Catholic schools in the diocese announce partnership with student information system

By Sarah DeMott

Catholic schools in the Diocese are about to get a new digital utility tool in student information system, RenWeb. RenWeb offers a complete, end-to-end database system to streamline and integrate functions from administration to the classroom to the home. Soon prospective parents will be able to inquire online, begin filling out applications for admission and financial aid and more. Current parents will be able to fill out medical information, re-enroll for the next school year, or check grades and teacher reports. Administration will be able to track inquiries, organize enrollment information into reports and dig into enrollment data to be better able to recruit and serve prospective families.

“We had been on the hunt for a great all-in-one tool for our schools for some time,” said Margaret Erich, Superintendent and Executive Director of the Office of Schools. “RenWeb’s platform is intuitive, geared to help our schools grow and succeed, and approaches customer service with a partnership mind set. We are excited to see what this new tool does for our enrollment and retention and how it helps cut back on menial tasks in the classroom that take up valuable instruction time, and streamline the way we provide parents with information about their children.”

Teachers will be able to keep track of student medical information and allergies while on field trips without bringing folders of information with them. Parents will be able to check up on their children’s performance and behavior via their computer or the RenWeb Home app. Optional features some schools will be utilizing include online billing, financial aid assessments, library and cafeteria services, text alerts and more.

Some schools will begin to roll in RenWeb features starting in January, but all Catholic schools in the Diocese will be fully functioning in the system by the end of the 2017-18 school year.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass

December 10, 6 p.m., St. Augustine Cathedral

On December 12, 1945, Pope Pius XII, decreed Our Lady of Guadalupe to be “Patroness of all the Americas.” Her feast day is December 12, and it is a Holy Day of Obligation in Mexico. The Diocese of Kalamazoo has a long-standing tradition of observing her feast day. Everyone is invited to a Bilingual Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Saturday, December 10, 6 p.m. at St. Augustine Cathedral, 542 W. Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo. The Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley will preside. Families are asked to please bring a flower(s) to offer the Virgin Mary. Participants are encouraged to come dressed in traditional clothing from their native country if they wish. A reception will be held immediately following Mass in the Crowley Center. Shown left are two participants from last year’s Mass wearing elaborate head-dresses adorned with peacock feathers to honor the Virgin Mary.

Diocesan program helps clients navigate the immigration process

By Vicki Cessna

Some need help with obtaining a green card, others a work visa and still others are advocating for family members. Whatever the issue, diocesan Immigration Assistance Program Director and lawyer Samantha Lindberg says they’re there to help “anyone who has an immigration problem.”

The mission of the Immigration Assistance Program (IAP) is to provide the indigent immigrant population of the nine counties of the Diocese of Kalamazoo with low-cost, competent legal representation in their immigration matters. The program began more than 15 years ago by Sr. Rosemary Tierney, CSI, a long-time advocate for the Hispanic/Latino community, who recognized the need as the population grew in Southwest Michigan throughout the last twenty years.

Lindberg notes that while 75 percent of IAP’s clients are from Mexico the remaining 25 percent come from countries all over the world including Canada, Nigeria, Germany, Israel, China, Burma and the Czech Republic.

On average Lindberg and program assistant Karina Mazei Puinig take on 200 cases each year and have about 200-300 open cases. Both are bilingual in English/Spanish.
From the Editor

By Victoria Cessna
Communication Director & Editor of The Good News

I’m not a teacher — but I play one on Wednesday evenings.

For 75 minutes I am blessed (and challenged) by the preciousness of 15-six year-old first graders in my religious education class. They instruct me in the very important language of elementary students such as the “coyote quiet” and “hands on top means stop” symbols used to command silence.

Recently while I was bumbling through a lesson on saints and sainthood the children were buzzing with questions to me faster than I could return (does my great grandma count? How about my dog? Is Moses a saint?). During this chaotic discussion one little girl raised her hand looking confused yet earnest, and asked, “Mrs. Cessna, what’s our learning target?”

In other words, “what the heck are you talking about? You’re all over the place.”

As I journey through Advent this year I’m reminded of this wise question from my young student, “what is my learning target?” With all the demands on our time it’s easy to fall short of a thoughtful and prayerful Advent season — I know I’ve been guilty of that. So this year, I’m going to make a point of giving myself a daily “time-out” to enjoy some silence, reflect on the daily readings and not be all over the place.

I’m also going to try something new. I’m going to choose 28 people, write their names on a slip of paper and place those papers in a mason jar. Each day of Advent I’ll choose a name and purposely pray for that person. I’m going to reflect on what my life would be like without them, what impact they’ve had and what a gift they are. Not a bad replacement for the chocolate squares in an Advent calendar.

