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Mass Launches Jubilee Year 2025 in Diocese

BY AMANDA HUDSON
News Editor

ROCKFORD—The Cathedral of St. Peter, one of seven churches designated as diocesan pilgrimage sites for the Year of Jubilee 2025, was the setting for the official opening of the Jubilee Year in the Diocese of Rockford on Dec. 29.

“The Holy Father has asked that in each diocese Mass be offered by the bishop if possible so that locally we can begin what began on Christmas Eve at the Vatican at St. Peter’s Basilica — the opening of the Jubilee Year 2025,” said Bishop David Malloy as he began the Mass.

That jubilee opening Mass, he added, “will incorporate most of the conditions that will allow each of us to seek that apostolic blessing, that plenary indulgence” gifted by the Church during the Jubilee Year.

Later, in his homily the bishop spoke of the “two great themes” of the Mass: the Jubilee year and also the Feast of the Holy Family.

That feast, he noted, honors God’s plan for that holy family, and for all families throughout time and around the world. “We are bound to concede the grace of



(Observer photos/Amanda Hudson)

Massgoers bow their heads as Bishop David Malloy opens the Mass beginning the Year of Jubilee 2025 in the Rockford Diocese, Dec. 29.

the sacrament (of matrimony),” Bishop Malloy said, noting briefly the current stresses in society on marriage.

In addition to the importance of that “permanent, unbreakable” bond between a man and a woman, he said, being open to children is part of the “call to renew again our sense of awe, our

sense of gratitude to God, and our sense of the beauty of marriage itself ...”

Bishop Malloy then turned his thoughts to the Jubilee Year, beginning with a short recap of the practice.

The Catholic Church began announcing jubilees at first with pilgrimages to Rome in mind, he said. The

timing moved from the original every 100 down to every 50 years. Now the jubilee years are held every 25 years. The last regularly scheduled one was held in the Year 2000, the great millennial year celebrating 2,000 years since the birth of Christ.

“Pope Francis has asked us this year to concentrate on ‘Hope,’” Bishop Malloy said. “I, for one, am so glad he chose that theme because, look around, are we not living in a world, in a society that is losing its hope?” He named what is being lost as “the hope of Christ coming to save (us) — the hope of the cross, the hope that there is life eternal that will never be taken away from us.”

Putting hope in material things means putting one’s heart “in what is going to be (an) ultimately corrupt road and be gone,” he said, calling that focus a “hamster wheel” that “takes away the hope that faith and eyes on eternal life” bring.

The bishop then spoke of what he called “an extensive offering of an extra element of forgiveness — a plenary indulgence.”

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Bishop Malloy visits with a group of the Rockford Diocese’s “Blue Nuns” (the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ) after the opening Mass of the Jubilee Year 2025.

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(OSV News composite photo/ Mihoko Owada, Catholic Standard/Courtesy of the Diocese of San Diego)

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About the Jubilee Year and Plenary Indulgences



BY BISHOP
DAVID J.
MALLOY

I warmly encourage taking advantage of this great opportunity to deepen your faith and to prepare your souls for the moment when we meet our Lord in the hope of joining Him in heaven for eternity.

Last week, the Catholic Church began the celebration of another Jubilee Year. Jubilee Years have their origin in the Scriptures, specifically in the Old Testament. In the Book of Leviticus, God tells Moses that the People of Israel are to celebrate a Jubilee every 50 years. During that year, gratitude to God is to be expressed by the gathering of families, respect for the land, abstaining from the work of the harvest, care for the poor and the release of debts (cf. Lv 25).

The Church's faith, over the course of time, took up this sacred practice. Starting in 1300, under Pope Boniface VIII, a Jubilee Year was first proclaimed. In our modern era, the Church celebrates a Jubilee Year, in ordinary practice, every 25 years. For this reason, 2025 has been proclaimed by Pope Francis as the Jubilee Year of Hope.

A central element of such Jubilee Years is the offering of a special Plenary Indulgence. It is worth reminding ourselves what such an indulgence is and how to obtain it.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that when we sin, there are two consequences. First, we lose our communion and friendship with God because we offend His love and infinite greatness. Secondly, when we sin, we also wound and disfigure ourselves. These consequences are not the result of some arbitrary anger on the part of God. Rather, they flow from the nature of sin and our personal rebellion against God.

Just as there are two consequences of sin, so there are two necessary remedies. First, we need the forgiveness of God to renew again our communion with Him. But even after that forgiveness, which is typically associated with our reception of the sacrament of confession, we still need to strive to heal the damage that remains in us, personally and spiritually. That is the role of purgatory, preparing us for full union with God after our death.

A good example of these two elements of sin can be found in the parable of the Prodigal Son. That son has horribly offended the dignity of his father. When he returns, penniless and humiliated, his father immediately forgives the son. But we sense in that parable, by the son's own confession

to his father, that the son still has work to do. He must learn again to live in the grace of his father, healing the wounds he has created with his brother and all the faithful servants.

Indulgences are the application to us of the Church's power to bind and forgive sins. Based in the merit of Christ's death and the prayers of the saints, the Church, in such an exceptional year, grants the possibility of a full healing of our woundedness resulting from sin.

In this Jubilee Year, Plenary Indulgences can be obtained even daily. They can be applied to ourselves or by our intention to someone who has already preceded us in death.

