

Again, he trusted God

Missouri native Venerable Fr. Tolton moved to Chicago 135 years ago to begin the final and most fruitful phase of his ministry.

Page 5



Jubilee 2025 Mass . Page 3

Guatemala Christmas. Page 4

Fr. Ussher's 25th . . . Page 6

The Beatitudes Page 7

Unlikely messenger .Page 11

Why Dec. 25?Page 14

The CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN

December 20, 2024 • Vol. 68 No. 13

Newspaper of the Diocese of Jefferson City

Bishop ordains Fr. Clever to Priesthood



Newly ordained Father Gregory Clever gives his first priestly blessing to Bishop W. Shawn McKnight outside the Cathedral of St. Joseph Dec. 7, following Fr. Clever's ordination to the Priesthood.

— Photo by Jay Nies

Second priest ordained this year

See a text of Bishop McKnight's homily on this page

By Jay Nies

"I can't believe I'm calling you Father!"

"I'm having a little trouble getting used to it, too!" Father Gregory Clever told a friend before dispensing one of hundreds of priestly blessings on his Ordination Day.

Through the laying-on of hands and the summoning of the Holy Spirit, Bishop W. Shawn McKnight ordained Fr. Clever to the Holy Priesthood on Dec. 7 in the Cathedral of St. Joseph.

"A glorious day for the Diocese of Jefferson City!" the bishop stated.

The Cottleville native, who calls Hermann and Starkenburg home in this diocese, will serve as associate pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Sedalia, effective Dec. 21.

Fr. Clever attended Kenrick-Glennon Seminary for college and three years of theology studies for the St. Louis archdiocese before stepping away from formation.

He taught religion and science for two years in the archdiocese at Sacred Heart School in Valley Park while maintaining his prayer life and making regular visits to one of his favorite places, the Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows in Starkenburg.

Drawn to rural life and to brotherhood with several priests whom he had known in the seminary, he again felt called to continue his formation, this time for the Jefferson City diocese.

He completed his theology studies at Mundelein Seminary in Chicago and was ordained a deacon on June 1.

See FR. CLEVER, page 13

Bishop McKnight: A priest lays down his life to minister to the Church in the person of Christ

Bishop McKnight preached the following homily Dec. 7 during the Ordination Mass for Father Gregory Clever:

By Bishop W. Shawn McKnight

In this season of Advent, a season of joyful expectation and hope, we remember the first "advent" of Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh as a little baby more than two thousand years ago; and who in his public ministry proclaimed good news to the poor, preaching the kingdom of God with a special anointing of the Holy Spirit.

He definitively won salvation for us by his death on the Cross, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven, and through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the birth of his Church.

During the season of Advent, we also renew our hope in

the final "advent" of our Lord at the end of time, when he shall come in glory and majesty, gathering all who believe in him, the living and the dead, to share in the eternal banquet,

our communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and with one another forever.

Thus, the season of Advent is truly "our season," a season highlighting the pilgrim Church on our journey toward the Kingdom preached by Jesus in his earthly life, and which comes to its fullness only at the final judgement.

But during this present time of the Church between his first Advent as a little babe, and his last Advent as King of the Universe at the end of time, Jesus continues to be present to us, just as he promised at the conclusion of the Gospel of

MAKING CONNECTIONS
Bishop McKnight



See MAKING CONNECTIONS, page 17

Find us online at
CATHMO.COM

and

  **@DIOJEFFCITY**

MOVING? If you are moving or changing parishes, please fill out information below. Clip and mail to THE CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN, 2207 West Main Street, Jefferson City, MO 65109-0914. Or complete the online form at diojeffcity.org/update-information. Allow two weeks.

NEW ADDRESS

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

NEW PARISH _____

OLD PARISH _____

12/20/24

Pray for deceased priests

- Dec. 22 — **Fr. Stephen J. Carew**, St. Aloysius, Baring (1970)
 Dec. 26 — **Fr. Robert J. Arnold**, St. Anthony of St. Padua, St. Anthony (1989)
 Dec. 27 — **Fr. John W. Buchanan**, Holy Guardian Angels, Brinktown (1984)
 Dec. 28 — **Fr. Gottlieb V. Steinwachs**, Holy Spirit, Centralia (1989)
 Jan. 1 — **Fr. Robert J. Dwyer**, Immaculate Conception, Montgomery City (1982)
 Jan. 4 — **Fr. Edward M. Owens**, Chaplain, Pershing Memorial Hospital, Brookfield (1997)
 Jan. 6 — **Fr. John W. Groner**, St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Robert; and St. Jude, Richland (2023)
 Jan. 7 — **Fr. Michael N. Schaller**, St. Margaret of Antioch, Osage Bend (1980)
 Jan. 8 — **Fr. Leo T. Buhman**, Immaculate Conception, Macon (2011)
 Jan. 9 — **Fr. Thomas F. Greaney**, Immaculate Conception, Jefferson City (1967); **Fr. Jeremiah F. Kennedy**, Immaculate Conception, Jefferson City (1967); **Bishop Michael F. McAuliffe** (2006)

Like Us On
facebook

**Diocese of
Jefferson City**



WE'RE HIRING!

The Chancery Office of the Diocese of Jefferson City is now taking applications for the following positions in our Jefferson City office:

- Accountant
- Matrimonial Tribunal Judge
- Director of Pastoral Liturgy
- Database Manager

Job descriptions and links for applying can be found at diojeffcity.org/about-us/employment

The CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN

Submit your advertising request through our online form at:
diojeffcity.org/event-listing/

Deadline for advertising is 10 business days in advance of issue date!

2025 PUBLICATION DATES

January 10 & 24
February 7 & 21
March 7 & 21
April 4 & 18
May 2, 16 & 30
June 13 & 27
July 11 & 25
August 8 & 22
September 5 & 19
October 3, 17 & 31
November 14 & 28
December 12 & 19



Women's Ministry winter events, Jan. 31-Feb. 3 at four locations

Musicians and composers Kathleen Basi and Katie Wills be the presenters for four "Ministry on the Move" events for women in the diocese, Jan. 31-Feb. 3.

The theme for these times for music and reflection will be: "Women of God: Uniquely Gifted, Uniquely Called."

The events will be held:

- Friday, Jan. 31, 5:45 p.m., in Immaculate Conception Church, Loose Creek;
- Saturday, Feb. 1, 9 a.m., in Holy Family Church, Hannibal;

•Sunday, Feb. 2, 1:30 p.m., in Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Columbia; and

•Monday, Feb. 3, 5:30 p.m., in St. Patrick Church, Rolla.

All women are invited to any of these events, which are hosted by the individual par-

ishes with speakers provided by Women's Ministry of the Jefferson City diocese.

Admission is free.

Full details and registration can be found at: diojeffcity.org/womens-ministry-upcoming-events.

Chancery Closing

The chancery offices in the Alphonse J. Schwarze Memorial Catholic Center will be closed the following days: **Dec. 24**, Christmas Eve; **Dec. 25**, Christmas Day; **Dec. 31**, New Years Eve; and **Jan. 1**, New Years Day.

Holy Hour for Vocations

DATE: December 30
TIME: 4:30 - 5:30 pm

All are invited to join Bishop W. Shawn McKnight, priests and seminarians of the diocese for a Holy Hour for Vocations on Monday, Dec. 30, at 4:30 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Joseph, 2305 W. Main St. in Jefferson City.

It will include Exposition of the Most Blessed sacrament, Evening Prayer and Benediction.

The prayer intention will be for the diocese, parishes, homes and hearts to be fruitful ground for the Lord's gift of vocations.

The Catholic Missourian
 Official newspaper — Diocese of Jefferson City
 Mailing address: 2207 W Main St, Jefferson City, MO 65109-0914. Phone: 573-635-9127

"A diocesan paper serves as a bond of unity by publishing diocesan happenings and promulgating official regulations and decrees. It also plays a teaching role by reporting notable events of a religious and secular nature, and interpreting them in the light of Christian principles."
 — Bishop Joseph M. Marling C.P.P.S., July 7, 1957

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight
 Publisher

Jacob Luecke, Director of Communications
jluecke@diojeffcity.org

Jay Nies, Editor
editor@diojeffcity.org

Kelly Martin, Advertising
advertize@diojeffcity.org

THE CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN (ISSN 1083-6977 or USPS 556940), December 20, 2024, volume 68, number 13. Published biweekly at 2207 W. Main St., Jefferson City, MO 65109. Subscription price \$14 a year through parish plan. Periodical postage paid at Jefferson City, Mo. and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Please send address changes to The Catholic Missourian, 2207 W Main St, Jefferson City MO 65109-0914.

Find us online @ **CATHMO.COM**

Must be St. Nick!



St. Nicholas, a fourth-century bishop of Myra and patron saint of children, greets Ryan Schrimpf while visiting the Immaculate Heart of Mary Child Development Center in Jefferson City on his feast-day, Dec. 6. Ryan is being held by LeAnn Rockwell, the center's director. Father Paul Clark, a friend of St. Nicholas's, helped arrange the visit.

— Photo by Jay Nies

On a cold winter's night



A few of the cast members prepare to take the stage during St. Joseph Parish's Christmas Play in Palmyra.

— Photo from the St. Joseph Catholic Church - Palmyra, MO Facebook page



Bishop McKnight's Calendar

DECEMBER

Dec 24 Christmas Eve Mass, Cathedral of St. Joseph, 7 pm Dec 29 Jubilee Year Mass, Cathedral of St. Joseph, 10 am Dec 30 Holy Hour for Vocations, 4:30 pm, Cathedral of St. Joseph; Christmas Dinner with priests and seminarians, Cana Hall
--

Bishop to open Jubilee Year of Hope in diocese with Mass in Cathedral

DATE: December 29
TIME: 10 am

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight will celebrate Mass at 10 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 29, the Feast of the Holy Family, in the Cathedral of St. Joseph to begin the diocese's observance of the Church-wide Jubilee Year of Hope.

The Mass will be livestreamed on the Diocese of Jefferson City Facebook page, facebook.com/diojeffcity.

Pope Francis declared a Jubilee Year for 2025, in keeping with the longstanding custom of observing a Church-wide jubilee every 25 years.



A Jubilee Year is an important occasion in the tradition of the Church, focused on promoting spiritual renewal through reconciliation and

unity among true believers.

The Jubilee Year of 2025 invites the faithful to embrace the spirit of hope. It will provide opportunities for grace, including participation in special Jubilee Masses or joining a pilgrimage.

There will be a number of special diocesan Masses and other observances held throughout the Jubilee year.

The diocese has launched a new webpage with information about how the Jubilee will be celebrated: diojeffcity.org/jubilee-year.



Notice of Appointments

I am pleased to announce that the Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight, Bishop of Jefferson City, has recently made the following appointments to provide the most effective pastoral care of the Diocese of Jefferson City:

PRIESTS

Very Reverend Brad T. Berhorst, JCL, from associate pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Pettis County, to full-time duties at the Chancery and to provide Mass coverage, with residence at the Cathedral of St. Joseph, Jefferson City,

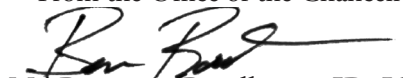
continuing as Judicial Vicar and Bishop's Master of Ceremonies, effective Jan. 6, 2025.

Reverend Gregory J. Clevor, newly ordained to Associate Pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Pettis County, effective Dec. 21, 2024.

LAITY

Max Cramer, appointed as Youth Representative for the Southeast Deanery on the Diocesan Youth Council for a term of two years, effective Dec. 3, 2024.

From the Office of the Chancellor,


Mr. Benjamin Roodhouse, JD, JCL
Chancellor

New ad rates to take effect Jan. 1

In an ongoing effort to keep up with rising production and printing costs, as well as continued increase in postage rates, *The Catholic Missourian* will be implementing the second phase of increasing our advertising rates, effective Jan. 1, 2025.

The new advertising pricing structure will be as follows:

Parish Rate — (this includes parishes, schools and other diocesan entities):

black/white rate \$10 per column inch

color rate \$12 per column inch

Business Rate —

black/white rate \$15 per column inch

color rate \$17 per column inch

For more information about advertising in *The Catholic Missourian*, contact Kelly Martin at advertize@diojeffcity.org or 573-635-9127.



Bishop McKnight's December prayer intention for our Local Church

For hope to find a home in our hearts as we embrace the joy of Christ's birth. Amid the jubilation, may we also find time in prayer to experience the calm and peace of God's presence in our lives.

Intención del mes de diciembre del Obispo McKnight por nuestra Iglesia Local

Para que la esperanza encuentre un hogar en nuestros corazones al abrazar la alegría del nacimiento de Cristo. Que en esta alegría también encontremos tiempo en oración para experimentar la calma y la paz de la presencia de Dios en nuestras vidas.

Please be so kind as to make this a part of your group and private prayer.

Sr. Karen Thein cherishes memories of Christmases in Guatemala

By Jay Nies

Her first Christmas on mission in Guatemala was vastly different from the rest.

"I was there when we had the earthquake in 1976," Sister Karen Thein SSND recalled, "and our village was almost completely destroyed."

Only 18 houses in Patzun, where she was serving, were left standing after the earthquake.

The sisters' convent and the school where they taught about 1,000 children were both leveled.

"That was a difficult Christmas," said Sr. Karen. "We didn't celebrate that year the way we usually did. But then, we started to build up again, and we celebrated each year after that."

Sr. Karen, a School Sister of Notre Dame now serving as a pastoral minister for Holy Cross Parish in Cuba, St. Francis Caracciolo Parish in Bourbon and St. Michael Parish in Steelville, was a missionary in Guatemala from 1976-1989.

The country is located in Central America, south of Mexico.

Vivid memories remain with Sr. Karen of the sights, sounds and tantalizing aromas of those Guatemalan Christmases.

"It was a long time ago, and I know some things have changed," she said, "but when

I was there, the best preparation was through the Posadas."

"Las Posadas" — which means "The Inns" in Spanish — is a communal celebration that takes place throughout many Latin American countries in the nine days leading

form the same ritual.

Sr. Karen would walk with many of them, because she was a pastoral minister of their parish.

"They weren't very far," she noted. "They were probably a half-hour away."

Then, on Dec. 24, people

floor."

After Midnight Mass, the sisters would walk back to their convent, stopping to greet people at homes along the way.

"And they always gave us more tamales with the meat in them," she said.

