

'You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' – John 8:32

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## LOCAL 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

BY THE CATHOLIC FREE PRESS

### JANUARY

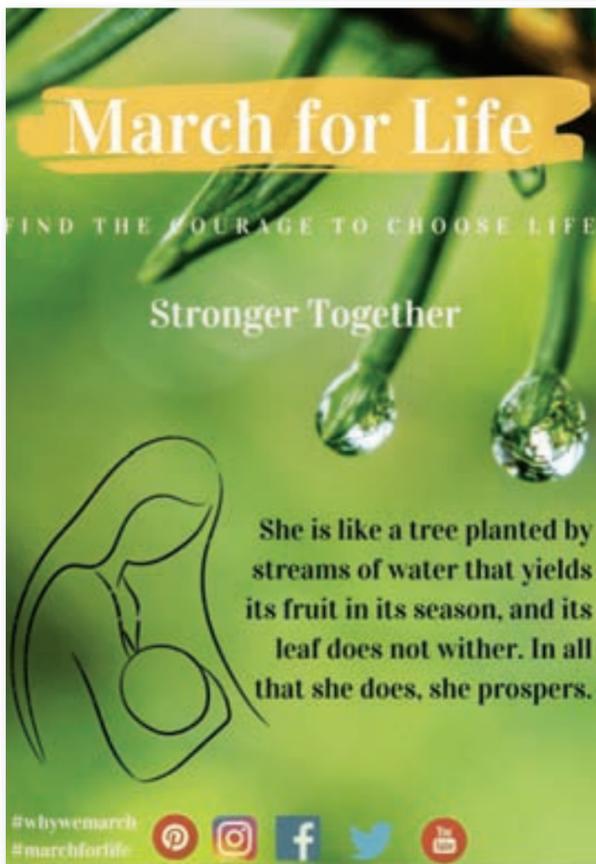
The year began and ended with great concern over the spread of the virus that plunged the world into a pandemic. But the work of the diocese continued with a new resolve as ministries pivoted to remote digital tools to spread the Good News. In early 2021 while reflecting on the pandemic and capsulating the pandemic's effect on the church, African Ministry Chaplain, Father Enoch K. Kyeremateng, said, "With God, we stand in faith and hope. This, too, shall pass."

► The annual March for Life was dealt a serious blow by the pandemic. Instead of going on the traditional March in Washington, D.C., diocesan students made signs for an online slideshow. It was called a Virtual March for Life. The year marked the 48th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion. The day was designated a day of prayer and penance. Allison LeDoux, director of the Worcester Diocese's Respect Life Office usually coordinates the diocesan trip. "Since we can't participate physically in the D.C. events, we decided to do a virtual March for Life," she said.

The diocese added two new revenue sources to help alleviate the annual deficit in the priests' retirement account. Parishes were to be assessed an additional 1 percentage point on their cathedralic payment, to be used exclusively for priests' retirement expenses in years when needed. Also, a diocesan wide parish collection for retired priests was held on Ash Wednesday. It will continue each year.

### FEBRUARY

▼ Ash Wednesday reception of ashes was also affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Msgr. James P. Moroney, director of the diocesan Office for Divine Worship, advised parishes about a more safe process that involved the sprinkling of ashes with holy water without saying anything. Bishop McManus recommended that to avoid transmission of the virus, yet maintain the usual manner of distribution, that ashes be applied to each person's forehead with a Q-tip, with each Q-tip discarded after it is used once.



said he created an online Lenten program similar to the one he offered for the first time in the previous Advent.

The pandemic created hardship, but also opportunity. Father Kenneth R. Cardinale, pastor at St. John Paul II Parish in Southbridge, said, "It forced us into the 21st century. Attendance at Mass dropped because some people did not feel safe around others, so pastors needed to find ways to reach parishioners. Like many pastors, Father Cardinale continued to hold Masses in person at the parish's two churches, Notre Dame and St. Mary, for those who felt comfortable attending, but for those who did not, he live-streamed Masses for the first time. "It's helped us appreciate most intensely what you might take for granted when times are good," Father Cardinale said of the pandemic. "In one way, you're worrying that it's hurting your faith community, but in some ways it's an opportunity to grow."

### MARCH

In his letter accompanying the annual report for Fiscal Year 2020, Bishop McManus stated the mission of the Church did not stop because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The mission continued, adapting programs and services as so the face of Christ was present to offer hope during these dark times, he said in the letter. The report showed operational deficits of \$1.74 million, but a total surplus of \$2.96 million, after accounting for realized and unrealized gains on investments, bequests, and forgivable PPP loan proceeds.

▼ Because of gathering size restrictions imposed by government officials during the pandemic, the 20th annual Worcester Diocesan Catholic Men's Conference was remote. Participants watched a pre-recorded welcome by Bishop McManus, talks and Mass while either at home or in small groups in churches. Traditionally, the conference has drawn more than 1,000 men to Assumption University for a day of



▲ The College of the Holy Cross named its first lay, and its first black president in its 178-year history. Vincent D. Rougeau, dean of the Boston College Law School, was chosen as the college's 33rd president. Mr. Rougeau succeeded Jesuit Father Philip L. Boroughs, who announced in September that he would be leaving the college at the end of June, after serving as president for almost a decade. President Rougeau was installed Oct. 22.

As the second Lent affected by the coronavirus pandemic approached, parishes looked at ways to enable worshippers to safely and conveniently participate in devotions and receive faith formation. Among options were in-person gatherings with masks and social distancing, online get-togethers, programs and devotions that individuals could access - live or later - and printed material. Among the many programs offered in the diocese, Romeo Marquis, faith formation facilitator at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Worcester,



talks, confessions and fellowship. Among speakers was theologian Scott Hahn. He told a virtual audience about spiritual journeys and God's stance on the global pandemic.

### APRIL

For his Easter 2021 message, Bishop McManus told the faithful it was time to prepare for a return to Mass and the Eucharist.

On this Easter Sunday, after a year of COVID isolation, when we seek peace and joy amidst doubts and losses, we can profitably reflect on the importance of gathering at the Eucharist. As Jesus came to the disciples gathered together in Jerusalem so, too, He is most present to us, not in our individual reflections upon the Scriptures, but when the Scriptures and Eucharist are celebrated at Mass. It has been a long year with necessary and prudent precautions keeping many of us from Sunday Mass. Given the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID pandemic, personal prayer, reading the Scriptures and watching the Mass live-streamed have been prudent choices for many. However, such choices are all inferior to being present at Sunday Mass and receiving the Holy Eucharist, which the Second Vatican Council proclaimed as the source and summit of the Church. Like St. Thomas and the disciples on the road to Emmaus, it is harder to recognize Jesus, ward off doubts and avoid being downcast by the trials and tragedies of life when we are not nourished by the Eucharist at Sunday Mass. As signs of progress in the COVID pandemic begin to give way to hope for a return to a more normal life, and as vaccines become more widely available, it may be time to begin to consider prayerfully a return to Sunday Mass.

▼ The former St. Mary's Schools and Visitation House property was sold. The school building will house a new school and Visitation House will remain in the former convent building after purchasing it from the new owners. CIG The Daniels Building LLC purchased the properties on Richland, Dorchester and Endicott streets for \$2.45 million. The school, a former convent, a playground and a parking lot were part of the property. Visitation House helps mothers in need and their babies.



Catholic Charities Worcester County began its planning to prepare for an expansion of its 50-year-old Crozier House to serve dozens more men in recovery at a time when pandemic stresses contributed to increased substance abuse. Crozier House, for men addressing substance use and post-traumatic stress disorders, is attached to the Catholic Charities administrative office building at 10 Hammond St. in Worcester. The long-term goal is to find another location for the offices, renovate the building and add Crozier House beds where the offices are, according to Timothy McMahon, executive director of Catholic Charities Worcester County.

All three Catholic colleges in the Diocese, the College of the Holy Cross, Assumption University and Anna Maria College, announced requirements for COVID-19 vaccinations for on-campus students in the fall. Each said they would allow exemptions from the requirement.

The Diocese offered guidance on the varied COVID vaccines. The Catholic Church made it clear that, in general, getting vaccinated to both care for your own body and as an act of charity toward others by helping to stem the spread of the virus, is important and worthy of support. Each individual, however, has the right to accept or decline a vaccine, the guidance stated. The guidance referenced a statement by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that it must be voluntary.

Also affected by the pandemic in 2021 was the Partners in Charity campaign. It wasn't the same as previous years. Before COVID we were always recommending that parishes conduct in-pew Sundays as the backbone of their appeal, said Michael P. Gillespie, director of the diocesan Office of Stewardship and Development. Obviously in 2020 that approach would not have worked, given that churches were first closed, and then in-person Masses only saw partial attendance.

The 2020 appeal was a learning experience, according to Mr. Gillespie. There was a much heavier reliance on using mail appeals and online invitations to participate through Flocknote, a contact management system in place in most of the parishes. By the end of the campaign, Partners in Charity reached 89 percent of \$5 million goal.

Abbot Francis Xavier Connelly, O.S.B., who stepped down from his post at St. Benedict Abbey in Still River in March, died April 8. He was succeeded by Abbot Marc Crilly. In August, Bishop McManus participated in a Rite of Blessing of an Abbot at a Mass for Abbot Crilly at St. John the Evangelist Church in Clinton.

### MAY

Bishop McManus ordained Carlos Francisco Ardila and Jose Fernando Carvajal the two latest Colombians to become priests for the Worcester Diocese. Family and friends, locally and from Colombia, gathered at St. Paul Cathedral for the ordination.

SEE 2021, 8

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New partnership helps two Catholic organizations serve more people in Diocese. 7

GRACE to the Finish brings fundraising for Uxbridge building closer to goal. 7

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# Even the Holy Family felt stress, pope tells families

BY CINDY WOODEN | CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The COVID-19 pandemic has been tough on families, but with extra patience and faith, bonds can grow stronger, Pope Francis wrote in a letter released on the feast of the Holy Family.

Marriage, as a vocation, calls you to steer a tiny boat — wave-tossed yet sturdy, thanks to the reality of the sacrament — across a sometimes stormy sea, he told couples in the letter published Dec. 26.