If you’re blessed with an abundant amount of siblings like I am, who have populated the earth with their own offspring, then you can get to know 28 people pretty fast. Add in some amazing friends and co-workers and I’ll be all set.

Last year while offering a reflection on Advent, Pope Francis said, “We rediscover the beauty of all being on a journey: the Church, with her vocation and mission, and all humanity, peoples, civilizations, cultures, all on a journey across the paths of time.”

This year as you journey through these four weeks why not take a few moments to pray for these fellow travelers. We all have the end-goal in mind and we can all use each other’s encouragement.

May you have a blessed Advent season and a very Merry Christmas!

Pope Francis December Intentions

Universal: End to Child-Soldiers

That the scandal of child-soldiers may be eliminated throughout the world.

Evangelization: Europe

That the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel which gives joy and hope to life.

The Good News for the Catholic Diocese of Kalamazoo

Proudly designated The Good News as the official publication of the Diocese of Kalamazoo. All notices and regulations, appointments, assignments, etc. issued under the caption “Official” are to be regarded as official communications of the Bishop of Kalamazoo. Opinions, features and letters to the editors that appear in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions held by The Good News or its Diocesan Office.

The Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley
Bishop of Kalamazoo

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Mission Statement of The Good News: The Good News is the official newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Kalamazoo. The Bishop of Kalamazoo is the publisher and president. The Good News is an extension in the minds of the teaching authority of the Bishop. Therefore, it must always and at all times present Catholic teaching in an orthodox, authentic and balanced manner. Its mission and goals proceed from this fundamental reality.

The Good News is an editorially independent publication of the Catholic Church in Michigan and is not controlled financially or editorially by the Michigan Catholic Conference.

www.diokzoo.org

Pastoral Letter Excerpt

There are approximately 110,000 Catholics living within the nine counties that make up the territory of the Diocese of Kalamazoo. But as bishop, I am actually entrusted with the spiritual well-being of all the people living within this territory, which is approximately 900,000 people for whom I have some spiritual responsibility. I pray for them. I try to be open to them and find ways for us to receive them and welcome them into the life of faith, and the life of the Church.

It is also important to keep in mind that our diocese is considered to be a “mission diocese” due to our relatively small percentage of Catholics in relation to the general population living within our diocese, as well due to the largely rural makeup of our diocese. By that very classification, it is evident that our resources are more limited than some larger dioceses, but it has no impact on the quality and vibrancy of those of us who make up the Catholic population in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, nor does it change our responsibility to fulfill the mission of the Church in this territory; in many ways, we have even more responsibility to reach out to those who have become inactive, disenfranchised or “fallen away” Catholics, and in particular to those many people living around us who do not know God at all or practice any religion or faith.

There is a special and intimate bond between the bishop and the priests of the diocese, the bishop’s Chief Collaborators, and all those whom the bishop assigns to serve the people of God. The normal place where the people of God come together is in the various parishes which make up the diocese. The bishop assigns a pastor to extend his ministry to serve the needs of each parish in the diocese, and the pastor in turn provides pastoral, sacramental, liturgical, catechetical and spiritual care and guidance to those members of the Christian faithful who are members of that parish, or several parishes, entrusted to his care. Some priests are assigned as parochial vicars to assist the pastor, and other priests may be assigned as chaplains, entrusted with the pastoral care of a particular group of the Christian faithful.

— Moving Forward in Hope: Charting the Course for the Future, pp. 18-19

Download copies of Bishop Bradley’s current pastoral letter from the diocesan website: www.diokzoo.org or listen to the audio version read by Bishop Bradley. Published booklets are available at the parish or by contacting the Communications Department at the diocese: 269-903-0163.

Superior General Visits Diocese

More than 16 percent of the priests serving in the Diocese of Kalamazoo are with a religious order. One of those orders is the Missions of St. Francis de Sales. The order was founded by Fr. Peter Memier in 1838 at La Rochelle–Sur-Foron, France. The first mission territory entrusted to the new congregation in 1845 was the vast mission territory of Visakhapatnam in India. Today members of MSFS are spread over many countries in the world.

Fr. Abraham Vettuvellil MSFS the Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales visited with Bishop Bradley and his order priests currently working in our Diocese. Shown right are:


Dioce helps navigate immigration process — Continued cover story

Perhaps some of the most rewarding cases are those clients who are the victims of domestic abuse. In those cases all fees are waived.

“Most of the woman we see in those situations feel stuck,” says Lindberg. “It’s gratifying to help women who’ve never had power over their lives take control.” While the path to citizenship can be a long and costly road to navigate, IAP provides services at a significantly lower cost than obtaining a private attorney. New clients are taken on only after an initial consultation.

