

THE CATHOLIC  
Spirit

## Pope Proclaims Year Dedicated to St. Joseph

By Junno Arocho Esteves, Catholic News Service

Marking the 150th anniversary of St. Joseph being declared patron of the universal church, Pope Francis proclaimed a yearlong celebration dedicated to the foster father of Jesus.

In a Dec. 8 apostolic letter, "Patris Corde" ("With a father's heart"), the pope said Christians can discover in St. Joseph, who often goes unnoticed, "an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble."

"St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all," he said.

As Mary's husband and guardian of the son of God, St. Joseph turned "his human vocation to domestic love into a superhuman oblation of himself, his heart and all his abilities, a love placed at the service of the Messiah who was growing to maturity in his home."

Despite being troubled at first by Mary's pregnancy, he added, St. Joseph was obedient to God's will "regardless of the hardship involved."

"In every situation, Joseph declared his own 'fiat,' like those of Mary at the Annunciation and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane," the pope said. "All this makes it clear that St. Joseph was called by God to serve the person and mission of Jesus directly through the exercise of his fatherhood and that, in this way, he cooperated in the fullness of time in the great mystery of salvation and is truly a minister of salvation."

St. Joseph's unconditional acceptance of Mary and his decision to protect her "good name, her dignity and her life" also serves as an example for men today, the pope added.

"Today, in our world where psychological, verbal and physical violence toward women

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Pictured at right is the statue of St. Joseph at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.  
Colleen Rowan Photo



## Bishop Will Celebrate Christmas Eve Mass at the Basilica

*Faithful Can Watch Livestream on Diocese's Website and Facebook, or Midnight TV Broadcast*

By Colleen Rowan

Bishop Mark Brennan will join the Catholic community of Charleston on Christmas Eve this year as he celebrates the 8 p.m. Mass at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. Those outside of the capital can join in the Mass by tuning into the livestream on the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's website and Facebook page. The Mass will also be televised at midnight around the state.

"It will be a joy to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord's birth with the parishioners there and to invite others to join us by livestream and television," Bishop Brennan said. "I celebrated Christmas last year at my cathedral in Wheeling, which meant I could not travel south, so I was determined—COVID-19 or not—to celebrate the feast in my co-cathedral in Charleston this year."

The faithful can watch the midnight TV broadcast of the Mass on the following stations: WTRF-TV 7 in Wheeling, WBOY/NBC for Clarksburg/Morgantown, WDVM in Martinsburg, WOWK Charleston/Huntington, and WVNS Beckley/Bluefield.

The basilica is requiring reservations for all Christmas Masses. In addition to the church, there  
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## St. Joseph ...

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is so evident, Joseph appears as the figure of a respectful and sensitive man," he wrote.

Pope Francis also highlighted St. Joseph's "creative courage," not only in finding a stable and making it a "welcoming home for the son of God (who came) into the world," but also in protecting Christ from the threat posed by King Herod.

"The Holy Family had to face concrete problems like every other family, like so many of our migrant brothers and sisters who, today, too, risk their lives to escape misfortune and hunger. In this regard, I consider St. Joseph the special patron of all those forced to leave their native lands because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty," the pope said.

As a carpenter who earned "an honest living to provide for his family," Christ's earthly guardian is also an example for both workers and those seeking employment and the right to a life of dignity for themselves and their families. "In our own day, when employment has once more become a burning social issue, and unemployment at times reaches record levels even in nations that for decades have enjoyed a certain degree of prosperity, there is a renewed need to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which St. Joseph is an exemplary pa-

## Christmas ...

Cont'd from Page 1

will be seating in the gathering space and parish hall.

"It will be a great joy to have our bishop spend Christmas at the basilica," said Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, Assoc. V.F., rector of the basilica. "What a wonderful way to end this most difficult year by having our shepherd lead us in the celebration of the Lord's birth."

tron," he said.

The Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican tribunal that deals with matters of conscience, also issued a decree Dec. 8 stating that plenary indulgences will be granted to Catholics not only through prayer and penance, but also through acts of justice, charity and piety dedicated to the foster father of Jesus.

Among the conditions for receiving an indulgence are a spirit detached from sin, receiving sacramental confession as soon as possible, receiving Communion as soon as possible and praying for the Holy Father's intentions.

However, the decree also highlighted several ways to obtain the indulgence throughout the year, including to those who "meditate on the prayer of the 'Our Father' for at least 30 minutes or take part in a spiritual retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on St. Joseph."

As a "just man," the document continued, who guarded "the intimate secret that lies at the bottom of the heart and soul," St. Joseph practiced the virtue

of justice in "full adherence to the divine law, which is the law of mercy."

"Therefore, those who, following the example of St. Joseph, will perform a corporal or spiritual work of mercy, will also be able to obtain the gift of the plenary indulgence," it said.

Indulgences will also be granted to families and engaged couples who recite the rosary together and thus imitate the "same climate of communion, love and prayer lived in the Holy Family."

Other acts of devotion include entrusting one's daily activities and prayers for dignified employment to St. Joseph, reciting the litany or any "legitimately approved" prayer to St. Joseph.

During this time of pandemic, the Apostolic Penitentiary also decreed that special indulgences will be granted to the elderly, the sick and all those who "for legitimate reasons are prevented from leaving their home" by "reciting an act of piety in honor of St. Joseph and committed to fulfilling the conditions as soon as possible."

**DIocese of WHEELING-CHARLESTON**

*Join Us for Mass of the Nativity of the Lord*

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24 • 8:00PM**

**BISHOP MARK BRENNAN - CELEBRANT**

FROM THE BASILICA OF THE CO-CATHEDRAL OF THE SACRED HEART IN CHARLESTON

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	WOWK      WBOY/NBC
	CHARLESTON/HUNTINGTON      CLARKSBURG/MORGANTOWN

*If able to attend Mass in person, check with your parish for Mass times and safety precautions.*

## To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children

**To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children:** The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing [www.reportbishopabuse.org](http://www.reportbishopabuse.org) to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit [www.reportbishopabuse.org](http://www.reportbishopabuse.org).

**To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer.

**To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. You may also call the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Complaint forms are available online at [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment," then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

**To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator:** please call Dr. Patricia Bailey at 304.242.6988.

In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the EthicsPoint platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), under "Accountability," then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected.

Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

## Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) requires that all Dioceses/Eparchies have in place a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people. In accordance with these requirements, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Safe Environment Program consists of the following components for persons seeking employment or to volunteer—directly or indirectly—with children: background check; receipt of the Diocese's Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children; and sexual abuse awareness training for adults. Sexual abuse awareness training may be completed online or via live workshop. For more information on the Office of Safe Environment, please go to [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."



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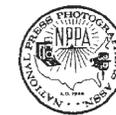


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# Panel Discusses Integrating Ecology, Economy, and Human Dignity

By Colleen Rowan

**WHEELING**—Bishop Mark Brennan joined Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and four others in the Integrating Ecology, Economy, and Human Dignity panel discussion Dec. 8 initiated by Catholics for a Sustainable Economy.

The near hour-long virtual event, livestreamed on the diocese's Facebook and website, focused upon West Virginia's future and care for creation in relation to the Catholic faith. Fittingly held this year, the 45th anniversary of the Appalachian bishops' pastoral letter *This Land is Home to Me* and the 25th anniversary of their letter *At Home in the Web of Life*, discussion geared toward ways West Virginians can work together to preserve the state's natural beauty while bringing in businesses that will provide a good living for the people.

Moderated by Susan Hollis, director of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, the panel also included Congregation of St. Joseph Sister Kathleen Durkin; Brandon Dennison, founder and chief executive officer of Coalfield Development Corporation; Kate Asquith, vice president of Programs and Operations for Appalachian Headwaters; and Joey James, senior strategist at Downstream Strategies.

The gathering began with Bishop Brennan leading participants in an opening prayer. He then offered his remarks in which he pointed to Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Querida Amazonia* as well as the Appalachian bishops' letters, which address the issue of ecology. This of course includes physical creation—the land, the rivers, the mountains, and the animals that inhabit them, he said, but “especially God's human creation—men, women, and children—and how actions and inactions affect their well-being.”