Like the disciples who were foundering on the Sea of Galilee, couples must keep their eyes fixed on Jesus, he said. Only in this way, will you find peace, overcome conflicts and discover solutions to many of your problems. Those problems, of course, will not disappear, but you will be able to see them from a different perspective.

Reciting the midday Angelus prayer

with visitors in St. Peter's Square Dec. 26, Pope Francis said he had written the letter as a Christmas gift to married couples during the celebration of the Amoris Laetitia Family Year, a year dedicated to re-reading his 2016 exhortation on marriage and family life.

In his Angelus talk, the pope commented on the day's Gospel reading about a 12-year-old Jesus staying behind in Jerusalem and making Mary and Joseph frantic.

In the Gospel, we see that even in the Holy Family things did not all go well: There were unexpected problems, anxiety, suffering. The Holy Family of holy cards does not exist, he said.

When Mary and Joseph find Jesus in the temple and ask him why he worried them so, he tells them, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

Mary and Joseph do not understand,

the pope said. They need time to learn to know their son. That's the way it is with us as well: Each day, a family needs to learn how to listen to each other to understand each other, to walk together, to face conflicts and difficulties.

In his letter to families, like in Amoris Laetitia, Pope Francis paid tribute to the strength and tenacity of couples as they face real difficulties together on the journey of life.

Like Abraham, called by God to set out to an unknown land, he wrote, with the pandemic — we, too, have experienced uncertainty, loneliness, the loss of loved ones; we, too, have been forced to leave behind our certainties, our comfort zones, our familiar ways of doing things and our ambitions, and to work for the welfare of our families and that of society as a whole, which also depends on us and our actions.



CNS PHOTO | PAUL HARING

Children carry flowers at the start of Pope Francis' celebration of Christmas Eve Mass in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 24.



CNS PHOTO | VATICAN MEDIA

Pope Francis delivers Christmas blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world) from the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 25.

## Pope prays Christmas will bring yearning for peace, dialogue

BY CINDY WOODEN  
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Before giving his Christmas blessing to the city of Rome and to the world, Pope Francis drew attention to the many places around the globe and within human hearts in need of Jesus, the prince of peace.

In the cold of the night, he stretches out his tiny arms toward us: He is in need of everything, yet he comes to give us everything, the pope told people gathered in a rain-washed St. Peter's Square.

On this festive day, let us implore him to stir up in the hearts of everyone a yearning for reconciliation and fraternity, Pope Francis said Dec. 25 before giving his blessing "urbi et orbi" (to the city and the world).

Cardinal Renato Martino, 89, the protodeacon of the

College of Cardinals, announced that the solemn blessing included a plenary indulgence for the people in the square, everyone watching on television, listening by radio or following on their computers.

Jesus came into the world — like a whisper, like the murmur of a gentle breeze, to fill with wonder the heart of every man and woman who is open to this mystery, the pope said in his Christmas message.

The Word became flesh in order to dialogue with us, he insisted. God does not desire to carry on a monologue, but a dialogue. For God himself — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — is dialogue, an eternal and infinite communion of love and life.

But all too often in too many places, dialogue is precisely what is missing, he said, as he offered specific prayers for people

struggling to survive amid war or the threat of war, violence, oppression or crushing poverty in Syria, the Holy Land, Yemen, South Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar and Ethiopia.

The impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on health care and the economy, but also on the way individuals live and interact was part of the pope's prayer as well.

With the pandemic, the pope said, our capacity for social relationships is sorely tried; there is a growing tendency to withdraw, to do it all by ourselves, to stop making an effort to encounter others and do things together.

On the international level too, there is the risk of avoiding dialogue, the risk that this complex crisis will lead to taking shortcuts rather than setting out on the longer paths of dialogue, he said.

Yet only those paths can lead to the resolution of conflicts and to lasting benefits for all.

Pope Francis said he knows people get weary watching or reading the news, but attention is needed or we risk not hearing the cry of pain and distress of so many of our brothers and sisters.

In addition to the continuing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians that drag on without a resolution, with ever more serious social and political consequences, he said, people should not forget Bethlehem, the place of Jesus' birth, which is experiencing hardship also from the economic repercussions of the pandemic.

And, the pope said, let us listen to the cry of children arising from Yemen, where an enormous tragedy, overlooked by everyone, has silently gone on for years, causing deaths every day.

In a troubled world, he said, Christmas celebrates hope. Today, the love that moves the sun and the other stars, as Dante says, became flesh. He came in human form, he shared in our plight, and he broke down the wall of our indifference.

In the form of a prayer to the newborn Lord, Pope Francis pleaded not only for peace between nations at war, but for all the suffering people in the city and the world and for the suffering Earth itself.

Eternal Word become flesh, he prayed, make us attentive to our common home, which is suffering from the carelessness with which we so often treat it. Inspire political leaders to reach effective agreements, so that future generations can live in an environment respectful of life.

He prayed for women who have been victims of domestic violence, which has increased in this time of pandemic, for the consolation of elderly people who are alone and for the serenity and unity of families.

He prayed for the sick, those who care for them and for a greater effort to make COVID-19 vaccines available to all.

### BRIEFS

#### Pope names Cardinal Czerny to lead dicastery

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Thanking Cardinal Peter Turkson for his five years of service as prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Pope Francis has decided to name new leadership for the office, said a Vatican communique. Beginning Jan. 1 and for a limited time, Canadian Cardinal Michael Czerny will serve as prefect and Salesian Sister Alessandra Smerilli will continue to serve as interim secretary, Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office, said in a statement Dec. 23. In August 2016, Pope Francis had announced the formation of the dicastery by merging the former pontifical councils for Justice and Peace, Cor Unum, Migrants and Travelers, and Health Care Ministry. The dicastery began operations Jan. 1, 2017, under statutes approved for a five-year experimental period. The pope tapped Cardinal Turkson, who had led the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace since 2009, to lead the office for that five-year period.

#### Vatican mandates vaccination for employees

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — With a view toward staying open and protecting people from a new increase in COVID-19 infections, the Vatican mandated that all employees be vaccinated against the coronavirus or show proof of having recovered from it. The previous Vatican rule, requiring a negative COVID-19 test every 48 hours for unvaccinated employees, was not part of the new rules published by the Vatican Secretariat of State Dec. 23 and with immediate effect. Vatican employees who cannot prove they have been vaccinated or have recovered from the coronavirus will not be allowed to go to work and will not be paid, although their benefits and family allowances will continue, according to the text signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state. The Vatican, which runs its own health service for employees, does recognize that some employees have a medical reason for not being able to be vaccinated. Other than that, the evaluation of the elements for possible exemption from the mandate will be evaluated by the Vatican Secretariat of State in consultation with the health service.

#### African bishop concerned about peace, stability

NAIROBI, Kenya (CNS) — In Christmas and New Year's messages, Catholic bishops and religious leaders across Africa expressed deep concerns about the severe challenges that threaten peace and stability throughout much of the continent.

The messages took on a common theme as they urged government leaders and opposing factions to come together to end confrontation and seek reconciliation so that local communities can confront dire poverty, climate change and other dangers.

In Chad, the country's bishops focused on the need for dialogue among the political parties in the country because discussions to date have not yet achieved the goal of peace.

The demand for an inclusive national dialogue by the majority of Chadians expresses their desire to change the dark page of their history and to look to the future with optimism, the Chadian bishops conference said in its message ahead of Christmas.

In Sudan, Bishop Yunan Andali of El Obeid, president of the Sudan Catholic Bishops' Conference, called on the faithful to pray for peace and justice in the country, which saw its path toward sustainable democratic rule sidetracked by a military coup Oct. 25.

#### Desmond Tutu dies at age 90

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (CNS) — Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu's compassion and sense of humor, as well as his commitment to justice and processes of peace, were among the many reasons he was an icon, said Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg. The retired Anglican archbishop of Cape Town — who in 1984 won the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his efforts to bring about a peaceful transition to a society with equal rights for all — died in Cape Town Dec. 26 at the age of 90. When he was asked at a meeting of young people why he was always so positive, Archbishop Tutu told them, "I'm a prisoner of hope," Bishop Dowling said. That sums up his life, the bishop said in a Dec. 26 telephone interview.



Tutu

#### September 2022 set for John Paul I beatification

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis will beatify Pope John Paul I Sept. 4 at the Vatican, according to Stefania Falasca, a journalist and vice postulator of the late pope's sainthood cause. In October, Pope Francis had signed a decree recognizing a miracle attributed to the intercession of Pope John Paul I, clearing the way for his beatification. At the time, a date for the ceremony was not announced. Writing Dec. 23 in Avignone, the daily newspaper owned by the Italian bishops' conference, Falasca said the date had been set. Pope John Paul I, an Italian who was born Albino Luciani, served only 33 days as pontiff; he died in the papal apartments Sept. 28, 1978, three weeks shy of his 66th birthday, shocking the world and a church that had just mourned the death of St. Paul VI.

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**BRIEFS**

**Illinois bishop decries end of parental notice**

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (CNS) Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Springfield decried a new Illinois law that repeals the state's Parental Notice of Abortion Act. By signing the repeal into law Dec. 17, Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker's action marks a dark and disgraceful moment in the history of the state of Illinois, the bishop said in a statement issued the same day. Effective Jan. 1, 2024, it repeals a 1995 law that required parents be notified of their minor daughter's abortion 48 hours before the procedure took place. The law did not require parental consent, as many other state laws do. The notification law did not actually take effect until 2013 because of various court challenges. That year the state Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the law was constitutional. The repeal measure, H.B. 370, was deceptively titled Illinois Youth Health and Safety Act, Bishop Paprocki said. Those legislators who promoted and voted in support of this legislation, and the governor who signed this unjust law, have granted a five-part victory to evil in our state, he said.



CNS PHOTO | ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

**In flyover, Kentucky bishop blesses his people**

OWENSBORO, Ky. (CNS) Owensboro Bishop William F. Medley wanted to bless his people who had been in the path of the tornadoes that struck western Kentucky during the night of Dec. 10, and with the help of a local pastor, some Knights of Columbus and an airplane, he did just that. On Dec. 21, the bishop flew over the southern regions of the Diocese of Owensboro with a monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament, blessing all below who had been impacted by the tornadoes. A week before, the bishop had driven 400 miles to visit the affected locations, including Resurrection Parish in Dawson Springs, St. Joseph Parish in Mayfield, the Princeton area and the Bowling Green area.