“Initial consultations are held on Mondays at our office from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.,” says Lindberg. “If it is determined by the IAP that there is a manner in which they can help the prospective client, they will provide that person with a list of documents required for the submission of their application/petition and an appointment for follow-up.

Each case is unique and some forms can be up to 21 pages long. Wait-times can vary from 1 to 2 months depending on the circumstances including country of origin and whether someone seeking legal status has a spouse or parent who is a U.S. citizen.

For more information on IAP visit www.diokzoo.org/immigration-assistance-program or visit our Facebook “DOK Immigration Assistance Program.”
THE BISHOP’S PERSPECTIVE
The Pause that Refreshes

I’m not sure where November went, but it seems that one day I woke up and there was snow on the ground. Christmas decorations up and Salvation Army bell ringers were at the D&W. Perhaps it was the mild fall weather that lasted well into November that contributed to that sense of great surprise when the first snow fell and the temperature dramatically dropped. By the time you read this Thanksgiving will have come and gone and we will definitely be in the midst of what we have come to know as the holiday season. For many, “Black Friday” has launched us into the frenzy of the shopping “countdown” and many, including me are wondering when and how to get everything done, from shopping, to decorations, to sending our annual Christmas greetings.

But let’s just stop, take a deep breath and put our lives on “pause” just for a moment. While all the frenzy and busyness of shopping and gift-giving are an important part of this holiday season, we need to keep that part in the proper perspective as we take the time to remember what it is that we are celebrating as we do all this running around. As we take time to pause and reflect, we remember that no matter what the rest of the world wants to call it, we are celebrating Christmas — literally, Christ’s birth — which changed the world forever. God Himself, in His Son Jesus, has come to make His dwelling among us (Emmanuel).

What greater sign could God give us of His unconditional love for us — what more dramatic action could He take to show us that He finds our world and all His creation so worthwhile that He wants to live with us, and to save us from our sins and the sinfulness of the whole world — than by being born just like each of us, was, to grow up as we have grown, and to ransom us from the ultimate enemies of our humanity, which is evil, sin and death. This is why we celebrate Christmas with such a wonderful spirit of joy and hope.

The pause that the Church provides for us each year to help us remember why we celebrate Christmas is called Advent. These four weeks which stand at the beginning of a brand new Liturgical Year remind us of what is truly important and help us to keep life in this world in perspective. Christmas celebrates Christ’s birth, the first and most dramatic “coming” of God into our world. But Advent also reminds us that there will be another “coming” of Christ in the final “coming” when the world as we know it comes to an end, and all of us — all humanity — will give an accounting to the Creator of all, our Loving God. However, Advent also helps us to keep in mind that between that first coming of Christ on Christmas and His final coming at the end of time, Jesus comes to us constantly and in countless ways as we live our lives of faith through our participation in the life of the Church. Jesus comes to us every time we go to Mass as we listen to God’s holy Word and receive the Holy Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus enters into and inspires our minds, and into our hearts and souls, and gives us the nourishment we need — the “daily Bread” we pray for every time we pray the Our Father. But Jesus comes to us in so many other ways as well.

Since each of us is made in the image and likeness of God, and since God’s Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of those who are baptized into Christ, we are called to see Jesus in one another, not just those with whom we are friends, or those we love and share life with in our families, but we are also called to see Jesus in those who are poor, needy, those who are vulnerable, and those who mistreat us and who might be our enemies. Christ “comes” to us every day and in all our life circumstances, and we are called to love Him in whatever form He comes to us as if we were seeing Him as the new-born Infant Savior on Christmas morn- ing, or as our Savior Lord hanging on the cross to save us; or as the Risen Lord on Easter, or as the Glorious Lord at the final coming. It would be much easier to love Jesus in His first coming, or in His final coming; it is much more challenging to love Jesus in the ways He comes to us in all the days in between those two ultimate “comings”, but that is what we are called to do. We are far more likely to miss Jesus, or ignore Him, in the daily “comings”.

Even though the Jubilee Year of Mercy came to a close a couple weeks ago on the Solemnity of Christ the King, and the Holy Doors were closed at St. Peter Basilica in Rome and in each of the Cathedrals around the world including our own, the doorway to Christ’s love and mercy is always open. If we learned anything during that Jubilee Year I hope that it was to remember that our God loves us unconditionally, and He never tires of extending His mercy and forgiveness to us. As we prepare for all the external celebrations of Christmas, let us make sure that we are also preparing for the spiritual celebration of Christmas, and in particular that we receive the Sacrament of Penance so that we can confess our sins, including those failures to see Jesus when He comes to us everyday. And along with all the decorations, gifts, and greetings, let us make sure to continue practicing the spiritual and corporal works of mercy each day, which is the best way to make sure that we are remembering to see Jesus in those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless, in prison or in any need.

