“Super – sized” youth rally gathers in Indianapolis this month

By Sarah DeMott

Thousands of Catholic youth from around the country will gather at the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis November 19 – 21 to delve deeper into their faith at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC). “NCYC is a ‘super-sized’ youth rally in the sense that it is a celebration of the Catholic faith through the youth lens shared with a super big crowd,” says Tim McNamara, Associate Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry at the Diocese of Kalamazoo. “Speakers, musicians and acts from around the country create an experience that we hope has youth delving deeper in the knowledge and practice of our faith.”

This year’s conference emcees are Jackie Francois and Paul J. Kim. Francois is a full-time speaker and singer/songwriter with a background in youth ministry. According to McNamara, her experience as a young wife and mother make her relatable to teens as a role model for joyful womanhood. Kim is an international youth speaker, vocalist and self-described beatboxer. Keynote speakers are Fr. Leo Patalinghug, Chris Padgett, Mark Hart, Matt Maher and Rev. Louis Merosne.

“The number one thing our youth receive from NCYC is they grow in their relationship with Christ,” says McNamara. “It happens in a unique way at NCYC because dioceses from around the U.S. all come together and students get to see the Body of Christ is more than just their parish. They are not alone; people from all around the world are living their faith joyfully.”

Students from around the diocese will be among those in attendance, including groups from St. Joseph Parish, Battle Creek; St. Martin of Tours Parish, Vicksburg; St. John Bosco Parish, Mattawan; and St. Margaret Parish, Otsego.

For more information on the conference, visit ncyc.info. For information on the diocesan trip contact Tim McNamara, tmcnamara@diokzoo.org; 269-903-1237.
Praying with purpose

The moments sneak up on you. Recently, standing in the grocery check-out line I spied a candy corn display and broke into a smile. Then, just as quickly, fought back some tears as I became lost in the memory of my dad snacking on his favorite Halloween-themed candy. The happy memory of his insatiable sweet tooth and the stinging feeling of not having him here on earth collided. But remembering is a good thing. It keeps us connected to those loved ones who’ve gone before us.

For some of the month of November may use the time to break out the fluffy sweaters, browse recipes for a Thanksgiving feast or cheer for your favorite team on a lazy weekend afternoon. As Catholics we’re lucky because amidst all the worldly holidays and events we are called to set aside this month to remember our loved ones who’ve died. And we’re not just called to revel in happy memories but to pray for their souls.

Sure, I still talk to my Dad with a “hey, Dad—put in a good word, will ya?” or “thanks Dad” when something goes the way I want (except the Cubs—but there’s always next year, right?). But we’re also called to dedicate our prayers for those special deceased loved ones. Why?

Last year during this time Pope Francis said it well when he explained that the November feasts, along with the entire month, are reminders that the November feasts, along with the entire month, are reminders in an orthodox, authentic and balanced manner. Its mission and goals proceed from this fundamental reality.

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That we may be open to personal encounter and dialogue with all, even those we are close to in faith and their Church.

It is a great honor and a privilege but also extremely humbling to be given an award that was named after and has been given to so many giants in the faith based education community,” said Long. “I am deeply grateful for the leadership of MANS and the sterling direction it provides for the more than 100,000 students enrolled in MANS member schools across the state. We know significant work remains to end discriminatory practices in education so that full and equitable school choice is available to all Michigan parents and families.”

The Ivan E. Zylstra Award, given by the Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools, is named in honor of the former President Emeritus of the MANS Board of Trustees. Mr. Zylstra served as the organization’s first president. He held the position of Director of Government Relations for Catholic Schools International, and served as a member of the President’s Panel on Non-public Education (1970-1972) that studied the place and contributions of non-public schools in the United States.

Long has been a leading advocate for faith-based education for more than a quarter of a century. In November 2010, he was appointed President and CEO of the Michigan Catholic Conference, which is the official public policy voice for the Catholic bishops in Michigan. From the beginning of his service with MCC in 1988, Long has worked to advance the cause of faith-based schools. In 1996 he sought to protect Michigan’s school code from including discriminatory language against non-public schools. He has endeavored to advance shared time opportunities for schools, dual enrollment opportunities for students, and for general fairness for teachers and students regardless of the building in which they teach or learn.

In 2000, Long served on the leadership team of the Kids First! voucher ballot campaign. Since 1997, he has served on the MANS Board of Trustees. He also served on the Parish Education Council of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish School in East Lansing from 2006-2014, serving on the Executive Committee for six of his eight years and as chair from 2011-2013.

The Michigan Association of Non-Public Schools was founded in 1972 as an association of Catholic schools of the seven dioceses of Michigan, the Michigan District of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod and District Two of Christian Schools International. MANS is a statewide association that accredits non-public schools in the state and advocates for legislative issues regarding non-public schools. Its membership includes some 400 schools that educate approximately 110,000 students annually.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) will meet, November 16-19, in Baltimore for its annual Fall General Assembly. The bishops will hear addresses by Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., USCCB president, and Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

The bishops will discuss and vote on revisions to the proposed USCCB strategic priorities for USCCB’s next planning cycle. The priorities, if approved, will inform the writing of the Conference’s next strategic plan, which will cover 2017-2020. The bishops discussed and provided input on a draft version of these priorities at their Spring General Assembly in St. Louis.

The bishops will also discuss and vote on a new introductory note and a limited revision to their quadrennial statement on political responsibility, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship.” The revised statement, which is reissued the calendar year before a U.S. presidential election, will feature new language around issues of public concern for Catholics. The revisions are the result of a working group led by Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, USCCB vice president.

The bishops will discuss and vote on a proposed formal statement, “Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography,” and discuss and vote on the inclusion of excerpts from the Roman Missal: Book for Use at the Chair in dioceses of the United States. They will also discuss and vote on a proposed one-time national collection to fund the completion of the Trinity Dome in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

CRS chairman Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City and CRS President Carolyn Wool will present on how CRS programming is responding to Laudato Si’, Pope Francis’ encyclical on ecology. Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Religious Liberty, will introduce a trailer to a movie on Dignitatis Humanae, the Second Vatican Council’s document on religious freedom.

The bishops will participate in the canonical consultation of three causes for canonization: Rev. Aloysius Ellacuria, CMF, Sister Ida Peterfy, SDSH, and Antonia Cuipa and 81 companions. This is a step in the Catholic Church’s process toward declaring a person a saint.

For updated coverage visit: www.usccb.org

U.S. Bishops to meet November 16-19 in Baltimore, address conference priorities, statement on political responsibility

The Good News

NOVEMBER  2015

“Waiting in Joyful Hope”
Preparing for the gift of mercy

While I have to admit that fall is not my favorite season, mainly because it precedes the coming of winter (my least favorite season), here in southwest Michigan, the gorgeous and breath-taking fall foliage makes me want to hold onto these days so that we can just gaze at the natural beauty, reflective of God’s amazing creative wonder. As we turn our clocks back and daylight becomes shorter, November brings a certain somberness to this next-to-the-last month of the year. We realize that we would be wise to prepare ourselves for what is to come by “winterizing” our homes, our vehicles and even our wardrobes.

Preparation is a very important part of adapting to the seasons of nature, and equally important to us in the seasons of our faith journey. I would like to reflect on ways that we should prepare for the “Jubilee Year of Mercy” called for by our Holy Father Pope Francis to begin on December 8th, the Solenmity of the Immaculate Conception of our sinless Blessed Virgin Mary. Pope Francis also chose this Holy Day of December 8th because it marks the 50th Anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. It is important for us to understand the need for God’s mercy and the many ways we are called to live mercy in the seasons of our daily faith lives.

The first step in helping us to be prepared would be to read the document Pope Francis wrote when he announced the “Year of Mercy” called “The Face of Mercy” (“Misericordiae Vultus”). This document, which is officially known as a “Bull of Indiction,” while containing many instructional items regarding how to observe this year in dioceses around the world, is also a beautiful and inspirational reflection on the theme of mercy. As Pope Francis says so beautifully at the beginning of the document, the purpose of this holy year is to call the Church together for an extended period of time to, in his words, “gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father’s action in our lives.”

