prayer:

“How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given as love imparts to human hearts the blessings of God’s heaven! No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin, where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.”

Father Ward is parochial vicar to Father Michael W. Gossett, pastor of Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes parishes, Wintersville.
Pope advances sainthood causes, including murdered Dutch priest

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis signed a decree recognizing a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Titus Brandsma, clearing the way for the canonization of the 20th-century martyr murdered at the Dachau concentration camp.

Father Ladislas Radigue and three companions were killed out of “hated for the faith” May 26, 1871. The French section of Vatican News identified the three companions as Sacred Heart Fathers Polycarpe Tuffier, Marcellin Rouchouze and Fréral Tardieu. They were a handful of the 75 clergy and 35 soldiers taken hostage and executed in the Rue Hafo massacre by members of the Paris Commune during the commune’s suppression after 71 days in power. Soldiers of the National Guard had seized power in Paris in March 1871 to establish a social democracy promoting workers, abolishing child labor and separating church and state.

The rebels, known as the Communards, confiscated church properties, abolished religious education and detained clergy with other prominent figures as hostages against French government army reprisals. French military forces eventually took control of Paris and executed at least 20,000 suspected Communards in what became known as the “bloody week.”

The other decrees approved by Pope Francis recognized the heroic virtues of:

• Italian Bishop Antonio Bello of Molletta-Ruvo-Giovannazzo-Terlizzi, who was born in 1935 and died in 1995. He was a member of the Secular Franciscan Order, established a center to treat drug addiction and visited Italian immigrants from his diocese who moved to Australia, Argentina and Venezuela. He was national president of Pax Christi and a vocal critic of international conflicts and the militarization of his region of Apulia with NATO aircraft bombers;

• Discalced Carmelite Father Juan de San Pedro Ustarroz, who was born in Spain in 1864 and died in Italy in 1615. He was active in founding the Italian congregation of the order, promoted St. Teresa of Avila’s beatification in 1614 and wrote numerous volumes on theology, sacred Scripture, religious life and mysticism;

• Italian Father Giorgio Guzzetta of the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, who was born in 1652 and died in 1756. He promoted and supported priests and religious traditions of the Byzantine and other Eastern rites in southern Italy, as well as Albanian immigrants;

• Sister Natahila Bonardi, founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Mary of Loreto, who was born in Italy in 1864 and died in 1945;

• Sister Maria Dosithea Bottani, superior general of the Urseline Sisters of Gandino, who was born in 1896 and died in 1970; and

• Odette Vidal de Oliveira, a Brazilian girl who was born in 1931 and died in 1939 after contracting tuberculous. She nurtured her relationship with Jesus in the Eucharist and was particularly devoted to St. Joseph.

God can act in unexpected ways, calling for brave acceptance, pope says

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — St. Joseph teaches people to learn to take life as it comes and to accept what God has in mind, Pope Francis said.

Speaking about how Joseph reacted to Mary being pregnant while they were still engaged, the pope explained why St. Joseph “gives us an important lesson: He chooses with his eyes open,” and “with all the risks” that came with it.

“They had probably cultivated dreams and expectations regarding their life and their future,” he said during his weekly general audience Dec. 1. But then, “out of the blue, God seems to have inserted himself into their lives and, even if at first it was difficult for them, both of them opened their hearts wide to the reality that was placed before them.”

During his audience in the Vatican’s Paul VI hall, Pope Francis continued a series of talks on St. Joseph, reflecting on his role as a just man and husband of Mary, and what he can teach all engaged couples and newlyweds.

St. Joseph was pious and subject to observing the religious laws of the time, which called for stoning a woman accused of adultery or — with later interpretations — a formal repudiation that had civil and criminal consequences for the woman, the pope said. But, Joseph’s “love for Mary and his trust in her suggested a way he could remain in observance of the law and save the honor of his bride. He decided to repudiate her in secret, without making noise, without subjecting her to public humiliation.”

“How holy Joseph was,” Pope Francis said. In contrast, “we, as soon as we have a bit of gossip, something scandalous about someone else, we go around talking about it right away!”

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him not to fear taking Mary as his wife and explaining to him the divine origin of and plan for her son.