Pope Francis has a very broad perspective because he addresses the whole world, the bishop said, while the Appalachian bishops considered one extensive region of the country but remaining conscious of global trends. Bishop Brennan said both stress respect for local culture and advocate for local control and local initiatives such as sustainable development and small-based communities and decry the exploitation of poor nations by rich ones or poor regions



**The Catholic Spirit Photos**  
From left: Bishop Mark Brennan, Congregation of St. Joseph Sister Kathleen Durkin, and Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., participate in the Integrating Ecology, Economy, and Human Dignity panel discussion Dec. 8 initiated by Catholics for a Sustainable Economy.

**“...Pope Francis is attentive to climate change and insists that respect for human ecology demands rejecting abortion, euthanasia, and other threats to vulnerable human beings.**

—Bishop Mark Brennan

by rich ones, large businesses and homogenization of culture.

“Writing more recently, Pope Francis is attentive to climate change and insists that respect for human ecology demands rejecting abortion, euthanasia, and other threats to vulnerable human beings,” Bishop Brennan said. “And similarly, the Appalachian bishops urge efforts to end domestic violence and the abuse of children.”

For the pope and bishops, he continued, an integral ecology must embrace both physical nature and people.

“I don't know what lessons we are all going to learn from this coronavirus pandemic,” Bishop Brennan said. “But I do hope going forward that citizens will press their governments to take strong measures to counteract the negative affects of human behavior on the climate, on the physical environment, and on human rights and will take initiatives of their own apart from government to do what they can in those areas.”

The bishop said that it is his hope as well that all may follow Pope Francis' lead “in advocating for richer nations to treat poor nations fairly, and to resist consumerism and reject the throwaway cul-

ture in its various forms.”

Panelists also took part in a question and answer session in which Hollis announced questioned posted by viewers in real time. A question for Bishop Brennan was this: “There has been a movement for organizations across the U.S. to divest from fossil fuels. ... for the diocese where a lot of income comes from fossil fuels, is anyone looking to address this?”

Bishop Brennan said the diocese is looking into the issue, but immediately letting go of land that produces gas and oil that sustains many parishes, Catholic schools, and agencies cannot happen overnight. The bishop noted that the pope is not asking for change to happen tomorrow. “He is saying, take a real look at all of this, so we are going to take a real look at it. ... We need to study that carefully and take responsible steps when we decide what we want to do.”

Speaking after the bishop was Sister Durkin, who noted that for 370 years the Sisters of St. Joseph have asked the question, Who is my neighbor? “Our mission is the prayer of Jesus, that all may be one,” she said.

Drawing upon the messages of *Laudato Si'*, and the Appalachian bishops' letters, Sister Durkin said that human dignity, ecology and economy are intimately related.

“At Home in the Web of Life amplified our core mission that we are one with every kind of human neighbor, with all creatures, and earth itself,” she said. “From Appalachia to the global community, Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* expands our vision and concern that the cries of the poor and the cries of the earth are one.”

She also spoke of her congregation's collaboration with Grow Ohio Valley, a nonprofit organization which addresses food insecurity for the poor by farming abandoned land, supporting local

farmers and creating employment. She also mentioned the congregation's collaboration with Try This West Virginia, an organization promoting healthier communities.

“I am thrilled to be joining Bishop Brennan and my brothers and sisters in the Catholic community for this important discussion today,” Manchin said in beginning his remarks. The senator also recognized the others on the panel. “The incredible work that these organizations are doing to bring economic vitality to West Virginia in new ways is commendable,” he said.

Manchin spoke of his growing up in Farmington in a devout Catholic family. He also spoke of the coronavirus pandemic and how it has changed life for everyone in West Virginia.

“I applaud the diocese for bringing as much normalcy to the lives of their parishioners as possible during these challenging times,” he said. “You've done a great job in keeping parishioners who want to worship in person, safe while also adapting to a new virtual reality in offering Mass online.”

As with public schools, Catholic schools have also been deeply impacted by the pandemic, Manchin said. “Teachers, support staff, and administrators have done a wonderful job keeping our children safe in these unprecedented times,” he said.

Moving on, Manchin said there is a balance between economy and the environment. “We all have to be rational about this. ... We need all of our energy to be used in the cleanest fashion as we move forward to the energy of the future,” he said.

At the end of the discussion, Kate Kosydar of Catholics for a Sustainable Economy thanked all of the participants.

The full video of the panel discussion may be viewed in its entirety on the diocese's website at [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org).

# Giving Goes Way Beyond Tuesday

## Almost \$800,000 Raised for Diocesan Parishes and Ministries as Donations Continue

By Colleen Rowan

Giving Tuesday may be over, but donations are still coming in for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. Almost \$800,000 has been raised for diocesan parishes and ministries.

The 1,037 generous donors from around the state did not miss the chance to bring needed support for their parishes, Catholic Charities West Virginia, Catholic education, and evangelization.

"I am deeply grateful to the Catholic people and our friends who are not Catholic for their outstanding support of this effort," said Bishop Mark Brennan. "In a time when many of our people are experiencing financial distress and many other worthy causes are soliciting their help, it is encouraging to know that people have not lost their sense of responsibility for one another. Catholic Charities, Catholic education, our evangelization efforts and our parishes will all benefit from their generosity. I thank God for them and pray that He will bless them."

Giving Tuesday was held in place of the annual Catholic Sharing Appeal (CSA), which had to be cancelled earlier this year because of the coronavirus pandemic. This month's Giving Tuesday was the first giving event held for parishes in place of the CSA. And the faithful were especially generous to their beloved parishes.

"The parishioners across our diocese continue to amaze and inspire me with their generosity," said Heidi Sforza, director of Annual Giving for the diocese. "In this most difficult year, they have con-

tinued to support their faith communities in such big ways."

Taking the top spot on the Giving Tuesday Leaderboard was Sacred Heart Parish in Princeton with \$269,285 raised by 42 donors. Father Sebastian Devasya, pastor of Sacred Heart parishes in Princeton and Bluefield, offered his heartfelt gratitude to all who participated in the campaign.

"Every donation, no matter how large or small, was given and received with great love for our church," he said. "Our Princeton parish would like to acknowledge in a special way our anonymous donor for a substantial contribution. This great donation is dedicated to the completion of an ongoing improvement project to our church campus."

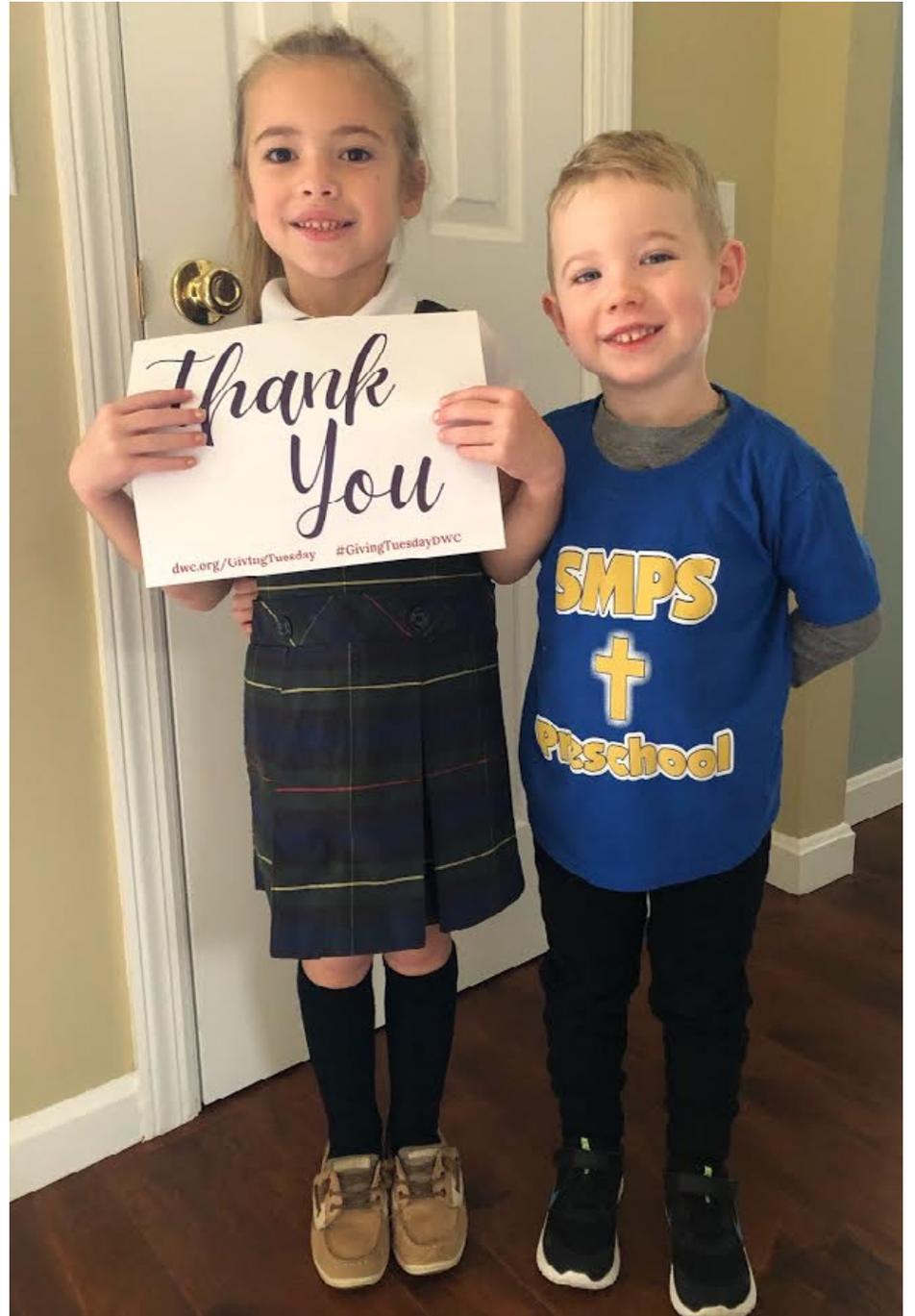
He also thanked parish staff and volunteers who worked diligently to coordinate the bulletin, mailing, emailing, and social media campaign as well as the diocesan staff for helping put together effective campaign resources and support.