Why is mercy so important? The answer to that takes us all the way back to the beginning of the human race and the entrance of Original Sin into the human story. As soon as Adam and Eve made their original sinful choice which violated God’s command, they separated themselves from God’s love. There was a consequence — a “price” — attached to that sin. The original unity needed to be restored, and God immediately began to develop a plan to accomplish that reconciliation. From that point forward, our loving God never stopped reaching out to humankind, calling us back to union with Him, constantly offering mercy and forgiveness, even though we did not deserve it. From the first time God revealed Himself to Moses in the Burning Bush as “I Am Who Am... a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex. 3:4), we have come to know God’s face — who He is and what He looks like — as the face of mercy.

And so, it only stands to reason that we, God’s children, who are recipients of God’s unconditional mercy, are most certainly called to show mercy to others.

Mercy is not an abstract idea, but rather a concrete reality through which God reveals His love as that of a father/mother, moved to merciful action from the very depths of love for their child. Jesus, constantly taught about the unconditional love of the Father in his parables such as the Parable of the Lost Sheep and that of the Prodigal Son. As Pope Francis explains, we find the “core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon.” (#9)

So how do we prepare ourselves, collectively and individually? There are many opportunities that have been planned at the diocesan level (see p. 7 for details), and each parish will be planning parish-based opportunities as well. Let me share with you here a few suggestions from our Holy Father on how we can individually make the most out of this year:

1. Rediscover the value of silence: “We must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word... In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adapt it as our lifestyle.” (#13) It would be very helpful if we could set aside even 15 minutes a day to spend in prayerful silence to allow God to speak to our hearts.

2. Refrain from judging, criticizing, and condemning: We know that Jesus has taught us “judge not lest you yourselves be judged.” Of course we would never ignore the Truth of our faith or pretend that sin is acceptable, but we are called to adopt a spirit of loving acceptance of the sinner and to refrain from judgmental harshness. As Pope Francis so powerfully said in using the image of the Golden Rule during his speech to the joint session of Congress: “This Rule points us in a clear direction: let us treat others with the same passion and compassion with which we want to be treated. Let us seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves. In a word, if we want security, let us give security. If we want life, let us give life. If we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities. The yardstick we use for others will be the yardstick which time will use for us.”

Preparando para el regalo de la misericordia

Aunque tengo que admitir que el otoño no es mi estación favorita, principalmente porque precede a la llegada del invierno (mi temporada menos favorable), aquí en el sureste de Michigan, el precioso e impresionante follaje de otoño me hace querer volver a estos días, para que solo podamos contemplar la belleza natural, reflejo de la increíble maravilla creadora de Dios. Al atravesar nuestros robles y la luz del día se hace más corta, noviembre tra engineer a cierta melancolía a este mes próximo al último mes del año. Nos damos cuenta de que debemos ser sensatos para prepararnos para lo que está por venir adaptando para el invierno nuestros hogares, vehículos e incluso nuestro vestuario.

La preparación es una parte muy importante en la adaptación a las estaciones de la naturaleza, e igualmente importante para nosotros en las temporadas de nuestro camino de fe. Me gustaría reflexionar sobre las maneras que debemos prepararnos para el “Año Jubilar de la Misericordia”, convocada por el Santo Padre Francisco que comenzará el 8 de diciembre, solemnidad de la Inmaculada Concepción de nuestra sin pecado bendita Virgen María. El papa Francisco también eligió este día santo del 8 de diciembre, ya que se conmemora el 50 aniversario de la clausura del Concilio Vaticano II. Es importante para nosotros entender la necesidad de la misericordia de Dios y de las muchas maneras en las que estamos llamados a vivir la misericordia en las estaciones de nuestra vida cotidiana de fe.

El primer paso que nos ayuda a estar preparados sería leer el documento que el Papa Francisco escribió cuando anunció el “Año de la Misericordia”, llamado “El rostro de la misericordia” (“Misericordiae Vultus”). Este documento, que se conoce oficialmente como “Bula de convocación”, al mismo tiempo que contiene muchos elementos de instrucción respecto a cómo observar este año en las diócesis de todo el mundo, es también una hermosa e inspiradora reflexión sobre el tema de la misericordia. Como dice el Papa Francisco tan bellamente en el principio del documento, el objetivo de este año santo es llamar a la Iglesia juntos por un largo periodo de tiempo para, según sus palabras, “contemplar más atentamente la misericordia a fin de llegar a ser signos efectivos de las acciones del Padre en nuestras vidas.”

¿Por qué es tan importante la misericordia? La respuesta a eso nos lleva hacia atrás al principio de la raza humana y la entrada del pecado original en la historia humana. Tan pronto como Adán y Eva hicieron su elección pecaminosa original el cual violó el mandato de Dios, se separaron del amor de Dios. Hubo una consecuencia — un “precio” — unido a ese pecado. La unidad original necesitaba ser restaurada, y Dios de inmediato comenzó a desarrollar un plan para lograr esa reconciliación. Desde ese momento en adelante, nuestro Dios amoroso nunca dejó de llegar a la humanidad, llamándonos de nuevo a la unión con Él, constantemente ofreciendo misericordia y perdón, a pesar de que no nos lo merecíamos. Desde la primera vez que Dios se reveló a Moisés en la zarza ardiendo como “Yo Soy el que Soy... un Dios misericordioso y clemente, lento a la cólera y rico en amor y fidelidad” (Ex. 2: 4), hemos llegado a conocer el rostro de Dios — quién es Él y cómo se parece — como el rostro de la misericordia.

Y así, sólo es lógico pensar que nosotros, los hijos de Dios, que somos los destinatarios de la misericordia incondicional de Dios, estamos ciertamente llamados a mostrar misericordia a otros.

La misericordia no es una idea abstracta, sino una realidad concreta a través de la cual Dios revela su amor como la de un padre/madre, movido a la acción misericordiosa desde lo más profundo del amor por los niños cuando van por mal camino. Jesús enseñó constantemente sobre el amor incondicional del Padre en sus parábolas, como la parábola de la oveja perdida y la del Hijo Pródigo. Como explica el Papa Francisco, encontramos el “núcleo del Evangelio y de la fe, porque la misericordia se presenta como una fuerza que supera todo, llenando el corazón de amor y trayendo consuelo a través del perdón.” (#9)

Entonces, ¿cómo nos preparamos, colectiva e individualmente? Hay muchas oportunidades que se han planificado a nivel diocesano (ver pág. 7 para más detalles), y cada parroquia estarán planeando oportunidades basadas en la parroquia también. Permitámonos compartir con ustedes aquí algunas sugerencias de nuestro Santo Padre sobre cómo podemos individualmente aprovechar al máximo este año:

1-redescubrir el valor del silencio: “En primer lugar debemos disponernos a escuchar la Palabra de Dios. Esto significa redescubrir el valor del silencio para meditar en la Palabra...En esta manera, será posible contemplar la misericordia de Dios y adoptarlo como nuestro estilo de vida.” (#13) Sería muy útil si pudiéramos separar unos 15 minutos al día para pasar en silencio orante para permitir que Dios hable a nuestros corazones.

2. Abstenerse de juzgar, criticar e condenar. Sabemos que Jesús nos ha enseñado “No juzguen para no ser juzgados”. Por supuesto que nunca ignoraríamos la verdad de nuestra fe o pretendernos que el pecado es aceptable, pero estamos llamados a adoptar un espíritu de aceptación amorosa del pecador y abstenernos de la dureza de juicio. Como el
“Waiting in Joyful Hope”

Seminarian Spotlight

Deacon Bruno Okoli
St. Thomas More Parish, Kalamazoo
Originally from Nigeria
St. Augustine Cathedral pastoral internship/
Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit

When did you first feel the call to become a priest?
I was 8 years old when I first felt called. My home parish in Nigeria had seminarians who would come to do apostolic work during the summers, and because I was an altar server, I got to spend a lot of time with them. I also noticed how happy and joyful they were and I wanted to be just like that.

How would you describe a typical day at the seminary?
I wake up by 5:30 a.m. every morning. I get ready and then proceed to a Holy Hour at Adoration, followed by Morning Prayer and Mass. After that, I have breakfast and head out to my classes. I usually have classes all day, and sometimes even at night. Before dinner, the seminarians gather together for Evening Prayer. After dinner, if I don’t have class, I go to the gym. I enjoy playing racquetball.

What would surprise people the most about being a seminarian?
Seminarians are just like normal human beings. They pray and play just like everyone else. The only difference is that we have an added grace of being able to read and study so much more about God.