May God’s blessings be generously bestowed upon you and all your families throughout this Advent and Christmas season, and as we move forward in hope into the new year of 2017, seeing and embracing Jesus in all His comings into our lives.

God Bless you now and always.
U.S. bishops meeting for annual meeting, elect new president, set priorities and goals

Baltimore — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops have approved their 2017-2020 strategic plan, during their annual Fall General Assembly in Baltimore, November 15. Under the theme, Encountering the Mercy of Christ and Accompanying His People with Joy, the strategic plan includes the collective work of 16 standing committees, 18 subcommittees and one ad-hoc committee; and it lays the groundwork for more than 740 individual projects of the USCCB for the next planning cycle. Bishop Bradley serves on two committees: Priorities and Plans and the Administrative Committee. Activities referenced in the plan include social media and awareness projects, the 2017 National Convocation of Catholic Leaders in Florida, and the 2018 V Encuentro on Hispanic Latino Ministry.

The plan is centered on five strategic priorities approved by the full body of bishops a year ago, and are aimed at encountering those in need, bringing them hope, and nurturing them spiritually and physically. These priorities are: Evangelization: Open wide the doors to Christ through missionary discipleship and personal encounter.

Family and marriage: Encourage and heal families; inspire Catholics and provide meaningful ongoing formation to clergy, religious and vulnerable.

Vocations and ongoing formation: Encourage vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, and provide meaningful ongoing formation to clergy, religious and lay ministers.

Religious freedom: Promote and defend the freedom to serve, witness and worship, in the U.S. and abroad.

In other developments at the meeting, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, was elected president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Archbishop Jose Gomez was elected as USCCB vice president.

The biggest highlight of all was a video message to the Bishops by Pope Francis himself in support of the upcoming “V Encuentro” which begins at the level of our Dioceses in early 2017, and will culminate with the national Encuentro in the Diocese of Fr. Worth in Texas in early 2018,” said Bishop Bradley. “It’s only 5 minutes, but it’s so heartwarming to see and hear (in excellent English) Pope Francis’ strong endorsement of this wonderful moment in the life of the Church in the United States. To me, the most important part of our Holy Father’s video message is this sentence: “Our great challenge is to create a culture of encounter, which encourages individuals and groups to share the richness of their traditions and experiences, to break down walls and to build bridges.”

The bishops also approved the canonical consultation of four causes for beatification and canonization: Julia Greeley, sought by Archbishop Samuel Aquila of Denver, Sister Blandina Segale, S.C., sought by Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico, Fr. Patrick Ryan, sought by Bishop Richard E. Stika of Knoxville, Tennessee; and Fr. Bernard Quinn, sought by Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn. Episcopal consultation is a step in the Catholic Church’s process toward declaring a person a saint.

Pope releases new apostolic exhortation “Misericordia et Misera”

Rome, Italy, (CNA/EWTN News) — Although the Jubilee of Mercy has ended, Pope Francis has decided that some of the novelties he applied to the Church during the Holy Year will continue.

A woman who obtains an abortion automatically incurs a “latae sententiae” excommunication, along with those who assisted her in the process. Because of this excommunication, the sin of abortion can normally only be absolved by a bishop, or certain priests appointed by him.

For specific occasions such as Advent or Lent, some bishops extend this faculty to all priests within their diocese. In the U.S., the faculty to absolve abortion has already been delegated to all priests.

However, the Pope’s new provisions take it to a universal level.

He is allowing all priests to absolve the sin of abortion from here on out, while SSPX priests will be able to continue hearing confessions validly.

In addition, he has indefinitely extended the mandate of the Missionaries of Mercy and has decided to institute the World Day for the Poor, which will take place each year on the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time.

The Pope announced his decision in his new Apostolic Letter “Misericordia et Misera,” meaning “Mercy with Misery.” Published Nov. 21, the letter was signed by the Pope Nov. 20 during Mass for the close of the Jubilee of Mercy.

In the letter, Pope Francis said that “the Sacrament of Reconciliation must regain its central place in the Christian life.”

“Given this need, lest any obstacle arise between the request for reconciliation and God’s forgiveness, I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion,” the letter read.

The provision made for the duration of the Extraordinary Holy Year “is hereby extended, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.”

Pope Francis firmly stated that “abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life,” but insisted that “there is no sin that God’s mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father.”

“May every priest, therefore, be a guide, support and comfort to penitents on this journey of special reconciliation.”

