Attendees cause highway gridlock en route to Kalamazoo United

By Vicki Cessna
Traffic was backed up on Interstate 94 as thousands of people flocked to Wings Event Center for Kalamazoo United. The nearly two-hour prayer and praise-filled event was the culmination of more than 18-months of planning lead by Bishop Bradley and Pastor Jeff Wenke, The Bridge Church, Portage, along with local Kalamazoo clergy, diocesan and lay leaders.

Kalamazoo United was a historic moment for the Church in Southwest Michigan as close to 3,000 people came together in prayer as a show of unity on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The start of the event was delayed 10 minutes to allow for the crowds to park and enter the arena while those already inside enjoyed extra music by the Singing Crusaders.

For close to two hours attendees sang songs of praise, and listened to people give witness to their faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. During the welcome and introductory portion of the program a letter from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity was shown on a large-scale screen and participants enthusiastically responded with applause. Music during the event was co-lead by John MacMullen, Centerpoint Church, Portage, and Ashley Takace, The Bridge Church.

According to Bishop Bradley one of the highlights of the event was witnessing the “faithful people reciting the Nicene Creed standing side by side with people of various Christian denominations, praying the Our Father hand in hand, and boldly singing the Doxology at the end of the gathering.”

An important dimension of the gathering was the presence of local social services agencies such as Catholic Charities, Bethany Christian Services, Samaritas and Alternatives.

While the Spirit-filled Kalamazoo United event has concluded, the ecumenical collaboration within the Diocese continues. The group will be hosting a series of “Faith Forums” bringing together all Christians to discuss important topics to help strengthen understanding and further dispel the misperceptions and misunderstandings people have of each other’s faith.

Bilingual Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dec. 9
Everyone is invited to a Bilingual Mass for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Saturday, December 9, 2017 at 6 p.m. at St. Augustine Cathedral, 542 W. Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo. The Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley will preside. Families should 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.

My dear Family of Faith,
At this special time of the year, I greet you with prayerful good wishes filled with the joy of Christmas!
While there are many wonderful customs we all look forward to celebrating, what is most special about this sacred Feast is that Christmas celebrates how much God loves us. “In the fullness of time”, St. John’s Gospel tells us, God sent His only-begotten Son to be born as an infant, to be One with us — Emmanuel — so that He could save us from our sins, Jesus, our Lord and Savior, is God’s greatest Christmas gift to the world.
In the midst of all the ways we celebrate this most Holy Feast, let us give thanks for the gift of God’s love in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.
May you have a blessed and Merry Christmas, and a truly Happy New Year.

Bishop Paul J. Bradley

Diocesan V Encuentro engages Hispanic community; prepares for national convocation

On Saturday, November 4, the Diocese of Kalamazoo celebrated its diocesan “V Encuentro”. More than 120 adults plus 30 children from parishes with Latinos from around the Diocese participated in a day-long event including prayer, reflection and teamwork exercises.

The day began with opening comments and prayer by Bishop Paul J. Bradley who also celebrated the concluding Mass. During his homily, Bishop Bradley thanked the participants for their work over the last seven months as they gathered insight from fellow Latino/Hispanic parishioners.

“This Encuentro is indeed an historic moment for us in our Diocese to rise to true greatness as Jesus defines it,” he said. During the meeting participants began to identify five diocesan pastoral priorities and three pastoral priorities for the region*. 

*See page 4 for more information.
FROM THE EDITOR
By Victoria Cessina

Every Christmas one of our treasured family traditions is to trim our tree together. We play Christmas music while unpacking the box of ornaments and set-up designated piles for each member of the family. My children get to relive the evolution of their artistic talents from the kindergarten handprint to the more elaborate foam-based crafts. My husband hangs the location-branded trinkets from our early pre-kid days. As for me, while many of our decorations are sentimental, there’s one ornament I look forward to seeing each year. It’s a handmade cross-stitch of a tiny angel standing over baby Jesus in a manger with a tiny gold star adorning the top; the ornament is barely the size of a half-dollar.

It’s special to me in two ways — for the love I have for the giver and for the love she showed me by making it.

For each year I happen upon this tiny ornament I’m immediately transported back to my senior year in high school. Those cold Midwest days leading up to winter break were stress-filled as we crammed in as many hours as possible studying for exams. To pass. To get ahead. To get in that cold Midwest school, to have something lavish to impress me. But she didn’t.

She bought me something exquisite for the love she showed me by making it.

Intenotions from Pope Francis
Universal: That all may experience the mercy of God, who never tires of forgiving.
Evangelization: That families, especially those who suffer, may find in the birth of Jesus a sign of certain hope.

USCCB marks 100th anniversary during annual November meeting

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican’s secretary of state, and Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Pope Francis’ representative to the United States, were both on hand to help the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) mark its 100th anniversary at the annual fall assembly last month in Baltimore.

The meeting included discussion on immigration, racism, family life and tax reform. The bishops received committee reports on immigration and racism and collaborated on the drafting of a statement on each of those issues. Following are a few highlights from the meeting:

- Approval of the I CEL Gray Book translation of the Order of Baptism of Children for use in the dioceses of the United States with 200 voting in favor, 23 against, and 3 abstaining. The vote required affirmation by two-thirds of the Latin Church members and is subject to confirmation by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.
- Development of a formal statement that would offer a renewed pastoral plan for marriage and family life ministry and advocacy in light of Amoris Laetitia under the lead of the Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth (223-Yes, 12-No, 2-Abstain).
- Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, was voted chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities and Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky, was voted chairman of the now-permanent Committee on Religious Liberty. Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron, Archbishop of Detroit has been elected as secretary-elect for the USCCB and Bishop Joseph R. Cistone, Diocese of Saginaw as chairman-elect of the Committee on National Collections.
- The U.S. Bishops have approved by voice vote the canonical consultation of canonization for a Lakota Catechist [see page 9]. Sought by Bishop Robert D. Gruss of Rapid City, South Dakota, the vote is in keeping with the Episcopal consultation process as a step in the Catholic Church’s process toward declaring a person a saint.

Vatican moves forward Pope John Paul I on the path to sainthood

By Elise Harris

Vatican City, Nov. 2017 (CNA/EWTN News) — Last month Albino Luciani, better known by his papal name, John Paul I, took the next step on the path to sainthood. Yet apart from the fame garnered by various theories that sprouted due to the enigmatic nature of his death, for many little is known of his saintly life and brief pontificate.