What most draws you to become a priest?
I desire to help people and one of those ways is by being priest. You get to help families, you get to share God with them, and not only physically help them, but also emotionally and spiritually help them as well.
Confession is one of the ways that priests really get to do this.

What would your best advice be to a young man who thinks he may have a calling to the priesthood?
I would tell him to pray and reflect upon what it is that is drawing you to the priesthood. Is God truly calling you? If you think He is, then just take a first step. Go talk to our Vocations Director, or go visit someone at the seminary. They will help you discern the next step to take.

Who is your favorite saint? Why?
Pope St. John Paul II. He was ordained pope just two months after I was born, so he is the pope I knew growing up. He had a special way of understanding human beings, of recognizing their human dignity and need for respect.

Who has been the most influential priest in your life?
I actually have two. Archbishop Albert Obiefune was the bishop of my diocese in Nigeria, before he was transferred and became an archbishop. He was a great advocate of Perpetual Adoration of the Eucharist. Almost all of our parishes had Perpetual Adoration, and because of it, they grew closer to Jesus. The other priest was actually my uncle, Rev. Francis Ekejindu. I lived with him for three years before entering the seminary in Nigeria.

How do you build your relationship with Jesus and His Church?
Jesus is the reason that I am alive. For me, to be alive and doing His will is like what Jesus says about the vine and the branches. If I’m cut off from Him, I can do nothing. I offer Him my prayers, time in Adoration, and read the Scriptures. Since He called me to serve, the best way I can serve the Church is to extend His relationships to others.

The Bishop’s Perspective

Continued from page 3

Let us consider renewing the criterion of the Golden Rule in our own lives and in our relationships with others.

3. Help those on the margins: We are called to be mindful of and to open our hearts to those living on the fringes of society. A wonderful way for us to do this is by practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. As Pope Francis says, “to reawaken our conscience...to enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy.” (#15) Putting this plan into action will mean that we must extend beyond our comfort zone — to reach out to those who are burdened, those who are outcasts, those who are hurting — to see them with the eyes of mercy so that they too might enjoy the mercy we have been given by God our Father.

4. Be transformed by an encounter with mercy: We are all sinners in need of a Savior. Jesus is our Savior Who has won for us God’s mercy. That gift must in turn make us agents of mercy to others. Pope Francis has called for this Year of Mercy, not as a spiritual exercise, but as an encounter for each of us, through the love and mercy of God, to be transformed and changed — to become holy, merciful and compassionate as the Father is holy, merciful and compassionate.

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ who is “the Face of Mercy,” during this month as we enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God’s mercy...for me to extend beyond our comfort zone...to reach out to those who are burdened, those who are outcasts, those who are hurting — to see them with the eyes of mercy so that they too might enjoy the mercy we have been given by God our Father.

Papa Francisco dijo tan poderosamente en el uso de la imagen de la Regla de Oro durante su discurso ante la sesión conjunta del Congreso: “Esta regla nos apunta en una dirección clara: vamos a tratar a los demás con la misma pasión y compasión con la que queremos ser tratados. Busquemos para los demás las mismas posibilidades que buscamos para nosotros mismos. En una palabra, si queremos seguridad, demos seguridad. Si queremos que vida, demos vida. Si queremos oportunidades, ofrecamos oportunidades. Con la vara que midamos a los demás será la misma con la que seremos medidos.” Consideremos la renovación del criterio de la Regla de Oro en nuestras propias vidas y en nuestras relaciones con los demás.

3. Ayudar a los marginados: Estamos llamados a ser conscientes de, y abrir nuestros corazones a los que viven en los márgenes de la sociedad. Una manera maravillosa para que hagamos esto es mediante la práctica de las obras espirituales y corporales de misericordia. Como dice el Papa Francisco, “para despertar nuestra conciencia...para entrar más profundamente en el corazón del Evangelio, donde los pobres tienen una experiencia especial de la misericordia de Dios.” (#15) Poner este plan en acción significará que debemos extendernos más allá de nuestra zona de confort — para llegar a aquellos que están agobiados, los marginados, los que sufren — a verlos con los ojos de misericordia para que ellos también puedan disfrutar de la misericordia que nos ha sido dada por Dios nuestro Padre.

4. Ser transformado por un encuentro con la misericordia. Todos somos pecadores en necesidad de un Salvador. Jesús es nuestro Salvador que ha ganado para nosotros la misericordia de Dios. Ese regalo debe a su vez hacernos agentes de misericordia para los demás. El Papa Francisco ha pedido este Año de la Misericordia, no como un ejercicio espiritual, sino como un encuentro para cada uno de nosotros, a través del amor y la misericordia de Dios, para ser transformados y cambiados — para convertirnos en santos, misericordiosos y compasivos como el Padre es santo, misericordioso y compasivo.

Mis queridas hermanas y hermanos en Cristo, quien es “el rostro de la Misericordia”, durante este mes nos prepararémos para el invierno, encontraremos tiempo para preparar nuestros corazones para ser transformados a través de la misericordia que Dios nos ha mostrado y a todo el mundo a través del gran sacrificio de su Hijo Jesús en la cruz para la redención del mundo. Inspirados por ese gran acto de misericordia, avanzaremos como pueblo de esperanza para que, en la bella imagen del Papa Francisco podamos estar “empapados en misericordia para que podamos salir a cada hombre y mujer, llevando la bondad y la ternura de Dios! Que el bálsamo de la misericordia llegue a todos, a los creyentes y a los que están alejados, como señal de que queremos que vida, demos vida. Si queremos oportunidades, ofrecamos oportunidades. Con la vara que midamos a los demás será la misma con la que seremos medidos.” (#5) Dios los bendiga.

Catholic Charities to mark St. Nicholas Day with special family friendly event and honor outgoing executive director Fran Denny

Families are invited to join in the celebration of St. Nicholas Day on December 6 with a special event hosted by Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo. Bishop Paul J. Bradley will be on hand to share the true story of St. Nicholas. Additionally crafts and refreshments will be offered. The family-friendly celebration will be held at the Fetzer Center on the campus of Western Michigan University from 3:30 p.m. — 5 p.m.

Immediately following the agency will honor outgoing President/CEO Fran Denny who is retiring December 31, 2015. Denny has served the Catholic agency for close to thirty years. RSVP’s are encouraged but not mandatory. Contact Catholic Charities, 269-381-9800, for more information.

Global Marketplace

St. Catherine of Siena Parish

Location: Marian Hall
Saturday, Nov. 14
9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

All profits go to Marketplace vendors to support their continued good work helping workers of the world to be fairly compensated for the goods and services they produce.

For more information, contact Margie Stinson via email at edmargie@sbcglobal.net or call (269) 501-6041.

Shop early for unique holiday gifts. Entrance is free and open to the public.

The church is located at 1150 W. Center Street, Portage, Michigan.
“Waiting in Joyful Hope”

Parishes and missions throughout the diocese will be conducting the Retirement Fund for Religious collection the weekend of December 12 – 13. This annual appeal benefits more than 33,000 senior Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests nationally.

In their years of active ministry, these now-elderly religious worked for modest stipends that did not include retirement benefits. These stipends were invested in ministry and in education for members who were engaged in ministry, not in retirement planning. The decrease in the number of religious in compensated ministry today and the ever-rising cost of health care make it a struggle for religious communities to provide for elder members. In 2014, the annual cost of care for senior religious was over $1.2 billion. It is projected that by 2025, that religious age 70 and over will outnumber those under age 70 by roughly four to one. Proceeds from this annual collection offer supplemental financial assistance, helping to furnish such day-to-day necessities as prescription medications and nursing care.

For more information go to www.retiredreligious.org or contact Lisa Irwin, Associate Director, Secretariat for Parish Life and Lay Leadership at 269-903-0177 or lirwin@diokzoo.org.

Retirement Fund for Religious

Hundreds participate in annual diocesan conference

Hundreds of people from across the diocese gathered last month at the Kalamazoo County Expo Center for the annual “New Evangelization Conference” hosted by the diocesan Secretariat for Catholic Education and New Evangelization. Attendees included catechists, Catholic school teachers and administrators, clergy, religious sisters and members of the lay faithful.

The day began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Paul J. Bradley who commended participants for sacrificing a beautiful fall Saturday to commit to grow in the faith and learn more about being intentional disciples.