"Although this pandemic year of 2020 has been unpredictable and full of hardship, it is inspiring to see our people so cooperative and charitable," Father Devasya said. In 2 Corinthians we are reminded, 'And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.' In gratitude and thanksgiving we remember always, our help is in the name of the Lord, blessed by the Lord!"

St. Michael Parish in Wheeling had the second highest total of \$62,450 with 199 donors. Father Carlos Melocoton, pastor of the parish and St. Michael Parish School, is in awe of his parishioners' generosity and their resilience in the pandemic.

"From the Guardian Fund project to One Mission, One Day for the school and now the church's Giving Tuesday, their support for the mission and ministry of St. Michael is inspiring," he said. "These parishioners are the ones who keep me going with my vocation to serve them as pastor! This affirms to me that they trust God. One hundred ninety-nine donors stood behind us in this challenging year which makes my 'heart full of joy!' They deserve quality pastoral care!"

The annual parish festival had to be cancelled this past summer because of the pandemic, and Father Melocoton said the parish had been



Cayla Morando Photo

Lola and Miles Morando thank all who supported their school, St. Michael Parish School in Wheeling.



Courtesy Photo

Father John Gallagher gives a thumbs up to all those who gave to his Parish of St. Michael's in Vienna.

looking for a substitute for the loss of revenue. St. Michael's parishioners really came through on Giving Tuesday.

"Our parishioners' generosity has given us an opportunity to fund our budget, especially for the second half of the school year," Father Melocoton said. "We all know that tuition revenue takes care of the first half of the school year, leaving parish assistance and fundraising to cover the second half of the year. The monies donated from Giving Tuesday is a great financial boost for our parish and school."

Finishing off the top five were

Corpus Christi Parish in Wheeling with \$60,115 raised by 70 donors, St. Francis de Sales Parish in Morgantown with \$57,280 raised by 120 donors, and St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Wheeling with \$45,125 raised by 57 donors.

Although donations can no longer be given on the website, parishioners can still donate directly to their parishes, Sforza said. They can mail in checks to the parish office or drop them in the offertory basket. Giving Tuesday should be noted on the memo line of the check so that they can be added to the totals on the website.

# Say 'No' to Sin, 'Yes' to Grace, Pope Says on Immaculate Conception Feast

By Junno Arocho, Esteves  
Catholic News Service

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** — Mary's Immaculate Conception offers a glimpse to the promised life for all Christians who open their hearts to God and his grace, Pope Francis said.

Addressing pilgrims in St. Peter's Square on the feast of the Immaculate Conception Dec. 8, the pope said the grace "to be totally free from sin" is a gift from God and the "fullness of holiness" given to Mary from the beginning.

"And what Mary had from the beginning will be ours in the end, after we have passed through the purifying 'bath' of God's grace. What opens the gates of paradise to us is God's grace, received by us with faithfulness," he said.

In the early morning, the pope visited the Spanish Steps privately to pay homage to the Immaculate Conception at a Marian statue atop a tall column. Customarily, the pope, accompanied by hundreds of people, would pray before the statue every year.

However, the Vatican announced Nov. 30 that the pope would "make an act of private devotion" due to the coronavirus pandemic and avoid the risk of infection that would be caused by a large gathering.

The pope prayed silently before the famed statue, which was erected in 1857 to commemorate Pope Pius IX's declaration three years earlier of the dogma that Mary was conceived without sin. After he departed, Rome firefighters used a truck and tall ladder to hang a ring of flowers and a rosary from the statue's outstretched arm.

In a statement released Dec. 8, Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said that after leaving the Spanish Steps, the pope visited in the Basilica of St. Mary Major, where he prayed before the icon of Mary "Salus Populi Romani" ("health of the Roman people") and celebrated Mass in the chapel of the Nativity.

After praying the Angelus prayer, the pope said that although



**CNS Photo/Paul Haring**  
A firefighter gives a thumbs up as he places a wreath on a tall Marian statue overlooking the Spanish Steps in Rome Dec. 8 the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Pope Francis prayed at the statue shortly before the Rome firefighters' traditional early morning event in honor of the Immaculate Conception.

the public could not be present for the laying of flowers at the statue of Mary, it "does not impede us from offering our mother the flowers that please her most: prayer, penance and a heart open to grace."

In his main talk, the pope reflected on the Marian feast day that "celebrates one of the wonders of the story of salvation."

"Even she was saved by Christ, but in an extraordinary way," the pope said, because God wanted the mother of his son to "not be touched by the misery of sin from the moment of her conception."

The pope said Christians must remember that to pass "through the

narrow door" that leads to paradise, they must first be mindful of their faults and open their hearts to God.

"Do you know who is the first person we are sure entered paradise? Do you know who? A 'ruffian;' one of the two who was crucified with Jesus," he said. "Brothers and sisters, God's grace is offered to everyone; and many who are the least on this earth will be the first in heaven."

He warned the faithful not to take advantage of the Lord's patience by continually postponing "a serious evaluation of one's own life" and thus, be unable to obtain God's grace.

"We may be able to deceive

people, but not God," the pope said. "He knows our hearts better than we ourselves do. Let us take advantage of the present moment!"

Pope Francis urged the faithful to "seize the day" by saying "'no' to evil and 'yes' to God" and "to once and for all stop thinking of ourselves, dragging ourselves into hypocrisy and to face our own reality as we are."

"And this, for us, is the path for becoming 'holy and immaculate,'" the pope said. "The uncontaminated beauty of our mother is incomparable, but at the same time it attracts us. Let us entrust ourselves to her and say 'no' to sin and 'yes' to grace once and for all."

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## Pope Says Catholics Can Receive Plenary Indulgence for Guadalupe Devotion

By Catholic News Service

**MEXICO CITY (CNS)** — With the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe closed for her feast to prevent the spread of COVID-19, Pope Francis said Catholics still can receive a plenary indulgence Dec. 11 and 12 for their Marian devotion if they follow certain conditions.

Mexico City Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes' letter announcing the indulgence was accompanied by the formal proclamation by Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, the Vatican tribunal that deals with matters of conscience and with indulgences.

To receive an indulgence, a remission of the temporal punishment one deserves for one's sins, the following conditions must be met. A person must:

— Prepare an altar or place of prayer to Our Lady of Guadalupe at home.

— Watch a livestream or televised Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City Dec. 12, "actively participating ... with devotion and with exclusive attention to the Eucharist." It said Masses could be accessed at [www.youtube.com/user/BasilicadeGuadalupe](http://www.youtube.com/user/BasilicadeGuadalupe) at midnight or 12 p.m. CST.