The Pope had initially declared that all priests could forgive the sin of abortion in a set of pastoral guidelines for the Jubilee issues Sept. 1, 2015, in which he also granted SSPX priests the faculty to absolve those who assisted her in the process. Because of this, some bishops extend this faculty to all priests within their diocese.

As another sign of his push for this emphasis on mercy to continue beyond the Jubilee, Francis also extended the special faculties given to the Missionaries of Mercy.

On Ash Wednesday, more than 1,000 priests were sent out around the world as ambassadors of mercy. Selected from every continent, the Missionaries of Mercy placed a special emphasis on their role as preachers and confessors.

They were given two special faculties that are usually unavailable to the average priest, the first being that they were not limited in geographic location in terms of hearing confessions.

Usually a priest has to ask permission from the local bishop before hearing confessions in a diocese other than their own, however, for the Missionaries of Mercy that was not the case.

A second aspect of the Missionaries’ mission was that they were able to absolve sins in cases otherwise reserved to the Holy See. Though there are several such sins, the Holy See clarified that the faculties of the Missionaries of Mercy were limited to just four: Profaning the Eucharistic species by taking them away or keeping them for a sacrilegious purpose; the use of physical force against the Roman Pontiff; the abdication of an accomplice in a sin against the Sixth Commandment (“thou shalt not commit adultery”) and a direct violation against the sacramental seal by a confessor.

Bishops were encouraged to contact Missionaries of Mercy in nearby dioceses and invite them to come to their own.

In his letter, the Pope thanked the missionaries for their “valuable service aimed at rendering effective the grace of forgiveness.”

“This extraordinary ministry does not end with the closing of the Holy Door,” he said, voicing his desire for their ministry “to continue until further notice as a concrete sign that the grace of the Jubilee remains alive and effective the world over.”

Pope Francis said that during the special Nov. 11-13 Jubilee for the Socially Excluded, as all Holy Doors around the world apart from that of St. Peter’s Basilica were closing, “I had the idea that, as yet another tangible sign of this Extraordinary Holy Year, the entire Church might celebrate, on the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, the World Day of the Poor.”

“This Day will also represent a genuine form of missionary action that could take place each year on the Thirty-Third Sunday of Ordinary Time, as the Church proclaims ‘Mercy with Misery.’” Published Nov. 21, the letter was signed by the Pope Nov. 20 during Mass for the close of the Jubilee of Mercy.

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Unite in prayer for the protection of the unborn
By Lisa Irwin

Associate Director, Sanctity of the Human Person

More than 56 million lives have been lost to abortion since the 1973 decisions of Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton. Heeding the Sacred Scriptures, that remind us to seek the Lord’s help and trust in God’s providence, we live believing that our prayers are heard. There are several ways you can join in the observance of prayer for the unborn, for women considering abortion, and for those who are seeking to adopt a child.

1. Within the Diocese of Kalamazoo, specific observances are still being finalized. Among them will be a special prayer gathering of Catholic and Protestants on Sunday, Jan. 22, 2017 at 3 pm. in Bronson Park in downtown Kalamazoo. For more information contact Lisa Irwin at lirwin@dioxidzoo.org or 269-903-0177.

2. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops invites you to participate in 9 Days for Life, Sat., Jan. 21 – Sun., Jan. 29, 2017. Join with thousands of Catholics nationwide in nine days of prayer and action focused on cherishing the gift of every person’s life. Pray for the respect and protection of each and every child. Pray for the respect and protection of each and every child.


Prayer, action and fellowship with others. Share your experience online. Visit: www.9daysforlife.com for more information.


Celebrating Advent: A season of waiting in joyful hope

November 27 – December 24

Our culture starts celebrating Christmas extremely early, but Advent is a season of waiting, waiting for the birth of Christ. To get the most out of Advent, avoid celebrating Christmas until Christmas Eve.

Commission a Child Shall Lead Them

A Child Shall Lead Them

Living the season of Advent can be a struggle. It seems like the world around us wants to celebrate Christmas so exuberantly that we skip over the four weeks of waiting and begin the decorating and the singing — and even the parties — as soon as we can.

My husband has a strong German streak in him that insists Advent must be acknowledged thoroughly before any type of “ho, ho, ho” or baby Jesus should be mentioned. We joyfully sing Advent carols such as Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence, On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist Cries, Prepare Thy Way O Zion, and Come Thou Long Expected Jesus. He also insists on putting up the tree and decorating the house on Christmas Eve. During Advent our only seasonal décor is the wreath with one pink and three purple candles, and the crèche — absent the Christ child.

Over the years, this extreme practice of Advent seemed a tiny bit harsh to me. Our daughters, however, grew up with it and they were always fine with my husband’s pre-holiday discipline.