“The world is in great need of the witness that we are able to give,” he said during his homily. “We must find a way to be those ‘missionary disciples’ that each of us can be. As we heard so beautifully in today’s psalm refrain: ‘Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.’ And if we don’t refrain: ‘Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.’ And if we don’t

Keynote speaker Deacon Keith Stronh encouraged the attendees to be “Missionary Disciples” sharing sobering statistics on the reality of church-going activity in the United States.

“We have a crisis of discipleship,” he said remarking that parishes can’t continue to be “units of maintenance,” doing and offering the same things for years and expecting results. During his presentation he urged the attendees to be inspired by their faith and share it with others.

During the afternoon, attendees were able to choose from a variety of breakout sessions lead by diocesan staff and guest speakers.

The annual conference is open to anyone hoping to grow in the Catholic faith. Next year’s theme will focus on the Year of Mercy.

The Other Six Days

Opening Up to God

“The Church’s first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God’s mercy, to call to conversion, and to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord.” – Pope Francis, Nov. 24, 2015

This month I listened to a couple of women in their seventies, the same decade as Pope Francis. I asked them how they live church in the other six days, outside of the church building.

Anna says, “I truly find God and I’m aware of God in the “OMG” moments... those special moments in music, or in nature, or after an encounter with family or friends. I try to find blessings every day for which to be thankful. That’s not hard. I pray for peace, openness and understanding for myself and others but I no longer have a “list.” In the grand scheme of things, I thank God for our blessings and realize that my this-is-what-I-want list is pretty paltry. How often are we asked to pray for someone who is going through some kind of crisis? I no longer pray so much for the change I’d wish for this person as for acceptance of what will be and growth through the journey.”

Margaret says, “I talk to God all day long and say, ‘Stay with me.’ In the last year, because of illness, I’ve had more time to spend with God and to write in my journal. The other day I actually had an argument with Him there. I said, ‘Didn’t You give us free will? Then why Do You want us to do Yours? I resent that.’

That’s a heck of thing to say to God, but I’m stubborn and I don’t like someone else telling me how to live my life. Letting go of my stubbornness makes me feel vulnerable and afraid. But arguing with God allows me to have what’s mine — to own and take on it. ‘It’ is soft and subtle and open to choices. That’s His gift.”

“I took in the words to go out and come back to me with a new take on it — God’s version, and to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord” – Pope Francis, Nov. 24, 2015

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The Other Six Days

Opening Up to God

“The Church’s first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God’s mercy, to call to conversion, and to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord.” – Pope Francis, Nov. 24, 2015

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Pope establishes new dicastery for laity, family, life

By Junno Aracho Esteves
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis announced he is establishing a new office for lay, family and life, which combines the responsibilities of two pontifical councils.

The pope made the announcement Oct. 22 during the afternoon session of the Synod of Bishops on the family.

“I have decided to establish a new dicastery with competency for laity, family and life, that will replace the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for the Family. The Pontifical Academy for Life will be joined to the new dicastery,” the pope said.

The responsibilities of the new office will be spelled out in a document being drafted by a commission the pope said he already has appointed.

Members of the pope’s international Council of Cardinals have been discussing the move for months.

Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, the retired archbishop of Milan, was tasked by the pope to study the feasibility of creating the new dicastery.

Following a presentation by Cardinal Tettamanzi, the council made a formal proposal to bring together the current pontifical councils for the laity and for the family and place the Pontifical Academy for Life under the new office’s jurisdiction.

Established in 1967 by Blessed Paul VI, the Pontifical Council for the Laity is charged with overseeing the apostolate of the laity and “their participation in the life and mission of the church,” both as individuals and through organizations and movements.

It was reformed 10 years later and included among the permanent dicasteries of the Roman Curia. The current president of the council is Cardinal Stanislaw Rylko.

The Pontifical Council for the Family was established May 9, 1981, by St. John Paul II and took the place of the Committee for the Family created by Pope Paul in 1973. The council, which promotes pastoral ministries and apostolates aimed at supporting families and the defense of human life, is headed by Archbishop Vinzenz Paglia.

Although there was no immediate word on who would lead the new dicastery, Pope Francis said that the special commission’s text on its competencies will be presented for discussion to the Council of Cardinals, which is scheduled to meet Dec. 10-12.

The deeper synod question: How should church relate to the wider world

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — As the Catholic Church marked the 50th anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council — the last session was held Sept. 14-Dec. 8, 1965 — debates within the synod indicated that reflections on the council have shifted from differences over the meaning of individual council documents and moved on to its general vision of the structure of the church and the relationship of the church to the world.

“The discussion is about the future of the church,” German Cardinal Reinhard Marx told a group of reporters Oct. 20. Some synod members seem to view the church as “a castle to be defended, surrounded by enemies. That I can’t understand,” he said. “The church is a sacrament in the midst of people,” reaching out, challenging, bringing healing.

The synod highlighted the fact that the family is at the very heart of the church. The church is where the faith is lived and passed on and where the Christian community most strongly impacts and is impacted by the surrounding society.

As pastors, members of the synod were wrestling, for example, with the questions of Communion for the divorced and civilly remarried and how best to respect the dignity of homosexual persons while defending marriage as a union of one man and one woman for life.

But none of the bishops thought the questions ended there.

A church living in the midst of the people obviously is challenged by the variety of cultures those people represent. Maintaining unity while responding to diversity and even learning from it has been a task the Christian community has struggled with from the beginning, and not always successfully. The dangers are real.

From the beginning of the synod, members discussed the possibility that in a truly universal church, some pastoral approaches to particularly important questions could be tailored to local situations.

Members of the synod’s German-speaking small group said outreach to the divorced and civilly remarried was one of those situations.

But English Group A, which had Australian Cardinal George Pell as its moderator and U.S. Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz as its recording secretary, said leaving a matter that touches on the indissolubility of marriage up to individual bishops’ conferences “would risk harm to the unity of the Catholic Church, the understanding of her sacramental order and the visible witness of the life of the faithful.”

Couple marks ten years with papal-themed anniversary

By Victoria Cessna

Some couples plan a beach vacation, others an evening out at a nice restaurant. But for Andy and Michelle Polishak, when deciding how to mark their 10th anniversary they landed on signing up as volunteers for the World Meeting of Families.

The seed of wanting to be a part of the historic visit of Pope Francis to the United States was planted with Andy when he happened to be on a business trip in Philadelphia.

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Couple marks ten years with papal-themed anniversary

By Victoria Cessna

Some couples plan a beach vacation, others an evening out at a nice restaurant. But for Andy and Michelle Polishak, when deciding how to mark their 10th anniversary they landed on signing up as volunteers for the World Meeting of Families.

The seed of wanting to be a part of the historic visit of Pope Francis to the United States was planted with Andy when he happened to be on a business trip in Philadelphia. It was during this time the news broke with confirmation of Pope Francis’ participation in the World Meeting of Families.

At the same time Michelle was pondering ways to mark the couple’s milestone wedding anniversary. When they received a flyer in the mail with details about the conference they took it as a sign.

With limited vacation days, the couple packed up their car and drove to Philadelphia ready to become official volunteers. Armed with fluorescent T-shirts and some briefing notes, the Polishaks were stationed at the Cherry Street security checkpoint for a four-hour shift.

During this time they fielded questions from “where’s the bathroom” to “what’s going on?” from a confused traveler looking for the security checkpoint for a four-hour shift. During this time they fielded questions from “where’s the bathroom” to “what’s going on?” from a confused traveler looking for the train station.

All the time, regardless of the packed crowds and thorough security measures, Andy said the crowds were “warm and welcoming.”

In addition, Andy, a self-described “relatively new Catholic” who came into the Church in 2010, said he was impressed by the ecumenical nature of the events.

“I happened to overhear a conversation between a priest and a woman who were walking to the security checkpoint ahead of me,” recalls Andy. “The woman explained that she came all the way from Tennessee and though she was Jewish she was inspired by the pope, remarking ‘his message is universal.’”

And while the couple was thankful for the kind travelers who gave them extra tickets to the Festival of the Families and “blessed beyond” words during the Mass with Pope Francis (where they carried with them intentions from their fellow St. Thomas More parishioners), they are both quick to underscore the wonderful “God moments” that happened during the trip outside of the official events.

The couple is especially enthused to recount the many interesting pilgrims they interacted with — the nuns from Nashville on the subway to the Hispanic immigrants from North Carolina staying at their New Jersey hotel to a man from Philadelphia who had just finished working his shift at the local 7-Eleven.