**Bishop Kicanas to undergo heart surgery**

TUCSON, Ariz. (CNS) In an online message to Catholics of the Tucson Diocese, retired Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas announced he has to undergo open heart surgery on or near Jan. 7 barring a COVID spike. Recently I learned that I had some serious issues with my heart. Quite a surprise! he wrote in the message, posted Dec. 20 on the website of the Tucson Diocese's online news outlet, New Outlook. It is estimated that the surgery will take about six hours followed by some five to seven days in the hospital and a six-week recovery at home, the 80-year-old prelate said. I have confidence in my doctors and their prognosis.

**Archdiocese sues public school district**

LOS ANGELES (CNS) The Archdiocese of Los Angeles is suing the Los Angeles Unified School District over millions of dollars in federal funds that the public school district is legally required to share with Catholic and other private schools for assisting low-income, academically struggling students with reading, math and counseling. Attorneys for the archdiocese filed the lawsuit in the Superior Court of California Dec. 16, nearly six months after the California Department of Education issued a 58-page investigation report that said the school district had committed egregious actions in withholding Title I federal funds from scores of Catholic schools. The state gave the Los Angeles Unified School District 60 days to begin timely and meaningful consultation with the archdiocese and to rectify any errors in calculating student need. The lawsuit said the school district has taken no such action.

**Retired Auxiliary Bishop Sheltz dies at age 75**

HOUSTON (CNS) Retired Auxiliary Bishop George A. Sheltz of Galveston-Houston died Dec. 21. No cause of death was given. The bishop, who was 75, was a native Houstonian and ministered in his home diocese for his entire priesthood of more than 50 years. Funeral arrangements for Bishop Sheltz are pending. There is real sadness for us at the death of Bishop Sheltz, said Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston. He was such a kind and generous man, a faithful priest. Whenever I asked him to do anything, he always said yes and did so cheerfully. He was a great model of a diocesan priest, conscientious. He mirrored Christ very much. As a priest of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Bishop Sheltz served at six parishes: Assumption, Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral, St. Vincent de Paul, Christ the Redeemer and Prince of Peace Church, all in Houston; and St. Anthony of Padua Church in The Woodlands near Houston. He served as dean of the San Jacinto Deanery and episcopal vicar of the archdiocese's northern vicariate while he was a parish priest.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATHY AND PETER DUNBECK

*Angels in the lead at St. Luke's*

**WESTBOROUGH – Youngsters from St. Luke the Evangelist Parish held a Nativity Pageant during which the Angels led all characters into the church. Making up the choir of angels were Alina Stone, Abigail Pursel, Thalia Maksian, Lillian Maksian, and Hanna Ciampa.**

**Groups urge court to block vaccine mandate**

BY CAROL ZIMMERMANN  
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON (CNS) The U.S. Supreme Court said late Dec. 22 that it will hear the legal challenges to the Biden administration's vaccine mandate for businesses with at least 100 employees and health care facilities.

The court scheduled oral arguments for Jan. 7. Until then, the court said, it will postpone any consideration of requests that it stay these mandates.

Business organizations, associations, religious groups and 27 states had called on the high court to stop the administration from mandating a coronavirus vaccine or, in lieu of a vaccine, COVID-19 testing for large employers.

Their objections came after the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit, based in Cincinnati, reinstated the vaccine mandate for employers Dec. 17.

Groups and states against the mandate filed appeals to Justice

Brett Kavanaugh, whose jurisdiction covers Ohio. Kavanaugh can ask the Supreme Court to consider these requests.

The three religious groups that filed a joint 179-page brief requesting a stay on the mandate are: American Family Association, a Christian activist organization; Answers in Genesis, a Christian apologetics ministry; and Daystar Television Network, an evangelical Christian network.

The groups said the mandate violated their First Amendment rights because it did not provide religious exemptions or accommodations. They also said it went against their sacred rights of belief and conscience.

After the court scheduled oral arguments Jan. 7 in challenges to the administration's vaccine mandates, White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement: We are confident in the legal authority for both policies and the Justice Department will vigorously defend both at the Supreme Court.

**Drug companies urged to share vaccine tech**

BY MARK PATTISON  
CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON (CNS) The global North is getting not only vaccinated but receiving booster shots as well to protect against the coronavirus. Meanwhile, in poorer nations, only 6% have gotten as much as a first shot.

If COVID-19 and its emerging variants are to be stopped, poor nations need not only the capacity to manufacture vaccines, but the technology behind those vaccines that have been proven successful at stemming COVID-19's spread.

We would need billions of vaccines available, said Mary Beth Powers, president and CEO of the New York-based Catholic Medical Mission Board, which provides long-term medical and development aid to communities affected by poverty and unequal access to health-care, focusing on women and children's health.

Production in the North is increasing, so we should have supplies that are near sufficient, she added, but that was before we started factoring in the boosters.

Powers, in a Dec. 22 phone interview with Catholic News Service, said: We

should think of the COVID vaccine as a public good not a private need, just as with previous vaccines for measles, diphtheria, polio and pertussis. We should have had a better plan ... or an idea of how to transfer the technology once vaccines were approved for use.

At a COVID-19 summit in September of this year, according to Powers, participants set a goal of having 70% of the world's population vaccinated by next

September. However, we're nowhere near that goal, she said. We're maybe at 6% of emerging markets of low- and middle-income countries. We're way behind where we need to be.

Governments of wealthier nations have been able to buy millions of doses for their citizens. But the bill from the drug companies is out of the price range of other countries, and they've had a much slower start getting people vaccinated, Powers said.



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## GUEST COMMENTARY

## Oppose assisted suicide law

BY KRIS CORREIRA | SPECIAL TO THE CFP

While the public hearing is over, the assisted suicide bill known as An Act Relative to End of Life Options (End of Life Options Act) is still awaiting action by the Joint Committee on Public Health. Continuing to meet with legislators to inform them of our opposition is crucial to preventing this bill from becoming law. Unless extended, the deadline for the committee to report out is Feb. 4. Particularly troubling about this bill is that it contains something other assisted suicide laws do not: the wiping away of conscience protection for Catholic clinicians, hospitals, and anyone else opposed to it.

Medicine was once centered on the knowledge, skill, and ethics of clinicians to provide compassionate patient care. As medicine progresses into a system centered on providing services, patient volume and satisfaction become the goods sought by the corporations and regulators running it. In this brave new world, declining a patient's request for a legal service because of a clinical judgement based on conscience is grounds for termination. Advocates claim this is necessary to prevent discrimination, but, in fact, it aims to end Catholic healthcare.

Catholic clinicians never refuse to care for a patient. We sometimes refuse to offer or refer for treatments that we view as harmful, such as assisted suicide, even if it is legal and others disagree. And we always offer alternatives that, for some things, may simply be our presence and support. Discrimination is not involved. It is a false claim by those who replace human dignity with human desire and do not tolerate those who think differently. While patient satisfaction is important, when government payments and clinician salaries depend on it then conscience objections must go, and any bioethical constraints go as well.

The End of Life Options Act is designed to protect doctors willing to hasten the death of their patients. It forces all others to either get used to it, refer to someone who will do it, or get out of medicine. None of those are acceptable options to those of us who never view someone as better off dead. Even now, this language already exists in recent palliative care laws. These laws mandate that all facilities and clinicians supply information to patients about palliative care and other end of life options. It also states that, Nothing in this section shall be construed to permit a healthcare professional to offer to provide information about assisted suicide or the prescribing of medication to end life. Medical professionals can opt out but must refer to someone willing to discuss all the end of life options.

Why would anti-conscience language be placed in a palliative care law when no one objects to informing patients about it? Keep in mind that the End of Life Options Act, which states that aid in dying shall not be considered assisted suicide. If the End of Life Options Act passes, everyone will be required to inform patients that aid in dying is an end of life option. Additionally, every doctor will be mandated to offer the service or refer to someone who will. That will be the end of Catholic medicine in Massachusetts.

Assisted suicide should never be legalized, and it should never be linked to palliative care. A small number of suicide activists are using palliative care to attack people of faith. Not only must we tell legislators to reject the assisted suicide bill, but also to amend the existing palliative care laws.

## OFFICIALS

**His Excellency, the Most Reverend Bishop Robert J. McManus, announced the following:**

**EFFECTIVE JANUARY 3, 2022**

**REV. RICHARD F. REIDY**, to administrator, St. Paul Parish, Warren, and St. Stanislaus Parish, West Warren, while remaining as vicar general and moderator of the curia, with residence at Christ the King Church, Worcester;

**REV. EDWARD M. RYAN**, to sacramental minister, St. Paul Parish, Warren, and St. Stanislaus Parish, West Warren;

**EFFECTIVE JANUARY 29, 2022:**

**REV. ALAN J. MARTINEAU**, from administrator, St. Paul Parish, Warren, and St. Stanislaus Parish, West Warren, to associate pastor, St. George Parish, Worcester, while remaining defender of the bond.



STATUES OF JOSEPH AND MARY ARE PICTURED IN THE NATIVITY SCENE IN ST. PETER'S SQUARE DURING A PREVIEW FOR JOURNALISTS AT THE VATICAN DEC. 9. THE NATIVITY IS FROM PERU'S HUANCAMELICA REGION.

CNS PHOTO | JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES

## Catechesis: The birth of Jesus

## POPE FRANCIS

I would like to recall with you the event history cannot dispense with: the birth of Jesus.

To comply with the Emperor Cesar Augustus' decree that ordered them to go to their place of origin to be registered, Joseph and Mary went from Nazareth down to Bethlehem. As soon as they arrived, they immediately sought lodging since the moment for Mary to give birth was imminent. Unfortunately, they did not find anything. So, Mary was forced to give birth in a stable (cf. Lk. 2:1-7).

Let's think: the creator of the universe. He was not given a place to be born! Perhaps this was in anticipation of what the evangelist John would say: He came to his own home, and his own people received him not (1:11); and what Jesus himself would say: Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head (Lk 9:58).

It was an angel who announced the birth of Jesus, and he did so to some lowly shepherds. And it was a star that showed the Magi the way to Bethlehem (cf. Mt 2:1, 9:10). An angel is a messenger from God. The star reminds us that God created the light (Gn 1:3) and that the baby would be the light of the world, as he would define himself (cf. Jn 8:12, 46), the true light that enlightens every man (Jn 1:9), that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (v. 5).