— Complete the usual conditions for an indulgence by praying for the pope's intentions, being in a state of grace after confession, attending a full Mass and receiving Communion. The letter said the last three conditions "can be fulfilled when public health guidance allow."

The indulgence would be for anyone in the world, but Cardinal Aguiar acknowledged that people in the United States and the Philippines have special devotions to Our Lady of Guadalupe, whose feast is Dec. 12.

In late November, Mexican church and civic officials canceled public feast celebrations for Mexico's patroness due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The celebration normally attracts 10 million pilgrims to the basilica, the world's most-visited Marian shrine.

Mexico's health secretariat reports more than 100,000 COVID-19 deaths — fourth most of any country — and the numbers are increasing.

The Archdiocese of Mexico City organized a virtual pilgrimage and asked people to submit photos with their intentions and share images of their home altars and small celebrations closer to home.

At the news conference announcing the closure, Archbishop Rogelio Cabrera López, president of the Mexican bishops' conference, said, "We already know that the Virgin moves and moves to where her sons and daughters are, especially those who are grieving."

## Cardinal Upholds 'Probable Invalidity' of Confession by Phone

By Carol Glatz Catholic, News Service

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** — Even though the world is facing a pandemic that may limit many people's ability to celebrate the sacraments, particularly those people who are in isolation, quarantining or hospitalized with COVID-19, confession by phone is still most likely invalid, said Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary.

In an interview Dec. 5 with the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, the cardinal was asked whether a phone or other electronic means of communication could be used for confession.

"We can confirm the probable invalidity of the absolution imparted through such means," he said.

"In fact, the real presence of the penitent is lacking, and there is no real conveyance of the words of absolution; there are only electric vibrations that reproduce the human word," he said.

The cardinal said it is up to the local bishop to decide whether he will allow "collective absolution" in cases of serious necessity, "for example, at the entryway of hospital wards where the faithful are infected and in danger of death."

In this case, the priest would have to take the necessary health precautions and should try to "amplify" his voice as much as possible so that the absolution may be heard, he added.

Church law requires, in most cases, that the priest and penitent be physically

present to each other. The penitent states his or her sins out loud and expresses contrition for them.

Recognizing the difficulties priests are facing regarding respecting health measures and mandates while being able to offer the sacrament, the cardinal said it is up to every bishop to indicate to their priests and the faithful "the cautious attentiveness that should be adopted" in the individual celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation in ways that maintain the physical presence of priest and penitent. Such guidance should be based on the local situation concerning the spread and risk of contagion, he added.

For example, the cardinal said, the place indicated for confession should be well-ventilated and outside of a confessional booth, face masks should be used, surrounding surfaces should be sanitized frequently, and there should be social distancing while also guaranteeing discretion and safeguarding the seal of confession.

The cardinal's comments reiterated what the apostolic penitentiary said in mid-March when it released a note "On the Sacrament of Reconciliation in the present emergency of the coronavirus."

The sacrament must be administered according to canon law and other provisions, even during a global pandemic, it said, adding the indications he mentioned in the interview about taking precautionary measures to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

"Where individual faithful should be in the

painful impossibility of receiving sacramental absolution, it should be remembered that perfect contrition, coming from the love of God, loved above all else, expressed by a sincere request for forgiveness — one which the penitent is able to express in that moment — and accompanied by the 'votum confessionis,' that is, by the firm resolution to receive sacramental confession as soon as possible, obtains the forgiveness of sins, even mortal ones," the mid-March note said.

Pope Francis repeated the same possibility during a livestreamed morning Mass March 20.

People who cannot get to confession because of the coronavirus lockdown or another serious reason can go to God directly, be specific about their sins, request pardon and experience God's loving forgiveness, he said.

The pope said people should, "Do what the Catechism (of the Catholic Church) says. It is very clear: If you cannot find a priest to confess to, speak directly with God, your father, and tell him the truth. Say, 'Lord, I did this, this, this. Forgive me,' and ask for pardon with all your heart."

Make an act of contrition, the pope said, and promise God, "I will go to confession afterward, but forgive me now." And immediately you will return to a state of grace with God.

"As the catechism teaches," Pope Francis said, "you can draw near to God's forgiveness without having a priest at hand."

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# Biden's HHS Pick Praised for Backing ACA, Criticized for Abortion Views

By **Julie Asher Catholic News Service**

**WASHINGTON (CNS)** — As President-elect Joe Biden systematically announces his Cabinet nominees, one selection has already become a culture war flashpoint.

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, Biden's choice to head the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has stirred the partisan fires Biden says he hopes to quell.

On the one hand, the head of the Catholic Health Association praised Becerra for a career spent "fighting for underserved communities" and his efforts "to protect the welfare of immigrants and migrants."

But National Right to Life and other pro-life leaders criticized Becerra "as an abortion activist plain and simple," citing NARAL Pro-Choice America's 100% rating for his record on abortion during his 25 years in Congress.

If confirmed, he would be "the most pro-abortion HHS secretary ever," said Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life.

Becerra also sued the Trump administration for expanding the religious exemption to the ACA's contraceptive mandate in 2017 to fully accommodate the Little Sisters of the Poor's refusal on religious grounds to cover contraceptives and abortifacients in their employee health care plan.

He argued the federal government was inserting itself into the state's "sovereign duty" to protect women's "reproductive rights."

The religious order ultimately prevailed on July 8 of this year when the Supreme Court ruled 7-2 in their favor

in a similar challenge from Pennsylvania.

News reports Dec. 5 speculated Biden would pick Becerra for HHS secretary and he officially announced the nomination Dec. 7. Becerra, 62, would be the first Latino to hold the position.

Also as part of his administration's health care team, Biden has nominated Dr. Rochelle Walensky, a Harvard infectious disease expert, to head the Centers for Disease Control, and Dr. Vivek Murthy to be U.S. surgeon general, as he was under President Barack Obama.

Biden named another former Obama administration official, Jeff Zients, as his White House coronavirus coordinator. Becerra and Murthy must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

A native of Sacramento, California, Becerra was sworn in Jan. 24, 2017, as California's 33rd attorney general. He's the first Latino to hold the office in the history of the state. He succeeded Kamala Harris, now vice president-elect, in the post after she was elected to the U.S. Senate Nov. 8, 2016.

Before that, Becerra served 12 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. While in Congress, Becerra worked in 2009 to get the Obama administration's Affordable Care Act through Congress, leading to its successful passage in 2010. As California's attorney general, he has defended the ACA in court.

Currently, he is the head attorney in a group of attorneys general from Democratic-led states defending the law against the Trump administration's lawsuit to have it overturned.

The son of immigrants, Becerra served one term in the California Legis-

lature before his election to Congress. He is a former deputy attorney general with the California Department of Justice.

Becerra, who has a law degree from Stanford Law School, and his wife, Dr. Caroline Reyes, a physician who specializes in maternal and fetal health, have three daughters.

"Becerra has been a strong partner with CHA in defending the Affordable Care Act and for advocating for greater access to quality, affordable health care coverage for everyone, particularly the most vulnerable," said Mercy Sister Mary Haddad, who is CHA's president and CEO. "I look forward to working with him to advance policies that address inequities of care in communities burdened by poverty and injustice."

As HHS secretary, Becerra would be Biden's chief health care officer and a key leader in his administration's plan for addressing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including a strategy for distributing the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is placing extraordinary pressure on families and communities across the country and our members are striving daily to meet their needs during these unprecedented times," Sister Haddad said.

"As we continue to address the public health crisis before us, it will take a highly coordinated federal response to bring the virus under control and stabilize our nation's health care delivery system," she added.

While others have criticized Biden's choice of Becerra because the nominee has no front-line experience in the medical field, it is Becerra's record on abortion that is most concerning to pro-life leaders.

"Joe Biden and his supporters may pretend that he is a 'moderate' but with nominees such as Xavier Becerra, he is showing that he is marching lockstep with the abortion industry," said National Right to Life's Tobias in a statement.

"As California's attorney general, Becerra repeatedly and aggressively attacked protective pro-life laws and organizations with rancor," she said. "While a congressman, he had a 100% pro-abortion voting record."