Perhaps one of the most touching moments they came upon was outside the Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul made famous for its intricate display of thousands of
Top 10 Questions about the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

1. What is the history of a Jubilee year? In the ancient Hebrew tradition, the Jubilee year was celebrated every 50 years and designed to relance rights and justice. It would offer families that had lost property and sometimes their freedom an opportunity change their circumstances. It was also a reminder to the rich of their obligations to the poor and a reminder that slaves could again become their equals.

2. What is the history of a Jubilee year? The Catholic Church says its Jubilee years give a more spiritual meaning to the justice and mercy issues, by including a general pardon and an indulgence open to all. It is the year of the remission of sins and punishment of sins, reconciliation, conversion and sacramental penance.

3. What is the purpose of a Jubilee year? In addition to the remission of sins and reconciliation, a holy Jubilee year is aimed at providing an opportunity to deepen an individual’s faith.

4. What are some of the initial rituals involved in a Jubilee? The event begins with the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican. The door normally remains sealed, opening only for Jubilee years and remains open throughout the Holy Year. After that door is opened, similar Holy Doors in Rome’s other three major basilicas are also opened, including St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls and Santa Maria Maggiore. The act symbolically provides an “extraordinary journey” for the faithful toward salvation.

5. When was the first Jubilee in the Catholic Church? The very first was called in the year 1300 by Pope Boniface VIII.

6. What is the significance of the start date of the next Jubilee? The opening of the Jubilee on December 8, the feast of the Immaculate Conception which is also the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. This is of great significance, for it provides an impetus for the Church to continue the work begun at Vatican II.

7. When will this Jubilee close? On November 20, 2016 with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

8. Why is this called an ‘extraordinarily’ Holy Year? The Catholic Church generally holds its ordinary jubilees every 25 years, but extraordinary jubilees can be called to mark an event of special importance or when a pope senses a strong need.

9. What is the theme of the upcoming Jubilee? Pope Francis has called this Holy Year to focus on divine mercy, which has been a recurring theme for this pontificate.

10. When was the most recent Jubilee? Pope John Paul II celebrated an ordinary Jubilee Year in 2000. http://popefrancisnewswap.com/

Jubilee Indulgences for the Year of Mercy

The granting of a plenary indulgence first requires that the faithful have at least a general intention of receiving the indulgence, and these other conditions: Being in the state of grace, having the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin (even venial sin), having sacramentally confessed their sins, receiving Holy Communion, and praying for the intentions of the Pope.

Throughout the Year of Mercy — established from December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016 — in addition to meeting the conditions, the faithful may gain the Jubilee Indulgence by performing one of the following works:

• Making a pious pilgrimage to a Jubilee shrine or place, passing through the designated Holy Door, and there participating in Mass, another liturgical celebration, or some devotional exercise (such as Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, etc.).
• Making a pious visit — either individually or in a group — to one of these same Jubilee shrines or places, passing through the designated Holy Door, and there spending time in Eucharistic adoration or meditation, and ending with the Our Father, the Profession of Faith (in any approved form) and closing with a prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
• Visiting for a suitable time those who are in need or difficulty (such as the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, the elderly, the disabled, etc.) as if making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them.
• Supporting by a significant contribution works of a religious or social nature (such as for the benefit of abandoned children, young people in trouble, the elderly in need, migrants and refugees seeking better living conditions, etc.).

For more information on indulgences:
A Primer on Indulgences – http://goo.gl/7LoBM
Myths about Indulgences – http://goo.gl/BKxkim
The Jubilee of Mercy and Indulgences – http://goo.gl/KFQEfn

What Is an Indulgence?

An indulgence is a special grace granted from the Church for the “temporal” remnants of our sins. Indulgences are perhaps one of the most misunderstood graces of the Church. Many people still link indulgences to the core issue Martin Luther protested against in the Protestant Reformation. Admittedly, abuses have taken place at times, but indulgences are still a very good thing to take advantage of today. “An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven” (Pope Paul VI, Indulgentiarum Doctrina). When we go to confession, our sins are forgiven, but there is still a temporal punishment due to sin that must be satisfied. This is why we do the penance our confessor prescribes and why our mothers told us to “offer up” minor complaints as a child. It’s like the analogy of the broken window: our neighbor might forgive us for breaking his window, but we still should pay to replace it. An indulgence is when the Church offers to pay for the window for us. The Church holds the keys to the treasury of all graces, all the merits of Christ and the saints. She may choose to share those merits with us at any time (Mt 16:19; 18:18) and she often does to encourage us to do the penance our confessor prescribes and to work to make amends for our sins.

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Event Highlights

December 8, 2015 — Opening Mass at St. Augustine Cathedral with Bishop Paul J. Bradley

Days of Recollection — to be held four times throughout the year offering opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation for clergy and laity [2015: December 9, St. Mary, Marshall; 2016: March 10, Immaculate Conception, Three Rivers; June 1, St. Bernard, Benton Harbor; October 12, St. Margaret, Otsego]. These days will include the theme of mercy, preaching and living it, they will also include time for confession. To conclude the day deanery wide penance services will be established on these days and all priests will go back and attend the penance service.

January/February 2016: Rachel’s Vineyard Healing Retreat jointly sponsored by Diocese of Kalamazoo and the Diocese of Grand Rapids

Lent 2016:
Leave the Light On: confession program. Each Wednesday, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. every parish partnership will offer confession at the same time.

Fridays: Stations of the Cross with Bishop Bradley on Fridays at parishes in the diocese

March 4/5: Parishes celebrate “24 Hours for the Lord” – stations of the Cross, Adoration and Confessions offered on Friday and Confessions all day on Saturday

Summer 2016: Diocese to conduct outreach at County Fairs in partnership with parishes

October, 2016: New Evangelization Conference will focus on theme of mercy (open to all the faithful)

November 20, 2016: Closing Mass with Bishop Paul J. Bradley at St. Augustine Cathedral

Diocesan Offerings: Holy Door: Diocesan Holy Door will be available at the Cathedral throughout the year of mercy, for the faithful to pilgrimage to and enter through.

http://popefrancisnewswap.com/
Canonizing four saints, pope urges people to serve others with joy

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis called on people to replace their thirst for power with the joy of quiet and humble service, as he proclaimed four new saints, including the parents of St. Therese of Lisieux.

All of Christ’s disciples, especially its pastors, are called to model themselves after Jesus and “suppress our instinctive desire to exercise power over others, and instead exercise the virtue of humility.”

The pope said the new saints — a Spanish religious woman, an Italian priest and the first married couple with children to be canonized together — “unfailingly served their brothers and sisters with outstanding humility and charity in imitation of the divine master.”

On World Mission Sunday Oct. 18 in St. Peter’s Square, during the Synod of Bishops on the family, the pope created the following new saints:

• Louis Martin (1823-1894) and Zelie Martin (1831-1877), the French parents of St. Therese of Lisieux. They had nine children; four died in infancy and four in childhood. The lives of the holy spouses of Lisieux are also a great witness to the Christian meaning of authority and hierarchy.

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• Italian Father Vincenzo Grossi (1845-1917), founder of the Institute of the Daughters of the Oratory.

• Spanish Sister Maria of the Immaculate Conception (1926-1998), a member of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Company of the Cross.

The pope said that the new saints “functioned as models of a type of charity in imitation of the divine model.”

“Faced with people who seek power and success, the disciples are called to do the opposite,” the pope said.

Jesus invites everyone to follow him on this same path of love and service, he said, and to “reject the worldly temptation of seeking first place and commanding others.”

“With people who seek power and success, the disciples are called to do the opposite,” the pope said.

Those who exercise “genuine authority” in the church and the Christian community are those who serve others and “lack real prestige,” Jesus calls people “to pass from the thirst for power to the joy of quiet service,” the pope said.

“With people who seek power and success, the disciples are called to do the opposite,” the pope said.

Jesus’ teaching and example clearly show there is “no compatibility between a worldly understanding of power and the humble service, which must characterize authority.”

“Ambition and careerism are incompatible with Christian discipleship; honor, success, fame and worldly triumphs are incompatible with the logic of Christ crucified.”

Through baptism, all Christians must share in this ministry by opening one’s heart to God in order to receive his love and charity, which is to be received not “only for ourselves, but also for others.”

Pope Francis again praised the new saints before reciting the Angelus in St. Peter’s Square and called for their intercession.