A local gentleman would cut a large branch from a tree — not necessarily an evergreen — to be the sisters' Christmas tree.

People would come and decorate it with little apples strung together.

"It was different but it was all the natural materials," she said. "And the people did it for

tion of it.

"You begin to see how everyone is different, but we're all looking for that same kind of Christmas spirit, and knowing that the Son of God is born in areas all over the world," she said.

"It doesn't matter how we celebrate. God comes to that."

Years after returning to the United States, Sr. Karen still appreciates how Americans celebrate the birth of Christ.

"But I honestly miss how they did it in Guatemala," she said. "There was a sense that we were truly preparing for the coming of Christ."

"It was carrying the dreg of hot chocolate," she stated. "It was sitting on mud floors in people's homes. The natural elements were always there. It wasn't fancy."

"It was all the natural things and the very human and deep love that people had there," she stated.

She said it's too easy to make Christmas celebrations fancy at the expense of the things that are natural.

"Jesus came in a very, very humble way and gave himself," she said. "And I think that's the invitation he gives us."

"Wherever you are and however you celebrate, I think that invitation is to take who you are and present that to the Lord and not feel like you have to be someone else."

"We let him be born to who we are, and that's what we give back to God," she said.

"There was a sense that we were truly preparing for the coming of Christ."

up to Christmas.

It is a reenactment of Mary and Joseph's long and frustrating search for a place to rest and to have Mary give birth to her baby.

Participants spend nine evenings actively preparing to open their own hearts to welcome Christ on Christmas.

"We would begin on Dec. 16," Sr. Karen noted. "And because there were all of these little villages outside Patzun that belonged to Patzun, we would go to a different *canton* or *aldea* every day."

They'd walk at night by lantern light, because there were no cars in Patzun at that time.

"We would pray the Rosary together and sing while we were walking," she said.

The people sang in the Cakchiquel, of which Sr. Karen only knew a few words.

"I knew how to say God and things like that," she said.

When the group of about 30 people would arrive at one of the little enclaves, a local family would be waiting for them.

The group would knock on the door and ask for a place for Jesus.

In the mode of the innkeeper in Bethlehem, the family would say there's no room.

The people in those homes would walk to another enclave the following night and per-

from all the places the group had visited would walk to the church in the center of Patzun.

"We'd have a large fire outside the church," she said.

People would bring special treats to share — tamales with

pork or chicken in them.

"And they would be wrapped in a banana leaf, not a corn husk," Sr. Karen noted.

Everyone would sing joyful songs, because Jesus was born.

"And they would have firecrackers!" said Sr. Karen. "That was one of the big things. People would bring them down to the fire pit and set them off there at midnight."

Then, they would carry an image of the Christ Child into church, which would be adorned with fragrant plants and mosses hung from the ceiling.

"It was absolutely gorgeous!" said Sr. Karen. "And there'd be pine needles on the

"You begin to see how everyone is different, but we're all looking for that same kind of Christmas spirit, and knowing that the Son of God is born in areas all over the world."

us. They would bring in the apples and string them."

The gift of oneself

Sr. Karen was amazed by the beauty and distinctiveness of the Guatemalan Christmas traditions she got to be a part of.

"Throughout the world, people of different cultures celebrate the coming of Jesus in ways that are meaningful to them," she noted.

"When I was in Guatemala, what they did there was very meaningful for me," she said. "But I also missed how we do it here."

Over time, she entered more deeply into the Guatemalan culture and grew in apprecia-

Jesus' crown of thorns returns to Notre Dame Cathedral

By Caroline de Sury
OSV News

Paris, France

Firefighters and police officers formed a human chain to rescue the crown of thorns from the inferno at Notre Dame on April 15, 2019.

On Dec. 13, 2024, this holiest relic of Paris' cathedral was returned to its proper home on the Île de la Cité.

Though temperatures were cold, the facade of Notre Dame was sunny in the late afternoon, as the procession arrived on foot along the cathedral from Palais du Louvre, on the other side of the Seine River, where the treasure had been stored since the fire.

A knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, dressed in a large black

cloak trimmed in red, held the crown of thorns, in its crystal circle frame, on a red velvet cushion.

Over 400 members of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher, including 200 knights dressed in white coats marked with the red Jerusalem cross, participated in the procession. They have been the crown's honor guard since the archbishop of Paris entrusted it to their care in 1923.

The crown of thorns, placed on Jesus' head by his captors to cause him pain and mock his claim of authority, was acquired by St. Louis, then-King Louis IX of France, in Constantinople in 1239 for 135,000 livres — nearly half France's annual expenditure at the time, according to the BBC.

See CROWN, page 10

Schulte's
Fresh Foods

JEFFERSON CITY
1904 Southwest Blvd.
(573) 636-8413

Open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Religious Gifts

For All Occasions:

Baptism - Confirmation - First Communion - RCIA - Wedding



The I. DONNELLY Co., Inc.

6601 TROOST AVE. • KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64131

Phone: (816) 363-2828

Nationwide Toll Free Order Desk: (800) 821-5372

Visit our online catalog at: www.idonnelly.com

Venerable Fr. Tolton, Mo. native, arrived in Chicago 135 years ago

Grave disappointments gave way to great success

By Jay Nies

The soft-spoken cleric felt a combination of weariness and relief as the train pulled into the station.

Father Augustus Tolton, formerly enslaved, formerly deprived of his priestly aspirations, formerly ostracized in the land of his upbringing for being too effective in his ministry, had finally arrived in a new mission field.

It was Dec. 19, 1889 — 135 years ago this week — the day Venerable Fr. Tolton, a Missouri native, first recognizably Black Catholic priest in the United States and current candidate for being declared a saint, arrived in Chicago and began the final and most fruitful phase of his ministry.

“Christmas must have been very subdued for him that year — away from his mom and sisters, away from his former parish, the feeling of having been pushed out,” stated Bishop Joseph N. Perry, retired auxiliary bishop of Chicago and co-postulator for Venerable Fr. Tolton’s sainthood cause.

“It had to be so overwhelming for him,” Bishop Perry surmised. “It was hard for him to grasp. His (former) bishop and particularly neighboring priests wanted him out of town.”

Yet, he had good reason to hope for something better.

“It was the graciousness of a southern gentleman named Archbishop Feehan who invited him to help this fledgling group of Black Catholics worshipping in a basement of a church in downtown Chicago,” said Bishop Perry, who himself is Black and a descendant of slaves.

Archbishop Patrick Augustine Feehan led the Chicago archdiocese from 1880 until his death in 1902. He previously served as bishop of Nashville, Tennessee, and before that as an influential priest of the St. Louis archdiocese.

The Sunday after Fr. Tolton’s arrival found him offering Mass for about 30 Black Catholics from all over the city

in a subterranean space accessible from a side door into St. Mary Church.

“He cultivated that community very well, and before he knew it, there were 600 people,” Bishop Perry noted. “That inspired the archbishop to build a parish for Black Catholics.

“That’s how it all started here,” Bishop Perry said with delight.

The late 19th century was a time of unprecedented immigration to this country, and large cities often had separate churches for people from different nationalities, to help them hold onto their faith and their identity.

“Every ethnic group had their own parish, with priests who spoke their own language,” Bishop Perry noted.

“How long, O Lord?”

Fr. Tolton, born in 1854 into a family of enslaved people in part of what is now the Jefferson City diocese, was baptized Catholic in the old log church where the stone St. Peter Church in Brush Creek now stands.

His father joined the Union Army at the beginning of the Civil War, and the rest of the family made a daring escape across the Mississippi River into Illinois, a free state, soon thereafter.

His mother, Martha Jane Tolton, continued to form her children in the faith after her husband died in the war.

The teachers at St. Peter School in Quincy, Illinois, helped young “Gus” catch up on his studies in religion and secular subjects.

Over time, he recognized and relentlessly pursued his priestly calling, despite that no Catholic seminary in this country at that time would enroll a Black man.

With help from priests, religious sisters and brothers and other friends in Quincy, he was eventually accepted into the Pontifical Urbanum Seminary of the Vatican department of The Propagation of the Faith.

With seminarians from all over the world, the Urbanum prepared young men for missionary outposts throughout the globe.

Fr. Tolton studied there for six years and was ordained to the Holy Priesthood in St. Peter’s Basilica in 1886.

The cardinal prefect of the Propagation of the Faith sent the new priest back to Quincy to serve as a missionary in the place where he had grown up and ministered as a lay catechist.

Thus, Fr. Tolton became the Roman Catholic Church’s first recognizably Black priest in the United States.

Things went very well for him at first.

As pastor of the St. Joseph Parish, established for Black Catholics in Quincy, he became a diligent and respected spiritual leader, as well as a novelty and a celebrity among the people.

White Catholics began attending the mission, to the consternation of their pastors and their bishop.

Most of the priests who had helped Fr. Tolton while he was growing up and discerning Priesthood had moved on to other assignments, although Father Peter McGirr, one of his staunchest allies, remained.

Issues of race and profes-

sional jealousy drove a wedge between Fr. Tolton and sev-



This is one of two recently installed stained-glass windows in the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Jefferson City that depict Venerable Father Augustus Tolton carrying out his priestly ministry.

eral other priests, making it increasingly difficult for him to carry out his priestly ministry in Quincy, although he loved the people dearly.

He wrote to Archbishop Feehan, who contacted Fr. Tolton’s superiors in Rome, asking for him to be sent to Chicago.

“Fr. Tolton had to go to great lengths to convince Rome to reassign him,” Bishop Perry noted.

When the orders finally came, Fr. Tolton left Quincy abruptly.

“He only told his mother, Martha Jane, and his sister, Anne, that he was leaving, and the next thing you know, he’s hopping on a train to come to Chicago,” said Bishop Perry.

“I think things finally came to such a boiling point, he either did not have time or felt that he could not emotionally say goodbye to the people he had nurtured in his pastoral care at St. Joseph in Quincy,” he said.

Light in the darkness

Fr. Tolton got to work in Chicago as quickly as he had left Quincy and Brush Creek.

See FR. TOLTON, page 12

We Make Funeral Pre-Planning Easy.

Give us a call, and we can help you get started.

(573) 636-3838

Funerals | Cremation | Pre-Planning



MILLARD
Family Chapels, Inc.



Mark Millard
Preneed Agent

Fr. Henry Ussher celebrates 25th priestly anniversary

**Has spent half of his years
of priestly service
as a missionary to this diocese**

By Jay Nies

God doesn't call angels to be priests.

He calls human beings.

"It's not by my own might but by God's own grace," said Father Henry Ussher. "God doesn't count on our weakness. He counts on what he can use us for."

Fr. Ussher — a priest of the Diocese of Wiawso, Ghana, who has been ministering in the Jefferson City diocese for 12-and-a-half years — celebrated his 25th priestly anniversary on Dec. 14.

"I thank God for choosing me from among his own people to be a priest of his Church," said Fr. Ussher, pastor of St. Clement Parish in St. Clement, St. Joseph Parish in Louisiana and the Mission of Queen of Peace in Clarksville.

"Being a priest has been a blessing to me, my family, and the people God has sent me to serve," he said.

Fr. Ussher is the seventh child of his parents, John Ussher and Paulina Akosua Afrim. He grew up in the small town of Asankran Moseaso in the western region of the African nation of Ghana.

He received the name Opong Kwame at birth and the name Henry when he was baptized two years later.

"I'm Catholic by my Baptism," he stated. "Because it was through Baptism that I became a follower of Jesus. The Priesthood doesn't make me Catholic; Baptism makes me Catholic. And at Baptism, I received a calling to serve God in a special way."

He was a stubborn and rebellious youth but was good at math.

"Growing up, I never dreamed of becoming a priest," he conceded.

He figured on becoming an accountant or working for a bank.

Instead, he stayed home to help his parents tend to the farms they owned.

"For two years, I planted corn, Cassava and rice," he said. "And I helped my uncle plant cocoa. The cash crop was

cocoa."

His home parish consisted of 88 towns, each with its own Mass station.

"Maybe once in six months, the priest would come to the town where I grew up," Fr. Ussher recalled. "Each community had its own Catholic leader — a catechist — who was trained to lead Bible studies and daily prayers in the community."

Young Henry began assisting the catechist in his town. This led him to attend the ordination of three priests in his parish church in 1983.

"When the men who were being ordained were asked to prostrate themselves on the floor before the altar, everyone went on their knees," he recalled.

"And while they were laying face-down on the floor, I looked at them and thought to myself, 'I wish I could be one of them.'"

He told his mother after Mass that he wanted to be a priest.

A letter arrived five months later, inviting local teens to take an entrance exam for the minor seminary.

"I gave them my name and went for the exams, and I passed," he said. "That started my vocation."

He was enrolled in St. Teresa Minor Seminary in Amisano.

"It was my first time traveling by car to a big place," he recalled, "moving from a rural community to a coastal town, passing through our capital town and moving to a neighboring region at the age of 19."

He had saved enough money to pay for his first term of seminary studies. His parents sacrificed to pay for his second term, and the local diocese took care of the rest.

"God's ways are not our ways, and his thoughts are not our thoughts," Fr. Ussher noted. "He made a way. I am the making of the Church, and I am very grateful."

The motto from Day 1 at St. Teresa's was "Work hard, pray hard, study hard."

"Discipline was the order of the day," he said. "You need to pass your exams. You need to participate in every activity, whether it's games or manual work. We had to be involved in everything,



Father Henry Ussher, a priest of the Diocese of Wiawso, Ghana, who is pastor of St. Clement Parish in St. Clement, St. Joseph Parish in Louisiana and the Mission of Queen of Peace in Clarksville, offers Mass in St. Joseph Church in Louisiana.

"You had to obey instruction," he stated. "Obedience. You had to obey. You had to submit to the rules of the minor seminary."

All of this was meant to instill discipline and prepare the young men for a life of ministry.

"At the end of it, you're going to serve people of all kinds when you're ordained," he said. "So you have to be on top of everything you're studying."

That ethic continued through his spirituality, philosophy and theology studies at St. Paul Major Seminary in Sowotum and St. Peter Major Seminary in Pedu.

"One of the things they looked at was moral character," he noted. "You had to be morally good. Your spiritual life had to matter most to you. You had to be in church every day.

helps you to comport yourself in everything," he said. "It also makes you humble. Respect for authority is instilled in you. We also learned to be punctual."

He was ordained a deacon on May 22, 1999.