Among other actions in Congress, Becerra voted against the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act and the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, which would prevent abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy "when extensive evidence shows an unborn child is capable of feeling great pain," National Right to Life said.

He also voted against a law to prevent the interstate transport of minors "for the express purpose of obtaining an abortion without the parents' knowledge or permission."

"Becerra is aggressively pro-abortion and a foe of free speech," said Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List, pointing to Becerra's defense of a 2018 California law requiring pro-life pregnancy centers to post signs advertising referrals for abortion providers. The law was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In response to a Catholic News Service request for comment on the criticism of Becerra over abortion, a CHA spokesman said in a Dec. 9 email: "We share the concerns about Mr. Becerra's position on abortion and will continue to advocate for laws and policies that protect the unborn."

"We will also continue to advocate for federal conscience protections that allow our members to follow the ethical standards rooted in and inseparable from church teachings about the dignity of the human person and the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death."

Spokesman Brian Reardon said CHA also recognizes "there are important issues that Pope Francis has raised regarding immigration, the environment and social justice that align with positions Mr. Becerra has taken."

"While we may not agree with every position taken by our elected officials and policymakers," he added, "we take seriously Pope Francis' call to work for 'the culture of encounter' and strive to find common ground where we can advance policies that improve the health and well-being of the most vulnerable among us."

In her statement, Dannenfelser also criticized Becerra for, like Harris, "persecuting citizen journalists who exposed Planned Parenthood's role in baby-parts trafficking."

Dannenfelser was referring to David Daleiden and Sandra Merritt of the Center for Medical Progress. They have been charged with nine felony counts of violating California's anti-eavesdropping law for their undercover investigative videos filmed in 2015 showing Planned Parenthood officials discussing fees related to selling fetal tissue, which is illegal.

Daleiden and Merritt pleaded not guilty to the charges in February of this year.

The two posed as representatives of a mythical fetal tissue procurement firm, in the same way animal rights activists taped undercover videos to show abuse in the poultry industry, which led Harris to launch an investigation of that industry.

After Daleiden and Merritt's videos were released in October 2015, Planned Parenthood said it broke no laws and was rightfully being reimbursed for making fetal tissue available for research. But it also announced it would no longer accept payment to cover costs of the program.



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## Parish Nurses Host Virtual Discussion on Holiday Blues and Depression

By Colleen Rowan

**CLARKSBURG**—“Holiday Blues and Depression, what you need to know” was the topic of the most recent in the Wellness Wednesday series on the Immaculate Conception Parish Nurses and Friends Facebook page.

In the segment, psychiatric nurse practitioner Amy Ankrom of Health Right in Morgantown who is also an assistant professor of nursing at West Virginia University discussed holiday blues, seasonal affective disorder, depression, and suicide.

“Learn about signs and symptoms to look out for as well as potential coping strategies,” organizers said in prompting the discussion. “Discover ways to prevent suicide.”

The discussion can be viewed on the group’s Facebook page or at <https://youtu.be/EPp3IkEuWGU>.

The Suicide Prevention Hotline is 1-800-273-8255 or TextTalk to 741741.

Veronica Gallo, a registered nurse and professor of nursing at WVU, is one of the 15 nurses involved in Immaculate Conception Parish Nurses. Two of them are student nurses, she said. The group has been in existence for several years, but recently started the Facebook page.

“During the pandemic we have been challenged to find ways to continue to provide services to the community,” Gallo said. “The Facebook page is one way we are trying to get much needed health information to our parishioners.”

## Forty Hours of Adoration for Advent This Weekend at St. Bernadette’s in Hedgesville

**HEDGESVILLE**—St. Bernadette Parish in Hedgesville is having 40 hours of Adoration for Advent this weekend. Forty Hours began at the parish church Dec. 10 and continues with the following schedule: Friday, Dec. 11 from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.; and Saturday, Dec. 12 from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

There will be a sign up sheet at the church in the narthex or one can call (304) 582-0536.

The schedule for Friday is: 9 a.m. Mass 9:30 a.m. beginning of Adoration; 10 a.m. Rosary; Noon Angelus; 3 p.m. Divine Mercy Chaplet; 6-7 p.m. confessions; 7 p.m. Evening Prayer with Benediction; 10 p.m. Night Prayer with Benediction.

Saturday’s schedule will be almost the same except that after the Divine Mercy Chaplet, confessions will be heard from 4-5 p.m. and Benediction will be at 5:30 p.m.

## Cathedral Hosts Wheeling Symphony Concert Filming



Photo by Wheeling Symphony Orchestra

The Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling hosted the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra (WSO) for the filming of “A Not-So-Silent Night with the WSO”. Residents of the Wheeling area were able to see the one-hour holiday concert on TV Dec. 10.

## Clarksburg Notre Dame Students Engage in Prayer PAL Initiative for Advent

**CLARKSBURG**—Notre Dame High School in Clarksburg is preparing for Christmas in a unique way. Patty DuPont, director of Religious Education, has organized a school-wide Prayer PAL Initiative for Advent.

DuPont said that over the summer, student leaders reached out to her about ways to strengthen the school community. And this favorite tradition immediately came to mind.

“During Christmas time, we tend to focus on ourselves rather than the true meaning of the season,” she said. “Especially now, in the middle of a pandemic, we want students

to really think of others. Instead of what do I need, focus on what someone else needs.”

Prior to Thanksgiving break, students in grades seven through 12 selected a name randomly. But they cannot reveal who they have chosen. The students were given notecards to leave a greeting on their pal’s locker.

Because Notre Dame is currently doing remote learning, students are utilizing creative ways to stay connected with their pals. Students have been mailing notes, candy and prayer cards.



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# Candy Canes Blessed for Kids in Morgantown



**Courtesy Photo**  
**Msgr. Anthony Cincinnati, pastor of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Morgantown, blesses the candy canes for St. Francis de Sales Central Catholic students Dec. 3.**

## Survey of Catholic Doctrine Virtual Course to be Offered

**WHEELING**—Survey of Catholic Doctrine, a five-week course offered through the University of Dayton’s Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF), will be offered Jan. 3-Feb. 6.

This is a hybrid model offering both live weekly lectures (through Zoom) as well as a rich variety of on-line resources, course officials said.

“We will look at some of the major doctrines of the Catholic Church

including the Trinity, original sin, church, salvation history, and the communion of saints,” course officials said. “We will explore and deepen

our understanding of terms and concepts such as: magisterium, ecumenism, eschatology, and other Catholic terms.”

This course is being

underwritten by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, which pays 100 percent of the tuition. The course instructor is Dr. Rodica Stoicoiu.

For further information about the course or to register, contact Jeanne McKeets at the diocese by sending e-mail to [jmckeets@dwc.org](mailto:jmckeets@dwc.org).

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# Helping to Meet Basic Needs

**By Katie Hinerman Klug, Catholic Charities West Virginia Marketing Communications Specialist**

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that offers nutrition assistance to individuals and families who qualify as low-income. Formerly known as food stamps, the program has a goal of helping people access nutritious food while helping them stretch their budget.

Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) is a proud recipient of grant funding from Catholic Charities USA. The funds are available through the Walmart Foundation as part of a nationwide effort to address hunger. Thanks in part to this generosity, CCWVa is able to operate a SNAP Outreach Program to educate West Virginians about SNAP and help eligible individuals and families apply for the program.

Chris Garner, CCWVa SNAP Outreach Program Director, shared the following story:

I knew Barry's family well and I never expected to see his name cross my desk for a SNAP application. You see, Barry's family was well to do. They were respected in their community and no one would ever have dreamed how life in a small town could change in the blink of an eye.

Barry started dabbling in drugs as a high school student. He thought smoking a little joint would be fun. He was the star of his high school basketball team and it was the cool thing to do. After

graduation he went to college and became an RN. But by that time, he and his friends were trying harder and harder drugs and working in a hospital gave him plenty of access to what he craved. There was never a fix that left him feeling fulfilled or a high that could erase the problems of everyday-life long enough for him to get straight.

Life became a never ending obsession for that next buzz. Soon, Barry would lose his job and his nursing license because of his drug addiction. He rebounded quickly and became a barber but his habitual drug addiction didn't end. His marriage failed, and his parents were left to raise the kids.