God reveals “a greater meaning than his own justice. How important it is for each one of us to cultivate a just life and, at the same time, to always feel the need for God’s help to broaden our horizons and to consider the circumstances of life from an always different, larger perspective,” the pope said.

Many times, he said, people feel “imprisoned” by what happens to them and are tempted to “close in on that pain, in that thought that good things never happen to us. And, this is not good for us. This leads you to sadness and bitterness. A bitter heart is so ugly.”

Often, “a providence is hidden that takes shape over time and illuminates the meaning even of the pain that has touched us,” he said.

By taking this risk, Joseph “gives us this lesson: to take life as it comes. Has God intervened there? I accept it” and seek to follow God’s guidance, the pope said.

During their engagement, Christian couples are called to witness to this kind of love that “has the courage to move from the logic of falling in love to that of mature love,” he said.

Mature love moves from infatuation and imagination to taking “responsibility for one’s life as it comes.”

It is demanding, but it will strengthen their love “so that it endures when faced with the trials of time,” he added.

“Dear brothers and dear sisters, our lives are very often not what we imagine them to be. Especially in loving and affectionate relationships,” Pope Francis said.

He repeated his advice to married couples, urging them to always make peace before the end of the day and never let arguments or bad feelings fester “because the cold war the next day is very dangerous. Don’t let war begin the next day.”

At the end of the audience, the pope recalled that Dec. 1 is World AIDS Day.

“It is an important occasion to remember the many people who are affected by this virus. For many of them, in some areas of the world, access to the necessary treatment is not available. My hope is that there might be a renewed commitment in solidarity to guarantee fair and effective health care,” he said.
Adena/Dillonvale — A blessing of Bambinelli (Infant Jesus) figurines will take place during the 4 p.m. Mass, Dec. 11, at St. Casimir Church, Adena, and during the 10 a.m. Mass, Dec. 12, at St. Adalbert Church, Dillonvale.

Advent penance services will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 14, at St. Adalbert Church, and at 7 p.m., Dec. 16, at St. Casimir Church.

Adena — A Wreaths Across America ceremony will be held at noon, Dec. 18, at St. Casimir Cemetery. Wreaths will be placed on veteran’s graves by Roger and Donna Sliva, parishioners of St. Casimir Parish, their family members, local veterans and volunteers. For additional information, contact Roger Sliva by telephoning (740) 546-4131 or emailing dpmsliva@gmail.com. Information is also available at www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/OH0273P. The ceremony is open to the public. Mask wearing and social distancing is recommended.

Athens — The Joyful Mysteries will be prayed during a scriptural rosary at 5:30 p.m., Dec. 14, at Christ the King University Parish.

Bellaire — Confessions will be heard at 3 p.m., Dec. 19, at St. John Church.

Belle Valley/Caldwell/Carlisle/Fulda — A blessing of Bambinelli figurines will take place during the 4 p.m. Mass, Dec. 11, at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church, Fulda; the 6 p.m. Mass, Dec. 11, at Corpus Christi Church, Belle Valley; the 8:30 a.m. Mass, Dec. 12, at St. Stephen Church, Caldwell; and the 10:30 a.m. Mass, Dec. 12, at St. Michael Church, Carlisle.

Caldwell — An Advent penance service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 14, at St. Stephen Church.

Carrollton/Morges — More Life Youth Group is raffling off a basket at Our Lady of Mercy Church, Carrollton, and St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church, Morges, to help offset costs for the teen portion of ballroom dancing classes and future activities. Tickets cost $1 each or 6 for $5. The winner will be drawn Jan. 2 and notified by telephone. For additional information, contact Erika Shockey by telephoning (330) 312-6074.

Colerain — Confessions will be heard at 5:30 p.m., Dec. 14, at St. Frances Cabrini Church.

Ironton/Pine Grove — A blessing of Bambinelli figurines will take place Dec. 12 during the celebration of the 9 a.m. Mass at St. Joseph Church, Ironton. The blessing will also take place during the noon Mass at St. Lawrence O’Toole Church, Ironton, and during the 4 p.m. Mass at St. Mary Mission, Pine Grove.

Malvern — An Advent penance service will be held at 7 p.m., Dec. 13, at St. Francis Xavier Church.

Marietta — Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption Catholic Woman’s Club is sponsoring a Christmas cookie fundraiser following the celebration of the 8 a.m., 10 a.m. and noon Masses, Dec. 12, at the basilica. Proceeds will go toward building clean water wells in impoverished countries.