The shepherds personify the poor of Israel, lowly people who interiorly live with the awareness of their own want. Precisely for this reason, they trust more than others in God. They were the first to see the Son of God made man, and this encounter changed them deeply. The Gospel notes that they returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen (Lk 2:20).

The Magi are also around the newborn Jesus (cf. Mt 2:1-12). The Gospels do not tell us who the kings might have been, nor how many there were, nor what their names were. The only thing we know for certain is that they came from a distant country in

the East (perhaps from Babylonia, or Arabia, or Persia of that time). They set out on a journey seeking the King of the Jews, whom they identified with God in their hearts because they said they wanted to adore him. The Magi represent the pagan peoples, in particular all those who have sought God down through the ages, and who set out on a journey to find Him. They also represent the rich and powerful, but only those who are not slaves to possessions, who are not possessed by the things they believe they possess.

The message of the Gospels is clear: the birth of Jesus is a universal event that concerns all of humanity.

Dear brothers and sisters, humility is the only way that leads us to God. At the same time, specifically because it leads us to him, humility leads us also to the essentials of life, to its truest meaning, to the most trustworthy reason for why life is truly worth living.

Humility alone opens us up to the experience of truth, of authentic joy, of knowing what matters. Without humility we are cut off, we are cut off from understanding God and from understanding ourselves. Humility is needed to understand ourselves, all the more so to understand God. The Magi may have even been great according to the world's logic, but they made themselves lowly, humble, and precisely because of this they succeeded in finding Jesus and recognizing him. They accepted the humility of seeking, of setting out on a journey, of asking, of taking a risk, of making a mistake. ...

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to invite every man and woman to the stable of Bethlehem to adore the Son of God made man. May each one of us draw near to the crèche in our own homes or in the church or in another place, and try to make an act of adoration, inside: I believe you are God, that this baby is God. Please, grant me the grace of hu-

mility to be able to understand.

In approaching and praying by the crib, I would like to put the poor in the front row, those whom as St. Paul VI used to exhort we must love because in a certain way they are the sacrament of Christ; in them the hungry, the thirsty, the exiles, the naked, the ill, prisoners. He wanted to be mystically identified. We must help them, suffer with them, and also follow them because poverty is the surest path to possess the Kingdom of God in its fullness (Homily, 1 May 1969). For this reason, we must ask for the grace of humility: Lord, that I might not be proud, that I might not be self-sufficient, that I might not believe that I am the center of the universe. Make me humble. Grant me the grace of humility. And with this humility, may I find You. It is the only way; without humility we will never find God: we will find ourselves. The reason is that the person who is not humble has no horizon in front of him or her. They only have a mirror in which to look at themselves. Let us ask the Lord to break this mirror so we can look beyond, to the horizon, where he is. But he needs to do this: grant us the grace and the joy of humility to take this path.

Then, brothers and sisters, just like the star did with the Magi, I would like to accompany to Bethlehem all those who have no religious restlessness, who do not pose the question of God, or who may even fight against religion, all those who are improperly identified as atheists. I would like to repeat to them the message of the Second Vatican Council: The Church holds that the recognition of God is in no way hostile to man's dignity, since this dignity is rooted and perfected in God. [ ] Above all, the Church knows that her message is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart (Gaudium et Spes, 21).

Let's return home with the angel's song: Peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!

## Women of valor and the pro-life cause

I first met Erika Bachiochi then Erika Schubert in July 1998, when she was my student in the Tertio Millennio Seminar on the Free Society in Cracow. She had graduated from Middlebury College two years before and was doing a master's program in theology at Boston College, which she completed in 1999. Erika received her law degree from Boston University in 2002 and has been a visiting scholar at the Harvard Law School. Married and the mother of seven, she is one of the country's leading exponents of pro-life feminism, and her recent book, *The Rights of Women: Reclaiming a Lost Vision*, has received considerable and well-deserved attention. In her spare (sic) time, she helped found a classical academy, St. Benedict's, in Natick, Massachusetts, and led its board for two years. In addition to her affiliation with the Abigail Adams Institute, Erika is also my colleague at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

On Dec. 7, a date that will live in infamy in the fever swamps of pro-abortion America, Erika Bachiochi had the temerity to publish an op-ed article in the *New York Times*. In it, she criticized the individualistic libertarianism that characterizes our politics, left and right and expressed the hope that, with *Roe v. Wade* out of the way, the pro-life movement can begin where it left off in 1973, working to convince fellow citizens that we owe dependent and vulnerable unborn children what every human being is due: hospitality, respect, and care. A post-*Roe* America, she proposed, would be a country that would need to move beyond its wrongheaded obsession with autonomy and bring forth a renewed solidarity instead a solidarity in which support, assistance, and care are offered to pregnant women and their children, both born and unborn, and men are called to task when

they fail to meet their responsibilities.

It was a well-reasoned, well-written, compassionate, and temperate piece. And it caused thousands of readers of what still imagines itself the country's newspaper of record to come unhinged. An f-bomb in the subject line of an e-mail Erika received set the tone for much of the rest. Several enraged partisans wrote the leaders of the Abigail Adams Institute and the Ethics and Public Policy Center, urging that this heretic be terminated (e.g., I find it extremely difficult to imagine that anyone would pay her to think. ). One pyromaniacally-inclined correspondent confessed surprise that you didn't burst into flames upon submitting your opinion [piece] as the *Times* is the goddess heathen nest of all things you despise. Several indulged in crude anti-Catholicism: I assume that you are rigidly Catholic which may explain your viewpoint; the Church only cares for the soul, not the living, breathing child. None of this vitriol involved serious argument, as most contented themselves with a sheer venting of their disgust (e.g., I cannot find a single sentence in this



THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

George Weigel

pitiful attempt at analysis that contains a shred of truth; I would suggest that you get out of your ... ivory tower; Your article and opinion are drivel. Full Stop. )

Considering the nastiness and vacuity of these non-responses to Erika Bachiochi's article, one suspects that those who regard *Roe v. Wade* as the linchpin of American democracy are beginning to fear that they've lost the debate about abortion. They lost the scientific debate long ago, and now they're losing the constitutional debate. The oral argument over the *Dobbs* case at the Supreme Court on Dec. 1, in which the defenders of *Roe v. Wade* were clearly outclassed, could only have intensified those fears.

All of which reminded me of a conversation at the end of Roland Emmerich's film *Midway*, when Admiral Halsey (Dennis Quaid), on learning that the previously demeaned and underrated U.S. Navy had just sank four Japanese aircraft carriers, said to Admiral Nimitz (Woody Harrelson), God bless those boys. Turns out all they needed was a fair fight. That was all the pro-life cause needed, too a fair fight. That's what pro-lifers finally got at the Supreme Court on Dec. 1. And by the testimony of just about everyone (including pro-abortion legal commentators), the pro-life forces replicated the feats of the *Enterprise*, *Hornet*, and *Yorktown* pilots on June 4, 1942: they demolished their adversaries (with Justice Sonia Sotomayor in the role of hapless Japanese admiral Chuichi Nagumo).

Erika Bachiochi and many other women of valor helped make that possible by decades of legal and moral commentary that has eviscerated the worst Supreme Court decision since *Dred Scott*. By their lives, work, and courage, these women falsify the claim that the pro-life cause is anti-woman. And their critics can't stand it.



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# Giving ourselves to the Christchild

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

Our celebration of the Epiphany this Sunday is one of the most significant feasts of the whole Christmas season. In *The Essential Advent and Christmas Handbook*, the authors define epiphany as being from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, which means manifestation. The authors continue to note that the term refers primarily to the feast of the Epiphany and celebrates the manifestation of the Lord to all the world as represented by the Magi or the Three Kings.

In Matthew 2:1-12, Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem asking of King Herod where the newborn King of Jews was. Although news of Jesus' birth greatly troubled King Herod, it brought joy and fulfillment to the Magi and all those who would later seek Christ in faith as they did.

The passage begins in verse 1 wherein St. Matthew tells us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea. The footnotes on this passage in *The Ignatius Catholic Study Bible New Testament* inform us that Bethlehem was a small village south of Jerusalem whose Hebrew name means House of Bread. The footnotes go on to explain that Bethlehem also came to be known as The City of David (because it is (also) the site where David was anointed king. The fact that the Hebrew name of Bethlehem means House of Bread is significant because Jesus would later identify himself as The Bread of Life in John 6:48, explaining that he would become the Eucharist upon which God's people would feed and enjoy as spiritual sustenance.

St. Matthew notes that Jesus was born in the days of King Herod the Great. The Catholic Bible Dictionary tells us that Herod was King of Judea from 37-4 B.C. serving as one of the petty kings administering small portions of the Roman Empire. The authors of the text explain that with considerable energy, Herod convinced (the Emperor) Augustus of his worthiness to



SUNDAY'S  
GOOD NEWS

Father  
Michael N.  
Lavalley

the Magi may have been member(s) of the Persian priestly caste. He goes on to state that their coming from the East is vague, but probably Babylonia, in the New Testament, the traditional home of astrology, is meant. McKenzie also suggests that the story of the Magi is primarily theological in interest and purpose. Jesus is presented as the King-Messiah of the Gentiles, recognized by the Gentiles but not his own people.

This is where, therefore, the Epiphany as manifestation is shown. The Magi's long trek to Bethlehem from Babylon shows that Christ has been manifested as God to them and their journey reflects their faith in him.

remain as Rome's chief Palestinian client ruler but, once confirmed as such, initiated a tyrannical and at times paranoid regime over the people of Israel.

Herod's cunning and duplicity is reflected in Matthew 2:3-8. In *The Word on Fire Bible: The Gospels*, Bishop Robert Barron explains under the pretense of piety, (Herod) called the Magi to himself and inquired after the star's first appearance and then he asked (the Magi) to go to Bethlehem and find the exact locale. Why? To stamp out this new baby king, this king who threatened to undermine Herod's tyrannical rule.

But, who were the Magi who had appeared at King Herod's court? In *The Dictionary of The Bible*, author John McKenzie explains that

the Magi may have been member(s) of the Persian priestly caste. He goes on to state that their coming from the East is vague, but probably Babylonia, in the New Testament, the traditional home of astrology, is meant. McKenzie also suggests that the story of the Magi is primarily theological in interest and purpose. Jesus is presented as the King-Messiah of the Gentiles, recognized by the Gentiles but not his own people.