On Dec 11 of that year, in the Cathedral of the Star of the Sea in Takoradi, Bishop John Martin Darko ordained him to the Holy Priesthood for the Diocese of Sekondi-Takoradi.

"The joy of being ordained was something I'll never forget," said Fr. Ussher. "It was broadcast outside for people to see. And you walk in behind the priests, and the bishop is behind you. And when you look back, you see all the people who have gathered there for you! It's something you never forget."

A father to everybody

Fr. Ussher ministered for nine months as associate pastor of Cathedral of St. Joseph Parish in Sefwi Wiawso and briefly as associate pastor of St. Paul Parish in Adjoafua, all the while serving as social communications director for the Diocese of Wiawso, which was created shortly after he was ordained.

His bishop intended to send him to Rome to study communication at the Pontifical

See FR. USSHER, page 15


edwardjones.com | Member SIPC





Peter B. Myren
Financial Advisor
744 W Stadium Blvd Suite F2
Jefferson City, MO 65109
573-635-1454

College and retirement — yes, you can save for both.
Call to schedule a one-on-one.

MKT-5894M-A-A1 AECSPAD 2/19/2020



WINTER-DENT
100% EMPLOYEE OWNED COMPANY

Insurance • Bonds
Employee Benefits • Financial Services
Offices located in Jefferson City and Columbia
800-769-3472
www.winter-dent.com

“Parishes as Communities of the Beatitudes” discussion groups in Louisiana assisted living center, Kirksville nursing home

Participants growing in faith, sharing insights for updates to their parish's pastoral plans

By Jay Nies

Some who were raised to observe the Ten Commandments as the yardstick for discipleship are discovering The Beatitudes in several communities for seniors in the diocese.

With facilitators from their parishes, several residents of Lynn's Heritage House Assisted Living in Louisiana and The Pines in Kirksville are participating in the “Parishes as Communities of the Beatitudes” small group faith sharing experience.

In the process, they're helping their parishes update their parish pastoral plans in light of the deanery pastoral plans that were approved earlier this year.

“I think I'm learning more than they are. It's really been a gift,” said Sister Ruth Ann Klauser SSND, who facilitates a faith sharing group at The Pines and two other groups at her home while serving in retirement at Mary Immaculate Parish in Kirksville.

The Beatitudes, an integral part of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, include a litany of blessings: Blessed are the poor in spirit ... those who mourn ... those who are meek ... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ... those who are merciful ... those who are clean of heart ... the peacemakers ... those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness ... and those who endure insults falsely because of Jesus.

Earlier this year, Bishop W. Shawn McKnight made the Beatitudes the basis for the diocese's new, three-year pastoral plan and the concurrent pastoral plans for the diocese's five geographical groupings of parishes, known as deaneries.

He promulgated the new pastoral plans this spring in a pastoral letter titled, “Shaping Our Future Together: Parishes On Mission Together as Communities of the Beatitudes.”

“Parishes as Communities of the Beatitudes” was developed to help parishioners discern in a prayerful and supportive setting, ways for their

parishes to cooperate more effectively with neighboring parishes in promoting stewardship, co-responsibility among the clergy and laity, and parishes being universally recognized as centers of charity and sanctuaries of mercy.

“Parishes helping parishes and helping communities,” said Sandy Orf, small-group coordinator for St. Joseph Parish in Louisiana.

She facilitates a faith sharing group composed of two members of St. Clement Parish in St. Clement who are residents of Lynn's Heritage House Assisted Living in Louisiana.

“They really enjoy it,” said Ms. Orf. “The Beatitudes are about finding God's love in lifting people up.”

Ms. Orf got the idea to start a faith sharing group at Lynn's Heritage from Joe and Karen Shuckenbrock, two fellow parishioners who take Holy Communion to Catholics in local senior communities and nursing homes.

The couple suggested that the two parishioners at Lynn's Heritage might enjoy having their own “Parishes as Communities of the Beatitudes” discussions in order to grow in faith and help their parishes.

Ms. Orf and the Shuckenbrocks agreed to help facilitate the program there.

“There's a nice family dining room, and that's where we meet,” said Ms. Orf. “We spend about an hour talking and listening.”

Fellow parishioners Edith Gatzmeyer and Lynda Clair help facilitate the faith sharing, offering insights and contributing to the conversations.

Much of the discussion focuses on the Beatitudes themselves.

“I was looking at the word Beatitudes when we started this,” said Ms. Orf. “And it got me thinking: If we want to BE good Christians, we have to have the right ATTITUDES.”

Participants talk about ways to help their whole Lynn's Heritage community reflect the Beatitudes more effectively.

“Even if you can't get to church, you can work with the Beatitudes with the staff and fellow residents and be kind

to others and help others,” Ms. Orf noted.

“Their response to that has been excellent,” she said. “They say, ‘that works.’ So, for this little group in this little town, it's working. We do what we can for whom we can, for what we can.”

Ms. Orf enjoys “seeing the wheels turn” as the man and the woman in her discussion group talk about ways to make the Beatitudes real, right where they live.

It also helps them stay connected with their community of faith.

“The interaction and having the people there know that they're part of the parish — that's rewarding to see,” said Ms. Orf.

Emphasis on compassion

One of the participants at The Pines in Kirksville told Sr. Ruth Ann: “We grew up learning to obey the Commandments, which is ‘thou shalt not.’ This is more of a positive way of looking at things.”

The oldest member of one of the faith-sharing groups there is 95. The youngest is 90.

The 95-year-old used to serve as a deanery representative to the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

“She's comes alive sharing what she's experienced with the Beatitudes,” said Sr. Ruth Ann.

“She says, ‘I might not have them all memorized, but I know what it's like to live in compassion with each other,’” Sr. Ruth Ann stated.

She usually brings them Holy Communion and gives it to them before their faith sharing begins.

Then, she begins with a prayer, and the group members spend time praying together.

Sr. Ruth Ann reads the Beatitudes aloud, and the group members discuss which are



PARISHES AS COMMUNITIES OF THE BEATITUDES



A small group faith-sharing experience, in four modules

real gift for me,” she said. “They say, ‘We'll keep studying. Because we don't want to stop forming our life with Jesus. We want to develop that more. And this is helping us.’”

Finding true happiness

Sr. Ruth Ann hosted faith sharing groups at her home this year, but then she thought: “What about the people who can't get out anymore?”

She called The Pines to gauge interest in starting one or more groups there.

“The enthusiasm that it brought! I knew we had to do it!” she said.

One of the participants told her: “These Beatitudes are really true happiness, and that's what God wants us to be at our age: truly happy.”

Each group member exudes humility and willingness to help their fellow residents and pray for their families and the people of their parishes.

“And they want to continue to grow in their relationship with God,” said Sr. Ruth Ann. “They live the Church in the nursing home.”

“It's been a wonderful Advent experience,” she stated. “The coming, the waiting.”

Members of her group tell her, “We have to wait while God is calling us. But while we wait for that, we need to get better, to get holier.”

All of this has helped convince her of the importance of ongoing faith formation opportunities for people of every age, and the fact that many people have a lifetime's worth of wisdom and experience to share.

“So, you listen,” she said. “That's one of the main things. And understand where they were in their life, and where they are today, and the acceptance that comes with that.”

“It's enlightening and truly inspiring,” she said.

easiest for them to put into action, and which are the most difficult.

Participants say they're lifelong learners and that “this is a great way for us to keep our religion and our faith formation going.”

Discussions often turn to compassion.

“They live this compassion with the companions they have at the nursing home and the people who care for them,” said Sr. Ruth Ann.

One participant told her: “God loves us, and he sent his Son to die for us. So, it's very important for us to try to live out each day what those Beatitudes are telling us.”

Group members are concerned for the past and present pastors of their parishes and pray for them every day.

They say, “We didn't know what co-responsibility was when we were active in our parishes,” but they feel like when they pray, they are being co-responsible.

They're also very concerned for the young people in their parishes and want to give a good example in their life.

Overall, Sr. Ruth Ann is amazed and gratified at the impact these discussions are having on the participants at The Pines.

“Just listening to them and watching them has been a

QUESTION CORNER

Do most people make it to heaven?

By Jenna Marie Cooper
OSV News



Q: I recently took a six-week theology class, and the priest teaching it was pretty emphatic that most don't make it to heaven. First, we must be without mortal sin. So all those who forsake Mass or the Holy Sabbath would not be eligible. I have also heard other well-known priests state the same thing. One used the parable of the sower (the one with rocks, weeds, path and rich soil) to illustrate that per Jesus only 25% make it to Heaven. Yet often I hear priests say the opposite. What is your take on the parable?

A: To me, it seems that looking at this parable in terms of celestial statistics is a fairly unusual interpretation.

The parable of the sower is found in the three "synoptic Gospels" of Matthew (13:3-9), Mark (4:3-9), and Luke (8:5-8). As we read in Luke's account:

"A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path and was trampled, and the birds of the sky ate it up. Some seed fell on rocky ground, and when it grew, it withered for lack of moisture. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some seed fell on good soil, and when it grew, it produced fruit a hundredfold."

One special thing about this particular parable is that Jesus himself is recorded as sharing a detailed explanation of it with his disciples in subsequent verses. That is, the seed represents the word of God, and the different kinds of soils represent those who hear it. Jesus states that the hard path is like the hard hearts of those who are never open to receiving God's word; the rocky ground represents those who have some faith, but only in a shallow way; and the thorns represent the worldly distractions that can choke out the faith of even sincere believers. And of course, those in whose souls the word of God takes root and flourishes are like the "good soil" at the end of the parable.

So, we know with certainty that Jesus was trying to make a point about hearing the "Good News," and the ways in which it might bear fruit or not bear fruit in us. Jesus was trying to explain the goal and some possible pitfalls to avoid. He never suggests that he was giving us a breakdown of who attains salvation in terms of percentages.

Granted, in some cases it is possible to legitimately find an extra layer of symbolic meaning in some scriptural passages. But such extra layers must always be in harmony with the Church's constant teaching. And the Church has never taught that only a specific numerical ratio of souls would be saved.

Further, while the Church has the canonization process for formally recognizing that some especially holy people are already in heaven, the reverse does not hold true. That is, although the Church does teach that going to hell is a real possibility, the Church has never and will never declare definitively that any individual is known to be in hell.

In fact, although this is educated speculation rather than Church teaching, some theologians — such as, perhaps most notably, the 20th-century Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar — have even proposed that we could at least entertain the hope that all might be saved.

Whether or not we personally see this theory of von Balthasar's as being practically realistic, it does hint at a real and uncontroversial truth of our faith. Namely, that God desires the salvation of all, and is patient and ready to forgive

See QUESTION, page 19

Papal Audience
December 18, 2024

Dear brothers and sisters:

We now begin a new series of catecheses for the Holy Year on the Jubilee theme of "Jesus Christ our Hope."

Today we reflect on the Gospel accounts of Jesus' genealogy, which remind us that his life and identity belong to a greater history that embraces his ancestry, his family and the faith of the entire people of Israel.

The presence of four Gentile women in Matthew's genealogy reminds us that Jesus was ultimately sent to be the Savior of all peoples.

The birth of Jesus from the Virgin Mary is itself a sign of a new beginning for our human family.

As Christmas approaches, let us give thanks for our own genealogy, and renew our commitment to embody the gifts of reconciliation, peace and hope which our Lord brought into this world by his Incarnation.

I extend a warm welcome to the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially those coming from Malta.

I pray that each of you, and your families, may experience a blessed Advent in preparation for the coming of Jesus our Savior at Christmas.



Warm tidings

Eighth-graders at Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School in Columbia display the 62 cozy fleece blankets they made as a service project for The Giving Tree for Christmas at Our Lady of Lourdes Church.



— Photo from the Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School Facebook page

Open a new checking account

Now's the time to join the Legends family!

11 Locations to Serve You

It's easy! Start today!



LEGENDS
BANK

Your town. Your bank.

MEMBER FDIC

[LEGENDSBK.COM](https://legendsbk.com)

Receive a FREE GIFT

Advent: We see what we're looking for

By Jaymie Stuart Wolfe
OSV News



I'm old enough to remember reading *Highlights Magazine* in the waiting room at the doctor's office. My favorite feature was the "Hidden Pictures" puzzle. The task was to find a number of small images that had been hidden within a larger picture. Kids were given a list of exactly what to look for — along with the assurance that they were all, in fact, there. But somehow, the puzzle remained challenging, nonetheless.

I experienced something even more

instructive as a parent, watching our youngest son pursue his interest in falconry. The process was far too involved for anyone who was simply curious. Only someone committed to persevering over the long haul could make it through the series of hoops required to keep and train a bird. But after our son passed an exam, earned the money for all the necessary equipment, built a mews in the back driveway, had it all inspected by the state's Division of Wildlife, and found a sponsor, it was time to capture an immature red tail hawk.

Of course, first, we had to find one. Unlike *Highlights'* "Hidden Pictures," there were no guarantees. For several weekends, various family members drove our son around wooded areas to look for

birds. Stretching our necks to the trees, we didn't see much of anything at first. But as time passed, we learned how and where to look. By the time he set his bird free two years later, most of us were seeing hawks everywhere. The life lesson was clear: we see what we are looking for and once we see it, it cannot be unseen.

During Advent, the Church encourages us to renew our search for God and teaches us how and where to look for him. Our faith reassures us that God is hidden in plain sight. Indeed, God is everywhere; the whole world is a sanctuary of his presence, a tent of meeting in the wilderness, a temple at the center of human activity.

And yet, we don't see God everywhere. Perhaps it's because fewer of us

are looking for him. But I suspect that it is even more because those of us who are looking no longer see the world the way our forebears in faith did.

Medieval Christians held an entirely sacramental view of life. For them, nothing was random or devoid of meaning. Everything was divinely ordained and brimming with significance. God was neither absent nor silent. Creation continually proclaimed his presence and his providence. Everything came from God and led back to him. And God was intimately involved in human life, always there in the thick of it. Because they were fluent in the language of sign and symbol, our medieval ancestors knew what

See STUART WOLFE, page 19

A Eucharistic Word: Waiting

By Michael R. Heinlein
OSV News



Learning to wait is an important skill to acquire. I am reminded of its importance almost daily as I help my young children come to understand it — and, of course, in that process come to understand it more and more in my own life, too. "Patience is a virtue" I heard so much from my mom as a child, echoed now in regular reminders I offer the kids.