Miltonsburg/Woodsfield — A blessing of Bambinelli figurines will take place Dec. 12 during the celebration of the 8:30 a.m. Mass at St. Sylvester Church, Woodsfield, and during the 10:30 a.m. Mass at St. John the Baptist Church, Miltonsburg.

St. Clairsville — Confessions will be heard at 6 p.m., Dec. 13, and at 5 p.m., Dec. 22, at St. Mary Church.

Tiltonsville — A blessing of Bambinelli figurines will take place during the 4 p.m. Mass, Dec. 11, and the 10 a.m. Mass, Dec. 12, at St. Joseph Church.

Confessions will be heard following the blessing and lighting of the outdoor Nativity at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 15, at St. Joseph Church.

Wintersville — Advent penance services will take place at 7 p.m., Dec. 12, at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, and at 7 p.m., Dec. 20, at Blessed Sacrament Church. A “Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols” will be held at 5 p.m., Dec. 19, at Blessed Sacrament Church. The choral service will consist of Advent hymns and Christmas carols with nine readings from Scripture. A reception will be held in Sargus Hall following the service.

Eucharistic adoration takes place from 5:30-8:30 p.m., Wednesday evenings, at Blessed Sacrament Church. The rosary is prayed at 7 p.m.

**Students ride in Christmas parade**

Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity Carol Juckem from St. Benedict School, Cambridge, organizes a group of students as they get ready for Cambridge’s Christmas parade. The float was made and pulled by members of Knights of Columbus Council 1641, Cambridge. The children sang Christmas songs amplified by a sound system, which was provided by Traci Mitchell, principal of St. Benedict School. (Photo provided)

**Bloomington** — A vocation discernment weekend will be held Jan. 7-9 at Catholic Familyland, Apostolate for Family Consecration, 3375 County Road 36. For additional information or to register, visit www.afc.org.
Abuse survivor who became outspoken advocate for other survivors dies at 69

DOUGLAS, Mass. (CNS) — Phil Saviano, who was abused by a Catholic parish priest when he was a child in the 1970s and who as an adult in 2002 helped shed light on clergy sex abuse of minors in the Archdiocese of Boston, died Nov. 28. He was 69.

Saviano died at his brother’s home in Douglas after a long battle with bladder cancer. His brother, Jim Saviano, was his caretaker in his final days.

Boston Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley in a Nov. 30 statement called him “a landmark voice of courage for survivors” who “played a significant role in uncovering the darkness of clergy sexual abuse in the life of the church.”

“We pray for the repose of Phil’s soul, for the consolation of his family and loved ones, and give thanks for his witness to the truth,” added the prelate, who is president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, known as SNAP, said in a statement that has been heard worldwide,” said Shaun Dougherty, president of SNAP’s board of directors. “He not only blazed the trail for many, but he also took us all along with him as well. He shared credit like no other. He was gracious with his time. He was kind. He was intelligent. He will be greatly missed by many.”

Saviano told The Associated Press in a brief telephone interview in mid-November: “My gift to the world was not being afraid to speak out.”

SNAP in its statement said that his gift “helped tens of thousands of sexual abuse survivors gain the courage they needed to speak out for the first time.”

A funeral for Saviano took place Dec. 3 at St. Denis Church in Douglas.

Little Flowers Girls Club presents floral offerings at two churches

Little Flowers Girls Club members from Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary School, Steubenville, left photo, present a floral offering at Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, Nov. 21. In the right photo, members of the club at St. Agnes Church, Mingo Junction, bring flowers for the feast. Father James M. Dunfee, pastor of St. Agnes Parish and diocesan vicar general, is pictured with the members. (Photos provided)

Obituaries

Gary L. Bonnizzo, 72, Toronto, St. Francis of Assisi, Nov. 20.
Patricia Cervelli, 86, St. John, Bellaire, Dec. 3.
Daniel W. Ellis, 77, St. Anthony of Padua, Bridgeport, Dec. 5.
Rosemary Chmielewsky Falowski, 86, Rayland, St. Adalbert, Dillonvale, Nov. 21.
Craig Kornetti, 56, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, Dec. 2.