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## CATHOLIC QUIZ

### CatholicQuiz of the Week™

#### The Epiphany of the Lord

January 2, 2022

#### 1. According to Isaiah, which ancient city has a central place among the nations of the world?

- a. Bethlehem
- b. Nineveh
- c. Jerusalem

#### 2. According to Isaiah, what kind of light shined on the city while everywhere else was in darkness?

- a. a full moon
- b. a falling star
- c. the glory of the LORD

#### 3. According to the vision of Isaiah, what symbols of wealth would come forth from Sheba and mark a time of peace and prosperity for a restored Israel?

- a. large herds of sheep and cattle
- b. gold and frankincense
- c. an abundance of rain and new crops

#### 4. In the Letter to the Ephesians, what was not known in previous generations, but now revealed through the Holy Spirit?

- a. that the Gentiles are coheirs of the promise of Christ
- b. that a new temple would be built again in Jerusalem
- c. that the Jews would be free of the dominance of Rome

#### 5. Who was the King of Judea when Jesus was born?

- a. Pontius Pilot
- b. Caiaphas
- c. Herod

#### 6. According to Matthew, who came from the East to visit the baby Jesus after his birth?

- a. the chief priests
- b. the Queen of Sheba
- c. the Magi

#### 7. In Matthew's Gospel, whose prophecy foretold Bethlehem to be the birthplace of the Messiah?

- a. Micah
- b. Isaiah
- c. Jeremiah

### Answers and References

- 1 c. Jerusalem (Isaiah 60:1)
- 2 c. the glory of the LORD (Isaiah 60:1-2)
- 3 b. gold and frankincense (Isaiah 60:6)
- 4 a. that the Gentiles are coheirs of the promise of Christ (Ephesians 3:5-6)
- 5 c. Herod (Matthew 2:1)
- 6 c. the Magi (Matthew 2:1-2)
- 7 a. Micah (Matthew 2:5-6)

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# Building God's kingdom in new year

The powerful temptation to build earthly kingdoms has been a painful thorn lodged deep within the human psyche from ancient times to the present day.

Kingdoms from Babylon to Persia, from Greece to Rome, from Ottoman Turkey to Great Britain, have come and gone. And the days of the modern kingdoms of the U.S., Russia and China are numbered as well. Yet, the powerful cling to their kingdoms at all costs — costs that have always crushed the weak, poor and vulnerable, and continue to do so to this day.

From abortion to war and the arms industry which feeds it from poverty to hunger, from untreated sickness to euthanasia, from human trafficking to child labor, from homeless people on our streets to fleeing refugees waiting at our borders, from pollution to climate change, from corporate greed to militaristic nationalism countless fellow human beings are enduring tremendous suffering in a world that is largely indifferent to their cries — what Pope Francis calls the culture of indifference.

Boldly challenging this culture of indifference, the Holy Father repeatedly declares that we are morally obligated to justly meet the needs of the world's poor and vulnerable, and link them with the needs of our common earth home.

In his cutting-edge environmental encyclical letter *Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home*, Pope Francis writes: Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor (see: <https://bit.ly/3ejj980>).

In hearing the cry of the earth, the pope warns, A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. Adding that the problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels — that is coal, oil and gas.



MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE

By Tony  
Magliano

And in hearing the cry of poor, Francis astutely observes that living comfortable lifestyles far removed from the poor, often leads to a numbing of conscience and to a cold impersonal analysis. At times this attitude exists side by side with a green rhetoric.

In *Laudato Si'*, Francis tries to awaken the consciences of all — especially the economically and politically powerful — to the plight of the poor. He writes that in political and economic discussions the poor seem to be brought up as an afterthought. Indeed, when all is said and done, they frequently remain at the bottom of the pile.

All of this indifference and injustice is rooted in self-centered decisions to build our

national and individual kingdoms. The only remedy to this cold-hardness of heart and mesmerized path to self-destruction is a full rejection of my kingdom come, and a full embrace of Thy kingdom come!

Those of us desiring to build the kingdom of God need to be growing in the fruits of his Holy Spirit love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and to actively use these fruits to end the suffering of our heavily burdened brothers and sisters and deeply wounded mother earth. And we need to tirelessly work to transform the structures of sin as St. Pope John Paul II called them which exist in our cultures, governments and corporations into structures aiding the building up of God's kingdom.

## FUNDAMENTALS OF CATHOLICISM

# Faith in the Church

BY FATHER KENNETH BAKER, SJ

The Nicene Creed embodies our official profession of faith as Roman Catholics. The three major sections concern the Holy Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the final section we profess our faith in the Church, baptism, resurrection of the dead and eternal life. Let us reflect on our faith in the Church.

If you think about it for a minute, it is truly astonishing that we say we believe in the Church. Non-Catholic Christians do not look upon the Church as we do. For many of them, the Church is an historical accident not intended by Christ something that just happened after the death of Jesus. They do not look upon the Church as a structured body, a hierarchical institution or a perfect society that was founded by Christ on Peter, the rock, and intended to perdure until the Second Coming of Jesus in glory.

For the Catholic, however, the Church is all of that and more. The Church is also the pilgrim people of God on its way to the glory of the Father; it is the mystical body of Christ a body because it is structured, visible and historical, and mystical because it is animated by the spirit of Jesus Christ; it is the bride of Christ which he loves and for which he offered his life; it is a holy temple composed of many parts; it is a sacred community, held together by one faith and one baptism, which operates through the seven sacraments given to her by her founder.

No matter which image or images are used to describe the Church, none of them is completely adequate because the Church is a mystery. This means that the total reality of the Church ultimately escapes the confines of human concepts and images. The principle which makes the Church possible in the first place is from above, for the Church is from God and transcends the capacity of the human mind fully to comprehend it. In early Christian mosaics, the Church was often represented by Noah's Ark, the idea being that just as Noah and his family were saved from the flood by the ark, so also the Church is the only ark of salvation for us. Thus, we find St. Cyprian in the third century saying that outside the Church there is no salvation, an idea that has been repeated in Church

documents since that time (Vatican II, Constitution of the Church, 14). The formula was narrowly understood by Father Leonard Feeney in the late-1940s, but in clarifying the Church's position on the matter the Holy Office, in 1949, in a letter that was approved by Pope Pius XII, explained that those who are in a state of invincible ignorance about the necessity of belonging to the Catholic Church can be saved if they have at least an implicit desire to enter the Church and if their hearts are informed with perfect charity.

When we say that we believe in the Church we are making the Church an object of supernatural and divine faith. When we believe in something by divine faith, this means we accept it as true on the word of God himself who has revealed it to us.

Thus, the very existence of the Church, including her essential structure and her outstanding characteristics, has been revealed to us by Jesus Christ. Accordingly, we profess our belief in the one Church of Jesus Christ when we pray the Nicene Creed.

Since the Church was founded by Jesus, but on the human foundation of Peter and the other Apostles, it has both divine and human dimensions. Because the Church is also human, she has some defects — scandals that sometimes drive people away from her. But we must never forget that, with all the faults of her ministers and people, she is still the only bride of Christ. Above all, she is our mother since she gave us birth into the supernatural life of grace that makes us adopted sons of God and heirs of the kingdom. We not only believe in her; we also love her as the one mother who will never fail us.

**NEXT WEEK: ONE CHURCH:** "It has been estimated that there are more than 200 religious groups in the United States that call themselves Christian. St. Paul said that we are "one body" in Christ, but our painful experience tells us that the body of Christ is divided into many.



THE CREED

# Around the Diocese

The Catholic Free Press welcomes information on events from parish and diocesan groups. Items should be received two weeks prior to event. Mail to: Calendar, The CFP, 49 Elm St., Worcester, MA 01609 e-mail to: calendar@catholicfreepress.org or fax: 508-756-8315

## THIS WEEK

**SATURDAY, JANUARY 1 -  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 7**

**MASS & ADORATION-SPENCER:** On First Saturday Mary, Queen of the Rosary Parish, 7 Church St., will hold an 8 a.m. Mass, the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. ADORATION IS SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

**THRIFT SHOP-FURNITURE ANNEX-LEICESTER:** The New to You thrift shop, 759 Main St., store hours are Saturdays, 9 a.m.-noon.; **Tuesdays**, 5-7 p.m.; **Wednesdays**, 9 a.m.-noon; and **Thursdays**, 2-6 p.m. Gently used donations of clothing/accessories, home décor/housewares and furniture are welcome (no electronics). Contact the parish office, 508-859-8083 or Donna Jringi at 774-262-5219 for information.

**PRO-LIFE VIGIL-WORCESTER:** A vigil will be held 9 a.m. **Saturdays** to pray for America and the unborn, across the street from Planned Parenthood, 475 Pleasant St.

**LITTLE AUDREY FIRST SATURDAY:** There will be NO Little Audrey Santo First Saturday Mass and devotions Jan. 1, resuming **Feb. 5** (currently accepting the first 8 registrants for in person Mass) which will be livestreamed on its Facebook page, 10:30 a.m.- noon at facebook.com/Little-Audrey-Santo. A link can be found on its website, littleaudreysantofoundation.com, to watch live and it will be posted for later viewing. Call 508-755-8712 for information.

**FAMILY MASS-DUDLEY:** St. Andrew Bobola Catholic Parish, 54 West Main St., will celebrate Mass, **Sundays** at 10:30 a.m., for children and families. The Mass will be short (30 minutes). For information, call the rectory at 508-943-5633.

**AFRICAN MASS-WORCESTER:** The diocesan African Ministry will hold Mass **Sundays**, 11:30 a.m., at St. Andrew the Apostle Mission, 5 Spaulding St.

**AFRICAN MASS-FITCHBURG:** St. Anthony of Padua Parish, 84 Salem St., will celebrate **Sunday** Mass in Swahili and English at 12:30 p.m.

**AFRICAN/GHANAIA MASS-WORCESTER:** St. Joan of Arc Parish, 570 Lincoln St., will celebrate **Sunday** Mass in Twi at 2 p.m.

**MASS AND ROSARY-CLINTON:** St. John, Guardian of Our Lady Parish, 80 Union St., will pray the rosary following the 7 a.m. Mass, **Monday-Friday** and following the 8 a.m. Mass **Saturday**.