Born Oct. 17, 1912, in Italy’s northern Veneto region, Albino Luciani, known also as “the smiling Pope,” was elected Bishop of Rome Aug. 26, 1978. He made history when he became the first Pope to take a double name, after his two immediate predecessors, St. John XXIII and Bl. Paul VI.

He sent shock waves around the world when he died unexpectedly just 33 days later, making him one of the shortest pontificates in the history of the Church.

In addition to the novelty of his name and the surprise of his death, Luciani was also the first Pope born in the 20th century, and is also the most recent Italian-born Pope of Rome.

Yet behind all the novelty of the month before his death and mystery of those that ensued, John Paul I has been hailed as a man of heroic humility and extraordinary simplicity, with a firm commitment to carrying forward the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and a knack for explaining complicated Church concepts in a way everyone can understand.

When John Paul I died 33 days after his election, his sudden and unexpected death led to various conspiracy theories that Luciani had been murdered.

However, in a book titled “John Paul I: The Chronicle of a Death” and published Nov. 7 to coincide with the announcement that Luciani’s
La Navidad es realmente la época más alegre del año, sin embargo, a veces podemos encontrarnos ambivalentes acerca de la temporada e incluso sin alegría a medida que nos apresuramos a través de los días, así como también en nuestra lista de “cosas por hacer”. En lugar de centrarnos en todas las responsabilidades adicionales, sería bueno dar un paso atrás y recordar en oración que nos estamos preparando para celebrar el mayor evento en la historia de la humanidad. Como escribe San Pablo en el Capítulo 4 de su Carta a los Gálatas: “Pero, al llegar la plenitud de los tiempos, envió Dios a su Hijo, nacido de mujer, nacido bajo la ley, para rescatar a los que se hallaban bajo la ley, y para que recibiéramos la filiación adoptiva.” (4:4-5) Esa frase hermosa, “la plenitud de los tiempos”, es tan poderosa, lo que significa que cuando Dios sabía que “el tiempo” era correcto — cuando la humanidad tenía la mayor necesidad — cuando todas las circunstancias estaban en su lugar — cuando la necesidad de un Salvador era una importancia tan crítica — es cuando Dios envió a Su Hijo como un bebé inocente, nacido de una Madre Virgen, para ser Cristo y Señor. San Juan refleja magníficamente sobre este acontecimiento mundialmente cambiante en el Prologo de su Evangelio cuando escribe acerca de la Palabra de Dios que existió desde siempre, pero que “todo hombre...” (1:1) y “cuando (el Señor) se hizo carne y habitó entre nosotros, y vimos su gloria, la gloria como del único Hijo del Padre, lleno de gracia y verdad.” (Juan 1:14) Nuestro amoroso Dios está tan enamorado de la humanidad que se convirtió en “Dios con nosotros / Emmanuel en la Encarnación. Este misterio de nuestra fe debemos “dejarlos estupefactos” espiritualmente mientras intentamos comprenderlo, pero como no podemos hacer eso, estamos llenos de gratitud y alegría; como dice el Salmo 126: “El Señor hizo grandes cosas por nosotros; estamos llenos de alegría.”

La Navidad es la época más feliz del año porque celebramos la verdadera encarnación del amor de Dios en nuestras vidas. A pesar de lo que pueda estar sucediendo en el mundo, o en cualquiera de nuestras vidas, desde horribles tragedias hasta problemas personales, el mensaje del Ángel a los pastores en esa primera mañana de Navidad sigue siendo el mensaje de esperanza para el mundo: “El ángel les dijo: «No temáis, pues os anuncia una gran alegría, que lo será para todo el pueblo: os ha nacido hoy, en la ciudad de David, un salvador, que es el Cristo Señor; (Lc.10) Y los pastores fueron a toda prisa, y según nos cuenta San Lucas,” una vez que vieron al Niño acostado en el pesebre, entendieron lo que les había dicho acerca de este Niño.” (2:17) Ahí reside el secreto del gran misterio de la fe: “ver” y “comprender” en la fe. Y lo que vemos y entendemos es que este Niño es la razón por la que podemos encontrar alegría, incluso en medio de nuestros problemas, incluso en el ajetreo de nuestras vidas agitadas y aceleradas, incluso mientras experimentamos ansiedad y preocupación por desafíos fuera de nuestro control.; porque, como el Niño nos dirá cuando sea adulto y proclame la Buena Nueva al mundo, “con Dios todo es posible”. (Mt. 19:26)

Mi lema episcopal, “Esperando en gozoza esperanza”, refleja ese mensaje de Adviento / Navidad. Como sabemos, como los tiempos litúrgicos, el Adviento dura cuatro semanas (aunque este año deberíamos decir solo cuatro domingos) y la Navidad dura solo tres semanas. Pero nuestras vidas humanas en este mundo son, en cierto sentido, un Adviento de por vida. Desde el momento de nuestro bautismo en Cristo, y comenzamos a vivir como discípulos de Cristo, esperamos con anticipación el tiempo en que podrémos vivir con Cristo para siempre en el Cielo. Hasta que llegue ese momento al final de nuestras vidas aquí en la tierra, estamos en un tiempo de “advenimiento”, esperando esa Venida Final. Pero debido a lo que celebramos en Navidad, y más importante aún lo que celebramos en Pascua, estamos esperando activamente, estamos muy ocupados cumpliendo con nuestras responsabilidades, pero siempre como, lo que el Papa Francisco continúa llamándonos a ser, discípulos alegres de Jesús. Al mismo tiempo, seguros de que nuestro Dios está con nosotros, permanecemos llenos de esperanza porque somos herederos de la Victoria que Cristo ya ha ganado.

Esta Navidad, como todas las del pasado y todas las que aún están por venir, habrá mucho para hacer. Pero este año, no perdamos de vista por qué la Navidad es la causa de nuestra alegría y la razón de nuestra esperanza. Miremos al Niño Jesús y verdaderamente “veamos” con los ojos de la fe y “comprendamos”, para que el día de Navidad, cuando hagamos la genullexación (y en todas las demás solemnidades, nos inclinemos profundamente) por las palabras del Credo “Para nosotros los homb andos otros los hom bres y para nuestra salvación El descendió del cielo, y por el Espíritu Santo se encarnó de la Virgen María y se hizo hombre “, nuestro gozo será completo. Que todos ude- des se llenen de gozoza esperanza en Navidad y siempre.

¡Félix Navidad y Dios los bendiga! Obispo Paul J. Bradley
Bishop’s Committee on Racism holds inaugural meeting

Participants of Bishop Bradley’s Committee on Racism met for the first-time in late October to discuss and brainstorm the Church’s response to the growing problem of racism. Members were nominated and appointed by Bishop Bradley who called for the creation of the committee in late August after a wave of national acts of violence and hate crimes.