A couple of years ago Barry's mom and older sister decided to try whatever it was that was making Barry so "carefree." They both shot up using the same needle and both ended up in the hospital with an infection that would eventually take their lives.

Fast forward to just a few months ago when Barry found himself on life support in the same hospital where his mom and sister died. He had overdosed and was in a coma. He had finally reached rock bottom and, according to him, "when you're at rock bottom you start remembering how good life used to be. You remember your life before drugs and it's sad to think how you gave all of that up for a momentary high."

Barry is now living with his father. Barry's dad has been raising his 4 grandkids for several years now. With Barry undergoing drug addiction treatment, it helps to have someone to lean on for support and encourage-

ment. Barry was approved for SNAP benefits, but his daily struggles are still front and center for him. He lost two respectful and rewarding careers due to his drug use and he isn't eligible for unemployment benefits. He faces an uncertain future and the prospects of potentially never having a prosperous career again. In times past when Barry found himself worried or troubled, he would quickly turn to his drug addiction, and that relentless pull is still there. He has a strong support group though, and it helps to know that others are going through the same thing he is going through.

All of the issues surrounding COVID-19 only serve to compound the problems he faces. According to Barry, "You feel cut off from everyone! It's like, I need to have people in my life but all I can see are masks. You can't see emotions behind a mask. I really



want to see someone smile so I can know that it's all going to be ok. I really need that!"

Barry knows that he faces an uphill climb but his family has rallied around him to help see him through. He is thankful for the SNAP benefits and he looks forward to the day when he can once again support his family and make a positive contribution to the lives of those he loves.

Until then, Catholic

Charities will be there for him.

To learn more about Catholic Charities West Virginia, visit [www.CatholicCharitiesWV.org](http://www.CatholicCharitiesWV.org).

The Mission of Catholic Charities West Virginia: Guided by God's love, Catholic Charities collaborates with community partners, parishes and families to provide caring and compassionate services to people in need and work toward lasting and meaningful change.

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# Rejoice in Bleak Times

**By Effie Caldarola, Catholic News Service**

The 19th-century English poet Christina Rossetti had never heard of COVID-19, climate change or many of the woes that beset us in the bleak midwinter of 2020.

Yet, in her poem, "In the Bleak Midwinter," she paints a Christmas scene that endures and brings an odd, consoling joy into these troubled times.

She sets the stage for Jesus' appearance into our chaotic world with these sobering lines, "In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,/ Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone."

Not everyone celebrates Christmas in the middle of a hard winter, but for those in the Northern Hemisphere, there are Advent days when ice forms on window panes and chilly winds whip through sullen grey skies.

And for all of us, the challenges of this particular 2020 Advent can make life seem hard as stone.

Many have experienced the death of loved ones from COVID. Some of us are unemployed, face food insecurity or homelessness. Shelters are overflowing. Many will not travel to see loved ones this season.

Some ache to see new grandchildren they've never met or regret missing family weddings, funerals and reunions.

Into the midst of these dark times come the bright lights of Christmas and the beautiful celebration of Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of the Advent season.

Rose-colored vestments and a rose candle on the Advent wreath remind us that the very word Gaudete is our Advent command: Rejoice!

So how do we rejoice in this crazy world of 2020?

One fundamental lesson of the spiritual life is that joy and consolation are not predicated on possessions, wealth or the perfect situations that we dream of for our life. Those tidy Hallmark Christmases make good fictional stories and colorful advertisements, but they are far from the heart of the real Christmas story, the one that brings us joy and a peace "the world cannot give."

The incarnation of Jesus into the world drives this point home. The Hebrew people were looking and hoping for a Savior,



**A family lights an Advent wreath at their Maryland home.**

CNS Photo/Tom McCarthy Jr., Catholic Review

but the one they most often envisioned would come with power and majesty and entitlement.

Instead, the birth of Jesus happened in the most humble of circumstances. This is a powerful lesson for us about our own aspirations in life. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' first visitors were shepherds, a despised and denigrated group of laborers if ever there was one.

An exhausted Mary, who had gone through all the messiness and pain of human childbirth, probably greeted them with warmth.

And no doubt she was aware of the presence of angels that surrounded her labor and her child.

Sometimes we forget that we, too, are called to welcome the weary and be aware of the angels that surround our Advent and Christmas, no matter the circumstances.

On Gaudete Sunday, a reading from First Thessalonians instructs us: "Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks."

Joy, peace, grace and consolation can come, and perhaps most usually come, in moments

of quiet and thoughtfulness.

Maybe this Gaudete Sunday, and this strange year, is beckoning us to quiet down, do less, be more prayerful, take intentional time to count our blessings and give thanks for the fundamental things. Maybe we can find room to rejoice when we won't be exhausted by constant parties, obligatory entertaining, harried travel, frenzied gift buying.

Will we miss some of it? Of course. But can we find joy in what Christ is offering us in this unique and unusual Advent of 2020? Yes.

Thessalonians tells us, pray constantly. Make time and space to pray. Count, each day, the things for which you are grateful. Call someone you love. Be intentionally joyful.

And spend some time with those shepherds. Jesus spent his entire life with those on the margins, so it was no accident that a group of sheep watchers got the first peek at God's arrival.

It was a foretelling of the Savior who would befriend the sinner and tax collector, touch the leper, humiliate those who wanted to stone a woman accused of sin.

Spend prayer time embracing the marginalized. Be with those seeking asylum at our border who have been turned away without a hearing or separated from their children. Pray with those condemned to die on death row. Pray with the poor, the victimized, the lonely, the ill.

In Psalm 34, which we read during the Third Week of Advent, we are reminded that "the Lord hears the cry of the poor." Place yourself with the poor and struggling.

In Rossetti's poem, she shares a line both joyful and a good companion to prayer: "Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him."

Here, we have the image of our Creator, so eager to join us in our humanity and our earthly struggle, that in the person of Jesus, God literally bursts the bounds of heaven to be with us in our lives. This is the incredible joy we feel on Gaudete Sunday. This is our invitation to the kingdom of God, where shepherds and sinners are welcomed. This is the joy that spills into our current history.

(Caldarola is a freelance writer and a columnist for Catholic News Service.)

## Obituaries

### Sister Mary Louise Lisowski

Sister Mary Louise Lisowski, age 74, died on December 7, 2020 at Caritas Christi, the motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill.

Born in Pittsburgh, Sister Mary Lou entered the congregation of the Sisters of Charity on August 27, 1967, from Saint Philip Parish in Crafton. Preceded in death by her parents, Michael J. and Mary V. (Krally) Lisowski, she is survived by three sisters: Mrs. Loretta Jean (William) Scutta, Judy Bundy, Mrs. Joani (Richard) Wagner, nieces and nephews. Sister Mary Lou earned a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in elementary education from Seton Hill University, a master's degree in religious studies from Boston College, and a master's degree in social work from West Virginia University. Sister Mary Lou taught students of the elementary and secondary levels in schools of the dioceses of Greensburg and Pittsburgh.

From 1983 until 1988, she served as a pastoral minister in Preston County, WV, and in 1987-1989, she was associate director of Focus on Renewal in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Sister Mary Lou began ministry at Catholic Charities in Wheeling-Charleston Diocese and, in 1990, she was joined by four local church women in crisis to form the Gabriel Project of West Virginia, Inc. to provide quality services to pregnant women in need. In 2007, Sister Mary Lou took on an additional role as adjunct faculty member in social work at Seton Hill University and was appointed Director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. She held that position until 2010.

Sister Mary Lou was tenacious in her work for the poor. In reflection on living Vincentian spirituality in the Setonian tradition as a Sister of Charity, Sister Mary Lou said, "Becoming the 'Company of Charity' meant that it was important in my ministry to make the Charity of Christ visible and real."

Arrangements are private.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Sisters of Charity, De Paul Center, 144 DePaul Center Road, Greensburg, PA 15601. For more information visit the website, [www.scsch.org](http://www.scsch.org).



### Sister M. Electa Schmidt, IHM

Sister M. Electa Schmidt, IHM, of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary died on Wednesday, December 2, 2020 at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton.

She was born December 31, 1926 in Linden, PA, and given the name Anna Catherine. She was the daughter of the late John and Catherine Schrant Schmidt. She entered the IHM Congregation on September 8, 1946 and made her temporary profession of vows on May 8, 1949 and her final profession of vows on August 3, 1952.