When our youngest daughter Martha was in junior high she pondered the idea of becoming a vegetarian. I listened to her reasons and concerns, then said, “Let’s try it for Advent. I like vegetarian dishes and have been thinking of expanding my collection of recipes. Four weeks will be a good amount of time to see if you like it.” We experimented with all kinds of recipes and found that ethnic dishes were our favorites; Mexican bean and cheese burritos, West Indian curry, Chinese stir-fry, and Italian pasta primavera. On Christmas Eve I made my Grandmother’s traditional oyster soup. It was a delicious ending to a tasty month.

On Christmas morning I scrambled the eggs with ham and sausage. Martha had tears in her eyes. We all did. It was so delicious we couldn’t tear ourselves away from the table even to open the gifts under the tree. I wanted to lick the skillet. Everyone agreed that Advent had turned into a very different kind of waiting period for each of us, and in the end; Christmas never tasted so good!

Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat, Feb. 24-26, 2017

If you or someone you know has been struggling with the emotional or spiritual pain of an abortion experience, confidential and compassionate help is available. Our next Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat will be held Feb. 24-26, 2017 at a private location in the Kalamazoo area. The following is a testimonial from a past retreatant: I experienced a great inner healing as a result of attending this post-abortion retreat. I highly recommend this retreat to anyone who has felt the void and shame of the abortion experience. It is a wonderful way to forgive yourself, find the unconditional love of Christ and grieve the loss of your child.

For more information or to register contact Maggie Walsh at (616)-340-1824, (800) 800-8284 (Toll free in Michigan only) or mw Walsh@ccwestmi.org. All inquiries are confidential.

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Semana Nacional de la Migración

La Iglesia Católica de Estados Unidos dedicará la semana del 8 al 14 de enero del 2017 como la Semana Nacional de la Migración, con el tema: “Creando una cultura de Encuentro”.

El tema de la Semana Nacional de la Migración hace enfoque al llamado del Papa Francisco a crear una cultura de encuentro. Nos llama a mirar más allá de nuestras propias necesidades y deseos. En la forma de vida de su primer Pueblo como Papa, el Papa Francisco enfatizó la importancia del encuentro en la fe Cristiana: “Para esta palabra es muy importante, el encuentro con los demás. ¿Por qué? Porque la fe es un encuentro con Jesús y debemos hacer lo que Jesús hace: encontrarse con otros.” Durante esta Semana Nacional de la Migración, en diciembre de este año, tomemos esta oportunidad para encontrarnos y hacer partícipes a los migrantes, inmigrantes, refugiados, niños y víctimas del tráfico humano como miembros de la comunidad y como vecinos — quienes son dignos de nuestra atención y nuestro apoyo. Para recursos sobre la Semana Nacional de la Migración pueden ir a: http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services-national-migration-week/index.cfm

Los Obispos ofrecen la siguiente oración para rezar en familia y comunidad: PADRE MISIONERO: TÚ

Te suplicamos que abras nuestro corazón para que brindemos hospitalidad y refugio a los inmigrantes que están solos, temerosos y lejos de sus hogares. Danos valor para acceder a cada forastero como a Cristo en medio de nosotros, para invitarlo a nuestras comunidades como demostración del amor de Cristo por nosotros. Oramos para que al encontrar una forastera, veamos en ella el rostro de tu Hijo, para que al conocer al otro, tomemos su mano en señal de bienvenida.

Abydamos a vivir solidarios unos con otros, a buscar justicia para los perseguidos y consuelo para los que sufren. Te lo pedimos por nuestro Señor Jesús, tu Hijo, que vive y reina contigo en la unidad del Espíritu Santo, un solo Dios, por los siglos de los siglos. Amén.

En Camino Hacia el V Encuentro – Parte 3

El pasado sábado 5 de noviembre la Diócesis de Kalamazoo ofreció un entrenamiento de información sobre el V Encuentro para todas las parroquias con comunidad hispana/latina. Nuestra presentadora fue la Dra. Fanny Tabares, quien se acaba de jubilar de la Diócesis de Kalamazoo. En este tiempo del año la Virgen de Guadalupe nos recuerda que vino a guiarnos a conducir. Pero aun en nuestra sabiduría, el Señor nos dice: “NO ESTOY YO AQUÍ QUE SOY TU MADRE” (Lucas 2:10-12). Dios se hace hombre y con su encarnación haciéndose uno de nosotros eleva a la humanidad.