**ADORATION-FITCHBURG:** St. Bernard Parish, 333 Mechanic St., holds eucharistic adoration **Monday** and **Tuesday**, 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m., in the church. (Divine Mercy Chapel closed at this time.)

**THRIFT STORE-WORCESTER:** Urban Missionaries' The Little Store, 242 Canterbury St., is open **Monday-Friday**, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and **Saturday**, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Call 508-831-



PHOTO COURTESY OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES

## Catholic Charities Christmas helpers

**WORCESTER – Administrators and staff from Catholic Charities Worcester County were busy on Christmas morning at St. Peter Central Catholic Elementary gymnasium in Worcester packing food for 2,750 meal deliveries made by hundreds of volunteers. Pictured from left are Maritza Cedeno, Tim McMahon, Carol LaFalam, Meghan McLeod, Katherine Pacheco, Matt Travers, and Male Kamya.**

7455 or visit thelittlestore242.com or on Facebook@TheLittleStoreWorcesterMA to browse or for information.

**MASS & ROSARY-WESTBOROUGH:** St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, 70 W. Main St., invites all to pray the rosary, **Monday-Friday**, after the 9 a.m. Mass.

**DAILY ADORATION-CLINTON:** St. John, Guardian of Our Lady Parish, 149 Chestnut St., Clinton, will hold eucharistic adoration **Monday-Friday**, 1-6 p.m. in the upper church.

**ROSARY-LEOMINSTER:** St. Cecilia Parish invites all to pray the rosary **Monday-Friday**, 3 p.m. in the church, 180 Mechanic St., and a men's group meets to pray the rosary **Wednesday** evenings at 7 p.m.

**BILINGUAL (ENGLISH & TWI) DEVOTIONS:** The Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary Ministry will hold bilingual devotions by conference call as follows: Divine Mercy Prayer **Monday-Friday** at 3 p.m. (for the sick, the souls in purgatory and other individuals' prayer requests) and **Friday** rosary prayers, 7-8 p.m. For conference call dial 727-731-4235 (No access code required) or dial 712-451-0011 (enter meeting ID: 269300).

**PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY-SOUTHBOROUGH:** St. Anne Prayer Shawl members meet **Mondays**, 10 a.m.-noon, in the parish hall, 20 Boston Road, to knit/crochet for people in need of a blessed shawl. Call the parish office if you or someone you know are in need of one. Donations are accepted. Members pray the rosary at 10:30 a.m.

**EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION-GARDNER:** Adoration will be held 6-8 p.m. **Mondays** in Holy Spirit Church, 50 Lovewell St. All are welcome.

**EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION-WESTBOROUGH:** Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and adoration will be held **Tuesdays**, 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m. with Benediction at 1 p.m. at St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, 70 W. Main St.

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE SUPPORT GROUP-CLINTON:** The Kolbe Family Group is open to friends and family of loved ones who are struggling with substance abuse and mental illness. This group provides spiritual and emotional support as well as educational resources. Meetings on the 1st and 3rd **Tuesday** of the month after the 6 p.m. Mass from 6:45-8 p.m. in the lower level of St. John, Guardian of Our Lady Church, 80 Union St. For more information, please email KolbeFamilyGroup@gmail.com

**BIBLE STUDY-VIRTUAL:** Father Conrad S. Pecevech, a retired priest of the diocese, will hold Bible study via Zoom, **Tuesdays**, 7:30-8:15 p.m. Newcomers are invited to participate. To receive the link to participate send your request to rusoire77@gmail.com.

**EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION-W. BOYLSTON:** Eucharistic adoration will be held **Wednesdays**, 3-7 p.m. at Our Lady of Good

Counsel Church, 111 Worcester St. Enter church through parking lot side entrance door.

**HOLY HOUR-NORTHBOROUGH:** A Holy Hour of adoration will be held **Wednesdays**, 7-8 p.m. at St. Rose of Lima Parish, 244 W. Main St.

**FAMILY PRAYER NIGHT-WORCESTER:** St. George Parish, 38 Brattle St., hosts a family prayer night, **Thursdays** at 6 p.m. People gather to pray for all families in the upper church. Prayers include the rosary, the Divine Mercy chaplet and Eucharistic Adoration. For information call 508-853-0183. Eucharistic Adoration is also a part of this time of prayer on the **Thursday** before the first **Friday** of each month.

**FIRST FRIDAY DEVOTIONS-WORCESTER:** Our Lady of Mercy Parish, 341 June St., will be open extended hours for adoration on the first **Friday** of the new year. The front doors of the church will be open on Friday, **Jan. 7** at midnight until 10 p.m. for silent adoration. A Liturgy of Thanksgiving and blessings for the new year will be offered at 6 p.m.

**BINGO-LEOMINSTER:** St. Cecilia Parish, 188 Mechanic St., will hold bingo **Fridays**. Doors open at 4 p.m. Games begin at 6:30 p.m.

**BINGO-WORCESTER:** St. Christopher Parish, 950 West Boylston St., will hold bingo on **Fridays**. Doors open at 4 p.m. and games begin at 7 p.m. For information call Leo at 508-853-9492.

**FRIDAY MASS AND DEVOTIONS-DUDLEY:** Please join us at St. Andrew Bobola Church, 54 W. Main St., **Fridays** for the rosary at 5:30 p.m. followed by Mass at 6 p.m., eucharistic adoration, the chaplet of Divine Mercy and venerating a first-class relic of Saint Faustina. Confession will be available in the church vestibule during the Rosary at 5:30 p.m., before Mass.

**CATHOLIC MEN'S GROUP-WORCESTER:** Christ the King Parish will host a men's group meeting for prayer and spiritual development on First Fridays (**Jan. 7**), 7:30-8:30 p.m., in the church, 1052 Pleasant St. The format will vary, but will incorporate prayer, the rosary, spiritual reading and discussion. All Catholic men are invited and welcome.

## UPCOMING

**SCOUT LEADERSHIP COURSE:** The Catholic Committee on Scouting will offer National Catholic Leadership Development, a course designed to help Scout leaders come to a better understanding of the role of religious faith in their lives, at Holy Name of Jesus House of Studies, 51 Illinois St., Worcester, **Jan. 8**, 8 a.m.-noon. Preregistration is required, via email to jdpaulin@gmail.com by **Jan. 6**.

**NO JAN. LITURGY IN SONG:** Due to various scheduling conflicts, the previously scheduled **Jan. 9**, 6 p.m. sung Mass at St. John Parish, Clinton, is cancelled and will resume the second Sunday of each month, on **Feb.13**.

**PIETA GRIEF SUPPORT - WORCESTER:** Pieta is an ongoing support group for bereaved parents. Anyone who has experienced the death of a child is welcome to attend. Meetings are held the second Monday (**Jan. 10**) of the month at St. George Church, 38 Brattle St., at 7 p.m. in the conference room. For more information, call Terry Gentile at 508-284-0796 or Sue Stevens at 508-852-4887, or email pieta3@gmail.com.

**LAY PRAYER FOR PRIESTS-WORCESTER:** Immaculate Conception Parish, 353 Grove St., will host a monthly holy hour 7-8 p.m., to pray for priests, Friday, **Jan. 14**, consisting of adoration, a short reflection, the rosary, silent prayer and benediction. Please join us for this important act of service and prayer for our priests. It is held every second **Friday** of the month.

**ONGOING GRIEF SUPPORT-UXBRIDGE:** The Grieving with Great Hope (GWGH) Ministry at St. Mary Parish will offer a monthly grief support meeting, 6:30-8 p.m., on the following **Fridays: Jan. 14, Feb. 11, March 11, April 8, May 6, June 10, July 8, Aug. 12** and **Sept. 9**, in the parish hall, 77 Mendon St. If you are grieving, you are welcome to attend. Contact Diane Moriarty at dmoriarty@stmaryuxbridge.org or the office at 508-278-2226.

**PRO-LIFE MORNING OF REFLECTION-WORCESTER:** All are invited to a Pro-life morning of reflection, Saturday, **Jan. 15** at St. Paul Cathedral, 15 Chatham St., presented by Monsignor James Moroney. Visit worcesterdiocese.org/january-events-links for pending updates.

**CHICKEN PARM DINNER-NORTHBRIDGE:** St. Peter Parish will hold a Chicken Parm Dinner "To Go." Pick up will be Saturday, **Jan. 15** starting at 5:30 p.m. in the parish hall, 39 Church Ave. Tickets are \$15/dinner and include salad and dessert. Orders must be purchased in advance. Call 508-234-2156 or email parishoffice@stpeterrockdale.org for tickets or with questions. "Pay It Forward" purchase an extra dinner to be delivered to someone in need in our local community.

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If you, or someone you know, were abused by someone representing the Catholic Church, please believe in the possibility of hope and help and healing.

We encourage you to come forward and contact:

**Victims Assistance Coordinator**

at the Diocese of Worcester

508-929-4363

(a direct, confidential line)

or [jaudette@worcesterdiocese.org](mailto:jaudette@worcesterdiocese.org)

# New partnership helps two Catholic organizations serve more people

BY CHRISTINA GALEONE | CFP CORRESPONDENT

About four or five years ago, retired educator Betty George attended a Christmas luncheon for a local club that she belongs to. For its Christmas charitable giving, the club made a donation to Urban Missionaries of Our Lady of Hope. Its members then toured the Worcester nonprofit's Little Store. But while the tour was brief, the positive impact the nonprofit and its comprehensive thrift store had on her was lasting.

Earlier this year, when the Needs Committee member for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's Blessed Sacrament Parish Conference participated in a SVdP meeting at which the need for furniture for low-income families was discussed, she remembered the Little Store.

Mrs. George proposed a partnership with Urban Missionaries that would benefit both the people served by their SVdP chapter - known as a conference - and the nonprofit.

"What I'm trying to establish is the philosophy behind it; we call it neighbors helping neighbors," she said of the recent partnership, adding, "They liked the fact that we might be helping the people down the street."

The informal partnership between the Blessed Sacrament conference in Worcester and Urban Missionaries consists of the conference collecting and donating gently used clothing and household items to the Little Store. The nonprofit estimates the value of each collection of donations. Then, accordingly, it issues Little Store vouchers, about every other month, to the conference. Mrs. George and other members then distribute the vouchers to the people they serve. They can use them to get furniture, clothing, household items, books and more.