Sister Electa served as a teacher in the following schools: St. Ann High School in Scranton, PA, from 1949 to 1951; St. Joseph Elementary School in Renovo, PA, from 1951 to 1954; St. Monica Elementary School in Raleigh, NC, from 1954 to 1958; South Scranton Catholic High School in Scranton, PA, from 1958 to 1961; Immaculata High School in New York, NY, from 1961 to 1966; St. Mary of the Mount High School in Pittsburgh, PA, from 1966 to 1970 and 1979 to 1982; Bishop Neumann High School in Williamsport, PA, from 1970 to 1972; Bishop O'Hara High School in Dunmore, PA, from 1976 to 1977; Bishop Guilfoyle High School in Altoona, PA, from 1977 to 1978; and Cathedral High School in New York, NY, from 1982 to 1986.

Sister served as both principal and teacher at Notre Dame High School in East Stroudsburg, PA, from 1972 to 1976.

Sister Electa also served as office manager of the Communications Office at the IHM Center in Scranton, PA, from 1978 to 1979 and 1986 to 1991; administrative assistant at the following: Our Lady of Grace Center in Manhasset, NY, from 1991 to 1994; St. Ann Elementary School in New York, NY, from 1994 to 1997; and Holy Family Elementary School in St. Petersburg, FL, from 1997 to 1999.

She also served as a pastoral minister at Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Parsons, WV, from 1999 to 2006; and on the support staff in the Vocations Office at the IHM Center in Scranton, PA, from 2006 to 2013, and in the Human Resources Office at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton, PA, from 2008 to 2016. From 2016 until the time of her death, Sister Electa was a prayer minister at Our Lady of Peace Residence in Scranton. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in business education from Marywood College and a Master of Science degree in education from Duquesne University.

She is preceded in death by four brothers, Edward, Richard, Robert, and John; and three sisters, Marie S. Harrow, Mildred S. Burditt, and Mary Schmidt. She is survived by a sister-in-law, Jane Schmidt of Barberton, OH; nieces and nephews. She is also survived by the members of the IHM Congregation. Interment will be at St. Catherine's Cemetery in Moscow, PA. Due to restrictions related to the coronavirus, the funeral mass and graveside service are private. Memorial contributions may be made to support the retired IHM Sisters c/o the IHM Sisters Retirement Fund, IHM Center, 2300 Adams Avenue, Scranton, PA 18509.

Funeral Mass: <https://video.ibm.com/recorded/128808049>



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# Papa proclama el año dedicado a San José

**Por Junno Arocho Esteves, Catholic News Service**

**CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS)**—Con motivo del 150 aniversario de la declaración de san José como patrón de la iglesia universal, el papa Francisco proclamó una celebración de un año dedicado al padre adoptivo de Jesús.

En una carta apostólica del 8 de diciembre, "Patris Corde" ("Con corazón de padre"), el papa dijo que los cristianos pueden descubrir en san José, que a menudo pasa desapercibido, "un intercesor, un apoyo y un guía en tiempos de problemas".

"San José nos recuerda que los que aparecen ocultos o en las sombras pueden jugar un papel incomparable en la historia de la salvación", dijo.

Como esposo de María y guardián del hijo de Dios, san José convirtió "su vocación humana al amor doméstico en una oblación sobrehumana de sí mismo, de su corazón y de todas sus capacidades, un amor puesto al servicio del Mesías que iba madurando en su casa".

A pesar de estar preocupado al principio por el embarazo de María, agregó, san José fue obediente a la voluntad de Dios "sin importar las dificultades involucradas".

"En cada situación, José declaró su propio 'fiat', como los de María en la Anunciación y Jesús en el Huerto de Getsemaní", dijo el papa. "Todo esto deja claro que san José fue llamado por Dios a servir directamente a la persona y misión de Jesús a través del ejercicio de su paternidad y que, de esta manera, cooperó en la plenitud de los tiempos en el gran misterio de la salvación y es verdaderamente un ministro de salvación".

La aceptación incondicional de María por parte de San José y su decisión de proteger su "buen nombre, su dignidad y su vida" también sirve como un ejemplo para los hombres de hoy, agregó el papa.

"Hoy, en nuestro mundo donde la violencia psicológica, verbal y física hacia las mujeres es tan evidente, José aparece como la figura de un hombre respetuoso y sensible", escribió.

El papa Francisco también destacó la "valentía creativa" de san José, no solo para encontrar un establo y convertirlo en un "hogar acogedor para el hijo de Dios (que vino) al mundo", sino también para proteger a Cristo de la amenaza que representaba el Rey Herodes.

"La Sagrada Familia tuvo que afrontar problemas concretos como cualquier otra familia, como tantos de nuestros hermanos y hermanas migrantes que, también hoy, arriesgan su vida para escapar de la desgracia y el hambre. En este sentido, considero a san José el patrón especial de todos los que se vieron obligados a abandonar sus tierras natales a causa de la guerra, el odio, la persecución y la pobreza", dijo el papa.

Como carpintero que se ganó "la vida honradamente para mantener a su familia", el guardián terrenal de Cristo es también un ejemplo tanto para los trabajadores como para quienes buscan empleo y el derecho a una vida digna para ellos y sus familias.

"En nuestros días, cuando el empleo se ha convertido una vez más en un problema social candente y el desempleo alcanza en ocasiones niveles récord incluso en países que durante décadas han disfrutado de cierto grado de prosperidad, existe una necesidad renovada de apreciar la importancia del trabajo digno, de la que san José es un patrón ejemplar", dijo.

La Penitenciaría Apostólica, un tribunal del vaticano que se ocupa de asuntos de conciencia, también emitió un decreto el 8 de diciembre estableciendo que las indulgencias plenarias se otorgarán a los católicos no solo a través de la oración y la penitencia, sino también a través de actos de justicia, caridad

y piedad dedicados al padre adoptivo de Jesús.

Entre las condiciones para recibir una indulgencia se encuentran un espíritu desprendido del pecado, recibir la confesión sacramental lo antes posible, recibir la Comunión lo antes posible y orar por las intenciones del Santo Padre.

Sin embargo, el decreto también destacó varias formas de obtener la indulgencia a lo largo del año, incluso para aquellos que "meditan en la oración del 'Padre Nuestro' durante al menos 30 minutos o participan en un retiro espiritual de al menos un día que incluye una meditación sobre san José".

Como "hombre justo", prosigue el documento, que guardaba "el secreto íntimo que se encuentra en el fondo del corazón y del alma", san José practicó la virtud de la justicia en "plena adhesión a la ley divina, que es la ley de misericordia".

"Por tanto, quienes, siguiendo el ejemplo de san José, realizarán una obra de misericordia corporal o espiritual, también podrán obtener el don de la indulgencia plenaria", dijo.

También se otorgarán indulgencias a las familias y novios que recen juntos el rosario y así imiten el "mismo clima de comunión, amor y oración vivido en la Sagrada Familia".

Otros actos de devoción incluyen confiar las actividades diarias y las oraciones por un empleo digno a san José, recitar la letanía o cualquier oración "legítimamente aprobada" a San José.

Durante este tiempo de pandemia, la Penitenciaría Apostólica también decretó que se otorgarán indulgencias especiales a los ancianos, a los enfermos y a todos aquellos que "por motivos legítimos no puedan salir de su hogar" por "recitar un acto de piedad en honor a José y se comprometió a cumplir las condiciones lo antes posible".

**Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de niños:** La Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston alienta a informar ante las autoridades civiles ante todo si se ha cometido un delito. También alentamos a utilizar [www.reportbishopabuse.org](http://www.reportbishopabuse.org) para hacer un informe sobre cualquier obispo en los EE. UU. Si tiene motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido una conducta sexual inapropiada, comuníquese con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y visite [www.reportbishopabuse.org](http://www.reportbishopabuse.org).

**Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación. Si cree que alguien está en peligro inmediato, llame al 911. Para informar confidencialmente cualquier incidencia de sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, comuníquese con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 800.352.6513. Puede informar anonimamente a esta línea directa si lo prefiere.

**Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis alienta a informar a las autoridades civiles apropiadas, ante todo, si se ha cometido un delito. La diócesis también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiales apropiadas. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de niños por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston a la Diócesis, comuníquese con uno de los siguientes designados al 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; o Muy Reverendo Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis al 304.230.1504.