In order to obtain this grace of a Plenary Indulgence, the faithful must fulfill five conditions. They must be truly repentant and free from affection for all sins, they must receive the sacrament of reconciliation a few days before or after seeking the Plenary Indulgence, they must receive holy Communion, preferably on the day of seeking the indulgence, and they must fulfill one of the specified acts of charity or penance such as visiting the sick or offering a fast for sins. Finally, as an act of solidarity with the whole Church, the faithful must offer prayers for the Holy Father.

In the Diocese of Rockford, St. Peter Cathedral Parish is designated as a pilgrimage site for the Jubilee Year. Additionally, St. Mary Parish in Sterling, St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Freeport, St. Mary Parish in Huntley, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Aurora, St. Thomas More Parish in Elgin and St. Mary Parish in DeKalb have been designated as pilgrimage parishes for the coming Jubilee Year. A pilgrimage to any of these sites, accompanied by the fulfillment of the other conditions is a means of obtaining the Plenary Indulgence.

I warmly encourage taking advantage of this great opportunity to deepen your faith and to prepare your souls for the moment when we meet our Lord in the hope of joining Him in heaven for eternity.

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_penitenzieria-ap_20240513_norme-indulgenza-giubileo2025-en.html

Let Us Open to God the Doors of Our Hearts



BY POPE
FRANCIS

We are all like lost sheep; we need a shepherd and a door to return to the house of the Father. Jesus is that shepherd; Jesus is the door.

From the "Urbi et Orbi" message, Central Loggia of St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, Dec. 25.

Dear sisters and brothers, happy Christmas!

The mystery that never ceases to amaze and move us was renewed this night: the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, the Son of God, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. That is how the shepherds of Bethlehem, filled with joy, found Him, as the angels sang: "Glory to God and peace to men" (cf. Lk 2:6-14). ...

This event, which took place over 2,000 years ago, is indeed made new thanks to the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit of love and life who made fruitful the womb of Mary and from her human flesh formed Jesus. Today ... the eternal Word of salvation is once more truly made incarnate, and speaks to every man and woman, to the whole world. This is the message: "I love you, I forgive you; come back to me, the door of my heart is open for you!" ...

This is the meaning of the Holy Door of the Jubilee, which I opened ... here in St. Peter's Basilica: it represents Jesus, the door of salvation open for all. Jesus is the door, the door that the Father of mercies has opened in the midst of our world, in the midst of history, so that all of us can return to Him. We are all like lost sheep; we need a shepherd and a door to return to the house of the Father. Jesus is that shepherd; Jesus is the door. ...

Often we halt at the threshold of that door; we lack the courage to cross it, because it challenges us to examine our lives. ... Taking a step towards something so great calls us to leave behind our disputes and divisions and [to surrender] ourselves to the outstretched arms of the Child who is the Prince of Peace. ... I invite every individual, and all peoples and nations, to find the courage needed to walk through that door, to become pilgrims of hope, to

silence the sound of arms and overcome divisions! ...

Jesus, the eternal Word of God made incarnate, is the wide-open door; he is the wide-open door that we are invited to enter, in order to rediscover the meaning of our existence and the sacredness of all life — for every life is sacred — and to recover the foundational values of the human family. He awaits us at the threshold. ...

He awaits the children, all those children who suffer from war and hunger. He awaits the elderly, so often forced to live in conditions of solitude and abandonment. He awaits those who have lost their homes or are fleeing their homelands in an effort to find a safe haven. He awaits all those who have lost their jobs or are unable to find work. He awaits prisoners who, everything notwithstanding, are still children of God, always children of God. He awaits all those — and there are many of them — who endure persecution for their faith.

On this festive day, let us not fail to express our gratitude to those who spend themselves, quietly and faithfully, in doing good and in serving others. I think of parents, educators and teachers. ... I think too of healthcare workers, the forces of order and all those men and women who carry out works of charity, especially missionaries throughout the world: they bring light and comfort to so many people in difficulty. To all of them we want to say: Thank you!

Brothers and sisters, may the Jubilee be an opportunity ... to forgive those who have trespassed against us, because the Son of God, born in the cold and darkness of the night, has forgiven our own. He came to heal us and forgive us. As pilgrims of hope, let us go out to meet Him! Let us open to Him the doors of our hearts. Let us open to Him the doors of our hearts, as He has opened to us the door of His heart.



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(Observer photos/Amanda Hudson)

Bishop David Malloy prays over the offerings during the Dec. 29 Mass, joined by Father Kenneth Anderson (center), Cathedral of St. Peter rector, and assisted by Deacons Bob Mitchison (left), and Deacon James Easton (right).

Mass Launches Jubilee Year 2025 in Diocese

From page 1

Bishop Malloy said, “even after we receive God’s forgiveness, (there are) still those damages ... even with God’s forgiveness, we are not yet ready for heaven, to be in God’s presence. But God gives us a chance, even after death, for a final and full purification” of purgatory. Mass intentions help souls in purgatory, as do plenary indulgences from the “treasury of the Church ... linked to Christ’s forgiveness.”

He noted how in Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son, even after the son received his father’s forgiveness, “he still had work to do” to mend the broken relationships with his family and others.

He also pointed to the good thief crucified next to Jesus, who told him, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

“There in a nutshell is the moment of plenary indulgence,” Bishop Malloy said.

Five conditions to fulfill

The bishop explained the conditions that are required to obtain a plenary indulgence for a deceased person or for the living person who completes the conditions.