In October, the Blessed Sacrament Parish Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul held a fill-the-truck collection for goods for the Urban Missionaries of Our Lady of Hope in the parish parking lot.

TANYA CONNOR | CFP

In the fall, the conference held a fill-the-truck collection drive.

"It really was a big, big success; we were thrilled," Mrs. George said. "I know my parish well. A lot of people wanted to donate to Urban Missionaries."

Tom Murray, the conference's president, is equally grateful for the success of the partnership.

"It's been beneficial to us," he said, noting that one couple they were able to help had been transitioning out of homelessness. He added, "We were able to provide them with enough to furnish their apartment."

Buoyed by that success, the conference members continue to find ways to give a "hand up" to the people they serve. They've recently arranged, through MassHire, to offer free online job search workshops.

They've also made the workshops available to members of other SVdP conferences who can use the information to advise the people that they serve.

Just as that Christmas visit to the Little Store had an indelible impact on Mrs. George, the good work that the Blessed Sacrament conference has been doing has had a positive effect on Susan Trelon, the president of St. Vincent de Paul Worcester, who oversees all the conferences in the Central District of Massachusetts. She appreciates the relationship that the conference has established with Urban Missionaries.

"It's great," she commented. "It's a good relationship, whereby you've got two Catholic nonprofits coming together and working together. That's always a good thing."

# Parishioners remember Father Ridick as being kind, caring and wonderful

Longtime parishioners fondly remember Father George J. Ridick as a shepherd who fostered community when two Worcester parishes were merged. Father Ridick, 76, retired pastor of Sacred Heart-St. Catherine of Sweden Parish in Worcester, died Dec. 21 in St. Vincent Hospital.

"He wanted us to be a community right from the beginning" when he came to St. Catherine of Sweden Parish, said Theresa Gallagher, who'd been a parish council member there, and is now a member of Sacred Heart-St. Catherine of Sweden. To form community, they restarted parish bazaars, had breakfasts, and went mountain climbing, she said.

"Another thing he wanted to do - he wanted to make sure we'd be a pro-life parish," she said. He had parishioners - including the youth - listen to speakers at a pro-life rally in Boston (and shop while there) and line the streets of Worcester with pro-life signs as part of the Life Chain.

"When we merged our parishes we all had reservations," but "he made our parish stronger," said Cathleen Grant, choir member, religious education teacher and Ladies Guild member at Sacred Heart-St. Catherine of Sweden. And, she said, "He healed a lot of hearts that were still raw from dealing with the after affects of the scandal."

She said: "He was really a

shepherd to us. He shared himself wonderfully with us. He was unstinting in his love and in his guidance in every way."

"He's larger than life - a great heart, a kind and caring wonderful priest and friend and mentor," said Lynn Lorusso, another Sacred Heart-St. Catherine parishioner. "I worked with him for 11 years (as) administrative assistant. He helped me grow spiritually, personally."

"How much I admired his devotion to God and his priesthood," said Patricia Reardon, Sacred Heart-St. Catherine of Sweden

food pantry manager, who worked with Father Ridick the whole time he was at Sacred Heart. "I will feast forever on memories of his great humor and the nicknames he bestowed on his parishioners." She said it meant a lot to people when he made them feel special.

"He was always impressing upon us how we would meet the Lord when we die," and that God would choose the time, Ms. Gallagher said. "I said to myself, 'He's been wanting to meet the Lord.' What a gift he chose for Father George to (die) at Christmas."

Father Ridick was born in Worcester on Jan. 29, 1945, the son of George J. and Angela C. (Bender) Ridick. He graduated from Classical High School in 1963 and from Assumption College in 1967, where he was an All-America basketball player.

He prepared for the priesthood at St. Mary Seminary, Baltimore, from 1969 to 1973. He was

ordained on June 2, 1973, at St. Casimir Church by Bishop Bernard J. Flanagan.

Following ordination, he was assigned as associate pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Worcester. In October 1976, he entered the U.S. Navy Chaplain Corps. He returned to the Diocese of Worcester and was named temporary administrator of St. Denis Parish, Ashburnham, in June 1983. In July 1983, he was appointed temporary associate of Our Lady of the Angels Parish. In October 1983, Father Ridick was assigned to the Lithuanian College/Gregorian University, Rome, where in May 1986, he was awarded a master's degree in clinical religious psychology. He was assigned as associate pastor of St. Roch Parish, Oxford, on June 27, 1986.

On June 1, 1988, he was named pastor of St. Catherine of Sweden Parish, Worcester. On June 30, 2007, he was named pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish, Worcester, while remaining pastor of St. Catherine of Sweden Parish, Worcester, and later was named pastor of the newly established Sacred Heart-St. Catherine of Sweden Parish located at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church.

He was inducted into the Worcester Public Schools 2015/2016 High School Athletic Hall of Fame. He led the Classical High School Tigers to two District 3 playoffs and one championship. He was named to the All-City team.

An entry in the Class of 1963 Classical yearbook called him "possibly the greatest basketball player ever to emerge from Classical High."

He retired in June 2018 and had been living with other retired priests in Southgate at Shrewsbury.

In an interview last January, Father Ridick reflected on his 45 years in the priesthood. "Every day was different," he said, "and you had contact with people throughout their lives and in so many important moments of their lives from birth until death and in sickness in between, marriages, setbacks, victories and accomplishments. You were part of people's families through the years. You celebrated them with sacraments, you celebrated them with activities in the parish and in the community, and you just encouraged each other to do better as we continue through life's journey. It wasn't always easy. Sometimes, as a matter of fact, the harder it was, the more you knew you were needed."

He is survived by his brother, James G. Ridick and his wife Nancy (Foley) of Worcester; nephew Timothy Ridick; his nieces Kate Ridick and Kris Sullivan. He is predeceased by his sister, Georgiana Ridick.

Bishop McManus was principal celebrant of his funeral Mass on Tuesday. A committal service and entombment followed in St. John Mausoleum.

# GRACE to the Finish nears goal

BY TANYA CONNOR THE CATHOLIC FREE PRESS

More than \$411,000 was raised this month - by numerous people at multiple sites - for a building memorializing a college student and a priest, organizers reported.

"GRACE to the Finish II," the Dec. 17-19 fundraiser for the new center for St. Mary Parish and Our Lady of the Valley Regional School in Uxbridge, was to last 62 hours, zero minutes, and three seconds - in honor of the second anniversary of Grace Rett's world-record-setting indoor rowing time.

The 20-year-old OLV alumna, who boldly proclaimed her faith, died in 2020 in a motor vehicle accident while on a training trip in Florida with the College of the Holy Cross Women's rowing team.

The Grace Rett Athletic Center is to fulfill her dream for her elementary and middle school to have its own indoor athletic space. The building is to include a basketball court and classrooms.

Though much money was raised by Grace to the Finish II, "equally important to us is the inspiration," and Grace's legacy, said her father, Christopher Rett.

The legacy of Father Dennis J. O'Brien is also being carried on in the center, which is scheduled to be dedicated in January, said Edward Reynolds, OLV principal.

Father O'Brien, who took up residence at St. Mary's when he retired in 2017, died unexpectedly July 17. Friends and former parishioners wanted to memorialize him by naming part of the center for him.

Mr. Rett said \$100,000 of the \$411,000 raised by the second annual "Grace to the Finish" was for the Father O'Brien wing.

More than \$3.6 million of the overall goal of \$3.8 million has been raised, he said.

Religious sisters are to be honored along with Father O'Brien "to reflect Father O'Brien's love and commitment to the religious orders that helped form his faith and empower his ministry," according to Mr. Reynolds. The Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Sisters of St. Joseph, who taught him, and the Sisters of St. Anne he worked with at Holy Name Central Catholic High School in Worcester, will be represented.

"We're trying to inspire parishioners from where Father O'Brien served to consider making a gift in his honor," because he was devoted to Catholic education, Mr. Reynolds said.

Grace's sister, Brianne, is also an inspiration, according to their father. Among fund-raising efforts for GRACE to the Finish II was what she did at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York, where she is a student. When asked in a radio interview about her relationship with God after her sister's death, she said that relationship is stronger, their father said.

"I think that's why the athletic director wanted to focus on her story," Mr. Rett said. He said that the fund-raising and awareness-raising included a talk Brianne gave to fellow students, an article about her and bracelets she designed which honor Grace.

Other efforts included Holy Cross rowing team members and others on indoor rowing machines, hoop-a-thons and a read-a-thon by OLV students, indoor golfing, gift card raffles, an online auction and a musician and businesses donating proceeds to the cause.

## TV/ONLINE/RADIO

### SCHEDULE OF BROADCASTS

On Livestream [worcesterdiocese.org/livestreams](http://worcesterdiocese.org/livestreams)

### DAILY AND SUNDAY MASS

- Monday-Friday at 9 a.m., English
  - Sunday (Spanish) at 8 a.m.
  - Sunday (English) at 10 a.m.
- All Livestream Masses can be REPLAYED after they have aired.

On Cable Access Stations **DAILY AND SUNDAY MASS** (as of 7/14/2021)

### IN WORCESTER

- WCCA TV Ch. 194, "The People's Channel"
  - Monday-Friday at 9 a.m., English
  - Sunday (Spanish) at 8 a.m.
  - Sunday (English) at 10 a.m.\*
- Streaming at [www.wccatv.com](http://www.wccatv.com) and [Roku@Worcester.TV](mailto:Roku@Worcester.TV) \*Sunday Mass (repeat) Monday at 6 p.m.

### OUTSIDE WORCESTER DAILY MASS

- Auburn Ch. 191 at 9 a.m.
- Boylston Ch. 191 at 9 a.m.
- Charlton Ch. 191 at 9 a.m.
- Holden Ch. 191 at 9 a.m.
- Leicester Ch. 191 at 9 a.m.
- Millbury Ch. 191 at 9 a.m.
- Northborough Spectrum Ch. 191 and Verizon Ch. 31 at noon

- Shrewsbury Ch. 28 and 328 at 9 a.m.
- Spencer Ch. 192 at 9 a.m.
- Sutton (Monday - Thursday) Spectrum Ch. 194 and Verizon Ch. 29 at 9 a.m.
- Upton Access TV Ch. 192 at 9 a.m.
- Webster Access TV Ch. 192 at 9 a.m.
- West Boylston Ch. 191 at 9 a.m.