“I call upon all parish communities to join with me in prayer and in working toward ways we can unify the Body of Christ,” said Bishop Bradley. “In light of these very serious concerns, I am convening a local Ad Hoc Committee of clergy and lay leaders to address this issue as it relates to the Diocese of Kalamazoo and make recommendations on a plan moving forward.”

Karen Risteau, former president of the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) and a parishioner of St. Mary of the Woods, New Buffalo, served as facilitator of the inaugural meeting. Committee members represented a wide array of cultures and backgrounds and shared openly about their own personal experiences confronting racism.

Bishop Bradley opened the meeting by sharing his hope for the committee’s work for the Diocese.

“What brings us together this evening is for us to have some honest discussion, some creative brainstorming and to see what suggestions we might be able to find to help us face this evil and root it out, beginning with ourselves, but including our community, our church and our society.”

Members agreed that building awareness and helping educate the faithful community on the topic of racism were important moving forward. Others suggested conducting listening sessions and attending the local Kalamazoo Valley Museum exhibit on racism.

At the conclusion of the meeting participants were invited to continue meeting as an ad hoc committee that will ultimately identify proposed pastoral recommendations for the Diocese for Bishop Bradley’s consideration.

Diocese offers Pro-Life activities to coincide with historic Roe v Wade anniversary

Forty-five years ago the Supreme Court made abortion legal throughout the United States in the now-infamous decisions in Roe v Wade and Doe v Bolton. In order to continue to pray for the end of abortion and the lives of the unborn the diocese has a number of activities in January:

March for Life Chicago:
Sunday, Jan. 14th, 2018

This annual March for Life event held in Chicago is fast becoming the Midwest version of the March for Life held in Washington, DC. The goal is consistent with the national march – for participants to be a visual and vocal reminder that the people of Chicago and the Midwest stand for all life. At press time details for a diocesan pilgrimage to this event were being finalized. Tentative plans call for a motor coach to leave from Kalamazoo at approximately 9 a.m., with a pick-up at St. Bernard’s Church in Benton Harbor around 10 a.m. The day’s agenda will include Mass in Indiana, box lunch, participation in the Chicago March from 2 p.m. – 4 p.m. (Central time) at the Federal Plaza, downtown Chicago, a dinner stop on the return trip, with tentative arrival back in Kalamazoo at 9:30 p.m.

Cost is approximately $60 (motor coach, tip and box lunch). Contact Lisa Irwin, lilirwin@diokzoo.org or 269-903-0177 or watch the diocesan website for more information.

Participate in 9 Days for Life

This nationwide call to prayer for life happens Jan. 18-26, 2018, and is an opportunity for Catholics to unite nationwide in nine days of prayer and action focused on cherishing the gift of every person’s life. Go to www.usccb.org/about/pro-life-activities/january-roe-events/nine-days-of-prayer-penance-and-pilgrimage.cfm for more information.

Diocesan Prayer for Life:
Sunday, Jan. 21, 2018 at 3 p.m., Bronson Park, downtown Kalamazoo.

Join Bishop Bradley, several Protestant pastors and Kalamazoo Right to Life for prayer for the protection of the dignity of human life, especially life in the womb.

Participants are invited to bring donations of diapers and baby wipes that will be given to Caring Network and Alternatives of Kalamazoo. In case of inclement weather, prayer will be moved to St. Augustine Cathedral.

Watch the diocesan website or call 269-903-0177 to check the weather status. Warm up with hot chocolate, cookies and fellowship at the St. Augustine Crowley Center afterward.

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children:
Monday, Jan. 22nd. Bishop Bradley will celebrate Mass at 6 p.m. at St. Augustine Cathedral. Parishes throughout the Diocese have been invited to also celebrate Mass at 6 p.m. so the Diocese is united at prayer. Check your local parish for information.

Kalamazoo United, continued from cover

In addition, a weekly “prayer focus” is being sent via text or email message to all those who elected to receive it. This powerful tool engages participants to be united in prayer on a weekly basis.

Additional information may be found: www.kalamazooisunited.org; Facebook: KalamazooIsUnited2017; text “Kalamazoo” to 84576 to receive weekly prayer focus and other updates or complete online form at Kalamazoo United or Diocesan websites.
Diocese of Kalamazoo to host the 35th Conference of Roman Catholic Musicians

By Nicole L. V. Mullis

With roughly 260 Catholic cathedrals in the United States and Canada, that translates into about the same number of cathedral musical directors. That is a small group of peers spread over a large area.

For the last 34 years, members of the Conference of Roman Catholic Cathedral Musicians (CRCCM) have gathered the second week of January for a four-day conference. It is a chance for fellowship, professional development, and, of course, music.

“We talk to each other through email and on the phone for advice, but we don’t get to see each other except for this one time of year,” said Dr. Thomas Fielding, St. Augustine Cathedral Director of Liturgy and Music.

The Diocese of Kalamazoo will host the 35th CRCCM Conference January 8-11, 2018. It will be the first time the conference has come to Kalamazoo. Dr. Fielding worked two years developing the agenda, which highlights the beauty of St. Augustine Cathedral and the educational resources unique to the local community.

Highlights include Solemn Vespers for the Baptism of the Lord, a day trip to Western Michigan’s Medieval Institute and a Christmas concert by professional choir Audivi. Members will travel to the University of Notre Dame where they will learn from Peter Jefrey, tour the new O’Neill Hall, and see the new Paul Fritts organ in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart. The conference will finish with Mass celebrated by Bishop Bradley, including festive Choral music. All CRCCM concerts are free and open to the public.

The Diocesan Heating Assistance Program (DHAP) will operate on Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning on Tuesday January 2, 2018 and running through the end of March (or until funds are exhausted). Each year the program helps close to 1,000 individuals from across the nine counties within the Diocese of Kalamazoo.

If you know of someone needing heating assistance, please call your parish or mission. Heating Assistance Volunteers will screen all those who come in for assistance and assist them to cover all costs. The maximum amount of assistance from the DHAP is $300 per household per heating season. Anyone still wishing to make a contribution to the 2017-2018 Diocesan Heating Assistance Program is invited to do so. If you have questions about the program, please contact Kerry Williams at Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo (kerrywilliams@ccdok.org or 269-381-9800).