First, a person must discern their hearts, minds, attitudes, to renounce sin and be fully sorry for them.

A second requirement is to go to confession. “An indulgence is not an alternative to confession,” he said, adding that there is “no strict part of the rule as to when ... one diocese says within 20 days” of a confession, and although there is “no hard-and-fast rule,” he said he recommends not to go beyond 20 days.



(Observer photos/Amanda Hudson)

A mother takes photos as her son shakes hands with Bishop David Malloy after the Mass.

Jubilee Churches

These seven parishes have been designated as pilgrimage sites in the Diocese of Rockford for the Jubilee Year 2025.

- Cathedral of St. Peter Parish, Rockford
- St. Mary Parish, Sterling
- St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Freeport,
- St. Mary Parish, Huntley,
- Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Aurora,
- St. Thomas More Parish, Elgin and
- St. Mary Parish, DeKalb.

Third, “receive holy communion; there is nothing that unites us to Christ more than this eaten worthily.”

Fourth is to do a special act. It could be a pilgrimage, near or far. “Lots of people will be going to Rome this year, (and/or) to the Lourdes’ basilica,” the bishop said. “Each diocese is allowed to establish places locally that would serve the purpose of a pilgrimage.” (see sidebar)

“The cathedral is one,” he said, adding, “so you have by coming today fulfilled those conditions that lie in your heart.”

A final and fifth step is to “say prayers for the Holy Father, because we are meant to be in communion with the

whole Church, (and) the Holy Father, the successor of Peter, sums up the whole Church.” At the Jubilee Mass, those prayers were added to the Mass’s prayers of the faithful.

“Except for the sacrament of confession, we’ve structured this Mass so that a plenary indulgence can be gained by all for yourself or for” someone who has died, Bishop Malloy said.

He urged those present to “take advantage of it now” in this jubilee year, saying, “We can do any of these acts time and time again ... you can do it every day if you wish ... (a plenary indulgence is) a great spiritual gift, the treasury of the Church ... the treasury of Christ himself.”

Christ the King Parish Gets Creative to Celebrate the Jubilee Year

WONDER LAKE—As the Jubilee Year 2025 officially opened in the Diocese of Rockford at the Cathedral of St. Peter, Dec. 29, Christ the King Parish joined locally. The Wonder Lake parish’s Mass featured the artistic contributions of parishioner and administrative assistant Evie Goins (pictured below). She painted and created banners for the Jubilee as well as the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the feast of Christ the King in 1925. The banners were then carried in processions at the weekend’s Masses.



(Photo/Evie Goins)

Bishop Malloy’s Public Schedule

ROCKFORD — Jan. 12, 7:30 a.m., Sunday Mass, Cathedral of St. Peter

MILWAUKEE — Jan. 14, 1:30 p.m., Installation of the Most Rev. Jeffery Scott Grob for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist

CRYSTAL LAKE — Jan. 18, 10 a.m., Confirmation for St. John the Baptist, Johnsburg; Sacred

Heart, Marengo; St. Patrick, McHenry; St. Joseph, Richmond; Resurrection, Woodstock; St. Mary, McHenry at St. Thomas the Apostle Church

ROCKFORD — Jan. 18, 4 p.m., Mass and 125th Anniversary of Knights of Columbus Council 470, St. James Church

ROCKFORD — Jan. 19, 7:30 a.m., Sunday Mass, Cathedral of St. Peter

Watch Sunday Catholic Mass

Presented by the Diocese of Rockford

Catholic TV in the Rockford Diocese starts with a faith-filled program at 6 a.m., followed by Mass at 6:30 a.m. on WREX channel 13 in Rockford and on cable.

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TOP O' THE MORNING WITH BISHOP MALLOY

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News in Brief

Pope names Consolata Missionary as the first woman dicastery prefect

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has appointed Consolata Missionary Sister Simona Brambilla to be the first woman to lead a Vatican dicastery, naming her prefect of the Dicastery for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life. The 59-year-old Italian sister had served as secretary of the dicastery since October 2023. The announcement of her appointment Jan. 6 also said Pope Francis named as pro-prefect of the dicastery Spanish Cardinal



(CNS photo/Lola Gomez)
**Sister
Simona
Brambilla**

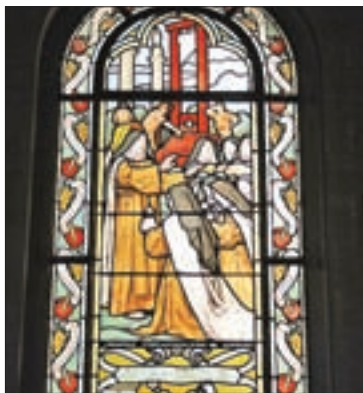
Ángel Fernández Artime, 64, the former rector general of the Salesians. The Vatican press office did not reply to requests to explain why the cardinal was given the title pro-prefect or how his role would be different from that of a dicastery secretary.

Pope praises popular piety during first-ever papal Mass in Corsica

AJACCIO, France (CNS)—As Pope Francis became the first pope to celebrate Mass on the French island of Corsica Dec. 15, the usual excitement of an open-air Mass with the pope was combined with the flair and pageantry of a Renaissance fair. Throngs of Corsicans, dressed in medieval outfits and carrying banners depicting Marian images, saints and crosses, processed into Ajaccio's Austerlitz Square for Mass with the pope. Seated below a towering statue of Napoleon Bonaparte, born on the island in 1769, and flanked by Corsica's various confraternities — Catholic lay associations centered around religious devotions and charitable works — the pope said the devotional groups are an example to modern society of "generously serving our neighbors by works of spiritual and corporal mercy."