Haciene un mes de marzo futuros tímidos, reflexivos, debo mirar más allá de nuestras propias necesidades y deseos. En la forma de vida de su primer encuentro como Papa, el Papa Francisco enfatizó la importancia del encuentro en la fe Cristiana: “Para esta palabra es muy importante, el encuentro con los demás. ¿Por qué? Porque la fe es un encuentro con Jesús y debemos hacer lo que Jesús hace: encontrarse con otros.” Durante esta Semana Nacional de la Migración, en diciembre de este año, tomemos esta oportunidad para encontrarnos y hacer partícipes a los migrantes, inmigrantes, refugiados, niños y víctimas del tráfico humano como miembros de la comunidad y como vecinos — quienes son dignos de nuestra atención y nuestro apoyo. Para recursos sobre la Semana Nacional de la Migración pueden ir a: http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services-national-migration-week/index.cfm

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Sacred Music at the Cathedral
2016-17 concert season

Sts. Peter and Paul Choral Scholars
Matthew Sprinkle, artistic director

The Choral Scholars are the premier, professional choral ensemble at Sts. Peter and Paul RC Church, Naperville, IL. Their programs feature the masterworks of Catholic choral music.

Friday, 3 February, 2017, 7 pm

St. Augustine Cathedral
542 W. Michigan Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI 49007 • 269.345.5147
Open to the public with a free-will exit offering.

Trauma Recovery Program in Spanish

The Diocese of Kalamazoo continues with the Trauma Recovery Program in Spanish. If you know someone who has suffered any type of trauma (physical, sexual, neglect, etc.), either in the past or present, please refer them for help to Lisette Mira-Amaya 269-929-7984 or Fanny Tabares 269-903-0200.

It is necessary to make an appointment as soon as possible, before the program begins, with the counselor Lisette.

Making a Report of Sexual Misconduct Number

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.

BISHOP’S CALENDAR
Dec. 4, Penance Service, St. Mark Parish, Niles, 3 p.m.
Dec. 5, Pastoral Letter Southern Deanery Meeting, Holy Angels Parish, Sturgis, 6 p.m.
Dec. 8, Feast of the Immaculate Conception Mass, St. Augustine Cathedral, Kalamazoo, 12:10 p.m.
Dec. 10, Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass, St. Augustine Cathedral, Kalamazoo, 6 p.m.
Dec. 13, Pastoral Letter Western Deanery Meeting, St. Bernard Parish Center, Benton Harbor, 6:30 p.m.
Dec. 14, Pastoral Letter Northern Deanery Meeting, St. Margaret Parish, Otsego, 6 p.m.
Jan. 21, Men’s and Women’s Conference Mass, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Portage, 8:30 a.m.
Feb. 1, Catholic Schools Week Mass, Hackett Catholic Prep, Kalamazoo, 10 a.m.
Feb. 2, Catholic Schools Week Mass, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Battle Creek, 9 a.m.

Christmas and New Year’s Mass Schedule at the Cathedral
Christmas Eve:
4 p.m., 6 p.m., Midnight
Christmas Day: 7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m.
New Year’s Eve: 4 p.m., Vigil
New Year’s Day: 7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m.

Activities around the diocese
Dec. 4: Advent Meditation Organ Recital by Thomas Fielding, D Mus., St. Joseph Church, South Bend, 7 p.m.
Dec. 11: Advent Taize Prayer with David Anderson, evening of prayer, music and candlelight, St. Joseph South Church, Stevensville, 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7: HCP Side by Side Jazz

The combined Collection for the Church in Latin America, Eastern and Central Europe, and Africa, will take place the weekend of Feb. 4-5, 2017

This Diocesan collection is a combination of three national collections, which are described below: For more than 50 years, the Collection for Cuba assists Catholics who live in countries once dominated by the Soviet rule is still felt in the form of poverty, infrequent pastoral care, and lack of resources, shortages of pastoral ministers, and poor infrastructures that make relatively simple things like participating in weekly Mass difficult. Funds from this collection have assisted the Caribbean to address these and other challenges and to develop evangelization and catechetical programs.

Each year, the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe assists Catholics who live in countries once dominated by the Soviet regime to rebuild their communities. The aftermath of 70 years of Soviet rule is still felt in the form of poverty, infrequent pastoral care, and lack of buildings where the faithful can worship and cultivate their faith. Support is needed to strengthen the Church in this region through the grants that fund projects that promote ministries for children and families, create affordable housing, and provide a cultural and spiritual education.

The Church in Africa journeys with people gifted with a vibrant spirituality and is a source of hope and faith as they face the challenges of poverty, high incidence of disease, food shortages and migration.

With so many people in Africa on the move, providing pastoral care to meet their spiritual needs is often difficult. This is true for migrant and refugee communities as well as people whose livelihoods keep them moving, such as fishermen and truck drivers. The Solidarity Fund for the Church in Africa allows the Church to address these needs through pastoral projects that foster lasting peace and reconciliation, provide pastoral care of migrants and refugees, and support the spiritual needs of the African people.