I was thinking about waiting and patience a good deal recently at a canonization Mass while on pilgrimage with my family in Rome. And the more I thought about that setting, the more I thought it was a great place to do so.

The Eucharist, as the source and summit of Christian life, has much to teach us about waiting. Especially true in the case of a canonization Mass, where I went hours early to hold seats for my family. The Mass itself is one prolonged wait, in some ways, as we anticipate our future end and the coming of Christ. What we pray at Mass following the Our Father sums up this reality rather well: "May we be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope of the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ." The grace of the Eucharist is what helps accomplish this in our lives.

One of the figures who was canonized that morning in Rome was Marie-Léonie Paradis, a Canadian religious and founderess. As is so often the case with the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us, waiting was very much part of her story. Paradis relied on the grace of the Eucharist as she experienced a unique and acute need for patience while waiting for God to act in her life. She relied on Eu-

charistic grace to uphold, transform and strengthen her. Religious life was a tenuous, at times rocky, experience for Paradis until she understood that God was calling her to begin a new community.

Paradis came to realize that she needed to be patient as God made it possible by attending to the various circumstances and personalities that had previously prevented it from coming to fruition. Eventually, her congregation for women religious would be established, according to God's will, dedicated to the service and support of priests and bishops. Through her struggles and disappointments, Paradis came to realize, as she later said: "Have confidence in God as a good Father. Don't you ever believe that God will lose you, if you put your confidence in him. Stay in peace, whatever happens!"

Eventually, my family arrived, the canonizations took place and Mass was celebrated. But this Advent, I keep coming back to the lessons in waiting I learned in October. They will stay with me for some time. And I am grateful for them. Because, ultimately, if we embrace Christ's life and let the Eucharistic mystery live in us, then we have to become masters in patience. We have to learn what it means to wait and be at peace with it. We have to embrace waiting as a time in which God acts.

Newly canonized St. Marie-Léonie Paradis' life teaches us to persevere in answering God's call, come what may. She reminds me how we must remain steadfast yet patient amid obstacles and divisions. She models how to elevate charity and service at the heart of our mission. She lived what St. Katharine Drexel once noted — that "the patient endurance of the Cross — whatever nature it may be — is the highest work we have to do."

And such is the case for each of us. This is what the saints do, as should we all. May we increasingly rely on the Eucharist to nourish and guide this in our

lives "as we await the blessed hope of the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ."

Michael R. Heinlein is author of "Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I." and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators.

REFLECTION

To certain poor shepherds

By Mark Saucier

We've all been there. The obligatory Christmas pageants: where our related little ones try to recapture the simple essence of Christmas in story and song.

This one, like most, was adorable. Mary and Joseph looked elated as they held their baby-doll Jesus. Three road-weary wisemen offered their iconic gifts.

The other kindergarten boys made up a well-costumed shepherds' choir, while the girls, in white dresses, golden halos, and vinyl wings, comprised their counterparts.

Our sometimes less-than-cherubic granddaughter was up there with the angels, singing the Christmas hymns with a smiling exuberance we could all use this time of the year.

Their 5-year-old voices and spritely gestures were delightful, but perhaps a little deceptive. We may have domesticated the Christmas story, made a Hallmark movie out of something that was meant to be shocking and disruptive.

No one is going to fear these diminutive darlings, divine or otherwise, but what are the first words of the angel Gabriel to Mary at the Annunciation? "Be not afraid."

And what does this angel tell Joseph in his annunciation dream? "Be not afraid." And those shepherds in the field? "Be not afraid."

The sudden appearance of an ethereal someone speaking directly to you must be frightening.

But aside from the looks of an angel, Mary had plenty to fear. Betrothed to a man, but pregnant not by him, she could be banished or stoned.

There's little doubt that Joseph's angel dream came about in a fitful sleep. A victim of circumstances, should he follow the rigid rules of custom, or open his home and heart to Mary and the prospects of further ridicule?

The shepherds in the fields had reason to quake. It wasn't just one angel appearing to them, but a host of them, shining in the glory of the Lord.

But shepherds had bigger fears in this hardscrabble life. Was this cold, hungry way of barely making ends meet all they had to look forward to?

For them, and for us, as well, there was something deeper.

Each appearance announced the coming of Emmanuel. It is God with us, God for us, and ultimately, God in us.

It is the God who will not abandon us, who will lead us through terrifying ordeals, who will comfort us in our grief.

For the Nativity players, all that took was trust. But unlike those little angels and shepherds, letting go and trusting is our biggest fear.

So be not afraid, and have a blessed Christmas!

Encounter

A reflection on hope: An invitation to be the tether

AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES



By Litz Main

Recently, I learned something that has profoundly shaped the way I think about hope.

In Hebrew, the word for hope, *tikvah*, carries a meaning that is both powerful and tangible.

It isn't just an abstract feeling or wishful thinking — it's a picture of an unbreakable cord, a rope that tethers us securely to something greater than ourselves.

This imagery has deeply impacted me, especially during challenging moments.

When I think of that strong and unyielding cord, I am reminded that my faith is rooted in our Lord, who is our ultimate source of hope.

This understanding of hope has been transformative for me.

It reframes hope as something enduring, not a fleeting feeling but a steady force that holds us in place even during life's storms.

As Christians, we are called to hold fast to this cord and to offer its strength to others.

This tether, rooted in Christ, gives us the courage to move forward, knowing that we are never alone.

Hope is a recurring theme

in Scripture, appearing more than 150 times throughout the Bible.

From the Psalms that cry out, "Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord" (Psalm 31:24), to the reassurance in Romans that "hope does not disappoint us" (Romans 5:5), the message is clear: hope is an essential part of our faith journey.

It connects us to God's promises and inspires us to be His instruments of hope for others.

At Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri (CCCNMO), this is the mission we strive to live out each day.

We work to be a tangible source of hope for those facing uncertainty — offering food to the hungry, welcoming the stranger, and supporting individuals and families as they navigate life's challenges.

Our work is rooted in the understanding that hope is not passive.

It's an active, living force that requires us to step forward in faith and love.

But this mission isn't something we can accomplish alone.

It is powered by the incredible generosity and compassion of people like you.



Together, we are stronger.

Together, we embody *tikvah* — that unbreakable cord — by coming together as a community of faith to serve those in need.

Your support, whether through your time, talents, or treasures, is the lifeline that allows us to extend hope to those who feel forgotten or abandoned.

This year, we've seen the power of hope in action.

Volunteers have stepped up to serve in countless ways, donors have shared their resources to sustain our programs, and our community has continued

to show what it means to walk in faith and solidarity.

Each act of kindness and generosity strengthens the tether, making it unbreakable for those who need it most.

As we prepare for the new year, I want to invite you to join us in this mission of hope.

There are so many ways to get involved.

You can volunteer your time, share your skills, make a financial gift, or simply keep the families we serve in your prayers.

Every contribution, no matter how small, makes hope tangible and reminds those on

the margins that they are not alone.

Hope is not just a concept; it's a call to action.

When we come together as a community, bound by faith and love, we reflect Christ's light in the world.

Let us step into the new year with hearts full of hope, ready to be the tether that connects others to the promise of something better.

Thank you for your unwavering support and for being part of this mission.

Together, we are the hands and feet of Christ, making *tikvah* a reality for those we serve.

CROWN

From page 4

It was moved to Notre Dame's treasury from the magnificent Sainte-Chapelle in 1806.

A crowd of faithful and curious onlookers gathered on the forecourt of the cathedral as the relic made its way to Notre Dame. Among them was Bénédicte de Villers, a 50-year-old woman who had come to do some Christmas shopping in central Paris. "I was not far away, and realizing what was happening, I took the Metro to come," she told OSV News.

"I arrived in front of Notre Dame just as the procession was beginning to enter the cathedral through the central door. Hearing the organ and the singing, I begged the security guards to let me in, explaining that I am a practicing Catholic, and that praying in front of Christ's crown of thorns meant a lot to me," she

said. "I had already come to venerate it at Notre Dame during Lent."

Once the crown of thorns had been placed on the main new altar inside the cathedral, Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris addressed the 2,000-strong audience of faithful.

"We are moving from the time of Advent to the time of the Passion, but that is the way it is all the time in life, and in the Christian life," he said. "We come to adore the Lord in the gift he made of himself to all humanity, as the Son of God."

During the Passion reading that followed, the cathedral's rector-archpriest, Father Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, presented the crown to the faithful in a long, deep silence.

Night had fallen by the time the procession reached the back chapel behind

the choir, in the axis of the nave. Here, under a vault in which the blue color has been revived, the new reliquary of the crown of thorns has been placed.

It is the work of French designer Sylvain Dubuisson, and takes the form of an altarpiece in marble and cedar wood, with the altar wall 12 feet high and 10 feet wide. It evokes the iconostasis of Orthodox churches with its notched panels enclosing gilded bronze thorns. This serves as a reminder of the history of the crown of thorns. For several centuries, before St. Louis purchased it, it belonged to the Byzantine Empire.

The marble altar is lit by small candles, and the central part of the cedar wall is a gilded disk, adorned with 396 hand-crafted glass blocks that reflect the light. At its center, some 7 feet high, a

blue niche, matching the chapel's vaulting and stained-glass windows, shelters the crown of thorns.

Archbishop Ulrich blessed the new reliquary, and prayed for all those who will come to pray there.

Father Pascal Ide, one of the cathedral's chaplains, told OSV News he was mesmerized with the new design. "This new reliquary is all radiance," he said.

The relic of the crown of thorns will be displayed every Friday from Jan. 10, 2025, until Good Friday; on other days it will be stored in the safe inside the marble altar.

For Father Ide, Notre Dame is now entirely a "cathedral of light."

Caroline de Sury writes for OSV News from Paris.

Our Lady of Guadalupe conveys God's confidence in, concern for the humble and downtrodden



Members of St. Peter Parish in Marshall act out the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego during a holy hour on Dec. 13 in St. Peter Church.

— Photos by Father Francis Doyle

By Jay Nies

Throughout Salvation History, God has been lifting up the lowly and sending them to proclaim his message to the powerful.

Faith and trust are what these unlikely emissaries have in common.

"God can choose wherever he wants, and he chooses very humble and faithful people who accept the invitation," said Father Francis Doyle.

Fr. Doyle, pastor of St. Peter Parish in Marshall and St. Joseph Parish in Slater, offered Mass and preached the homily in St. Peter Church the evening of Dec. 12, the Solemnity of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"God chose Mary, a very humble but enormously faithful woman, to be the mother of his Son," the priest noted. "And also St. Juan Diego — uneducated, no status, very poor. The Lord chose him to have an encounter with the Blessed Virgin Mary."

That unlikely encounter sent waves down through the generations, with millions of conversions to the Catholic faith being attributed to Our Lady's apparitions to that humble man, along with her continued intercession.

On Dec. 9, 1531, Jesus's

Mother made the first of several apparitions to Juan Diego, an indigenous convert to Catholicism, at Mount Tepeyac in present-day Mexico City.

In the cold of winter, she left him with a bouquet of roses, a type that is not native to that locale, along with an intricate, scientifically inexplicable image of herself imprinted upon his *tilma* (cloak).

With those powerful signs, she sent Juan Diego as a missionary to his own people and to those who had led them to the cross by the sword.



The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe near Mexico City, where the *tilma* is displayed, is the most celebrated place of pilgrimage in the Americas.

Devotion to Mary under the title Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to increase, and today she is venerated as patroness of the Americas.

Personal devotion to her as an intercessor is an essential element of Latin American spirituality and culture.

Pope St. John Paul II de-

clared Juan Diego a saint in 2001.

Masses and daylong celebrations mark the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico and other Latin American countries and in U.S. communities with large Hispanic populations.

Celebrations often include Las Mañanitas, the traditional serenading of the Blessed Mother, usually before dawn; Mass; the acting-out of the story of St. Juan Diego and the Blessed Mother; festive music and fellowship.

"Closer to Christ"

Celebrations in Sedalia started at 4 a.m. in the St. Patrick Chapel of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, with the serenading of the Blessed Mother.

Father Brad Berhorst, associate pastor of the parish and judicial vicar for the diocese, offered Mass at 5 a.m.

He noted that the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is celebrated just four days after this year's observance of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception — the title under which Our Lady is revered as patron saint of the United States.

Why two Marian feasts, celebrated close together?

"Some things just can't be over-celebrated!" Fr. Berhorst



proclaimed in his homily, "and I am sure that our devotion to the Mother of God is one of those things."

Furthermore, her appearance to Juan Diego in that particular time and place manifests God's love and concern for every person.

"In his own great plan of salvation, God gave Mary as a mother to every Christian in the person of the Beloved Disciple when Jesus said to him from the Cross, 'Behold, your mother,'" said Fr. Berhorst, referring to John 19:26-27.

"But God also ordained that Mary should at certain points later in history manifest her particular and special care for each and every one of us — not just in a general and universal way, but with a particular and special knowledge of our needs and intentions," the priest stated.

He noted that the Blessed Mother appeared to Juan Diego as a beautiful, radiant young woman, speaking his indigenous language.

"She looked like him and his people, and she spoke like him and his people," the priest said. "Our Lady knew Juan Diego — her appearance to him was not the beginning of her relationship with him, but rather a milestone along the way of her relationship to him."

The fact that so many con-

versions took place so quickly shows that Mary also knew the hearts of the people in Mexico at that time.

"And although we may never experience such a remarkable manifestation of Our Lady's presence as her appearance to Juan Diego, her relationship to each of us is no different," said Fr. Berhorst. "It's the same: Our Lady knows us. She knows our hearts, as well."

The priest encouraged everyone to call upon the intercession of Our Lady, "who is truly ours, who knows our needs and intentions, who knows that what we need most is Jesus Christ, her Son, and who always knows how to bring us closer to him for help in time of need."

"This is the role that Mary plays in our lives," said Fr. Berhorst. "She brings us closer to Christ, her Son, and to His Church."

"Rich and instructive"

At the Mass in Marshall, Fr. Doyle encouraged the people to learn everything they can about the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on St. Juan Diego's *tilma*.

"Take time to really investigate all the details of the image," he suggested, "And not only scientifically but also symbolically. It's incredibly rich and instructive."

FR. TOLTON

From page 5

It was the last week of Advent.

"He celebrated Christmas that year with his new family of 30-some people in the church basement at Ninth and Wabash," said Bishop Perry.