The Other Six Days

By Jane and Ellen Knuth

Prayer Groups

Jane: It makes sense to assume that the Virgin Mary and her cousin Elizabeth must have been prayer partners. They were both pregnant, under unusual circumstances, and their exchange of greetings when they met at Elizabeth’s house turned into a couple of the greatest prayers of all time. There were other women in their group; the scriptures mention Johanna, Mary Clopas, Suzanna, and Mary and Martha, Lazarus’ sisters. These women followed Jesus around, funding his trips, and they ended up climbing Calvary with him.

A model prayer group for us all.

Ellen and I, and her sister Martha, are a sort of women’s prayer group, too. We mostly pray by phone text. The other day, I sent off this note:

Jane: “I prayed for balance for you, like you asked.”

Ellen: “Thank you.”

Jane: “I’ll keep praying. It’s like taking vitamins. The love and the peace grow together.”

Ellen: “Along with iron sufficiency?”

Jane: “Yeah. ☺”

Ellen: I believe so strongly in the power of prayer that I often have to give my mom strict prayer parameters so things don’t get out of hand. But I get a little panicky about prayer groups, probably because I dislike praying out loud. I can talk about prayer — that’s no problem — but offering up my intentions in public makes me uncomfortable. I’d rather let prayer run through my thoughts, private and close.

There are exceptions: I am comfortable praying with my nuclear family and a few close friends, and I will ask them for prayers when needed.

On rarer occasions, I will offer to pray for others outside of my normal prayer-scape. I ask them for permission, as I have no desire to offend and want them to have a choice. This step can be a bit scary, but I’ve never gotten a negative response, even from those who have declined. Most of the time, I’m given the go-ahead, sometimes with additional details to include.

Recently a colleague came back to work after making a last trip to see her ailing grandfather. As an atheist and former funeral director, my coworker has a deep understanding of the death process and accompanying rituals, she is empathetic, studied, and careful in her emotional responses.

Though unsure it would be welcomed, I asked if it was alright if I said a prayer for her grandma and family. With a small smile she glanced at me. “Ellen, that is fine. I’m sure my mom would really appreciate it. Thank you.” I nodded and a prayer was on its way. That was it. Would I call what was formed in that instant a prayer group, like Mary and Elizabeth? Certainly not. Was it a grouping that led to a prayer? Yes.
Advent family activities are a must

By Nicole L. V. Mullis

Christmas is a joyful yet jammed-pack time of year. Here are some ways Catholic families can slow down and "prepare Him room."

Make a family Advent wreath

A family Advent Wreath can be traditional, with pine boughs and candles, or crafty, with popped sticks and construction paper. The point is to make it together and set aside time each Sunday to light the candles and reflect on their meaning.

The first Sunday of Advent celebrates "hope." Light the purple "Prophet's Candle" and remember that Jesus is coming. The second Sunday of Advent celebrates "faith." Light the purple "Bethlehem Candle" and remember Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. The third Sunday of Advent celebrates "joy" and is known as "Guadete Sunday." Light the rose "Shepherd's Candle" and remember the joy the world experienced when Jesus was born.

The second Sunday of Advent celebrates "peace." Light the purple "Angel's Candle" and remember the message of the angels that destroyed the darkness on the first Sunday of Advent. Light the violet "Advent Wreath" in honor of Mary and Joseph's waiting for Jesus to be born. Light the purple "Prayer Candle" and remember the oil that Jesus would turn into light. Light the white "Candle of Peace" and remember the joy the world experienced when Jesus was born. Light the white "Prophet's Candle" and remember the joy the world experienced when Jesus was born.

Prepare a "bed" for Baby Jesus

Set up a Nativity Scene in a central location, but don't put the Baby Jesus in yet. Have an envelope of straw or yellow construction paper cut into "straw" near the manger. For every good deed or sacrifice made by a family member, add one piece of straw to the manger. On Christmas morning place Baby Jesus in the manger together.

Say Advent prayers for loved ones

Christmas cards arrive early and often in the weeks of Advent. Decorate a special box to hold these cards as they arrive. Every day, as a family, pull out one card and pray for that person. If you want, send that person an "Advent" card or an email saying, "We prayed for you today!"

Decorate an Advent Tree

Purchase a small tree or make one out of construction paper. Select 24 Bible stories and create ornaments for each one. Starting on December 1st, select an ornament, read the corresponding story from the Bible, and hang it on the tree.

Celebrate the Advent feast days

December 6th is St. Nicholas' feast day. Read about this generous saint together. Have the children set out a shoe for St. Nicholas, which you can secretly fill with the traditional chocolate coins or a simple bag of goodies.

December 8th is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Attend Mass as a family. Talk about Mary's extraordinary birth and why we celebrate it. Prepare a special supper, serving white cake for dessert to represent Mary's Immaculate Heart.

December 13th is St. Lucia's feast day. Since St. Lucia's name means "light," take a family drive to see the neighborhood Christmas lights or hang a string of lights outside your own home. Look up a recipe for the traditional "St. Lucy buns" or, in a pinch, use canned cinnamon rolls to recreate the characteristic "s" shape. December 12th is the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Attend Mass as a family. Read the story of Our Lady's appearance to St. Juan Diego. Create a Lady of Guadalupe centerpiece for the table and have your favorite Mexican food for supper.

Kalamazoo parish will host Rorate Caeli Mass on December 16

The Rorate Caeli Mass is an ancient Advent tradition honoring our Blessed Mother. For the third year in a row, Very Rev. James Richardson, pastor, St. Mary Parish, Kalamazoo, will celebrate the Solemn High Votive Mass of Our Lady in Latin at his parish on December 16th.

The Rorate Caeli Mass is lit only by candlelight. It traditionally begins with a procession of children, each holding a candle for presentation inside the church. Because it is a votive Mass in Mary's honor, white vestments are worn instead of Advent violet.

The readings and prayers of the Mass foretell the prophecy of the Virgin who would bear a Son called Emmanuel. Fr. Richardson notes that while the Mass is in Latin, the readings and his homily will be in English. He is especially excited for the additional talents of the St. Mary's Youth Choir which will lead a number of Marian hymns during the Mass.

And you don't have to know Latin to attend and just "get lost in the experience" says Father. "The peacefulness that comes with the simple element of candlelight really conveys the spirit of joyful anticipation," he added.

The procession for the Rorate Caeli Mass at St. Mary’s will begin at 7 a.m. from Fr. Bart Hall, on the parish grounds.

Breakfast will be served following Mass in Bart Hall.

For more information contact the St. Mary Parish, Kalamazoo at 269-342-0621.
Western Michigan University becomes a FOCUS campus

By Nicole L.V. Mullis

The Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) started 20 years ago with two missionaries serving one campus. FOCUS now has hundreds of missionaries serving on 137 campuses. This August, Western Michigan University counted itself among those numbers.