For more information visit www.usccb.org/collections and then search for the Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe, the Collection for the Church in Latin America or the Solidarity Fund for the Church in Africa, or contact Lisa Irwin, lirwin@diokzoo.org or 269-903-0177.

January is Poverty Awareness Month

During Poverty Awareness Month, join the U.S. Bishops, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the Catholic Community in the United States in taking up Pope Francis’ challenge to live in solidarity with the poor. For daily ways to learn about poverty in America, visit http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-development/povertyusa/upload/poverty-awareness-month-calendar.pdf.

Youth Events Coming Up

The PRESENCE 2017
Do you want to come to a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and how He is present in your life? The Presence is an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist specifically for 9th – 12th high school youth that will assist in exploring this question. Join us from Friday, February 10th – Sunday, February 12th 2017 at Hackett Catholic Prep (1000 West Kilgore Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49008). For more information, including how to register, please visit The Presence website (www.thepresencekalamazoo.org) or check out http://www.diekzoo.org/youth.
Youth Group supplies meals for Haiti relief

By Jay Cessna

More than 30 volunteers from the EDGE Youth Group of St. Catherine’s of Siena met in the Stanley Center and helped put together 1,200 meals for Haiti relief provided by Food Aid International. This was another act of charity organized by the EDGE Youth and Conformation Director Nicole McClish. “We hope that this will show these kids the importance of practicing being the hands and feet of Jesus,” she explained. “Showing mercy is to care for those less fortunate.” When asked what McClish hopes the youth gets out of this experience, she answered: “For them, to take a minute to think about all the daily privileges we all take for granite and realizing how little others have and being active on trying to do something about it.”

Regional youth rally kicks off in Otsego

By Jay Cessna

St. Margaret’s Parish in conjunction with the diocesan Youth and Young Adult ministry held a youth rally that gathered young people from the St. Margaret’s Youth Group, Plainwell United Methodist, and Genesis Youth Group to hear about how faith can change and affect you while entering adulthood. The band “Kleen S18” started the event with live music. It was a combination of familiar music and music the band composed themselves. Tim McNamara, Associate Director, Youth and Young Adult Ministry, said that the music acted like a “...clean slate of the soul.” Next was a skit performed by a group of young people about how through the power of Christ our sins and vices have no real power over us and can be overtaken and replaced with good will and compassion. The rally ended with two speakers, Molly Gless and Rev. Ben Huyhn, Pastor, St. Margaret Parish, who talked about their experience with faith and how the youth should implement it moving forward in life.

Marshall man embraces the corporal work of mercy “to visit the prisoner”

By Vicki Cessna

“When you walk out, you’re humble.”

That’s the feeling expressed by prison ministry volunteer, Ed Dennis, a parishioner of St. Mary Parish, Marshall, who’s been visiting the Lakeland Correctional Facility in Coldwater and the Battle Creek County jail for more than six years.

His inspiration to participate in prison ministry began years ago when he was interested in the work of Chuck Colson, who was sent to prison for his part in the Watergate scandal and later went on to found Prison Ministry Fellowship and Breakpoint. Dennis and his wife supported Colson’s work through monetary donations and after years of doing that he felt called to devote his time.

On the second Sunday of the month, Dennis visits Lakeland Correctional Center and conducts a 45-minute Catholic Communion Service. He admits that this type of ministry isn’t all “fun and games” and can be very challenging.

“You enter a bleak place,” notes Dennis. “There’s wire and concrete and cells. But it’s inspiring to meet with all these men who have a common goal to worship God. Certainly there is a just reason they are there but regardless of their circumstances, you realize that you’re all bonded together by our shared humanity.”

Dennis also spends time at the county jail in Battle Creek where he conducts an hour-long Christian bible and scripture study.

“I’m just there to offer an invitation to get to know Jesus and to have our minds transformed,” he says.

For those interested in volunteering Dennis believes that having some teaching skill and being comfortable speaking in front of a group are good talents to have. But most important is to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit.

“It’s very gratifying. The men are just so thankful to have someone from the outside show they care.”

During the just-concluded Year of Mercy St. Joseph Parish, Battle Creek, contacted Dennis about doing something related to the corporal work of mercy, “to visit the prisoner.” He took the request back to the group of incarcerated men at Lakeland and they came up with the idea to have a donation to an organization that provides bible study materials for prisons.

“Each of us is given God-given talents,” remarks Dennis. “Possibly this ministry could be the thing you are called to do.”

For more information on how to become involved with prison ministry in the diocese contact: Lisa Irwin, Associate Director, Parish Life and Lay Leader.