As Fr. Tolton had done so many times in the past, he again placed himself completely in God's hands.

"Fr. Tolton, by reason of his own religiosity, trusted in God, and that trust had taken him this far," said Bishop Perry.

"This was to be a blip in the whole adventure — a significant blip, mind you — but the Lord was carving something new for him, in which he could begin to blossom as a priest in his own right," the bishop stated.

Fr. Tolton stayed in contact with Archbishop Feehan and by letters to Sister (now Saint) Katherine Drexel, foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Philadelphia, and Josephite Father James Flaherty in Baltimore.

"He leaned on them for friendship," Bishop Perry noted.

He also revered his parishioners and fellow priests.

"His dossier indicates he

was warmly accepted by the clergy here," said Bishop Perry. "And we know how well he was loved by the number of people who turned out for his funeral. He was really appreciated."

During Fr. Tolton's time in Chicago, he and early civil-rights leader Daniel Rudd helped establish the National Black Catholic Congress, which was at first known as the Colored Catholic Congress.

The organization's first gathering was in 1889 in Washington, D.C.

"Fr. Tolton was thoroughly convinced that the Catholic Church was the best thing going at that time for helping Black people," said Bishop Perry.

Fr. Tolton could see that no other force in American society at that time had both the resources and the spiritual mandate to help Black people overcome the lingering effects of slavery and ongoing discrimination.

He ministered intensely, guarding the souls of his parishioners and helping with their material needs in any way he could.

Exhausted, he died of heat-stroke while walking back

to his rectory on June 9, 1897, at age 43.

His earthly remains were buried in St. Peter Cemetery in Quincy, in keeping with his wishes.

His would not be classified as a martyr's death, but if the people in his care were not so acutely marginalized, he likely would have lived and ministered to a ripe old age.

Friends might have been introducing him into the 1930s or '40s as "Old Father Gus."

As it was, he was largely forgotten by that time, until the publication of *From Slavery to Priest: A Biography of the Reverend Augustine Tolton*, by Franciscan Sister Caroline Hemesath, in 1973.

"That proved to be an opening," said Bishop Perry.

Interest in Fr. Tolton's story spread, and prayers for his intercession vastly increased.

The Chicago archdiocese opened an official sainthood cause for him in 2010.

Upon review of the extensively researched "position on the virtues" document submitted to the Church's Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Pope Francis concluded in 2018 that Fr. Tolton had exhibited heroic virtue throughout his life and at the time of his death, and declared him venerable.

Signs and favors attributed to God through Fr. Tolton's



This is one of two recently installed stained-glass windows in the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Jefferson City that depict Venerable Father Augustus Tolton carrying out his priestly ministry.

intercession continue to be reported and investigated.

Many people seeking help from near God's throne in heaven turn to the kindhearted priest whose skin was nearly as dark as his clerical garb.

persecution and denunciation, and one thing after another, and somehow, we're still here," said Bishop Perry.

"We have before us the model of the saints who helped us do that," he said. "I think Fr. Tolton is one of them."

When asked what Catholics should take to God while thinking of Fr. Tolton's arrival in Chicago, Bishop Perry offered a spontaneous prayer:

"Lord, my life is in your hands!" he prayed. "And I see from time to time, I see a cross in my life, but I accept it as a blessing, an opportunity to come to know your sacrifice on our behalf."

"I hope to make this sacrifice something that you can use, O Lord, for somebody else."



Wishing you every blessing as you experience anew God's greatest gift.

The entire Stutte family and staff wish you and your family a very merry Christmas and blessed New Year.



CATHOLIC SUPPLY®
OF ST. LOUIS, INC.

ST. LOUIS HILLS (314) 644-0643
O'FALLON, MO (636) 379-3705
catholicsupply.com®



Planned Giving
LEAVING A LEGACY

Have you ever considered naming your local parish or school as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy?

Jake Seifert
Director of Development
573-635-9127 x-227
development@diojeffcity.org

Have you already remembered your parish or school in your estate plans? Please let us know!

DIocese OF JEFFERSON CITY
2207 W Main | PO Box 104900
Jefferson City, MO 65110-4900
diojeffcity.org

FR. CLEVER

From page 1



LEFT: Soon-to-be-ordained Father Gregory Clever lies face-down on the floor before the altar, in a gesture of humility, obedience, total dependence on God and total self-giving. **RIGHT:** Bishop W. Shawn McKnight anoints Fr. Clever's hands with Sacred Chrism, symbolizing the power of the priest to sanctify.

— Photos by Jay Nies



He served in the diocesan Youth/Young Adult Ministry Office this summer and then at Helias Catholic High School.

An exuberant congregation from near and far filled the Cathedral of St. Joseph for his priestly Ordination Mass on the sunny, mild first Saturday of December.

Several dozen priests from this diocese and others celebrated the Mass.

"Faithful steward"

This was the diocese's second priestly ordination of 2024, with Father Christopher Hoffmann having been ordained on June 1.

The cathedral bells rang out as the recently completed organ and diocesan choir segued into the opening hymn.

The soon-to-be-ordained priest took his place in the front pew next to his parents and waited to be summoned forward after the readings.

Bishop McKnight thanked Henry and Dorothy Clever for the gift of their son to the Church.

As part of the Ordination Rite, Fr. Clever publicly promised to carry-out the duties of a priest as a minister of Scripture and sacraments, to pray without ceasing, to work obediently and respectfully with the bishop, and to imitate Jesus, who offered himself up as servant and sacrifice.

Fr. Clever then lay face-down on the floor before the

altar, in a gesture of humility, obedience, total dependence on God and total self-giving.

The priests, congregation and choir chanted the Litany of Saints, imploring the holy men and women in heaven to pray for Fr. Clever and for the entire Church.

Fr. Clever then knelt before the bishop, who silently laid hands on his head in the biblical act of bestowing the gift of the Holy Spirit.

More photos from this event have been posted in *The Catholic Missourian's* online edition, cathmo.com. Select "Photo Galleries" from the "Multimedia" tab on the menu bar.

One by one, the other priests also placed their hands on the new priest's head, signifying their prayers for strength and grace.

Monsignor James J. Ramacciotti, a priest of the St. Louis archdiocese who has served as a priestly model and mentor to Fr. Clever, ceremonially helped him put on his priestly vestments.

Bishop McKnight anointed Fr. Clever's hands with the Oil of Sacred Chrism, symbolizing the power of the priest to sanctify, with the words: "The Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and power, guard and preserve

you, that you may sanctify the Christian people and offer sacrifice to God."

The bishop prayed the Prayer of Ordination, asking God to help Fr. Clever "be a faithful steward of your mysteries, so that your people may be renewed in the waters of rebirth and nourished from your altar; so that sinners may be reconciled and the sick raised up."

At the Offertory, Fr. Clever's parents presented the bread and wine to Bishop McKnight for consecration.

Kneeling before the bishop, Fr. Clever accepted it as a symbol of his most important duty: celebration of the Eucharist.

Following a sign of peace from the bishop and the other priests, Fr. Clever remained in the sanctuary as a concelebrant and spoke part of the Eucharistic Prayer.

"In his great love"

Among the many concelebrating priests were Monsignor Robert A. Kurwicki, vicar general; Father Paul Maina Waithaka, dean of formation for Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois; Father Paul Clark, diocesan director of vocations and seminarians; and the priestly deans of each deanery.

Assisting them were Deacons Enrique Castro and John Schwartze.

Seminarians of the diocese served in various roles at the

Mass.

The Diocesan Choir, conducted by Andrew Meagher, director of music for Cathedral of St. Joseph Parish, and accompanied by organist Annette Kehner, led the singing.

Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus served as the honor guard. Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem took part in the processions.

Caleb Villmer, who was one of Fr. Clever's students at Sacred Heart, proclaimed the first reading.

"It was really an honor," he said. "I've known Father for a long time, and it was really cool to be able to be part of the celebration today."

Fr. Clever gave his first priestly blessing to Bishop

McKnight after processing out of the Cathedral at the end of Mass.

In written remarks, Fr. Clever thanked his parents, siblings, grandparents and extended family; the people of his home parishes and the communities where he served as a seminarian; his seminary formators and fellow seminarians; Bishop McKnight; and all others who helped him discern his vocation.

He also thanked God, "who called me today to be a priest, not because I am worthy of it, but because he, in his great love, has asked this of me. Please pray for me to be a saintly witness to his love."

See ORDAIN, page 19

Mark's
Mobile Glass Inc.

"We Come to You"

Jefferson City 1-800-900-3875 Columbia 1-866-966-2010
Osage Beach 1-866-966-3900 Sedalia 1-800-888-7130
Eugene (Automotive Center) 1-573-415-8740

RESIDENTIAL GLASS
CUSTOM MIRRORS & SHOWER DOORS
COMMERCIAL GLASS & STORE FRONTS
AUTOMOTIVE SERVICES (Eugene location only)

History enthusiast explores, refutes myths about origin of Christmas celebrations

By Jay Nies

The date for celebrating Jesus's birth comes from early Church Fathers' calculations for the date of the Annunciation, not from some corresponding pagan feastday.

Guillermo Villa-Trueba Ph.D., Hispanic outreach manager for the Missouri Catholic Conference, made that and several other points about the Christian observance of Christmas in a Spanish-language livestreamed discussion the evening of Dec. 18.

"People need to be sure there's nothing wrong about celebrating Christmas," said Dr. Villa-Trueba.

He pointed out that every year, people try to subvert the truth of the Catholic faith by making false statements about

why Christmas is celebrated on Dec. 25.

"But the date of Christmas is not a matter of faith, it is a matter of custom," Dr. Villa-Trueba noted. "If he wasn't born on that exact date, it would not affect our faith at all. The historical basis of Christianity would be completely unharmed."

Nonetheless, there's good reason to believe that Jesus was, in fact, born on Christmas.

"It mainly revolved around when Jesus was conceived, when the Annunciation took place," said Dr. Villa-Trueba.

He pointed out that the early Christians were more concerned about when Jesus was crucified, died and rose from the dead than when he was

born.

Only over time did the mystery of the Incarnation — the Son of God being born in human flesh in order to restore God's broken relationship with humanity — grow in stature in the consciousness of early Christians.

"They started doing these calculations based on Jewish and Roman calendars," Dr. Villa-Trueba noted. "They concluded that Jesus died on March 25."

A widespread theory is that, adhering to the tradition that the great prophets, most notably Moses, had all died on the anniversary of the day they were conceived, the Church Fathers concluded that the Annunciation had also taken place on March 25.

That is the day when the angel told Mary that she had found favor with God, and

that she would be the mother of the Savior.

With her "*fiat*" — "Let it be" — Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Those doing the calculations added nine months to that date, which brought them to Dec. 25 for the birth of Christ.

"More than anything, this was a way of reinforcing that nine months elapsed from the moment of the Annunciation," Dr. Villa-Trueba stated.

Conflicting dates

Dr. Villa-Trueba graduated magna cum laude from Notre Dame Law School. He holds a doctorate in Economics and Government and master's degrees in Public Policy, History and Canon Law.

He noted that every December brings claims that celebrating Christmas is not biblical, or that its timing is actually based on ancient pagan celebrations.

"There are basically two myths that are espoused by dif-

ferent factions with distinct objectives," he said.

These claims are usually made either by religious fundamentalist groups with roots dating back to the Puritans of the early 17th century, or by atheists who identify as neopagan.

"With the atheists, although most of them actually come from a culturally Christian background, they want to show that Christianity is based on lies," said Dr. Villa-Trueba.

They draw parallels between Christmas and the ancient Roman celebrations of Saturnalia and Sol Invictus.

"They say those pagan feasts preexisted Christmas, and that Christmas was just an attempt to rebrand or 'baptize' these pagan feasts in order to win over converts," he noted.

Saturnalia was a Roman festival in honor of the God Saturn. It was celebrated on Dec. 17 and was later expanded to Dec. 23.

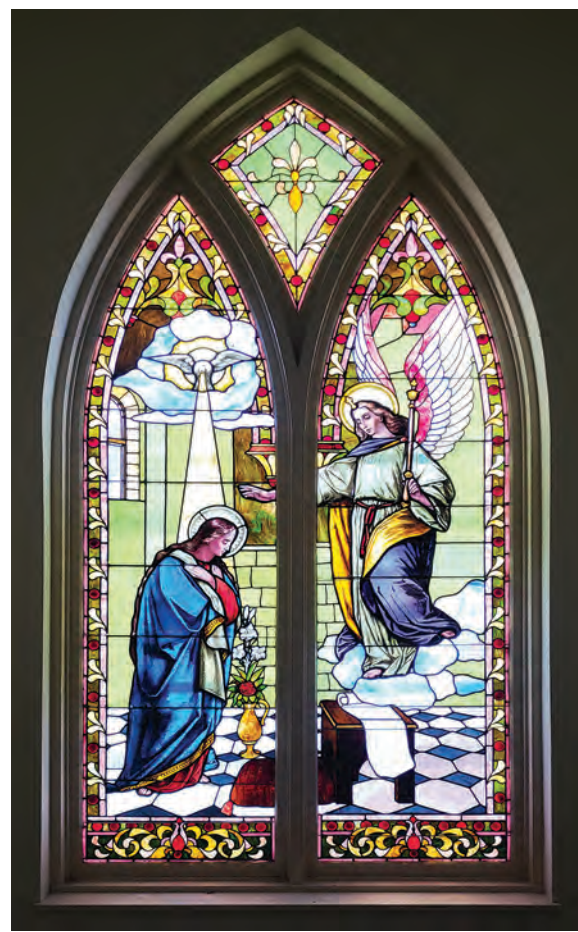
"Those dates don't overlap with Christmas Day or even with any of the 12 Days of Christmas," Dr. Villa-Trueba pointed out.

If the goal of the early Christians was to make people choose between Christmas and Saturnalia, it would make no sense to choose a different date, he noted.

Sol Invictus, also sometimes known as Natalis Solis Invicti, is Latin for "the unconquered sun." This celebration was implemented by Roman Emperor Aurelian around 274 A.D.

"He was very hostile to Christianity," said Dr. Villa-Trueba. "He wanted a way for the pagan cults in the empire to unite."

So, he decided to make a public celebration of the annual rebirth of the sun.