### SUNDAY MASS

- Athol/Orange Ch. 13 and 135 at 10:30 a.m.
- Auburn Ch. 191 at 10 a.m.
- Boylston Ch. 191 at 10:30 a.m.
- Charlton Ch. 191 at 10 a.m.
- Holden Ch. 191 at 10 a.m.
- Millbury Ch. 191 at 10 a.m.
- Northborough Spectrum Ch. 191 and Verizon Ch. 31
- Spencer Ch. 192 at 10 a.m.
- Templeton Ch. 8 at 10 a.m.
- Upton Access TV Ch. 192 at 10 a.m.
- Webster Access TV Ch. 192 at 10 a.m.
- West Boylston Ch. 191 at 10 a.m.

### CATHOLIC RADIO PROGRAMMING

- 5:45 a.m., Morning prayer, WTAG, 580 AM and 94.9 FM
- EWTN Global Catholic Radio (24-hour Livestream)
- 1230 AM, Worcester, 970 AM and 101.1 FM, Southbridge
- Eternal Life Radio, WQPH 89.3 FM Fitchburg

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FROM PAGE ONE

▼ A ceremonial ground-breaking for the Grace Rett Athletic Complex and Education (GRACE) Center was held at St. Mary Parish's center. The GRACE Center is being built behind Our Lady of the Valley Regional School in Uxbridge. The building is named for an OLV graduate who died in a motor vehicle crash while on a training trip in 2020 with the Holy Cross Women's rowing team, a day after her 20th birthday. The project will fulfill her dream for her school to have its own indoor athletic space.



Construction on the building continued throughout the year. And a fundraiser in December brought in an additional \$400,00 for the building project, leaving it about \$150,000 short of its total goal.

The Diocese released a pastoral letter, "Coming Home to Mass," inviting people who have been away from church during the pandemic to come back. Physical restrictions caused by the pandemic were lifted and full occupancy of churches was allowed. As a community of faith we have been praying for this moment during these many long months of the pandemic. Now our ability to be present personally at Mass is a blessed reality, the bishop said in his letter. The bishop also restored the obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.

JUNE

A 95-year-old football game tradition ended with St. Peter/St. John high schools. St. Paul Diocesan Junior-Senior High School of Worcester and St. Bernard High School of Fitchburg announced plans to begin a Thanksgiving football rivalry next fall replacing the former Thanksgiving Day rivalry. St. Peter-Marian High School and Holy Name High School merged to form St. Paul's, which opened in the fall of 2020 on Holy Name's renovated campus. St. Bernard's won the inaugural Bishop's Cup Thanksgiving game with a score of 48-14.

► St. Paul Diocesan Junior/Senior High School held its first graduation with a baccalaureate Mass on the school's football field. Bishop McManus and Michael Clark, head of school, presented diplomas to St. Paul's first graduating class. There were 158 diplomas awarded.



▲ About 200 people attended an ordination at St. Paul Cathedral. Fathers Lucas M. LaRoche and John L. Laroche grew up in the Worcester Diocese. Bishop McManus gave the new priests the traditional instruction about being holy, administering the sacraments, and following the Good Shepherd, who came not to be served but to serve, and to seek and save the lost.

▼ Later in the month Bishop McManus ordained permanent Deacons John William Ladroga, Donald John Pegg and Scott Joseph Camilleri at a Mass in St. Paul Cathedral in Worcester. Their wives, children, grandchildren and other supporters participated.



# LOCAL 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

JULY

Bishop McManus issued a statement regarding Pope Francis' apostolic letter on the traditional Latin Mass in which he reinforced the theological principle that the bishops in communion with the Bishop of Rome constitute the visible principle and foundation of the unity of their particular Churches. The bishop promised to serve the spiritual well-being of all.

AUGUST

▼ News of a destructive earthquake in Haiti saddened the faithful in the Diocese, many of whom have supported their Haitian brothers and sisters in the faith. Father William C. Konicki, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Hopedale learned that the parish's twin parish, St. Gerard Church, was demolished by the 7.2 magnitude earthquake. For 20 years, the parish has twinned with the Pont Salmon parish, erecting schools, chapels and other buildings, and providing \$900 a month for support. Father Claude Renel Elysee, St. Gerard pastor, emailed Sacred Heart photos of the church and parish center, both of which had collapsed. Sacred Heart helped to build the parish center. Other parishes in the Diocese also received bad news from their twinning parishes in Haiti. Parish communities supported by St. Roch Parish in Oxford and St. Gabriel the Archangel in Upton were also devastated.



The pandemic was bad, but it was good for enrollment at Catholic schools in the diocese. Enrollment increased from the 2020-2021 school year in most of the Catholic schools. Data showed that schools had more students enrolled in 2021 than the previous year. Superintendent David Perda said, "Most of those gains are double digit gains."

SEPTEMBER

After a mandate from the Worcester Health Department, that included all schools in the city, Catholic schools were required to implement mask-wearing indoors. Later in the fall the city required masks in all public buildings, including churches. As the year ended, the mask mandate was still in place. (Photo on Page One.)

The Worcester Catholic Women's Conference returned in 2021 and focused on evil in society. The conference drew about 360 women from the Diocese and beyond to St. Joseph Basilica and School in Webster. In his homily at the closing Mass of the conference at St. Joseph Basilica, Bishop McManus noted that attempts to curtail the Catholic Church are prevalent in the United States. The country is filled with institutions and social movements such as the political left, cultural and academic elites and media that have an agenda to curtail the Catholic Church, he said. "We are the last institution in American society that will not bend the knee to their radically secular social and political agenda, and this infuriates them."

Maintenance work got under way on the bell tower of St. Paul Cathedral, thanks in part to the Legacy of Hope capital campaign. Repairs included repointing of the tower. After a pause because of the pandemic, Legacy of Hope resumed in-parish visits and fund raising and concluded at the end of 2021 on the way to its \$32 million goal. (Pledge payments will continue through 2025, in some cases.)

Nativity School of Worcester received a \$1.8 million gift from the late Catherine Butler. The school is funded by contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations. Ms. Butler's estate gift is the largest gift in the school's 18-year history. The donation will significantly increase the school's endowment and advance its mission

to provide a tuition-free Jesuit education for middle school boys.

OCTOBER

St. John's High School in Shrewsbury named a makerspace after an alumnus, who is also the parent of a former student, from whose estate the school is to receive \$1 million. The Thomas J. Kelley Makerspace for Robotics & Engineering is a 2,400-square-foot lab which is home to St. John's engineering program and robotics team. The gift will be used to create an endowed fund to support the operation of the makerspace, which opened in 2017, and to provide professional development for faculty.

The Serra Club of Northern Worcester County held its 70th anniversary/priest appreciation celebration on Oct. 7. The club promotes vocations. Bishop McManus celebrated Mass in St. Leo Church in Leominster.

About 250 people attended the 8th annual Celebrate Priesthood! Gala, held at St. Paul Diocesan Junior/Senior High School. The in-person gala returned after a virtual event in 2020 and raised more than \$200,000 for the care of retired priests.

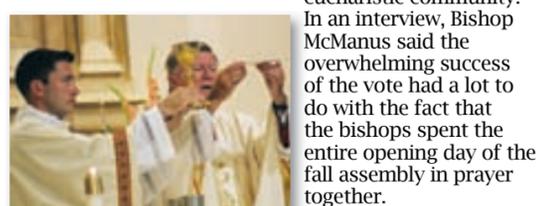
NOVEMBER

Thirty-four couples, with 1,371 years of marriage, registered for the Mass to celebrate marriage in the diocese. God and faith are important for a lasting marriage was one message the participants heard. The messages came from those involved in the diocese's annual wedding anniversary Mass, held at St. Paul Cathedral.

▼ A shrine that has drawn parishioners and neighbors to prayer was blessed by Bishop McManus. Parishioners started building the shrine of the Blessed Mother of Grace at Our Lady of Vilna Church on July 5, 2019, Father Tam M. Bui, pastor, told The Catholic Free Press. But the pandemic hit, delaying the bishop's blessing of the shrine. The statue of Mary, which stands atop large boulders, was made in Vietnam and donated by a family in the parish, Father Bui said. (The former Lithuanian parish now serves primarily Vietnamese Catholics.)



▼ The U.S. Catholic bishops overwhelmingly voted to approve a new document on the Eucharist that highlights the sacrament's indispensable role in the life of the Church. The vote, coming during the annual fall assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, was 222 to 8, with three abstentions. Bishop McManus, a member of the Committee on Doctrine which worked on the document, said, "This document is fundamentally important to who we are as Catholics. We are a eucharistic community."



In an interview, Bishop McManus said the overwhelming success of the vote had a lot to do with the fact that the bishops spent the entire opening day of the fall assembly in prayer together.

The speaking program for the 21st annual Men's Conference, which is scheduled for Saturday, April 2, 2022, at Assumption University was announced. In 2020 we were all disappointed when the conference had to be cancelled two weeks before it was to take place because of the pandemic. This past year we had a virtual conference for the same reason. But now we are so delighted to go forward with an in-person conference again, Msgr. Thomas Sullivan said.

DECEMBER

A pilgrimage organized by Father Juan Escudero, pastor of St. Rose of Lima Parish, in Northborough, closed out the Year of St. Joseph. Parishioners visited St. Joseph Church in Worcester to hear about the saint and the church from Msgr. Robert K. Johnson, pastor of Holy Family Parish.

The diocesan Office of Fiscal Affairs hired a financial consultant to be a liaison between the office and parishes. Stephen Sycks, with experience in banking and non-profit fund raising, is to help parishes with administrative issues.

Priests in the Diocese who died in 2021

- March 3: Father Dennis Timothy O Mara, 69
- May 25: Father Andre M. Garipey, 90
- July 17: Father Dennis J. O'Brien, 70
- Oct. 14: Father Joseph M. Nally, 77
- Oct. 16: Father Laurie L. Leger, MS, 93
- Nov. 1: Father Thomas B. Fleming, 71
- Dec. 5: Father John F. Gee, 94
- Dec. 21: Father George J. Ridick, 76

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