“We are trying to help students who are already Catholic dive deeper into their Catholic faith,” said Hannah Schinkel, FOCUS team leader for WMU.

Their methods are simple. The five-member team offers Bible studies, as many as they can, wherever students are willing to have them. All are invited. All are taught.

“From the Bible studies we look to see who are the students that really want to run in the faith,” Schinkel said. “We ask them into a relationship we call discipleship where we teach them how to evangelize their peers.”

They call it “spiritual multiplication,” a catchy way of describing the teaching style of Jesus Christ.

“Jesus spoke to the crowds, but he had 12 disciples that he spent a lot of time with and invested in,” Schinkel said.

It’s a slow process, but one Schinkel knows bears good fruit. It did for her.

She was involved with FOCUS while studying fashion and advertising at the University of Nebraska. The missionary there changed Schinkel’s life.

“She knew Jesus so intimately, and that’s what I wanted,” Schinkel said.

After graduation, Schinkel became a FOCUS missionary, which involved five weeks of intensive training and several weeks of intensive fund-raising. Every FOCUS missionary must supply their living, much like St. Paul, did while evangelizing the Gentiles.

“We have about 40 students that regularly come,” Schinkel said. “Our goal is to reach the whole campus for Christ, but we do that with intentional investment.”

That investment is already proving profitable, according to FOCUS ministers. WMU junior Madelyn Donovan is FOCUS’ first disciple, hosting a Bible study of 10-12 people.

“Jesus spoke to the crowds, but he had 12 disciples that he spent a lot of time with and invested in,” Schinkel said.

 Already the missionaries have gained a foothold on campus, with eight Bible studies being offered.

Eucharist and penance, NCYC participants attend general and breakout sessions on topics relevant to living as a disciple of Christ in today’s world, visit with organizations that provide resources and other support to youth and youth ministry, spend time in personal and communal prayer and engage in service to others.

As a first-time attendee, I was in awe to watch 25,000 teenagers in Lucas Oil Stadium kneel in complete and reverent silence when the Blessed Sacrament was placed in exposition on the altar for an hour on Friday night,” added Dragan. “The night was filled with beauty and grace.”

The busload of youth departing from St. Joseph Parish, Battle Creek, received a blessing from Fr. Christopher Ankley, pastor, St. Joseph Parish. Joey Janofski was anticipating a fun-filled convention.

“I’m going to get closer to God and the faith and to see people you have a lot in common with. It’s going to be a lot of fun,” he said.

“it’s a faith fest,” added chaperone Amy Swager, St. Martin of Tours Parish, Vicksburg. “If you can imagine having Mass with 25,000 of your closest Catholic teenage friends, that’s what it is.”

FOCUS ministers are shown above this past summer at Notre Dame University. They are, from left to right, Austin Chmelik, Hannah Schinkel, Honor Guastalli, Kyle Naugle and Kathryn Thuestad.

Every other year, Catholic young people and their chaperones — youth ministers, campus ministers, parents, catechists, priests, coaches and scout leaders — come together to pray, learn, and grow in their faith at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis.

This year a number of youth from across the Diocese of Kalamazoo attended. Diocesan staff attending included Tim McNamara, Associate Director, diocesan Young Adult Ministry, and George Dragan, Associate Director, Catechesis and Youth Ministry. McNamara explained the significance of the theme of the conference which was “Called.”

“What stood out most to me was the keynote addresses that consistently reminded the youth, and all of us, that God is present in each joyful-to-most horrific moment of our lives,” he said, “and because of this fact, the opportunity for His love and grace is present as well. We need to constantly and continuously call out to God at each and every moment.”

In addition to opportunities to receive the sacraments of the Eucharist and penance, NCYC participants attend general and breakout sessions on topics relevant to living as a disciple of Christ in today’s world, visit with organizations that provide resources and other support to youth and youth ministry, spend time in personal and communal prayer and engage in service to others.

As a first-time attendee, I was in awe to watch 25,000 teenagers in Lucas Oil Stadium kneel in complete and reverent silence when the Blessed Sacrament was placed in exposition on the altar for an hour on Friday night,” added Dragan. “The night was filled with beauty and grace.”

The busload of youth departing from St. Joseph Parish, Battle Creek, received a blessing from Fr. Christopher Ankley, pastor, St. Joseph Parish. Joey Janofski was anticipating a fun-filled convention.

“I’m going to get closer to God and the faith and to see people you have a lot in common with. It’s going to be a lot of fun,” he said.

“it’s a faith fest,” added chaperone Amy Swager, St. Martin of Tours Parish, Vicksburg. “If you can imagine having Mass with 25,000 of your closest Catholic teenage friends, that’s what it is.”

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NICYC hosts nationally known speakers and musical talent including popular singer Matt Maher.

photo courtesy of NCYC
The Catholic Difference
A museum for which to be thankful
By George Weigel

On September 29, 1952, the publication of the complete Revised Standard Version of the Bible was celebrated at the National Guard Armory in Washington, D.C., and the principle speaker was the U.S. Secretary of State, Dean Acheson. The son of the Episcopal bishop of Connecticut, Acheson movingly described the ways in which the King James Bible, which the new RSV was to supplant, had once shaped American culture and our national life:

“…In the earliest days in the Northeast, the Book was All. The settlers came here to live their own reading of it. It was the spiritual guide, the moral and legal code, the political system, the sustenance of life, whether that meant endurance of hardship, the endless struggle against nature, battle with enemies, or the inevitable processes of life and death. And it meant to those who cast the mold of this country something very specific and very clear. It meant that the purpose of man’s journey through this life was to learn and identify his life and effort with the purpose and will of God…”

That biblical vision helped form the bedrock convictions of the American idea: that government stood under the judgment of divine and natural law; that government was limited in its reach into human affairs, especially the realm of conscience; that national greatness was measured by fidelity to the moral truths taught by revelation and inscribed in the world by a demanding yet merciful God; that only a virtuous people could be truly free.

“But this…did not exhaust the teachings of this Bible,” Secretary Acheson continued. “For it taught also that the fear of God was the love of God and that the love of God was the love of man and the service of man.”

At this perilous moment in our national history, when contempt and hatred seem far more characteristic of our civic life than charity and solidarity, it’s worth pondering how far we have come, and why. To claim that “the Book is All” today would be risible. For if it succeeds in its mission, the Museum of the Bible will strengthen by the opening of the Museum of the Bible on November 29, 2017. It is a museum for which to be thankful.