Pope declares 16 new saints killed during French Revolution

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Pope Francis has declared as saints 16 Carmelite martyrs executed by guillotine during the French Revolution in a series of decrees published Dec. 18. Using what the Vatican called an "equipollent" or equivalent canonization, Pope Francis approved adding to the canon of saints Blessed Teresa of St. Augustine and 15 other members of the Carmelites of Compiègne killed during the French Reign of Terror. The French revolutionary government outlawed religious life in 1790 and the community of Carmelites in Compiègne was forced to leave their convent two years later. In 1794, after being discovered to have continued living in community as consecrated women, they were tried and publicly executed by guillotine. The decree extends devotion to the Carmelite martyrs to the universal Church.



(CNS photo/G. Freihalter/WikiCommons)
A stained-glass window of the martyrs of Compiègne, France, is in Saint-Honoré d'Eylau Church in Paris, per this 2010 file photo.

Pope Francis appoints five auxiliary bishops for Chicago

CHICAGO (OSV News)—Pope Francis appointed five priests from the Archdiocese of Chicago as auxiliary bishops, increasing the number of active auxiliary bishops in the archdiocese. These bishops-designate all have extensive pastoral experience, with most currently serving as pastors. Bishops-designate Timothy J. O'Malley, Lawrence J. Sullivan, José María García-Maldonado, John S. Siemianowski and Robert M. Fedek will be ordained in early 2025. Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich expressed gratitude to the pope for these appointments, highlighting the bishops' strong pastoral records. Only three of the Chicago Archdiocese's six vicariates are currently filled by active auxiliary bishops. Auxiliary bishops are appointed by the pope to head those vicariates. The bishops-designate will remain in their current assignments until the archdiocese announces their new roles.



(CNS photo/screen grab, Vatican Media)

Holy Door, Holy Year

Pope Francis pauses in prayer on the threshold of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Dec. 24, 2024, after he opened it and inaugurated the Holy Year 2025.

Cardinal McElroy Will Succeed Cardinal Gregory

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—Cardinal Robert W. McElroy of San Diego has been appointed the next archbishop of the Archdiocese of Washington, following Pope Francis' acceptance of the resignation of Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory, the first African American cardinal, the Vatican announced Jan. 6.

The see city is home to the White House, Congress, Supreme Court and a multitude of embassies, nonprofits, think tanks and lobbying groups.

Canon law required Cardinal Gregory, 77, to submit his resignation to the pope when he turned 75 on Dec. 7, 2022. The resignation and appointment were publicized in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 6 by Cardinal Christophe Pierre, apostolic



(OSV News composite photo/Mihoko Owada, Catholic Standard/Courtesy of the Diocese of San Diego)
**Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory, left, and
Cardinal Robert W. McElroy**

nuncio to the United States.

The Archdiocese of Washington is comprised of 2,104 square miles in the District of Columbia and the five counties of Montgomery, Prince George's, St. Mary's, Calvert, and Charles in the State of Maryland, and has a total population of 3,050,847 of which 671,187, are Catholic.

Cardinal McElroy, 70, is a San

Francisco native who pursued degrees at Harvard and Stanford before his 1980 priestly ordination. He was appointed as bishop of the San Diego Diocese in 2015 and a cardinal in 2022.

He is a member of the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life and Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Washington National Shrine Named A Jubilee Year Site

WASHINGTON (OSV News)—The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., has been named a special place of pilgrimage for the Catholic Church's Jubilee Year 2025, the theme for which is "Pilgrims of Hope."

The designation allows pilgrims to gain the Jubilee Year indulgence.

The Basilica's rector, Msgr. Walter Rossi, expressed gratitude for the honor, noting that this will be a unique moment of grace, especially for those who can't make the journey to Rome.

The national basilica in Washington is the largest Ro-



(OSV News photo/Bob Roller)

A file photo shows spring flowers blooming outside the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

man Catholic church in North America and is among the 10 largest in the world.

The national shrine, open every day of the year, provides four daily Masses Monday

through Saturday, confession for five hours every day, and seven Masses (including the Saturday vigil) for Sundays.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that sin incurs a "double consequence." While the sacrament of reconciliation restores men and women to grace and "intimate friendship" with God, the Church teaches that "temporal punishment of sin remains."

This requires purification through works of mercy, charity, prayer and penance to complete the soul's conversion, or remitted, in whole or in part, through indulgences granted by the Church.

SEASONED OBSERVER

'A Hug from God' Prayer Shawl Ministry Spreads God's Love Around the Globe



(OSV News photo/St. Rose of Lima Parish)

Prayer shawl ministry members at St. Rose of Lima Parish in North Wales, Pa., are seen in an undated photo.

Many hands, whether old or young, make for light work and many prayers.

BY GINA CHRISTIAN
OSV News

A prayer shawl ministry in Pennsylvania is wrapping hundreds around the world in what members call “a hug from God.” Since June 2015, a dedicated group of four to five volunteers has been meeting weekly at St. Rose of Lima Parish in the Philadelphia suburb of North Wales to stitch an array of knitted or crocheted prayer shawls, along with lap blankets, baby blankets and square “mini-shawls” that can be draped across the shoulders. Another seven volunteers package the dozen shawls made each month by the group, along with other donated shawls.