Carol Bauer Miller, 84, Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, Nov. 19.
Caroline “Carann” Rico, 60, St. Joseph, Tiltonsville, Nov. 5.
Mary Rynearz, 85, St. Mary, Shadyside, Nov. 27.
Garnet Sarver Schaad, 89, Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, Nov. 24.

Ironton Catholic schools support the diabetes research foundation

St. Lawrence Central School and St. Joseph Central High School, Ironton, students and staff stand in St. Joseph Church, Ironton, to show their support for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. During the month of November, the Ironton Catholic schools raised more than $3,400 for the foundation by selling T-shirts and taking donations. The project showed support for one of their students, Cohen Dressel, who was diagnosed with Type 1 juvenile diabetes earlier this year. (Photo provided)
Pope Francis tells Greek young people to dream big, trust God’s love

MAROUSSI, Greece (CNS) — Spending a bit of time with young people before leaving Greece, Pope Francis encouraged them to have the courage to hope, to dream and even to question their faith.

He met with Catholic teenagers and young adults from across Greece at St. Dionysius School in Maroussi, a suburb of Athens, Dec. 6. Three of them had a chance to briefly share their stories with him.

Katerina Binibini, whose family came from the Philippines, said she sometimes feels angry or jealous when she sees people without any faith easily coast through life without any problems, while as “a faithful Christian, I feel constantly put to the test.”

She said she finds it hard to explain her faith to others, especially when there is so much suffering or injustice in the world.

Pope Francis said all those moments of doubt in life are “vitamins” for the faith, making it stronger and more resilient.

“Faith is precisely that: a daily journey with Jesus who takes us by the hand, accompanies us, encourages us, and, when we fall, lifts us up,” he said. Never be afraid to reflect and ask questions because “you cannot walk this path of faith blind.”

Whenever the devil sows doubt in one’s heart, he said, always remember that faith “is not primarily about a list of things to believe and rules to follow,” but is the “reality, a beautiful truth that does not depend on us and that leaves us amazed: we are God’s beloved children!”

“Realize that your worth is in who you are and not what you have. Your worth is not in the brand of the dress or shoes you wear, but because you are unique,” he said.

This wisdom will serve them well to avoid, like Odysseus, the dangerous allure of the sirens’ song, the pope said. “Today’s sirens want to charm you with seductive and insistent messages that focus on easy gains, the false needs of consumerism, the cult of physical wellness, of entertainment at all costs.”

In response to Ioanna Vidalis from Tinos, the pope talked about the importance of other people when it comes to growing in the faith. Vidalis had explained the central role her mother and grandmother played in her life and faith, but described how, as she got older, “everything that seemed clear became complicated” to the point that she almost stopped believing in God.

But she said she came to realize that no matter how much she tried to turn away from him, he was always there, ready to guide and accompany her.

“‘The greatness of God’s love,’ she said, is seen in the fact that he gave her the freedom to be wrong, and she seeks to share this ‘greatness’ with other young people she serves.

Jesus makes himself known also through the people who are in one’s life, he said. “God does not hand us a catechism; he makes himself present through people’s life stories. He walks among us.”

Serving others is “the path to true joy! Helping others is not for losers, but for winners; it is the way to bring about something truly new in history,” he said.

“Don’t settle for posting a few tweets. Don’t settle for virtual encounters; look for real ones, especially with people who need you. Don’t look for visibility, but for those who are invisible in our midst. That is new, even revolutionary,” he added.

Lastly, Aboud Gabro, who escaped with his family from war-torn Syria, told the pope about those “miracles” that led to their safety and then being welcomed, integrated and thriving in Greece.

The pope said he was struck by his story of overcoming “so many refusals and a thousand difficulties” – a true modern-day odyssey.

Odysseus’ son, Telemachus, was also at a crossroads in life, wondering if he should stay home waiting for his father or go off on a wild search for him; the young man finally found the courage to set out on his adventure, the pope said.

This shows “the meaning of life is not found by staying on the beach waiting for the wind to bring something new. Salvation lies in the open sea, in the pursuit of dreams, real dreams,” the pope said.

“Don’t be paralyzed by fear: Dream big! And dream together,” the pope told the young people. “As with Telemachus, there will always be those who try to stop you,” but they are just “destroyers of dreams, the slayers of hope, incurably stuck in the past.”