This stained glass window depicting the Annunciation adorns the gathering space in Annunciation Church in California. It is commonly understood that the early Church Fathers' calculation for the date of Christ's birth is based on the date of the Annunciation.

— Photo by Jay Nies

PROVIDING COMPLETE ELECTRICAL SOLUTIONS SINCE 1968.

• CONTACT US FOR ALL YOUR ELECTRICAL AND DATA SOLUTIONS •

Meyer
ELECTRIC INC.

3513 N Ten Mile Drive, Jefferson City • (573) 893-2335

NOW REOPEN In Jefferson City!

1620 Southridge Dr., Jefferson City, MO



We can't wait to see you!

Check out our newly renovated and expanded facilities, featuring state-of-art equipment and a comfortable patient environment.

Call (573) 455-5066 to schedule your **FREE VEIN SCREENING**

See CELEBRATE, page 18

FR. USSHER

From page 6

University of the Holy Cross but wanted him to gain some pastoral experience first.

Circumstances in the diocese then led him to be appointed to his first pastorate — of Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Adabokrom — a year and three months after his ordination.

The parish consisted of 10 towns in a remote part of the diocese.

“As a priest in Ghana, you’re like a father to everybody in the community,” he said. “Everybody comes to you, for prayers, for advice. You cannot count 10 people who have been through secondary-school education.

“So, with the education I had received, I was put in charge of everything,” said Fr. Ussher. “The road into town was not good, there was no running water, no electricity, and everybody looks to you to bring change to their life, to their community.”

For 10-and-a-half years, he labored to draw the people closer to God while helping to improve their standard of living.

He helped get a parochial school built, as well as with road improvements and the eventual construction of a hospital.

But to him, the greatest achievement of his time in Adabokrom was the development of a vacant, 25-acre tract into of the Shrine of our Lady of the Rosary.

“The town has become a spiritual eye of the diocese,” he said. “The shrine! Where people go to pray for help from Mother Mary.”

Every August, 7,000 to 8,000 people gather at the shrine to celebrate the Blessed Mother.

While working to bring electricity to the town, Fr. Ussher bought a generator to light the church for evening Masses and to run the public-address system on Sundays.

He did not use it at home.

“I chose to stay in the darkness because that’s how everyone else was, so I could identify with the people,” he said.

Power lines arrived the year after he left Adabokrom, and now, about half the people liv-

ing there are on the power grid.

An act of kindness

In 2009, Fr. Ussher got invited to attend a conference in the United States, and his bishop wanted him to go.

The priest wrote to 40 U.S. dioceses requesting offerings for Masses, to help him pay the airfare.

The Jefferson City diocese was the only one that responded.

“They sent me \$500 for Masses,” he said. “That helped me buy my ticket.”

This diocese sent him four more additional offerings for Masses, one each quarter.

Back home, Fr. Ussher received a letter from Bishop John R. Gaydos of Jefferson City, now retired, asking if he’d like to spend four years ministering in this diocese.

Impressed by how the people of Missouri had helped a priest they had never met from another part of the world, Fr. Ussher’s bishop gave him permission to minister here.

“And now, I’ve been here for 12-and-a-half years” — half the time he’s been a priest.

Cultural exchange

Since arriving here, Fr. Ussher has served as associate pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Rolla; associate pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Laurie and the Mission of St. Philip Benizi in Versailles; administrator of Immaculate Conception Parish in St. James, St. Anthony Parish in Rosati, St. Francis Caracciolo Parish in Bourbon and St. Michael Parish in Steelville; administrator of St. Clement Parish in St. Clement, Sacred Heart Parish in Vandalia and the Mission of St. John in Ladonia; and currently as pastor in St. Clement, Louisiana and Clarksville.

The first things he noticed here were differences in the weather, culture and modes of worship.

“African culture is active culture; you get to know everybody,” he said. “Church is active, with movement, dancing.

“The culture has changed me to love what is here now,” he said. “I’m getting to love the quiet aspect, the solemn aspect of Mass here.”

The impression his people in Ghana have of Europeans and Americans is that they don’t go to church.

“But here, you see that many people do have great devotion,” he said. “And most of the churches here have Adoration chapels tied to them, which we generally don’t have in Africa.”

He’s still getting used to the weather, especially the cold in wintertime. And he still prepares his meals according to Ghanaian norms.

The priests of this diocese have welcomed him and befriended him.

He appreciates the ongoing priestly formation he receives in this diocese, along with the interaction of his parishioners.

“So, when I go home, I’ll have something to share with them from here, just as here, I sometimes share with them how it is in Africa,” he said.

One Body

Fr. Ussher said his favorite part of being a priest is standing at the altar to lead people in worship and celebrate the Eucharist.

“Being able to administer the sacraments is what sets the priest apart from the rest of the faithful in the Church,” he noted. “My greatest happiness is when I’m offering Mass, or baptizing, or visiting the sick, or being in the confessional.”

He emphasized that a priest’s purpose is to minister to God’s people for the salvation of their souls.

He does this primarily through the work of sanctifying, teaching and guiding the people through the Sacraments and sharing the teachings of Christ.

“We need priests because Christ wanted to continue his ministry on earth,” said Fr. Ussher. “He appointed people to carry on his work, and we are ordained in that line of succession to carry on his work in the vineyard.

“So, we need priests today,



Father Henry Ussher waves outside the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Jefferson City.

grace.”

Fr. Ussher is grateful to God for calling him to be a priest and to all who have been part of his ministry.

He’s quick to thank the people of this diocese who have allowed him to work with them and minister to them, as well as the people who invited him here and helped him get acclimated.

“We have a wonderful bishop here, and wonderful priests,” he said. “I thank them for working with me and helping me.”

He asked for prayers for God to continue to make him God’s instrument, in God’s own way.

“I pray that the years ahead will be a blessing for myself and all the

people of this diocese and my home diocese,” he said.

“And I pray that in this diocese, the young people will hear the voice of God and will join us at that altar someday, so that there will be enough priests to minister in the diocese,” he stated.

we need priests tomorrow, we’ll need priests until the end of time,” he stated. “Because his work needs to be continued.”

He said that to be Christian is to live the life of Christ and belong to his mystical Body.

“The Body of Christ is the Church, and the Church is Catholic,” he said. “Jesus prayed that all sheep who do not belong to the fold will be brought into the fold of the Catholic Church.

“That is why we can never stop evangelizing people who are not in the Church, as well as the people who are,” said Fr. Ussher.

Thanks and praise

He reiterated that priests are human beings, and none are perfect.

“But when we give ourselves to Jesus, he can use us,” he said. “It is God who called me, and not by my strength, but by his



◆ Plumbing

◆ Central Vacuum Systems

◆ Water Filters

◆ Water Softeners

615 A Clark Ave
Jefferson City

573-636-9661

www.SchimpfPlumbing.com



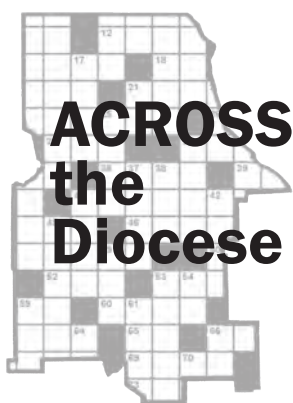
A Life Celebration® Home

The mark of excellence for five generations.

302 South Fifth
Hannibal, Missouri

573.221.8188 • www.jamesodonnellfuneralhome.com

© 2018 The James O'Donnell Funeral Home, Inc



By Father Donald Antweiler

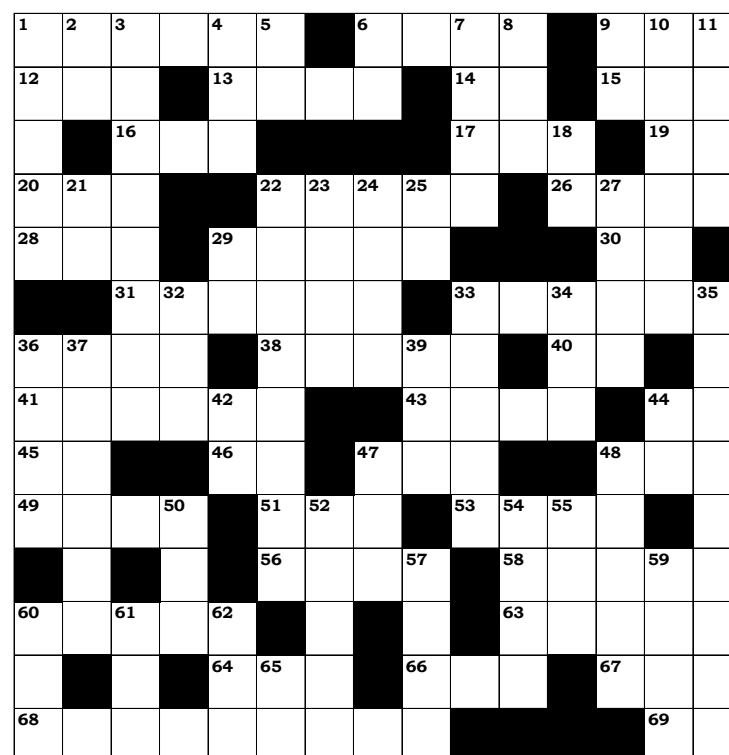
ACROSS

1. As we prepare to celebrate the Christmas ____, it's good to recall the story of Christ's birth as told in Luke (2:1-20) and Matthew (2:1-23) and tradition.
6. "They just keep coming like ____," —Osage clan chief about the white migration, 1850s.
9. The sound of a shepherd's sheepdog, perhaps.
12. "No matter if ____ were a junior staffer, like me, or a senior aide, he made you feel like a special and important member of his team with a role to play," —Brad Mitchell, White House staff, in *Character Matters...and Other Life Lessons from George H.W. Bush*, by Jean Becker.
13. "And blessed is the fruit of thy ____, Jesus."
14. Three of these make a Santa's laugh.
15. Ball holder.
16. "Have you been to South America?" 'Yes.' 'Business or pleasure?' 'I don't travel for pleasure. I travel with a ____,' —*Zero Day*, by David Baldacci.
17. Prefix for mate or mal.
19. The Evergreen State, home of Mt. Rainier (abbr.).
20. Debtor letters.
22. The shepherds were keeping the ____ watch when they got visitors in the sky.
26. "Do not seal up the prophetic words of this book, for the appointed time is ____," (Revelations 22:10).
28. Pregnant Mary might have ridden on one on the trip to King David's birthplace for the census.
29. Brother of the prophet Moses (Exodus 4:14).
30. Comparative suffix.
31. ____ the Ape Man.
33. Where the shepherds were living.
36. "Then he took ____, gave thanks..." —Luke 22:17 (2 wds.).
38. An ____ of the Lord appeared to the shepherds.
40. These letters on a car stand for Luxury Sport.
41. Name of one of the three traditional Magi.
43. This was missing at the inn.
44. "No less smiling and gracious was the tall, spare man half of us called '____' — the rest of us (as we were taught at home) 'Mist' Pres'dent,' with no thought of its high import..." —*Tad Lincoln's Father*, by Julia Taft Bayne.
45. "Louis XIV once declared 'I ____ the state!' It was no idle boast," —"Grand Disguise," *Great Mysteries of History* by Kenneth Platinick.
46. "He was a loyal aide-____-camp and did his job with not so much as the expression on his face to indicate anything but his complete devotion to duty," —*The March*, by E.L. Doctorow.
47. Shape of a rainbow.
48. "When Jesus comes again at the ____ of time, he will not have a single drop more of glory than He has right now upon the altars and in the tabernacles of our churches," —*The Lamb's Supper*, by Dr. Scott Hahn.
49. The celestial visitor proclaimed good ____ of great joy for all the people.
51. Text letters for Too Much Information!
53. ____ Herod massacred the Innocents.
56. Church song.

58. The Kansas City baseball team is named for the American ____, a famous livestock show and parade which celebrates the city's livestock heritage.
60. The Magi were guided by ____ (2 wds.).
63. A brand of soda.
64. "One of the bystanders drew his sword, struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his ____," (Mark 14:47).
66. ____ is a legal term/word that refers to a thing (property, interest, status) that is the object of rights; or abbr. for residence or research.
67. "She thought she was going to raise me in her own image. What a joke. She has champagne tastes. I prefer beer straight out of the ____," —*People of the Book*, by Geraldine Brooks.
68. The city of Jesus's birth.
69. Abbr. for agriculture, Mo.'s main industry.

DOWN

1. The census happened when Quirinius was governor of ____.
2. Letters for Executive Order; directive by a U.S. President.
3. In those days, Caesar ____ called for a census of the whole (Roman) world.
4. "...all went to be enrolled, each to his ____ town," (Luke 2:3).
5. "Cary refreshed the screen and then swore as the two most dreaded words in the English language appeared at the top of the display: ____ Service," —*Zero Hour*, by Don Bentley.
6. Stomach muscle.
7. "Dante knew for all his façade of dark beauty, proud defiance, and stoicism in suffering, the Devil is a fool, and a vulgar fool at ____," —Comedy in the Divine Comedy by Dorothy Sayers.
8. Mary gave birth to her firstborn ____.
9. "I must still come to you until I get the men-____-arms; for so it is commanded and I may not disobey," —*Personal Reflections of Joan of Arc*, by Mark Twain.
10. "Rejoice and be glad, for your ____ will be great in heaven," (Matthew 5:12).
11. Reaction of the shepherds to the heavenly visitor.