For every twist of the knitting needle or crochet hook, there's a prayer, said Ginny Hunter, who along with her late husband, Paul, started the ministry after a faith formation class challenged them to minister together in a way that would have “longevity.”

“Our philosophy is that from the first stitch, we pray for the future recipients and whatever their special intention is,” she told OSV News.

The intentions — which are consistently prayed for once submitted to the ministry — span a wide range of concerns, she noted, from worries about car problems to denied loans to going back to school.

So far, the ministry has sent out close to 2,800 prayer shawls throughout the U.S. — and across the globe.

“We are in so many countries,” said Hunter, with shawls now in Canada, Colombia, England, Germany, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Mozambique, Slovakia, Venezuela and more.

Among the recipients are military members

and their families, wounded veterans, those facing illness, job loss, loneliness or any kind of challenge, said Hunter.

The group's mini-shawls, which include a plastic rosary, are especially comforting to those undergoing chemotherapy, medical imaging and other treatments, Hunter said.

“One of the men in our parish is getting hyperbaric oxygen treatments for bladder cancer and he holds onto his shawl,” she said. “People get claustrophobic during an MRI. So they hold onto them.”

The shawls have been in the operating room as well. “We had an older gentleman who was not cooperating going into OR,” Hunter said. “He kept saying, ‘My prayer shawl.’ ... Somebody brought him the little square, and he immediately laid it on his chest and calmed down. His blood pressure cooperated; they got an IV line into him and the doctor said, ‘That (shawl) will be with you after the operation.’”

The shawls have even made their way to death row, she noted.

“I was contacted by a social worker (in Texas), and she said, ‘I have two guys who have their death date. It would mean a lot to them and it'll go to their families when they die,’” Hunter said.

The shawls are much more than the sum of their stitches, as every single recipient's name is “written in a leather book” that the group “begins to read through every All Saints' Day (Nov. 1),” she noted.

With 2,800 petitions and shawls so far, “it will take us until Easter to finish,” she said.

The recently widowed Hunter, who is battling multiple sclerosis, told OSV News she has no intention of slowing down in the ministry, especially as she reflects on the “outstanding” messages sent by recipients.

“I bring them to the group to share with them,” Hunter said. “And I say, ‘This is why I'm going to keep on keeping on.’”

DESTINATION



(OSV News photo/CNS file, courtesy The National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton)

The National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, Md., kicks off its 50th anniversary celebration of the canonization of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Jan. 4, 2025.

'One of Us' Anniversary Exhibit National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Emmitsburg, Md.

Destination: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton was a wife. A mother. A teacher. She was also — as the title of a new exhibit at the National Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, Maryland, tells visitors — “One of Us.”

As the first native-born American saint, the 50th anniversary of Mother Seton's canonization will be celebrated with a full year of activities, which began on her feast day, Jan. 4, with an EWTN-televised Mass, here.

The “One of Us” exhibit aims to celebrate America's “glorious daughter,” as St. Paul VI described her at her canonization in 1975. But it also is meant to bring people close to her, not distance them from her.

“In many ways, she was an ordinary woman who did ordinary things — things not unlike you and I do today,” said Rob Judge, executive director of the Seton Shrine. “She just did them through the lens of eternity, and God's grace and His providence — this strong belief that He would take care of her, and that He could be sought in this world and in the next.”

Why to go: Highlights of the exhibit include the story of Mother Seton's canonization through the personal scrapbooks of those who attended the proceedings in Rome or watched them in Emmitsburg.

An original mural by Maryland artist Ellen Byrne depicts Mother Seton's road to sainthood, while a separate installation shows other Americans in stages of the canonization process.



(Observer file photo)

A statue shows the patron of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Crystal Lake.

Sept. 14 will be a “Day of Joy” anniversary to celebrate the day she was canonized. Visit <https://setonshrine.org/fifty/> for more events and details.

The shrine's regular programs, tours and activities will continue throughout the year.

Accessibility: All of the sites, walkways and tour grounds are handicapped-accessible, and an assisted listening system is available.

Hours: The Visitor Center, Museum and Basilica are open daily, 10 a.m.-5 p.m., and until 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. The gift shop closes at 4:30 p.m.

(Grand) Kid friendly: Children are welcome, and any may be particularly curious about the patron saint of Catholic schools.

Info: ■ Address — The National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, 333 South Seton Ave., Emmitsburg, MD 21727-9297. ■ Phone — 301-447-6606 ■ Website — <https://setonshrine.org/>

—By Kimberley Heatherington, OSV News. Send Destination ideas to seasonedobserver@rockforddiocese.org



(Photo provided by Bishop David Malloy)

Traditional Christmas Mass Brings the Story of Salvation to County Jail

WINNEBAGO—Inmates at the Winnebago County Jail took part in the joy of Christmas on Christmas Day as Bishop David Malloy continued his tradition of celebrating Mass inside the jail. Assisted by jail ministry volunteers and with cooperation from the Winnebago County Sheriff, Bishop Malloy is able to share Mass with those incarcerated at Christmas and Easter and hears confessions at the jail during the Lenten season for Be Reconciled Day. Bishop Malloy began saying Mass there and at other prisons within the diocese after he became Bishop of Rockford in 2012.



(Photos provided/Susana Morones)

Father Alexander Suárez baptizes an infant at St. Rita of Cascia Parish, Aurora, on Nov. 2, during a day of baptisms sponsored by that parish and St. John Neumann Parish, St. Charles.