Pope names two laywomen to key positions in Vatican’s family office
Vatican City (CNA/EWTN News)

On Tuesday the Vatican announced Pope Francis’ appointment of two lay women — experts in bioethics and canon law — as the first two under-secretaries of the mega-dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

The appointment of Dr. Gabriella Gambino for the section on life and Dr. Linda Ghisoni for the section on laity was announced in a Nov. 7 Vatican communique, bringing the leadership of the dicastery more clearly into shape after it’s establishment in 2016.

The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life officially began its work Sept. 1, 2016, replacing the former Pontifical Council for the Laity and Pontifical Council for the Family, which were dissolved.

The department is responsible for projects relating to the apostolate of laity, families, and the institution of marriage, within the Church, and is responsible for the organization of events such as the World Meeting of Families, which will take place in Dublin in August 2018.

Both Gambino and Ghisoni join dicastery secretaries Fr. Alexandre Awi Mello and prefect Cardinal Kevin Farrell, in leading the department. However, the appointment of a third under-secretary for the section on family is still forthcoming.

Gambino, 49, is currently a professor at the John Paul II Pontifical Theological Institute for Marriage and Family Sciences, is a professor of bioethics at the Faculty of Philosophy, and a researcher and associate professor in the philosophy of law at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata.”

Originally from Milan, she holds a doctorate in bioethics from the Institute of Bioethics at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Rome.

From 2001-2007, she taught and did research at the Institute of the Methodological Social Sciences of the LIUSS-Guido Carli University in Rome, and in 2002 was appointed scientific expert of the National Committee for Bioethics at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers.

Gambino collaborated with the former Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Academy for Life from 2013-2016.

She is married with five children, and has written numerous publications on the themes of life, family and marriage. In addition to Italian, she speaks five other languages.

Dr. Linda Ghisoni, 52, works as a judge at the First Instance Court of the Vicariate of Rome, as a professor of canon law at the Pontifical Gregorian University, and as a professor of law at Roma Tre University.

Free solutions-driven program for adults healing from traumatic childhood
By Dr. Phyllis Florian
Director, Trauma Recovery Program

Did you know that one in six children experience adverse events (e.g. bullying, neglect, physical/verbal/sexual abuse, divorce or death of a parent, life-changing accidents or traumatic events) before adulthood? A child’s limited ability to process these events makes him or her especially vulnerable to later emotional problems. (For more information, go to: https://accestoahigh.com/get-your-ace-score/.)

The Trauma Recovery Program was specifically created to help adults who are struggling in certain aspects of their lives now, while identifying one or multiple events in childhood that may have been “traumatic” in some way? The program does not focus on the past — rather, it focuses on the present situations that get adults stuck in troubled relationships, fragile or intense emotions, or poor coping skills at work or home.

This program is offered free for participants which also includes all relevant program materials and ongoing support to help participants improve their lives.

The next Trauma Recovery Program session of classes begins in February 2018, and registration is open now. Call the Trauma Recovery Program at 269-903-0134.
Collection Helps Aging Sisters, Brothers and Priests in Religious Orders

Catholics in the Diocese of Kalamazoo will have the opportunity to “give to those who have given a lifetime” as part of the collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious, to be held in parishes Dec. 9-10. Coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) in Washington, D.C., the annual appeal benefits 32,000 elderly Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests whose religious congregations lack adequate retirement funding.

Last year, the Diocese of Kalamazoo contributed more than $110,000 to the appeal. Women and men religious, who serve or have served in the diocese but whose communities are based elsewhere, may benefit from the Retirement Fund for Religious.

The 2016 collection raised close to $30.7 million. Approximately 94 cents of every dollar aids senior religious. In June, the NRRO distributed $25 million to 390 religious communities across the country. Communities utilize these funds to bolster retirement savings and subsidize expenses, such as prescription medications and nursing care. Throughout the year, additional funding is allocated to assist religious communities with the greatest needs and to promote ongoing education in retirement planning and eldercare delivery.

Despite this generosity, many religious communities still struggle to provide for aging members. Only 41 of the 539 communities submitting data to the NRRO in 2016 were adequately funded for retirement. Traditionally, Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests — known collectively as religious — served for small stipends that did not include retirement benefits. Today, hundreds of religious communities lack sufficient retirement savings. Compounding the funding shortage are the rising cost of care and the decrease in income that has resulted from the declining number of religious able to serve in compensated ministry.

In addition to providing assistance for day-to-day needs, collection proceeds underwrite initiatives to help religious communities address the factors underlying their retirement shortfalls. These efforts have facilitated solutions such as collaborative care facilities, strategic partnerships with health-care providers and numerous cost-saving measures. Visit retiredreligious.org to learn more.

Black Elk sainthood cause advances with US bishops’ vote

Baltimore, Nov 14, 2017 / 02:59 pm (CNA/EWTN News) — The sainthood cause for Lakota medicine man and Catholic catechist Nicholas Black Elk took another step forward today, as the U.S. bishops unanimously approved his canonical consultation.

The Nov. 14 voice vote of the bishops took place at their annual fall assembly in Baltimore, and is the latest in a series of steps on the path to sainthood.

The motion to vote on the cause was brought forward by Bishop Robert D. Gruss of Rapid City, South Dakota, the home diocese of Black Elk, where his cause was officially opened earlier this year.

Even before his conversion to Catholicism, Black Elk was a prominent medicine man "widely known as a holy man and a mystic," Bishop Gruss told the assembly of bishops.

After his conversion, Black Elk "fully embraced a Catholic life" and became an "ardent Catechist" who would go on to convert more than 400 Native Americans to the faith, Gruss noted.

Black Elk became an "icon who reveals what God calls all of us to be — people of faith and hope, and a source of hope for others," he added.

Black Elk was born sometime between 1858 and 1866, and, like many of his ancestors, served as a medicine man, which combined the roles of medical doctor, spiritual adviser and counselor.

He was present for the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876, and the following year, he joined Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, which toured Europe, including a performance before Queen Victoria.

In 1892, after touring with the show for several years, he married Katie War Bonnet. They had three children. After she converted to Catholicism, all three children were baptized.

The year after she died, Black Elk converted to Catholicism and was baptized on Dec. 6, 1904, the Feast of St. Nicholas. He took Nicholas as his baptismal name because he admired the saint’s generosity.

In 1905, he married again to Anna Brings White, a widow with two children. They had three children together and she passed away in 1941.