18. "It was...the paradox of progress that scientific advances seemed to go hand-____-hand with social disintegration — the result of an increase of knowledge coupled with a lack of understanding," —*Literary Converts: Spiritual Inspiration in an Age of Unbelief*, by Joseph Pearce.
21. Bone.
22. Jesus grew up in this town.
23. Middle East country formerly called Persia.
24. "...unwillingness to act, lack of clear thinking, until self-preservation strikes its jarring ____ — these are the features which constitute the endless repetition of history," —Winston Churchill
25. Letters for Head Nurse.
27. Electric fish.
29. The Natural State, home of The Great Passion Play (abbr.).
32. "There needs to be an ____ that edits what I say versus what I want to say," —Blake Shelton.
33. What the shepherds were guarding.
34. One of the most common names for a street in the U.S. is named after this stately shade tree, now ravaged by disease.
35. The shepherds were told to look for an infant wrapped in ____ clothes.
36. Nothing like ____ of hot soup on a cold day (2 wds.).
37. Magi transportation.
39. "To ____ is human; to forgive, divine," —English poet Alexander Pope.
42. "God works in some very weird ways, and moving a boy to begin a life of devotion to the saints through a magazine ____ is just one of them," —*Clues from My Life with the Saints*, by James Martin, S.J.
44. In the Catholic ordo, letters for Pastoral Note.
47. "Yet I have never failed — do not now fail — to remember that in the Republican cause there is a higher ____ than that of mere office," —A. Lincoln in *The Zealot and the Emancipator*, by H.W. Brands.
48. To escape Herod, Joseph fled with the family to ____.
50. The city of David's birth was south of Jerusalem and west of the Dead ____.
52. One of the three named gifts the Magi brought.
54. In technology, letters for Incident Response Plans (i.e., plans to deal with malicious cyberattacks).
55. Alternate spelling of Noah.
57. Pope St. John Paul II referred to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a "sure ____ for teaching the faith," in the Apostolic Constitution "*Fidei Depositum*," issued when the *Catechism* was officially published.
59. Largest continent.
60. Priest's full white garment under the chasuble.
61. Make lace.
62. Abbr. for religion.
65. Letters for American Eagle; clothier.

See ANSWERS, page 23

CASTROP PLASTERING CO. INC.



PLASTERING - DRYWALL
ACOUSTICAL TILE
STUCCO & THIN WALL
PLASTERING

4915 Hwy. 50 West, Jefferson City (573) 893-4111

MAKING CONNECTIONS

From page 1

Matthew: “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the Age.”

We can think of his veiled presence to us — in the Scriptures, in the Sacraments we celebrate, especially the Eucharist and the gift of Holy Orders, as “middle Advents” of our Lord, which guarantee his true presence in our Church.

It is the gift of sacred leaders, according to the will of Christ — first the bishops with and under the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter, and the ministerial priests who are the principal co-workers with the bishops — which guarantees our sacred Communion with the Lord and with the Apostolic Church.

Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, Christ continues his ministry today as our Priest, Prophet and Shepherd, who did not come “to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.”

Christ is our King, not in the way the world understands monarchs, with people doting and fawning all over them with various marks of deference and respect, but in how he served others — in giving his life as a ransom for many.

It is a different kind of kingship. And likewise, we are recognized as true subjects of Christ the King in how we treat others, with lives of sacrificial service, generosity and charity for others.

Christ will recognize us as his subjects by our love for one another.

Deacon Clever, with the rites of baptism, confirmation, and Holy Eucharist, and now with the Rite of Ordination of a Priest, your personal history is yoked in God’s providence with the History of Salvation, as narrated in Sacred Scripture and lived out in the Church from one generation to the next until the end of time.

As a man of the Church, Deacon Clever, your life is not your own. You have been formally called to the sacred order of the Priesthood, and you shall lay down your life for Christ and his Church to minister, *in persona Christi Capitis* (in the person of Christ, the Head of the Church), as a spiritual shepherd-leader of the

faithful and a co-worker with the bishop, his priests and deacons.

You will share in the responsibility we all have together to preserve the Apostolic Communion of the Church in what we believe as Catholics, in how we live as Catholics, and how we pray as Catholics, faithful to the teachings, example and model of prayer of the Good Shepherd himself.

Thus, dear son, you are called by God to serve his Church to be an effective leader, a man of communion, and a man of deep, personal prayer.

Note well the admonishment from the First Letter of St. Peter to all presbyters: “Tend the flock of God in your midst, overseeing not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it, not for shameful profit but eagerly. Do not lord it over those assigned to you but be examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

We who share in the ministerial Priesthood know all too well how personally unworthy we are for this sacred office, which the Roman Canon forces us to confess out loud before the assembly as we offer the perfect sacrifice of the Son to the Father: “To us ... your servants, who, though sinners, hope in your abundant mercies.”

Deacon Clever, let there be no room in your heart and mind for any form of clericalism that would cause you to refrain from the demands of pastoral charity, the charism we have as diocesan priests.

Clericalism artificially separates us from the laity and warps the supernatural respect



Soon-to-be-ordained Father Gregory Clever and the people who are gathered in the Cathedral of St. Joseph Dec. 7 for his priestly ordination listen to Bishop W. Shawn McKnight’s homily.

— Photo by Jay Nies

the People of God have for those who can give them the sacraments.

Always be alert to any sense of entitlement and preserve the spirit of gratitude and generosity that you feel in your heart today as the motive for being a priest for Christ and His Church.

Have as your aim always the salvation of souls, and the active engagement of the laity in the life and mission of the Church.

In this very sanctuary, you will join me at the altar of sacrifice with the rest of the presbyterate of our beloved diocese, the missionary priests serving among us, and our guest priests.

You will share in the mission we have received from Christ through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to teach, to sanctify and to govern.

You will promise obedience to me and my successors; you will promise to be united more closely to Christ in your personal prayer and in carrying out your priestly ministry; and you will resolve to exercise the

power and authority given to you from above, not for your personal gain, but in service to Christ’s merciful love.

The context of the Church today, here in the Diocese of Jefferson City as elsewhere, points out the need for you to follow the model of the Lord’s style of leadership, who came not to be served, but to serve.

The sacred trust you will hold as a priest of the Church must be carefully preserved. As your Bishop, I need your help to rebuild and strengthen the confidence, trust and belief in the Sacrament of Holy Orders that has unfortunately been

lost by some.

By your fruitful ministry exercised in the key of pastoral charity, with a spirit and mindset of co-responsibility with the lay faithful, you will be an effective leader in the faith.

We want you, Deacon Clever, to be a man of faith and a man of your word who, with the joy of the Gospel and with fidelity to the Deposit of Faith, will assist the healing of the wounds of the Church.

Your joyful service as a priest will help the whole Church witness Christ’s resurrection in

our day.

I pray that through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, our diocesan Patroness, and in the upcoming Jubilee Year of “Pilgrims of Hope,” you and I may serve faithfully with our brother priests to shepherd our Church in the joy of the Gospel and with a profound sense of gratitude for His merciful love.

May the good Lord inspire more vocations to the ministerial Priesthood to serve in our diocese, and may we foster a generous response in the hearts of men to that call by our own good example. Amen.

Supplying ice for parish picnics, weddings and any occasion you might have.

Call us today!

HILKE'S ICE

Freeburg, Mo.

573-744-5500

HILKE'S ICE CO.
FREEBURG, MO
573-744-5500

CATHOLIC GIFT ANNUITY
Administered by Catholic Extension

CREATE A LEGACY THAT LASTS A LIFETIME

WITH A CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITY

With a Catholic Gift Annuity, you can secure the future for yourself and your loved ones, and give a lasting gift for your parish, school or our diocese.

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

- Fixed – rate annuity payments for life, one or two people
- Immediate and future tax benefits
- A payment schedule tailored to your needs
- Knowing that you will help Catholics in need in our diocese

NEW RATES FOR 2024

AGE	ANNUAL PAYOUT RATE
60-64	5.2-5.6%
65-69	5.7-6.2%
70-74	6.3-6.8%
75-79	7.0-7.8%
80-84	8.1-8.9%
85-89	9.1-9.9%
90+	10.1%

catholicgiftannuity.org

For a personalized proposal, contact:

Jake Seifert
Director of Development & Missions
Diocese of Jefferson City
2207 West Main Street, Jefferson City MO 65109-0914
development@diojeffcity.org • 573-635-9127

DIOCESE OF Jefferson City

Need more info about an event or want to see more events?
Visit the diocesan EVENT CALENDAR at diojeffcity.org/events.
Want your event listed?
Fill out the ONLINE FORM at diojeffcity.org/event-listing.

Fundraisers & Social Events

Nov. 28-Jan. 5

Laurie, "Festival of Lights" free Christmas light display, 5-10 pm each evening; gift shop open on Fridays 6-8 pm, National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church

Jan. 5

California, K of C country breakfast, 8-11:30 am; **Vienna**, K of C monthly breakfast, 7:30-10:30 am

Meetings & Conferences

Every Tuesday

Jefferson City, Divorced Catholics group, 6:30-8 pm, Immaculate Conception Parish's Emmaus Room

Every Wednesday & Saturday
Jefferson City, 12-Step Meetings, 7-8 pm, Immaculate Conception Parish's Emmaus Room

Jan. 11

VIRTUAL, "Foundations of Chant: Pastoral & Musical Approaches," presented by the Jefferson City Chapter of NPM, 9-10:30 am, for info or to register email JeffersonCityMO@npm.org

Faith Formation & Spiritual Renewal

Every Tuesday

Jefferson City, "Tuesday With Faith," small group discussions, 6:30-8 pm, Immaculate Conception Parish's Pleus Hall, for info, call 573-645-2478 or email jimkemna@gmail.com

Every Friday

Jefferson City, Centering Prayer Group, 11 am-noon, Immaculate Conception Parish

Jan. 6

Columbia, Monthly CoMo Charismatic Prayer gathering, 7-8:30 pm, Korean Martyrs Room, St. Thomas More Newman Center Parish

Jan. 8

Columbia, Faith, Fun, Fellowship Nite (F3 Nites), discussions for all ages about the Catholic faith, 6:30-8 pm, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish's Flanagan Hall, for info or to RSVP visit tinyurl.com/ymw7m3ae

Jan. 17-19

Conception, MO, Encountering Christ silent retreat for

women, for info visit conceptionabbey.org/guests/upcoming-retreats

Jan. 24-26

Conception, MO, Encountering Christ silent retreat for men, for info visit conceptionabbey.org/guests/upcoming-retreats

Jan. 31

Loose Creek, "Women of God: Uniquely Gifted, Uniquely Called," evening of music & reflection, 5:45 pm, Community Center

Jan. 31-Feb. 2

Conception, MO, Encountering Christ silent retreat for women, for info visit conceptionabbey.org/guests/upcoming-retreats

Youth & Young Adults

First Wednesdays each month
Jefferson City, Rooted/Connected/Searching in Community young adult group, 5-8

pm, Immaculate Conception Parish's Pleus Hall, for info visit icangels.com/youngadults

Health & Wellness

Jan. 6

Rich Fountain, Blood drive, 2-6 pm, Sacred Heart School dining room

Chancery Closing

The chancery offices in the Alphonse J. Schwartze Memorial Catholic Center will be closed the following days: **Dec. 24**, Christmas Eve; **Dec. 25**, Christmas Day; **Dec. 31**, New Years Eve; and **Jan. 1**, New Years Day.

CELEBRATE

From page 14

The problem with conflating this celebration with Christmas is: Christmas was already being observed by that time.

A book by St. Hippolytus of Rome, written in 204 A.D., mentions Christmas and that it was celebrated on Dec. 25.

Another historical source, written by Sextus Julius Africanus in the early 200s, also mentions celebrating Christmas on Dec. 25.

"So, the more likely explanation here is that Christmas was gaining popularity, and the emperor wanted an alternative

celebration for people to do on that day," said Dr. Villa-Trueba.

He pointed out again that although the date for Christmas does not have pagan roots, such roots would not present a dilemma for the faithful.

"What we are celebrating is the birth of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ," he said. "The evidence of the events that we celebrate on Christmas is pretty clear: the birth of Jesus Christ.

"So, as long as people keep in mind the actual reason we celebrate Christmas, there is

no problem with having that celebration, along with all the traditions that have come along with it," he said.

"Even if there was a minor tradition that is pagan in origin, that would not be a sin," he stated. "Because we do it in a way that is intended to glorify the birth of Jesus Christ.

"We make our homes, churches and public spaces beautiful and ready to greet our Savior," he said.

The true meaning

Dr. Villa-Trueba offered several resources for people who'd like to research these matters more in-depth.

"If they want something more academic, they can consult Dr. Thomas Talley's book, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*," he said.

"If they want something shorter and less scholarly, the Catholic Answers website has many great resources."

Visitors to that site — catholic.com — can read well-cited articles by such Catholic apologists such as Jimmy Aken and Joe Heschmeyer.

"And if they prefer to listen in a podcast, Joe Heschmeyer has a couple of his 'Shameless

Popery' podcasts dedicated to the origins of Christmas," said Dr. Villa-Trueba.

"And Jimmy Aken, on his 'Mysterious World' podcasts, talks about several Christmas traditions."

Not only are these things interesting from a historical and academic standpoint, they ultimately point to timeless truth.

"The Incarnation is one of the main mysteries of our faith," said Dr. Villa-Trueba. "It's the means by which Our Savior came to us to redeem us, to become one with us, to experience everything we experience, except sin, and ultimately to die for us and offer us the possibility to restore our rela-

tionship with God and save us through his sacrifice," he said.

Dr. Villa-Trueba is grateful for Advent, the season of preparation to welcome Christ historically at Christmas, as well as spiritually more deeply into the heart of every believer.

"It's great to have this Advent season to prepare, because none of us are worthy of Jesus Christ," said Dr. Villa-Trueba. "We're just doing our best to be ready for Christmas."

But having properly prepared for the day when it arrives, "there's no harm in participating in these Christmas traditions and expressing our happiness for the birth of our Savior," he stated.

"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

— John 1:14

Page 1 Young missouri Page 11

March 15, 2024 • Vol. 47 No. 10

2025 Advertising Price Increase

Due to rising production/printing costs and postage rates, *The Catholic Missourian* will be implementing the final phase of increasing our advertising rates, beginning January 1, 2025.

Parish Rate:
Black/white \$10 per column inch
Full color \$12 per column inch

Business Rate:
Black/white \$15 per column inch
Full color \$17 per column inch

Mother to speak at Stewardship Conference, says families are the foundation of stewardship

Some of the featured articles in this issue include: Retired priests, religious put greater focus on being; Mother to speak at Stewardship Conference, says families are the foundation of stewardship.

Getting into the spirit



Students at St. Mary School in Frankenstein give a matinee performance of this year's Christmas play. — Photo by Erin Vader, Ed.D.

"I see the Nativity"



Preschool students in Anne Perkins's class at Immaculate Conception School in Jefferson City show the results of their writing and painting activity that began with the sentence, "I see the Nativity." They also shared pictures of Nativities from their own homes.

— Photo from the Immaculate Conception Catholic School Facebook page

"Wait for the Lord ..."



Pre-kindergarten through first-grade students in the Holy Cross Parish Faith Formation Program in Cuba display the Advent Wreath Countdown Calendars they made and decorated in their class Dec. 4, while all the classes discussed the meaning of Advent and its importance in preparing for Christmas.