He asked families to entrust their joys, dreams and difficulties to Sts. Louis and Marie Guérin Martin; he asked that the example of St. Grossi be an inspiration for people dedicated to offering young people a Christian education; and he prayed that St. Maria of the Immaculate Conception “help us live in solidarity and in closeness with those most in need.”

A video to accompany this story can be found at https://youtu.be/UAksxNLG-qRA

The saints and all of us

By George Weigel

ROME. Amidst all the Sturm and Drang of Synod-2015, something genuinely new in the life of the Church began, and it shouldn’t escape our notice. For the first time in two millennia, an entry in the liturgical books will now read, on the appropriate day, “Saints Louis and Zelie Martin, Spouses — a happy addition to ‘Martys,’ ‘Confessor,’ ‘Bishop,’ ‘Religious,’ ‘Pope,’ etc., in the pantheon of vocations to sanctity. Spouses: a married couple, together on the tapestry that hung from the central loggia of St. Peter’s before, during, and after their canonization on October 18; a man and a woman, a dad and a mom, who were the parents of a saint, the Little Flower, and in whose married life mutual sanctification took place before cooperation with God’s grace.

Spouses as-saints. There was something for Synod-2015 to ponder. And if insufficient attention was paid to this during the Synod, that’s no reason for the Church, in which millions of spouses are living lives of heroic virtue, not to take notice — and to reflect upon some old truths about the “canonization” of saints.

The Church doesn’t canonize saints for their sake. God takes quite good care of his holy ones, we may be sure, and being “raised to the dignity of the altars,” as the old phrase had it, does nothing for those so raised. No, the Church canonizes saints for our sake, so that we might have models who inspire us to be the holy ones we must be, if we’re to fulfill our Christian and human destiny. That’s why the Church sings the Litany of the Saints at its most solemn liturgical celebrations: the Litany of the Saints is the Church’s family album, the roster of those who form that “great cloud of witnesses” of which the author of the Letter to the Hebrews speaks so eloquently.

Another old truth worth repeating, with the holy spouses of the Martin family in mind, is that the Church doesn’t “make saints”; God makes saints, and the task of the Church, through the beatification and canonization process, is to recognize the saints that God has made. The process by which that recognition takes place has changed over time, from something resembling an adversarial legal procedure to something more akin to a doctoral seminar in history. The object of the exercise remains the same, though: to sift through the record of a life in order to find the traces and tracks of grace at work — as it is in all of us.

The lives of the holy spouses of Lisieux are also a great witness to the incredible capacity of the Catholic Church for self-renewal.

Louis Martin was born in 1823; Zelie was born eight years later. In other words, both were born a generation after the utter devastation of the French Church by the French Revolution.

After the enforcement by state power of the religious tolerance of the Reign of Terror (a spasm of lethal Gallic craziness musically evoked by Francois Pouleau’s ‘Dialogues of the Carmelites’), who would have predicted that 19th-20th-century France would be a seedbed of mission and sanctity, the effects of which would be felt from the hitherto-obscurge village of Lourdes in the French Pyrenees to Francophone Africa to Oceania?

Yet it happened. Much of what we think of as “French Catholicism” today grew out from under the rubble of the Terror and the destruction of the Church of the ancien régime. Louis and Zelie Martin, and their daughter, the Doctor of the Church who gave Catholicism the “Little Way,” were all products of that astonishing flourishing of holiness and evangelical zeal that followed immediately after a period of unprecedented destruction. How did that happen? It happened because, life by life, men and women took the risk of fidelity. Ordinary people defied the claims of their putative ecclesiastical betters — too often heard during Synod-2015 — that asking the heroic is just too much.

No, it’s not. Summoning us to lives of heroic virtue is asking us to be the saints we — like Saints Louis and Zelie Martin, Spouses — were baptized to be.
Pope Francis and True Mercy

By Victoria Cessna

“Spotlight,” a major motion film will be released this month showcasing a “behind-the-scenes” look at the Boston Globe journalists responsible for breaking the story regarding child sexual abuse in the Church. The film, which features many notable and fan-favorite actors such as Michael Keaton and Rachel McAdams, opens nationally November 20th.

The movie is likely to generate a renewal of conversation and coverage about the tragic events in the Church’s history. At the same time Catholics can be armed with the facts regarding the Church’s response to understand and join-in on the national conversation.

It has been twelve years since the Charter for the Protection of Children was approved in Dallas. The Charter is a comprehensive set of procedures established by the USCCB in June 2002 for addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy. It also includes guidelines for reconciliation, healing, accountability, and prevention of future acts of abuse. The Charter directs action in all the following matters: Creating a safe environment for children and young people; • Healing and reconciliation of victims and survivors; • Making prompt and effective response to allegations; • Cooperating with civil authorities; • Disciplining offenders; Since 2003 an Annual Report has been published on the progress made in implementing the procedures of the Charter. Those reports, based on annual independent audits, show progress. Approximately 99 percent of adults working or volunteering in our parishes and schools are trained and have had a background check. Of the millions of children in Catholic schools or religious education, 4.4 million of them are trained to recognize abuse and how to tell someone. Since 2002, the Diocese of Kalamazoo has done the following in aid to the healing and restoration of victims and their families and to ensure the highest level of safety possible to all children: • Began and continues a Trauma Recovery Program (offered in both English and Spanish languages) for all Catholic adult victims and survivors of any childhood trauma and/or neglect. This program, which is offered free of charge to all Catholics regardless of who abused them — clergy, parent, sibling, relative, teacher, coach, neighbor, etc., is directed by licensed professionals with the goal to help individuals learn new tools to improve their lives and to heal by learning to integrate their feelings, thoughts and behaviors. Since the fall of 2002, more than 300 people have participated in the program. • Enacted and followed a “zero tolerance” policy which calls for the immediate removal of a Catholic priest or deacon if an allegation of sexual abuse is established. • Completed more than 10,000 background checks on all clergy, employees of the Church, and all volunteers who have any contact with children. • Trained these same 10,000 individuals including all clergy, seminarians, all Church employees, and all volunteers who work with children with a three-hour workshop “Protecting God’s Children” to raise people’s awareness to recognize child predator behaviors and how to act on that information. • Required all children in our churches and schools to receive appropriate training annually in how to recognize dangerous situations and abuse and to report them to a trusted adult. • Required all visiting clergy, prior to their coming to the Diocese of Kalamazoo, to provide proof that they have never been credibly accused of abuse and are in good standing in their own diocese or religious order community. • Created a Code of Ethical Standards to help create a safe, appropriate and Christian environment for minors and their relationship with adults involved in Church ministry.

For more information on safe environments in our Diocese visit: www.diokzoo.org.

Additional Resources:
All parish and Catholic school volunteers working with children under 18 must complete a “Protecting God’s Children” training course (also called “VIRTUS”). You must register online — follow the link on the diocesan website: www.diokzoo.org.

Upcoming classes:
November 14: • Our Lady of the Lake Parish, Edwardsburg, 10 a.m. • St. Peter Parish, Douglas, 10 a.m. November 17: • St. Margaret Parish, Otsego, 6 p.m.

Sexual Misconduct Questions & Reporting: 877-802-0115

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“Waiting in Joyful Hope”

By Bishop Robert Barron

[After returning] from a week covering Pope Francis’s triumphant journey to the United States, I can confidently tell you that the news media are in love with the Vicar of Christ. Time and again, commentators, pundits, anchorpersons, and editorialists opined that Pope Francis is the bomb. They approved, of course, of his gentle way with those suffering from disabilities and his proclivity to kiss babies, but their approbation was most often awakened by this Pope’s “merciful” and “inclusive” approach, his willingness to reach out to those on the margins. More often than not, they characterized this tenderness as a welcome contrast to the more rigid and dogmatic style of Benedict XVI.

Often, I heard words such as “revolutionary” and “game-changing” in regard to Pope Francis, and one commentor sighed that she could’t imagine going back to the Church as it was before the current pontiff.

Well, I love Pope Francis too, and I certainly appreciate the novelty of his approach and his debt manner of breathing life into the Church. In fact, a number of times on the air I commented that the Pope’s arrival to our shores represented a new springtime after the long winter of the sex abuse scandals. But I balk at the suggestion that the new Pope represents a revolution or that he is dramatically turning away from the example of his immediate predecessors. And I strenuously deny that he is nothing but a soft-hearted powder-puff, indifferent to sin.