During Black Elk’s lifetime, the practice in the Diocese of Rapid City was for Jesuit priests to select Lakota Catholic men to teach the faith to other members of their tribe as catechists. They evangelized, prayed and prepared converts in the Lakota language, traveling by foot or by horseback until automobiles became available.

Black Elk became a catechist in 1907, chosen for his enthusiasm and his excellent memory for learning Scripture and Church teaching. He was also one of the signatories of the cause of canonization for St. Kateri Tekakwitha, another Native American saint. He passed away Aug. 19, 1950 at Pine Ridge.

Last year, a petition with more than 1,600 signatures to open his cause for canonization was presented to Bishop Gruss by the Nicholas Black Elk family. An October Mass officially opened his cause in the diocese this year.

Gruss said that Black Elk’s witness is an inspiration for both Native and non-native Americans, because he “lived the Gospel in everyday life.”

The next step in Black Elk’s cause will be for a tribunal to investigate and document examples of heroic virtue in his life.
Dios Que Se Nos Comunica En Las Fiestas De Fin De Año

por las Hermanas Misioneras Siervas del Divino Espíritu

Cuando decimos diciembre inmediatamente sentimos que es un tiempo que nos lleva a pensar en celebración, en fiestas, en tradiciones y especialmente nos lleva a pensar en dos de los principales motivos de nuestro amor, la virgen María y el Niño Jesús.

Con el adviento la Iglesia nos prepara para ese encuentro hermoso con la sagrada familia en la noche de navidad, en el camino del adviento nos encontramos con la celebración de la virgen de Guadalupe y la de las posadas, que son momentos oportunos para que los conocamos:

El mensaje de la Virgen a Juan Diego:
"Sabe y ten entendido, tú, el más pequeño de mis hijos, que soy yo la siempre Virgen Santa María, Madre del Verdadero Dios por quien se vive, del Creador cuyes está, Dios y de la tierra. Deseo vivamente que me erija aquí un templo para en él mostrar y dar todo mi amor, compasión, auxilio y defensa, pues soy vuestra piadosa madre, a ti, a todos vosotros juntos los moradores de esta tierra y a los demás amadores míos que me invoquen en y confíen; oí allí sus lamentos y remediar todas sus miserias, penas y dolores".

El mensaje la virgen es una invitación a la confianza plena en su amor protector y su caminar con nuestro amado pueblo.

El segundo regalo de este magnífico tiempo es el poder contemplar a ese hermoso niño que es Dios con nosotros, Dios que se entrega y se da con amor, ese Dios que se hace el Hijo de María, de José y que en la noche santa se nos revela envuelto en pañales enseñándonos el don de la humildad.

En un tercer y último momento, reflexionemos en la figura cordial de los Reyes Magos tan queridos por todos nosotros; sus regalos nos muestran la entrega, el amor incondicional, la fuerza, el perdón y la devoción, que ofrecen servir al niño; pero tenemos esta creatividad propia del que ama. Ellos nos enseñan algo que va más allá de la fe en Dios, su amor, su compasión, su entrega, su fiel y correcta obediencia, su amor a su Señor. Es una lección que no solo es para los niños, sino que es una lección para todos nosotros. Es una lección que nos enseña a ser fieles a nuestro Señor, a ser fieles a nuestra fe.

El pasado sábado 4 de noviembre fue celebrado en la Catedral de San Agustín el Encuentro Regional del V Encuentro, bajo el lema “Entre todos por el V Encuentro”.

El Encuentro Regional fue un momento para reunir a las comunidades de la Diócesis de Kalamazoo y de otras comunidades de los Estados Unidos, para reflexionar sobre los valores y tradiciones que nos han marcado en nuestras vidas, y para establecer una mejor relación con nuestra comunidad.

Durante el Encuentro, se presentaron diferentes actividades que fueron muy apreciadas por los asistentes. Las actividades incluyeron la celebración de la Misa de la Virgen de Guadalupe, la presentación de bailes folclóricos y la rifada de regalos.

En cuanto a la Misa, fue un momento de paz y armonía, donde se transmitió el mensaje de amor y de paz que nos transmite la Virgen de Guadalupe. Durante la rifada de regalos, los asistentes tuvieron la oportunidad de dar y recibir regalos, lo que fue un momento de alegría y de felicidad.

Los bailes folclóricos fueron un momento de destreza y de diversión, donde se mostraron las diferentes tradiciones culturales de los asistentes. Los asistentes se vistieron con trajes típicos de su país de origen, lo que fue un momento de respeto y de diversidad.

En resumen, el Encuentro Regional fue un momento muy significativo para todos los asistentes. Fue un momento de reflexión, de alegría y de diversión. Los asistentes salieron del Encuentro con una mayor conciencia de la importancia de las tradiciones y de la necesidad de mantenerlas y de transmitirlas a las nuevas generaciones.
Renowned jazz artist headlines Hackett event on December 6th

On Wednesday, December 6th beginning at 7 p.m. the Hackett Catholic Prep Band Boosters will host a jazz event sponsored by the Michigan State University Federal Credit Union Guest Artist in Residence grant program. This year’s guest artist is Harvey Mason, studio musician, jazz drummer and record producer. He has worked with numerous artists including: Barbra Streisand, James Brown, Herbie Hancock, Jennifer Hudson, Frank Sinatra, and John Legend. The show will feature music performed by Mr. Mason and the Michigan State University Jazz Orchestra 1. The Hackett Jazz Band will open the evening’s performance. Proceeds from the event benefit all students in the Hackett Catholic Prep Marching, Concert, Pep, and Jazz Bands in their pursuit of excellence in musicianship. The evening will be held at Hackett Catholic Prep Auditorium (1000 W Kilgore Road). Cost: $15 general admission — $5 students. Tickets are available online at hackettcatholicprep.org

Discovering Our Deepest Desire – new session begins March 1, 2018

By Socorro Truchan, Associate Director, Domestic Church

The Discovering Our Deepest Desire (D.O.D.D.) marriage enrichment series has been very well received by many married couples in the Diocese of Kalamazoo. Some comments from couples participating in the 12-week series help to explain the importance of providing these marriage enrichment opportunities in every parish. Some of the comments are: “I gained more than I expected. I/we have a lot of tools to help our marriage grow and strengthen” and “I liked the emphasis of taking personal responsibility for making a marriage strong; instead of the blame game” and “I feel I have a lot of practice to do to change the patterns and will need to be patient with my spouse as we move forward in our sacramental life of marriage.”