For Moms in Need, There's Help At St. John Neumann Parish

BY MARGARITA MENDOZA
El Observador Editor

ST. CHARLES—In the Fox River Valley area, mothers looking for spiritual and material help can find these and a sense of hope at St. John Neumann Parish, here.

Thanks to the Walking with Moms in Need ministry, mothers are supported during their pregnancy and beyond.

In almost two years of the Walking with Moms in Need ministry, the St. John Neumann community has helped “around 60 moms,” says Susana Morones, the parish Service Outreach Coordinator and Respect Life Coordinator. The program currently has the capacity to help 40 mothers.

“Our first goal is to walk with them, to let them know that they are not alone, and that we as [the] Catholic Church are here to take care of, and to care about them,” Morones said.

History

“Walking with Moms” began as an initiative of the United States bishops some years ago, but 2020’s pandemic shut-downs delayed it for a time. In the Rockford Diocese, St. John Neumann soon got on board and *The Observer* checked in on its early programs (see the May 12, 2023 issue).

The U. S. initiative is an opportunity for Catholic parishes and communities to “walk in the shoes” of local pregnant and parenting women in need, accompanying them in friendship and connecting them to local resources.

As Pope Francis said in his Lent 2015 message, parishes should be “islands of mercy in the midst of the sea of indifference.”

Therese Stahl, Director of the Life and Family Evangelization Office, says, “The community of St. John Neumann is embracing mothers in crisis in an inspiring way ... The parish is bringing the Gospel of life to all.

“Our dream for all parishes in



One of the babies baptized Nov. 2 reaches for Father Suárez.

the diocese is for a discernment of the needs of mothers and families in each community and how each parish can walk radically with these parents.”

Serving year-round

When a mother contacts the parish for assistance, she first receives a personalized baby basket to welcome a little girl or boy. These provide the essentials, such as clothes, diapers, shampoo, and “everything to welcome the new baby,” Morones says. Also, “we incorporate different ministries from our parish — a rosary from the Rosary Ministry, a baby blanket from our Neumann Needlers,” she explains.

After their welcome, mother and child are enrolled for two years in the program to receive whatever help they may need.

The parish organizes Breakfast with Moms and Babies four times per year, during “the months that we consider are highlights for pro-life ... February, May, October, and August,” Morones says. At those breakfasts, “we give them talks about how to take care of babies” and themselves, as well as the importance of motherhood. “We talk about family, we talk about baptism, we talk about everything that forms them in the Catholic faith,” she says.

In months without breakfasts, the parish organizes a baby drive on third Saturdays. Mothers come to the church to receive diapers and “everything else they may need,” Morones says.

Most women come from the Elgin, St. Charles, or Aurora areas. Some are referred by pro-life centers like Corbella Clinic

in South Elgin, TLC Pregnancy centers in Elgin, and Waterleaf in Aurora.

Spiritual fruits

Susana Morones frequently asks the Walking with Moms mothers how the parish can help them. The ministry helps pay rent and bills.

It also provides another type of aid: spiritual aid.

Last fall, some mothers asked for their children to be baptized. Since they were Spanish speakers, St. Rita of Cascia Parish in Aurora, led by parochial administrator Father Juan Ayala, opened their doors to help.

Word spread, and before long, others wanted baptism for their nephews, nieces and relatives. After the families prepared for baptism, Father Alexander Suárez, parochial vicar, baptized 16 children on Nov. 2, 2024. St. John Neumann sponsored the celebration and provided cakes. “Everything was a pouring of blessings for these families,” Morones said.

She speaks of “the beautiful fruit” of the program: guiding these moms “back to their Catholic faith also, to receive the sacraments. A lot of the moms asked us [for] guidance to baptize their babies, to get married in the Catholic Church.

“They want to come back to the Church again and bring the child to the faith,” she says.

Every mother and child in the program receives care and compassion, but one testimony has stuck with Morones. A woman told her, “If it wouldn’t be for you my daughter wouldn’t be alive,” because her family had wanted her to have an abortion.

That quote sums up why the Walking with Moms program accepts everyone. “We are here for them. We don’t ask questions, we show them who we are, and God does the rest,” Morones concludes.

For more information on St. John Neumann’s ministry, call 630-377-2797, ext. 125.

Information on Walking with Moms in Need provided by <https://www.walkingwithmoms.com>

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Aid for Women Pregnancy Center is Now Hiring Medical Professionals and Advocates for its Rockford Center

For more information: (312) 880-9289
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Founded on the faith and teachings of the Catholic Church, Aid for Women serves thousands of women each year, helping them to choose life for their unborn babies.

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DAY 4: Papal Audience - St. John Lateran Holy Stairs
DAY 5: Basilica of St. Peter and Vatican Treasures & Baroque Square
DAY 6: Montecassino San Giovanni Rotondo
DAY 7: San Giovanni Rotondo St. Michael's Cave
DAY 8: Lanciano - Loretto
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The tour is being organized by
Holy Cross, Batavia Parishioner Jeff Ball
hcitaly2025@gmail.com

Nursing Graduates Blessed at Baccalaureate

BY AMANDA HUDSON
News Editor

ROCKFORD—St. Anthony College of Nursing held its Baccalaureate Service at Holy Family Church on Dec. 13, recognizing the graduation of two Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degrees and 29 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degrees.