A good deal of the confusion stems from a misinterpretation of Francis’s stress on mercy. In order to clear things up, a little theologizing is in order. It is not correct to say that God’s essential attribute is mercy. Rather, God’s essential attribute is love, since love is what obtains among the three divine persons from all eternity. Mercy is what love looks like when it turns toward the sinner. To say that mercy belongs to the very nature of God, therefore, would be to imply that sin exists within God himself, which is absurd.

Now this is important, for many receive the message of divine mercy as tantamount to a denial of the reality of sin, as though sin no longer matters. But just the contrary is the case. To speak of mercy is to be intensely aware of sin and its peculiar form of destructiveness. Or to shift to one of the Pope’s favorite metaphors, it is to be acutely conscious that one is wounded so severely that one requires, not minor treatment, but the emergency and radical attention provided in a hospital on the edge of a battlefield. Recall that when Francis was asked, in a famous interview two years ago, to describe himself, he responded, “a sinner.” Then he added, “who has been looked upon by the face of mercy.” That’s getting to the relationship right. Remember as well that the teenaged Jorge Mario Bergoglio came to a deep and life-changing relationship to Christ precisely through a particularly intense experience of his essential attribute. As many have indicated, Papa Francesco speaks of the devil more frequently than any of his predecessors of recent memory, and he doesn’t reduce the dark power to a vague abstraction or a harmless symbol. He understands Satan to be a real and very dangerous person.

When Pope Francis speaks of those on the margins, he does indeed mean people who are economically and politically disadvantaged, but he also means people who are cut off from the divine life, spiritually poor. And just as he reaches out to the materially marginalized in order to bring them to the center, so he reaches out to those on the existential periphery in order to bring them to a better place. In speaking of mercy and inclusivity, he is decidedly not declaring that “I’m okay and you’re okay.” He is calling people to conversion. As my mentor, Cardinal Francis George, said, “All are welcome in the Church, but on Christ’s terms and not their own.”

Nowhere has the confusion on this score been greater than in relation to the Pope’s famous remark regarding a priest with a homosexual orientation, “Who am I to judge?” I would wager that 95 percent of those who took in those words understood them to mean that, as far as Pope Francis is concerned, homosexual activity is not really sinful. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Pope was responding to a hypothetical involving a priest with same sex attraction, who had fallen in the past and who is now endeavoring to live in accord with the moral law, a sinner, in a word, who has been looked upon by the face of mercy.

As we so very legitimately exult in the beauty of Pope Francis’s unique style and theological emphasis, let us not turn him into an advocate of “anything goes” liberalism. As St. Augustine long ago reminded us, misericordia (mercy) and miseria (misery) are two sides of the same coin.

Bishop Robert Barron is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and the host of CATHOLICISM, a groundbreaking, award-winning documentary about the Catholic Faith.

On September 8, 2015, he was ordained Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.
Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Misa bilingüe en la Catedral. Preside Nuestro Obispo Paul J. Bradley, Obispo de la Diócesis.

Diciembre 11 (Viernes) — Días de todos los años, el Señor Obispo, Paul Bardley, preside en la catedral la Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. Este año la celebración diocesana de la Virgen de Guadalupe será el viernes, 11 de diciembre del 2015 a las 7:00 p.m. en la Catedral de San Agustín, 542 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49007. Y se sugiere el día 12 o 13 celebrar en sus parroquias locales. Reserve su tiempo para acompañar a la Virgen María en su día. Las personas que deseen pueden usar vestidos típicos de su país de origen y llevar flores para ofrecer a la Virgen María y compartir con otras personas. Después de la Misa habrá una recepción para todos.

Bilingual Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Presiding Bishop Paul J. Bradley

As in past years, the Most Rev. Paul Bradley will preside the bilingual Mass in honor of the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This year the Diocesan celebration will take place on Friday, December 11, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Augustine Cathedral, 542 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49007. And it is suggested to be celebrated at your local parishes on the 12th or 13th. We hope you can reserve some time to accompany the Virgin Mary on her day. It is suggested to dress in traditional clothing of different countries of origin. It is also suggested for families to bring flowers to offer the Virgin Mary. There will be a reception after Mass.

Fortaleciendo las Familias en la Fe (Reflexión #17)

Por Verónica Rodríguez

Actividad para hacer en familia este mes de Noviembre: Recuerdemos lo que el Papa Francisco dijo durante la misa a finalizar el Encuentro Mundial de las Familias en Filipinas, “el hogar es el lugar correcto para que la fe se convierta en vida, y para que la vida se convierta en fe”. Démosle vida a nuestra fe en nuestros hogares, haciendo juntos una actividad. En este mes de noviembre se celebre el Día de Acción de Gracias o “Thanksgiving”. Es un día para reunirse en familia y dar gracias por todas las bendiciones que nos ha dado Dios. Algunas parroquias tienen una cena de “Thanksgiving” para familias necesitadas, esta sería una excelente oportunidad para ayudar en familia a servir los platos de comida o entregar despensas de comida. Así toda la familia esta junta y compartiendo con la familia extending, la familia parroquia. Si no celebran “Thanksgiving”, por qué no comenzar esa linda costumbre y quizás el primer paso sería aprender sobre la historia del Día de Acción de Gracias.

Año Jubilar: Año de la Misericordia

Por la Dra. Fanny Tabares

El Papa Francisco ha convocado a todos los católicos del mundo para un Año Jubilar. En el año jubilar de la Misericordia, se buscará mostrar “la alegría de re-descubrir y hacer conocida la misericordia de Dios”. El 8 de diciembre para celebrar también los cincuenta años del Concilio Vaticano II, se abrirá la Puerta Santa de la Basílica de San Pedro, a la que se unirán las otras tres basílicas de Roma abriendo sus respectivas Puertas Santas: Santa María la Mayor, San Juan de Letrán y San Pablo Extra Muros. La apertura de las Puertas Santas se contará después por todo el mundo, puesto que todas las diócesis celebrarán de esta manera el Año Santo.

En la Diócesis de Kalamazoo: El Año Santo se iniciará también el 8 de diciembre a las 12:10 p.m. con la Santa Misa en la Catedral de San Agustín presidida por el Señor Obispo de Bradley. Y este mismo día en la catedral, se abrirá la Puerta Sagrada Diocesana del Año Jubilar que estará disponible para el año del misericordia, para que los fieles en peregrinación entren.

• Para prepararnos para esta peregrinación tendremos: Una Tarde con el Señor Obispo Bradley con el tema: “La cara de la Misericordia”. Presentación del Año de la Misericordia el 3 de noviembre en la parroquia de St. Mary, Niles a las 6:30pm; y el 9 de noviembre, en la Parroquia de Immaculate Conception, Hartford a las 6:00p.m. Posiblemente se unirán otras parroquias a esta presentación.

• La Conferencia de la Nueva Evangelización de octubre 22 del 2016 se enfocará en el tema de La Misericordia y será abierta para todos los coryentes.

• La Misa de Conclusión del Año Jubilar será el 20 de noviembre del 2016 con el Señor Obispo Paul J. Bradley en la Catedral de San Agustín.

• Todas las Parroquias y escuelas católicas deberán establecer actividades directamente relacionadas con las Obras de Misericordia Corporales y Espirituales.

• Es importante estar atentos en las parroquias para programas más adelante a nivel diocesano y parroquial para celebrar el Año Santo.

Este Año Jubilar estará lleno de importantes celebraciones y eventos. Los temas que se manejarán a nivel parroquial serán:

• La celebración: anuncio de la misericordia
• El sacramento de la Reconciliación: experiencia de misericordia
• La caridad: testimonio de misericordia

El Papa Francisco convocó oficialmente el Jubileo con la Bula de Convocación “Misericordiae Vultus” (“El rostro de la misericordia”). En esta bula el Papa Francisco explica el espíritu con el que los católicos del mundo debemos vivir el año del jubilo. “Siempre tenemos necesidad de contemplar el misterio de la misericordia. Es fuente de alegría, de serenidad y de paz. Es condición para nuestra salvación. Misericordia: es la palabra que revela el misterio de la misericordia. Es el acto último y supremo con el cual Dios viene a nuestro encuentro. Misericordia: es la ley fundamental que habita en el corazón de cada persona cuando mira con ojos sinceros al hermano que encuentra en el camino de la vida. Misericordia: es la vía que une Dios y el hombre, porque abre el corazón a la esperanza de ser amados para siempre no obstante el límite de nuestro pecado.”