The sessions will be held at St. Ann Parish in August, every Thursday, starting March 1st (except Holy Thursday – skipping March 29) and finishing on Thursday May 24, 2018. To register online: visit www.diokzoo.org/marriage-enrichment. For more information, please contact Keith and Hope Marotti, 269-353-1213 or Socorro Truchan at 269-903-0199. Registration is limited to 12 couples.

Save the date for February retreat at St. Joseph parish

On Feb. 17, 2018, St. Joseph Parish, St. Joseph, will host a retreat featuring Fr. Peter Fennessy, SJ. The theme of the retreat is, “Art as a Doorway to Prayer.” The half-day retreat will be held at St. Joseph Parish, Rose Center 301 Wayne St., St. Joseph, from 9 a.m. – 12:30p.m. Participants are invited to 8 a.m. Mass at the Church followed by breakfast in the Rose Center.

Remember your Church when considering year-end giving options

Did you know that Congress retroactively reinstated the ability to make charitable gifts from your Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA)?

Did you know that The Diocese of Kalamazoo and all of its parishes, schools and agencies (such as Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo) qualify for these charitable rollovers?

If you are 70 1/2 or older, you can transfer as much as $100,000 from your IRA directly to a church (non-profit) entity without having to count any of the transfer as taxable income. This charitable rollover will also benefit you in that it would count toward your required minimum distribution for 2017.

The good news is that there still is time to take advantage of this opportunity for 2017. Charitable rollovers can be made in January 2018 for 2017. For those of you who took mandatory distributions in December 2017, you can donate that money to the church and not have the distribution subject to tax. If you are considering making such a gift, please contact Tom Dowdall, Director of Development, Diocese of Kalamazoo, 269-903-0145.

Please consult with your accountant or financial adviser for further information on how you could benefit from making a charitable rollover to support mission of the Church.

Combined second collection benefits the Church in Latin America, Europe and Africa

On the weekend of February 3rd and 4th parishes across the diocese will take up a combined second collection which is a combination of three national collections.

The collection benefits the following:

The Collection for the Church in Latin America provides resources for the Church in 25 countries in Central and South America as well as the Caribbean to address barriers to practicing the faith that include lack of resources, shortages of pastoral ministers, poor infrastructure and remote villages. Funds from this collection allow the Church to address these and other challenges and to develop evangelization and catechetical programs, training for lay leadership, and outreach to remote villages. 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. Since the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991, Central and Eastern European countries have been working to rebuild political structures, social welfare, and their economies. The impact is still felt in the form of poverty, infrequent pastoral care, and deteriorating buildings which leave the faithful with no place to worship or find spiritual nourishment. The funds collected support 28 countries in a myriad of ways, including the support of seminaries, youth ministry, social service programs, pastoral centers, church construction and renovation, Catholic communications projects, to promote ministries for children and families, create affordable housing, and provide a cultural and spiritual education. The people of Africa are joyful and faith-filled, but they also face challenges due to poverty, high incidence of disease, food shortages, high rates of unemployment and illiteracy, and migration. Migration is especially challenging as the Church seeks to provide pastoral care and meet the spiritual needs of people on the move, whether migrants, refugees, or people whose livelihoods keep them moving, such as fisherman or 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/nationalcollections 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, lilirwin@diokzoo.org or 269-903-0177.

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 Lisa Mira-Anaya 269-929-7084. It is necessary to make an appointment as soon as possible, before the program begins, with the counselor Lissette.

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: 877-802-0155. 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.
Blessed Solanus Casey becomes first man from Michigan to be beatified

By Vicki Cessna


Those were just some of the adjectives pilgrims used to describe the Beatification Mass of Solanus Casey which took place on November 18.

Ford Field in Detroit was filled to capacity as close to 70,000 people came to see the humble Capuchin priest move one step closer to sainthood. Blessed Solanus Casey, as he is now called, was best known for his care for the poor and humble demeanor.

“The life of our Blessed is an exemplary page of the gospel, lived with human and Christian intensity. It is a page to read with dedication and emotion... and to imitate with fervor,” said Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints, who read the Latin-language letter from Pope Francis officially declaring the priest to be blessed.

“In raising this Capuchin to the altars, Pope Francis points him out to the whole Church as a faithful disciple to Christ, the Good Shepherd,” the cardinal said in his homily. “Today the Church and society still need the example and the protection of Father Solanus.”

“Brother and Sisters, let us repeat together: Blessed Father Solanus, pray for us,” he concluded.

Beatification is the final step before possible canonization. Blessed Solanus Casey’s feast day will be July 30.

Priests, deacons and lay faithful from around the Diocese were among those 70,000 Mass-goers. Deacon John Lohrstorfer and Rev. Craig Lusk were among the clergy volunteering as Eucharistic Ministers during Communion.

Rev. John Fleckenstein, pastor, St. Philip Parish, Battle Creek, was on his way to vest when he overheard a man express his disappointment in not being able to give his confession. The lines of people overwhelmed the more than 80 priests hearing confession. Fr. Fleckenstein quickly offered to hear the man’s confession and when their time together was finished he realized a line of people had formed. He continued to hear confessions for the next hour, missing the opportunity to concelebrate. “But I was definitely where I needed to be,” he said.

In his tweet the day following the Mass, Bishop Bradley wrote, “How inspiring to see Ford Field filled to capacity praising/thanking God for the saintly life of a humble Capuchin Friar. Fr. Solanus Casey, who near the end of his life said, ‘I have two loves: the sick and the poor.’

“One of the most powerful moments of the Mass came as Paula Medina Zarate, the Panamanian woman whose 2012 cure from illness was attributed to the blessed’s intercession, bore a relic of Solanus Casey in his opening procession. Zarate had been visiting friends in Detroit when she stopped at Fr. Solanus’ tomb to pray.

In conclusion of the two-hour Mass, Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit asked Cardinal Amato to thank Pope Francis on behalf of the archdiocese’s faithful.

“Please let him know that we are grateful beyond measure that he has judged father Solanus worthy of the rank of ‘blessed,’” the archbishop said. “Tell him we are committed anew to imitate Blessed Solanus by witnessing to Christ’s mercy. The field hospital of mercy is open here in Detroit.”

—Additional material from Catholic News Agency

St. Mary’s Assumption School, Bronson, held its first “Cupcake Rosary” during October. The entire student body, teachers and staff prayed a decade of the rosary and then enjoyed the treats.

St. Rose of Lima School, Hastings, celebrated its traditional Thanksgiving celebration with a food drive for holiday baskets for families in need this holiday season. After Mass, parishioners and parents offered the children a feast with turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and other traditional dishes.