También puede llamar a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la Diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de queja están disponibles en línea en [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), haga clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", luego en "Ambiente seguro", luego "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede devolver por correo de EE. UU. A: Office of Safe Environment, Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

**Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis:** llame a la Dra. Patricia Bailey al 304.242.6988.

Además de los métodos enumerados anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la Diócesis también se ha asociado con Navex Global para ofrecer la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar otras inquietudes adicionales, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diácono, religioso, o empleado laico de la Diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Se puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es un sistema de informes de terceros que informa a las autoridades civiles cuando corresponda y a las autoridades diocesanas, y la identidad de la persona que informa esta protegida.

Enlaces e información: Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de Crímenes contra Niños: 304-293-6400.

## Employment Opportunities

### Secretary/Bookkeeper at St. Francis Xavier Parish, Parkersburg

Applications are now being accepted for part-time Secretary/Bookkeeper at St. Francis Xavier Parish, Parkersburg. The successful applicant will have skills in dealing with the public, computers, and financial systems. We use Microsoft Office and Quickbooks as our primary technology tools. Resumes may be mailed, emailed, or dropped off at the office. The location and mailing address is 609 Market Street, Parkersburg, WV 26101. The e-mail address is [secretary@stxpborg.org](mailto:secretary@stxpborg.org)

### Catholic Charities West Virginia Regional Case Manager for Homeless Outreach (Temporary Position)

Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) is seeking a temporary full-time Regional Case Manager for Homeless Outreach for its Northern Region in Wheeling, WV. The position is expected to continue through April 30, 2021. The Case Manager is responsible for assisting and supporting the Regional Director in the region's programs, and will also direct case management duties essential in carrying out the mission and vision of CCWVa. This includes providing case management services to at-risk individuals and families, especially to those experiencing homelessness. The Case Manager also addresses financial assistance needs for clients outside of case management services. Other primary responsibilities are to meet with impacted individuals or families to assess needs, assist in removing barriers to self-sufficiency and, if indicated, develop and implement a comprehensive service plan in cooperation with the individual/family. The Case Manager is responsible for documenting all activities involved in this process and maintaining a case file according to guidelines/models provided. An additional responsibility will be to carry out winter shelter operations for people experiencing homelessness.

Qualifications include: Bachelor's degree in social work, human services, or related field; experience working with at-risk populations; knowledge of federal, state and community resources, case management practices, populations served and their culture and needs; excellent computer skills with the ability to track and analyze data; and willingness to adapt to change in schedule, including evenings and weekends if necessary. Must have transportation to travel and a valid Driver's License.

Please email resume, cover letter, and three professional references by December 18, 2020 to: Mark Phillips at [maphillips@ccwva.org](mailto:maphillips@ccwva.org). Application materials can also be sent to: Mark Phillips, Northern Regional Director, CCWVa, 2000 Main Street, Wheeling, WV 26003.

### Outreach Worker, Northern Region (Temporary Position)

Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) is seeking a temporary full-time Outreach Worker in its Northern Region in Wheeling. The position is expected to continue through September of 2021. The Outreach Worker's responsibilities include representing the agency in assisting the economically disadvantaged and others seeking needed services. Specific duties include: completing emergency assistance applications in the Wheeling office and the New Martinsville outreach location; coordinating pantry distribution in New Martinsville; screening for and enrolling eligible clients for state and federal benefits; accepting and making referrals to and from other organizations; maintaining client and other records as required; maintaining documentation of all requests for assistance; and compiling reports. May require some travel.

Qualifications include: Bachelor's degree preferred in human services, education, social work, or related field; high school or equivalent required, plus sufficient experience in the social service field. Casework experience w/ at-risk populations. Ability to work collaboratively. Ability to assess and make decisions about assistance required from Catholic Charities WV and other resources.

Please email cover letter, resume and three professional references by December 18, 2020 to: Mark Phillips at [maphillips@ccwva.org](mailto:maphillips@ccwva.org). Application materials can also be sent to: Mark Phillips, Northern Regional Director, CCWVa, 2000 Main Street, Wheeling, WV 26003.

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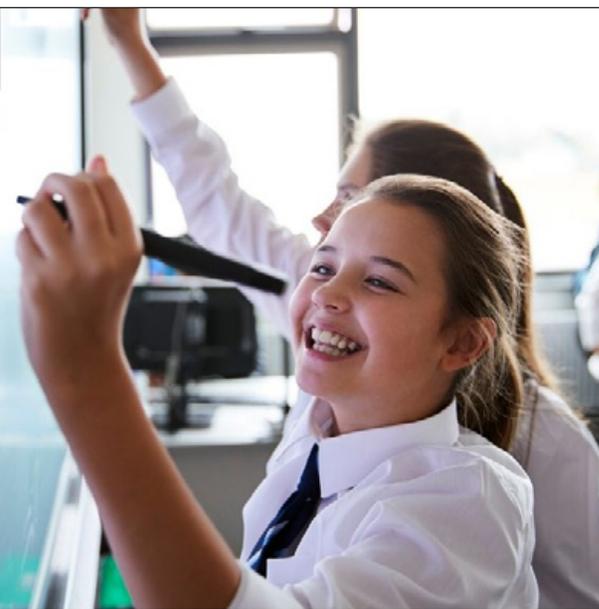


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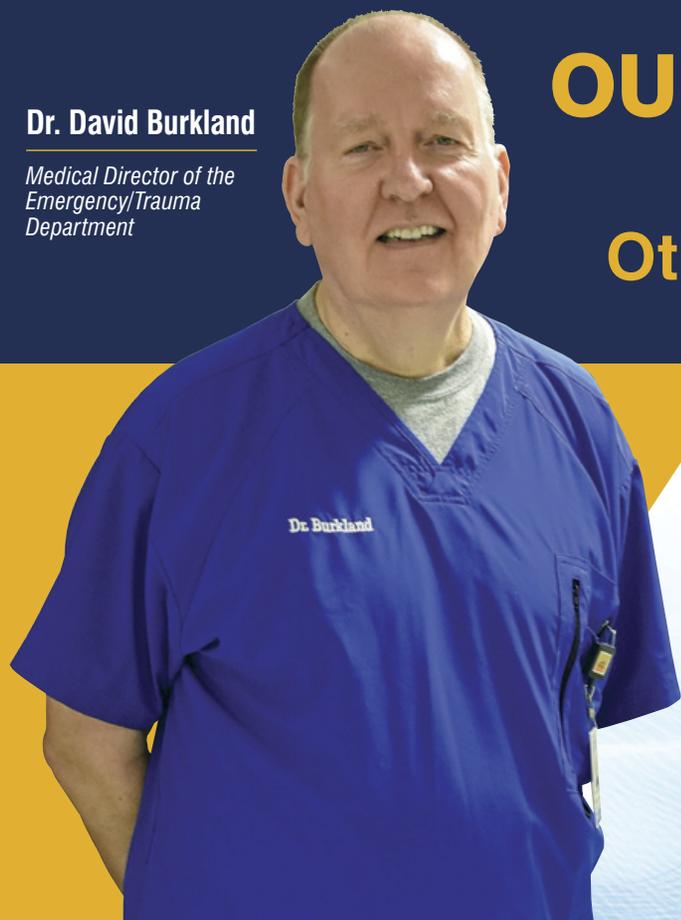
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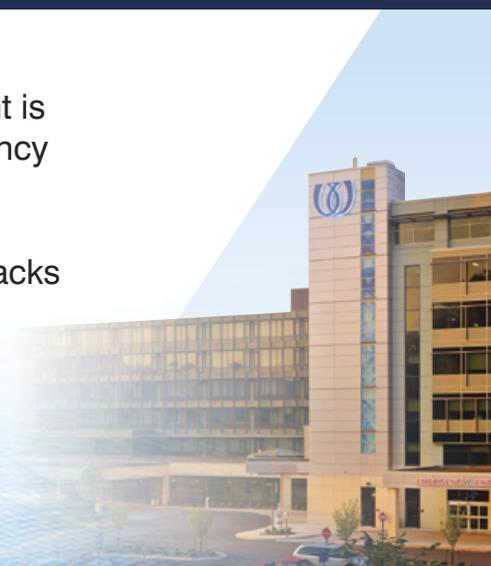
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