— Photo from the Holy Cross Catholic Church Cuba Missouri Facebook page

Strike up the band



Members of the Father Tolton Regional Catholic High School band and friends spread a little holiday joy by playing Christmas carols outside Bass Pro Shops in Columbia the afternoon of Dec. 7.

— Photo from the Fr. Tolton Regional Catholic High School Facebook page

Thanksgiving Parade in Glasgow



Students of St. Mary School in Glasgow march in their school's annual Thanksgiving Parade.

— Photos from the St. Mary School Facebook page

"O, come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!"

Bible Accent

The shepherds were not the only ones who received messages from angels after Jesus' birth.

In Matthew 2:13-15, we learn that after Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus had been visited by the Magi, Joseph had a dream. In this dream, an angel warned him that King Herod of Judea planned to find Jesus and kill him.

"Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him," the angel told Joseph.

Joseph did what he was told and fled to Egypt with his family during the night. In the meantime, Herod ordered the massacre of all boys who were infants up to age 2.

After Herod died, an angel again appeared to Joseph in a dream.

"Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead," the angel said.

Joseph, Mary and Jesus returned to Israel and lived in the town of Nazareth in Galilee.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton was born in 1774 in colonial New York City and was raised an Episcopalian. She married a merchant named William Magee Seton and had five children. Her husband died in 1803 in Italy, where Elizabeth had learned about Catholicism. She converted to the faith in 1805 in New York. The Seton family's shipping business had gone bankrupt, leaving Elizabeth poor and friendless. A priest from Baltimore suggested that she open a school for girls in that city. In 1809, Elizabeth founded the U.S. Sisters of Charity, which opened many schools and orphanages. Elizabeth died in 1821, and she became the first native-born U.S. saint in 1975. We remember her on Jan. 4.



An angel tells some shepherds about Jesus' birth

By Jennifer Ficaglia
Catholic Courier

One day, the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus wanted to count the people who lived in the lands he ruled. Since Rome controlled the Middle East, all the people living there were instructed to go to their ancestral hometowns to be counted.

A man named Joseph, who was a relative of King David, was living in the town of Nazareth in Galilee. He had to travel to Bethlehem in Judea to be counted in the census. He took his pregnant wife, Mary, with him.

When the couple reached Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to a son, whom she wrapped in swaddling clothes. She laid him in a manger, because there had been no room for Joseph and Mary to stay at an inn.

During this time, there were shepherds who were living in the fields around Bethlehem. They were keeping watch over their flocks at night when an angel from God appeared in their midst.

The glory of God shone so brightly around the angel and the shepherds that the men became frightened.

"Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be



Illustration by Linda Rivers

for all the people," the angel said. "For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

Suddenly, the angel was joined by a multitude of other angels who were all praising God.

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests," they said.

After the angels left, the shepherds looked at each other in awe and excitement.

"Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has

taken place, which the Lord has made known to us," they said.

The shepherds went into the city. They found Joseph, Mary and the infant lying in the manger, just as the angel had said.

The shepherds went back into the city and told everyone they encountered what the angel had told them. Then they returned to Joseph and Mary to glorify and praise God.

Read more about it...
Luke 2

1. Where was Joseph's ancestral home?
2. Why were the shepherds so excited?

Puzzle

Using the hints provided from Matthew 2, put a T next to the sentences that are true and an F next to the ones that are false regarding the Magi's search for Jesus. If a sentence is false, put the correct answer on the line at the end of the sentence.

1. ____ The Magi gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense and myrtle. (verse 11) _____
2. ____ The Magi were from the west. (verse 1) _____
3. ____ The Magi followed the moon in order to find Jesus' birthplace. (verse 2) _____
4. ____ The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to King Herod. (verse 12) _____

Answers: 1. F (myrrh); 2. F (east); 3. F (star); 4. T.



What is another
name for
Bethlehem?
(Hint: Luke 2:4)

Answer: The city of David.



Gina N Mauller, CFP®
Financial Advisor
11 South Fairview Road
Suite 109
Columbia, MD 21033
573-445-7671
Parishioner

**Complimentary
investment review.**

Give us a call.

MKT-58940-A-A1 AECSPAD 23216280

'Mary' on Netflix is reverent, engaging, but sometimes uneven

By John Mulderig
OSV News

New York

The life of the Blessed Mother, from before her birth to the flight into Egypt, is recounted with varying levels of artistic adeptness in the uneven biography "Mary" (Netflix).

Though the result is not always satisfying, the production overall is both reverent and engaging. The film is also suitable for a wide audience.

After asking God fervently for the gift of a child, Mary's elderly parents, Joachim (Ori Pfeffer) and Anne (Hilla Vidor), eventually have their prayers answered.

They dedicate their young daughter (Mila Harris) to God and she subsequently goes to live in the Temple in Jerusalem where she grows up (Noa Cohen) under the spiritual guidance of the prophetess Anna (Susan Brown).

Though Mary's future does not initially seem to include the prospect of marriage, her lifelong guardian, the archangel Gabriel (Dudley O'Shaughnessy), helps bring about a fateful meeting with Joseph (Ido Tako).

He falls in love with her at first sight, and the ardor with which he seeks Joachim and Anne's blessing on their union is almost comic — though touching nonetheless.

Following the couple's betrothal, Mary becomes pregnant amid circumstances Joseph does not understand (the Scriptural story of his enlightening dream is omit-



Noa Cohen as Mary and Ido Tako as Joseph star in a scene from the Netflix movie "Mary." — OSV News photo/Christopher Raphael, Netflix

ted). Yet he resolutely stands by her.

Director D.J. Caruso and screenwriter Timothy Michael Hayes draw on nonbiblical sources — most prominently the second-century "Protoevangelium of James" — to flesh out their tale. Their drama is at its best in evoking the poignancy of Mary's plight as an apparent adulteress scorned and even physically attacked by those around her.

But Gavin Struthers' fine cinematography is not always matched by the dialogue, which sometimes feels starchy. That's especially true in scenes that focus on King Herod (Anthony Hopkins), who comes across as a cranky sadist.

Despite this drawback, however, "Mary" registers as a substantive — if necessarily speculative — profile. It might well serve as the starting point for a family discussion about its protagonist's

pivotal role in salvation history.

The film contains some stylized violence, including torture, momentary gore, mature themes and a couple of mildly vulgar expressions.

The OSV News classification is A-II — adults and adolescents. Not rated by the Motion Picture Association.

John Mulderig is media reviewer for OSV News.

Movie Ratings



Adults and Adolescents

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever (PG)
The Carpenter (PG-13)
The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim (PG-13)
Lost on a Mountain in Maine (PG)
Mary (not rated)
Moana 2 (PG)
Radiating Joy: The Michelle Duppong Story (not rated)
Wicked (PG)



Adults

Bonhoeffer: Pastor. Spy. Assassin. (PG-13)
Here (PG-13)
Red One (PG-13)
Venom: The Last Dance (PG-13)



Limited Adult Audience

Gladiator II (R)
Heretic (R)



Morally Offensive

Y2K (R)

Ratings are supplied by OSV News Service.

New book on Abp. Fulton Sheen reveals his gift for converting lost sheep

Ignatius Press

While the life of Venerable Fulton Sheen could fill many volumes, it was the souls he won for God that fills the new book by Cheryl Hughes, *Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen: Convert Maker* (Ignatius Press).

Hughes holds a Ph.D. in historical theology from Durham University in England.

Her books include *Katharine Drexel: The Riches-to-Rags Story of an American Catholic Saint* (2014) and *Crossing Boundaries and Confounding Identity: Chinese Women in Literature, Art, and Film* (2023). She and her husband live in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Through Sheen's magnetic personality, wit and compassion, many thousands of people likely entered the Church from all walks of life. *Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen: Convert Maker* reveals the conversion stories of jazz legend Ada "Bricktop" Smith, journalist Heywood Broun, Communist activist Louis Budenz, U.S. Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce, spy Elizabeth Bentley, composer Fritz Kreisler, Communist Bella Dodd and Hollywood starlet Virginia Mayo.

But it's amongst the pages of *Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen:*

Convert Maker that readers will learn that Sheen was the most sought-after expert on Communism in the United States and that it was through Sheen's broadcasts that the young priest, Karol Wojtyla (the future Pope John Paul II), partly learned English. The two priests became friends during the Second Vatican Council.

"An insightful book. I am confident that your encounter with Archbishop Sheen in the pages of this book will open you to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit — to a deeper conversion of heart and soul," said Most Reverend Louis Tylka, Bishop of Peoria, Illinois.

Find us online
@
cathmo.com

BUILDING DEMOLITION?



Asbestos Inspection and Abatement

Serving clients throughout the Diocese of Jefferson City since 1985 with asbestos, lead, mold, and environmental services.

Contact Us
1-800-769-5798
www.arsi-mo.com

On air

Mustard Seed
Sunday Scripture readings and reflections
Sundays, 10:06 am, KWIX-AM 1230, Moberly
Sundays, 8 am, KRLL-AM 1420, California

EWTN and other Catholic programming
Covenant Radio Network broadcasts
KHJR 88.1 FM, Jefferson City
KBKC 90.1 FM, Moberly
KEFL 91.5 FM, Kirksville
94.7 FM, Columbia
103.3 FM, Fulton
K216GM 91.1 FM, Canton

O, Holy night!



Students of Our Lady of the Snows School in Mary’s Home, accompanied by organist Theresa Bax and led by Ms. Williamson, their music teacher, perform their Christmas concert in Our Lady of Snows Church.

— Photo from the Our Lady of the Snows Catholic School Facebook page

Daily Readings

Sunday, Dec 22 FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT Mi. 5:1-4a Ps. 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 Heb. 10:5-10 Lk. 1:39-45	Sunday, Dec 29 THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH Sir. 3:2-6, 12-14 Ps. 128:1-2, 3, 4-5 Col. 3:12-21 or 3:12-17 Lk. 2:41-52	Sunday, Jan 5 THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD Is. 60:1-6 Ps. 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13 Eph. 3:2-3a, 5-6 Mt. 2:1-12
Monday, Dec 23 <i>St. John of Kanty, priest</i> Mal. 3:1-4, 23-24 Ps. 25:4-5ab, 8-10, 14 Lk. 1:57-66	Monday, Dec 30 1 Jn. 2:12-17 Ps. 96:7-10 Lk. 2:36-40	Monday, Jan 6 St. André Bessette, religious 1 Jn. 3:22–4:6 Ps. 2:7bc-8, 10-12a Mt. 4:12-17, 23-25
Tuesday, Dec 24 <i>Morning:</i> 2 Sm. 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 Ps. 89:2-5, 27, 29 Lk. 1:67-79 <i>Vigil:</i> Is. 62:1-5 Ps. 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29 Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 Mt. 1:1-25 or 1:18-25 <i>Night:</i> Is. 9:1-6 Ps. 96: 1-3, 11-13 Ti. 2:11-14 Lk. 2:1-14	Tuesday, Dec 31 <i>St. Sylvester I, pope</i> 1 Jn. 2:18-21 Ps. 96:1-2, 11-13 Jn. 1:1-18	Tuesday, Jan 7 St. Raymond of Penyafort, priest 1 Jn. 4:7-10 Ps. 72:1-4, 7-8 Mk. 6:34-44
Wednesday, Dec 25 THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD (Christmas) Solemnity (Holyday of Obligation) <i>Dawn:</i> Is. 62:11-12 Ps. 97:1, 6, 11-12 Ti. 3:4-7 Lk. 2:15-20 <i>Day:</i> Is. 52:7-10 Ps 98:1-6 Heb. 1:1-6 Jn. 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14	Wednesday, Jan 1 SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD (Holyday of Obligation) Nm. 6:22-27 Ps. 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8 Gal. 4:4-7 Lk. 2:16-21	Wednesday, Jan 8 1 Jn. 4:11-18 Ps. 72:1-2, 10, 12-13 Mk. 6:45-52
	Thursday, Jan 2 Ss. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, bishops and doctors of the Church 1 Jn. 2:22-28 Ps. 98:1-4 Jn. 1:19-28	Thursday, Jan 9 1 Jn. 4:19–5:4 Ps. 72:1-2, 14, 15bc, 17 Lk. 4:14-22a
	Friday, Jan 3 <i>The Most Holy Name of Jesus</i> 1 Jn. 2:29–3:6 Ps. 98:1, 3cd-6 Jn. 1:29-34	Friday, Jan 10 1 Jn. 5:5-13 Ps. 147:12-15, 19-20 Lk. 5:12-16
	Saturday, Jan 4 St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious (USA) 1 Jn. 3:7-10 Ps. 98:1, 7-9 Jn. 1:35-42	Saturday, Jan 11 1 Jn. 5:14-21 Ps. 149:1-6a, 9b Jn. 3:22-30

The Holy Father’s prayer intentions for January:
Let us pray that the Holy Spirit helps us recognize the gift of different charisms within the Christian community, and to discover the richness of different ritual traditions in the heart of the Catholic Church.

Sponsored by

Expert Care Close to Home

**SSMHealth.**
St. Mary’s Hospital
JEFFERSON CITY



Find us online
@
cathmo.com

Support Our Seminarians & Infirm Priests Through the Christmas Special Collection

During this holy time of giving,
please remember our clergy.

Christ was born to share God's good news.
Today, our Catholic clergy dedicate their lives
to sharing this same message with the world.

Your gift will help us educate our seminarians
and provide for the needs of our infirm priests.

*The priests — and future priests — of the Diocese
of Jefferson City thank you for your generosity!*



Please place your gift in the
envelope inserted in the
December 6th issue of
The Catholic Missourian and bring
it to Mass or your parish office

Christmas Special Collection

During this holy time of giving — please remember our clergy.
Christ was born to share God's good news. Today, our Catholic clergy
dedicate their lives to sharing this same message with the world.
Your gift will help us educate our seminarians and provide for the
needs of our infirm priests.
The priests — and future priests — of the Diocese of Jefferson City thank
you for your generosity!

Name: _____

Donation amount: _____ Check #: _____

Envelope #: _____

Please make your check payable to your local parish
and place the check in this envelope.

diocese of
Jefferson City



DIOCESE OF
Jefferson City

OR GIVE ONLINE AT

[diojeffcity.org/
Donate-Christmas](https://diojeffcity.org/Donate-Christmas)