At the livestreamed Baccalaureate Service, the graduates were pinned by their chosen loved ones. The pins and hoods were first blessed by Bishop David Malloy who presided at the service.

His homily welcomed everyone, and he spoke of the important service of nurses. He urged the graduates to think deeply about their patients, recognizing the total person, including their souls. He also shared a little about his family's experience with hospice nurses this past summer as his mother reached her final days.

In addition to blessing the pins and hoods, he blessed the hands of the group of graduates before they raised their hands and recited the Nurses' Pledge, led by Dr. Beth Carson.

Bishop Malloy's final blessing of all who were present was followed by the recessional and lots of photographs in the church's narthex.



(Observer photos/Amanda Hudson)

Brenda Cazarez, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, receives her pin from her son.

The morning Baccalaureate Service preceded an afternoon Commencement Ceremony at Cliffbreakers Event Center.

Those earning a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree were: Tina Hudzinski-Newell and Mary Lynn Williams.

Those graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree were: Mistura Adejare, Thanaa Alhasan, Jordan Bailey, Carla Botzoc, Josie Burns, Brenda Cazarez, Diana Centeno,

Rachel Cordell, Courtney Crenshaw, Elizabeth Garnica, Artasia Gill, Lexi Goodall, Jadah Harris, Abigail Hefel, Maggie Henthorn, Michelle Hernandez-Vazquez, Millenna Jones, Logan Knouse, Emma Lerias, Heather McCutcheon, Stephanie Mendoza, Christina Miller, Brittany O'Connor, Kalley Palmer, Rachel Rittmeyer, Paige Slothower, Kyrum Smith, Sarah Smith, and Jacob Sundberg.



Graduates of St. Anthony College of Nursing raise their hands and recite the Nurses' Pledge.



(Photo provided/Brenda Durein)

Freeport Women Donate Winter Wear

FREEPORT—With cold weather coming, St. Thomas Aquinas Parish's Women In New Evangelization Ministry (WINE) teamed up with Birth to Five Illinois: Region 8 to keep children warm this winter at Amity Daycare and Learning Center and Head Start, both in Freeport. The parish women collected gloves and mittens, and Birth to Five provided hats. Then, in late November, the groups gave the warm winter wear to around 80 excited kids. A drive-through donation collection also benefited local charities.



(Observer photo/Amanda Hudson)

Marriage on Tap Shares Tips for Couples

LOVES PARK—A roomful of couples ranging from newly engaged to married 61 years gathered for a Marriage on Tap presentation Nov. 22 at St. Bridget Parish's Mitchell Hall, here. The evening included a social time, dinner, and a talk by Jason and Kim Kotecki (pictured) who shared strategies that have worked for their marriage including helpful hints of having a unified purpose, staying grounded through daily prayer, keep dating, take a Sabbath and remain hopeful. The next Marriage on Tap will be Feb. 8 at Holy Family Parish, Rockford with the theme of "Goal Setting in Marriage and Family Life" with Relevant Radio talk show host and therapist Doug Hinderer. Info: 815-282-6642.

Don't wait for the mail!



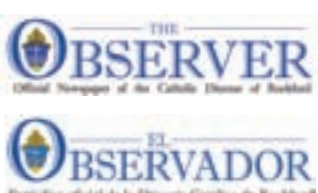
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What's Up

■ AURORA

Literacy center tutor training Jan. 18

The Dominican Literacy Center*, 260 Vermont St. (behind St. Therese Parish), will hold tutor training sessions for female volunteers with at least a high school diploma. Training will be Jan. 18, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Tutors will help women students learn to read, write and speak English during weekly 90-minute sessions from January through May. Teaching experience not required. ***Note:** The center is not accessible to those with limited mobility.

Info: Alison Brzezinski, 630-898-4636, Alison@dominicanliteracycenter.org

Marmion raffle holds drawing Feb. 28, grand prize June 6

Marmion Academy's alumni association is holding its 34th annual "Big Ticket Raffle" to support the schools' scholarships and financial aid. Tickets are on sale for \$100; only 1,000 tickets available. A grand prize drawing for \$25,000 will be June 6. Early bird drawings Feb. 28 (1 winner, \$500) and April 15 (2 winners, \$300 each). Additional prizes awarded. Buy tickets at www.marmion.org/raffle

■ BATAVIA

Alpha young adult program to begin Jan. 21

Holy Cross Parish will begin an 11-week course for young adults on Jan. 21, 6:30 p.m., with a free meal in Donovan Hall, 2300 Main St. Meetings continue Tuesdays at the same time and place. Meetings include homemade meals; videos about life, spirituality, and Christianity; and group talks. Cost: none. Register at <https://holycross-batavia.org/alpha>

Senior luncheon Jan. 17

Holy Cross Parish's senior luncheon will be Jan. 17, noon, in Donovan Hall, 2300 Main

St. The afternoon will include bingo games and a meal of soup, bread, salad and desserts. Cost: \$5 donation.