En esta segunda parte del Día del Año Santo jubilar, el Año de la Misericordia, se considera que el año jubilar de la Misericordia, se abre para describir la naturaleza de Dios a través de la Historia de su misericordia. Dios a través de la Historia de su misericordia.

Diciembre/December

5 (Sábado) — 10 a.m.-12m. Comité Diocesano de Pastoral Hispana, Centro Pastoral Diocesano (Hispanic Ministry Diocesan Pastoral Committee) meeting, Diocesan Pastoral Center, Kalamazoo

11 (Viernes) — 7 p.m. Misa Bilingüe, Celebración de Nuestra Sra. De Guadalupe, Catedral de San Agustín, Kalamazoo, MI, Preside el Señor Obispo Paul J. Bradley (Bilingual Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at St. Augustine Cathedral, Kalamazoo, MI, Presiding Bishop Paul J. Bradley).

16 (Miércoles) — Comienzan las Posadas y Novenas Navideñas en las Parroquias. (Beginning of the Posadas and Christmas Novenas in the Parishes.)

Calendario/Calendar

Noviembre/November

Oct. 22-Nov. 24 Sesiones Recuperación de un Trauma en español (10 sesiones). (Trauma Recovery Sessions in Spanish. 10 sessions).

1(Domingo) — Día de Todos los Santos (All Saints Day)

2 (Lunes) — Día de los Difuntos (All Souls’ Day)

6 (Viernes) — 6:30 – 9 p.m. Taller de Liturgia, Ministros de Comunición y Lectores. Parroquia de St. Mary, Niles. (Liturgy Workshop, Ministers of Holy Communion and Lectors)


“La Iglesia Domestica” Boletín Electrónico

(English translation): “La Iglesia Domestica” is an electronic newsletter from the Diocese of Kalamazoo (Domestic Church publication – please contact Socorro Truchan at (269) 903-0199 or by email: struchan@diokzoo.org

NOTA: el boletín se publica también en inglés (“The Domestic Church”) si gustan recibir ambos. (English translation): “La Iglesia Domestica” is an electronic newsletter from the Diocese of Kalamazoo (Domestic Church publication – please contact Socorro Truchan at (269) 903-0199 or by email: struchan@diokzoo.org
Confirmation with Bishop Bradley:
Nov. 8: Diocesan Confirmation, St. Augustine Cathedral, 3 p.m.
Nov. 22: Confirmation, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Allegan, 11 a.m.

CENTRAL DEANERY
Kalamazoo:
Nov. 8: Mass in Polish, St. Monica Parish; 2 p.m. Mass celebrated in Polish by Fr. Lipka. Potluck to follow.
Nov. 12: Gathering for Widowed Men, Diocesan Pastoral Center, 4-5:30 p.m. Please join others for a time of fellowship and support. Contact: Socorro Truchan, 269-903-0199, struchan@diokzoo.org.
Nov. 20: Vineyard Academy Farm to Table Fundraiser Dinner, St. Mary Church, Kalamazoo, doors open at 6 p.m. Fundraiser for Vineyard Academy. Cost is $50/dinner. Contact: 269-629-7725 or vineyardacademy.org.
Nov. 21: Marriage Preparation Training, Diocesan Pastoral Center, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., One-day training for marriage preparation facilitators. Contact: Socorro Truchan, 269-903-0199, struchan@diokzoo.org.

Dec. 8: Year of Mercy Opening Mass with Bishop Bradley, St. Augustine Cathedral, 12 p.m.
Dec. 11: Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass with Bishop Bradley. St. Augustine Cathedral, 7 p.m.
Dec. 12: Fighting Porn in Our Culture and Winning, St. John Bosco Church, Mattawan, 9:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. Conference featuring founder of “Integrity Restored”, Dr. Peter Kleponis. Early Registration (by Nov. 20) $15/person or $25/married couple. Register at: diokzoo.fightingporn.eventbrite.com.
Dec. 12: Opening of Holy Door for the Year of Mercy with Bishop Bradley, St. Augustine Cathedral, 4 p.m.

Portage
Nov. 14: Global Marketplace, Marian Hall St. Catherine of Siena Parish, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Fair trade goods market. No entry fee. Contact: Margie Stinson, 269-501-6041, edmargie@sbcglobal.net.
Nov. 21: Monthly Energizer, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Making a Report of Sexual Misconduct
A report of sexual misconduct may be initiated at the Diocese of Kalamazoo’s Sexual Misconduct Question and Reporting Line: 877-802-0115. A caller will be requested to provide his or her name and telephone number. All calls regarding sexual misconduct will be returned, usually within one hour. This toll-free telephone number has been established as a part of the diocese’s effort to protect children, young people and other vulnerable people in our schools, parishes and ministries. This line is for reporting suspected sexual misconduct or child abuse within diocesan institutions and ministries only. If you have some other concern about diocesan schools, parishes or ministries, please contact the appropriate diocesan school, parish or office directly. In all cases of sexual abuse you are encouraged to report all cases to the local police or protective services.

Please join us at CCDOK’s 4th Annual CharitiesDine Restaurant

Dine out to help us serve homeless teens, families in crisis, pregnant women & babies… at least 35% of your bill will be donated directly to Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo.

Alle House
Andrea’s Cafe and Pizza
TOD (The Old Dairy)
Chocolatia
Coldstone Creamery (Francisheka)
Comensoli’s Fieldstone Grill
Joe’s Cokelot’s Pizza
Juliana’s Liz’s Parkview Cafe
Michelle’s (4 locations)
Treat Street
More than 100 couples honored at Golden Anniversary Mass

In one of the biggest turnouts, more than 100 couples celebrated 50 years of marriage at the annual diocesan Golden Anniversary Mass. Eight couples celebrated more than 50 years, including two celebrating 65.

For John and Sandra Fleckenstein, who were among the couples celebrating 50 years of marriage, their five-decades together began with love at first sight. “I was an usher in church and she came in and sat right down next to me,” said John Fleckenstein. “I looked at her and said, ‘let’s go have a cup of coffee,’ and I knew that was it, right then.”

Making the celebration extra special, the couple’s son, Very Rev. John Fleckenstein, concelebrated the Mass with Bishop Paul J. Bradley.

Bishop Bradley invited all those not celebrating their anniversary to stand, giving the “Jubilarians” a standing ovation during his homily. Pope Francis continually emphasized the importance of marriage during his Papal Visit to the U.S. in September. At the prayer vigil for the Festival of Families, he recognized the difficulty of married life imparting these words to the crowds of people gathered in Philadelphia, “Laying down one’s life out of love is not easy. As with the Master, ‘staking everything’ can sometimes involve the cross,” he said. “This is a great legacy that we can give to our children, a very good lesson: we make mistakes, yes; we have problems, yes. But we know that that is not really what counts. We know that mistakes, problems and conflicts are an opportunity to draw closer to others, to draw closer to God.”

In his homily, Bishop Bradley also acknowledged that married life is not always easy. “When you first said: ‘I Do,’ you have no idea what would come your way, yet, you said ‘I Do’. And every day of these last 50 years, you have said ‘I Do’ again and again and again… You are doing what Jesus told us makes us just like Him: you are laying down your life for your friend, for your beloved spouse.”

Deacon Jim and Bonnie Laveline couldn’t agree more. “You have a lot of problems during your marriage, she says. “And it’s difficult sometimes. But it is worth it.”

**Students create prayer knots to honor pope’s special devotion**

Lake Michigan Catholic Elementary students, led by Art teacher Mary Dudding, created Prayer Knots in honor of Pope Francis’ devotion to “Mary, Untier of Knots.” Pope Francis saw this image of Mary while he was a student in Germany, and promoted her veneration in Latin America. The painting was originally inspired by a meditation of martyred bishop St. Irenaeus, based on the parallel made by St. Paul between Adam and Christ. In turn, St. Irenaeus made a comparison between Eve and Mary, saying “Eve, by her disobedience, tied the knot of disgrace for the human race; whereas Mary, by her obedience, undid it.”

According to Dudding, the knots represent the problems and struggles people face for which they do not see a solution. Students and staff of Lake Michigan Catholic Elementary School tied their own knots in union with Pope Francis, whose prayer life serves as a model for our own as we seek holy guidance to “untie the knots” and come closer to God.