Free throw contest Feb. 1

Holy Cross Parish's Knights of Columbus Council #2191 will host a free throw contest for boys and girls ages 9 to 14 on Feb. 1 in the Holy Cross School gym, 2300 Main St. Registration at 10 a.m.; competition at 10:30 a.m. Children compete within their own gender and age group for \$25 gift cards. Sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/02-01-25-kc>

■ CRYSTAL LAKE

Blood drive Jan. 11

The Knights of Columbus Council #3880 will host a blood drive Jan. 11, 7:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., at the Oak Street location of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, 451 W. Terra Cotta Ave. Open to healthy persons 16 and older, including first-time donors. Photo ID required. Sign up at https://donateblood.versiti.org/donor/schedules/drive_schedule/11598737

■ GENEVA

Worldwide Marriage Encounter Feb. 14-16

A Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend will be held at Comfort Inn & Suites, 1555 E. Fabyan Parkway. Application fee: \$100. Register at alifetimeoflove.org or call 888-574-5653 for information.

■ HUNTLEY

Free throw contest Jan. 11

St. Mary Parish's Knights of Columbus Council #11666 will host a free throw contest for boys and girls ages 9 to 14 on Jan. 11, 9 a.m.-noon, at Northwestern Medicine Health and Fitness Center, 10450 Algonquin Rd. Participants can come anytime in the three hours; winners advance to district-level contests. Cost: none. Info: ftc@huntleyknights.org

■ MARENGO

Healing retreat and workshop Feb. 8

The Diocese of Rockford's Catholic Charities and Rockford Sexual Assault Counseling (RSAC) invite all Christian women who are survivors of sexual assault or domestic violence to a retreat and workshop Feb. 8, 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., at Sacred Heart Parish, 323 N. Taylor St. The day includes education on trauma, coping skills, prayer, and more, with time for confession. Lunch provided. Cost: \$30. Register through Catholic Charities' STRIPE secure payment system at <https://buy.stripe.com/3cs29Weg204ifJecMM>. Questions to Mary Fuller, 815-520-7549.

Note: This retreat is not a crisis intervention program. Women who are struggling with mental health, addiction or homelessness are encouraged to seek other professional help first.

■ POLO

Church anniversary celebration Jan. 12

On Jan. 12, St. Mary Parish will celebrate the 125th anniversary of the dedication of the church, which took place Jan. 7, 1900. The church at 211 N. Franklin Ave. will be rededicated at the 10:15 a.m. Mass and a potluck will follow in the church hall. All are welcome.

■ ROCKFORD

Women's guild winter luncheon Feb. 6

Holy Family Parish's Women's Guild will mark the 60th anniversary of their winter luncheon at this year's on Feb. 6 at the Rockford Country Club, 2500 Oxford St. Doors open at 11:30 a.m. and lunch begins at 12:30 p.m. Will feature basket auctions, a cash raffle and cash bar. Cost: \$25/person; register by Jan. 27 to Mary Rita McCarthy, mritamc@aol.com.

'Baking Spirits Bright' in Youth Ministry Program at St. Bridget

LOVES PARK—In November, St. Bridget Parish's youth ministry hosted a pie-baking service event for its middle and high school students. They baked a total of 150 apple pies and, in the spirit of sharing their gifts and talents, took the pies home to share with their families and neighbors. "It was such a fun and inspiring time!" Gabby Williams, youth ministry director, wrote in a message to *The Observer*.



(Photo/Gabby Williams)



(Photo provided/Sue Croke)

Preschool Performs Christmas Concert

SYCAMORE—In December, St. Mary School's preschool class practiced and performed a Christmas concert, with the theme: "Happy birthday, baby Jesus!"



(Photo/Ricky Rieckert)

KCs Encourage Fellowship, Christmas Cheer

AURORA—The Knights of Columbus Council #14929 at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish held a "Fellowship Sunday" Dec. 8, with opportunities for visitors to visit with Santa.



(Photo provided/John Gehrke)

'Here We Come A-Caroling' in Sterling

STERLING—Ahead of Christmas, members of the Knights of Columbus Council #662 spread the joy of Christ's birth by Christmas caroling at local nursing homes.



(Photo/Amy Ott)

Boylan Gives to Families Through St. E's

ROCKFORD—On Dec. 5, Boylan Central Catholic High School students continued a 50-year tradition of supporting local families during the Christmas season by delivering gift baskets and groceries to the St. Elizabeth Catholic Community Center. The gifts were the fruits of a school donation drive led by teachers Erica Schwartz and Sarah Pfluger which raised over \$7,000. Thanks to the Boylan community's efforts, 35 families (186 individuals) were able to celebrate Christmas with joy and dignity.

Different View

CNS/Joe Heller



Opening the Bricked-In Doors

The recent reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris offered everyone who watched — both believers and nonbelievers — a rich feast of ancient pageantry. It also confirmed, again to believers and nonbelievers alike, that nobody does ceremony better than the Catholic Church.

Called to Holiness



by **Jaymie Stuart Wolfe**
OSV News

of restlessness erupting in violence, a struggle for power because we cannot find peace. But Christmas offers us all a way out. The mystery of Christ's birth crashes through what is impenetrable. He alone

demolishes the power of sin; He breaks through the barrier of death. Jesus makes every wall a doorway.

With the Incarnation, God knocks on the door of humanity, and Mary answers. The humanity Mary places entirely at God's disposal enables each one of us to do the same, to give Him our fiats too. This is what makes the Blessed Virgin "Our Lady"— "Notre Dame." In the waning days of Advent, the Mother of God comes to us as a living Cathedral, designed and created by God himself. She is salvation's proof of concept. In the expectant Virgin, we see that those who believe are blessed, and that "nothing will be impossible with God" (Lk 1:37). This is the source of all hope.

Doors are so much more than mere architectural necessities. They give us both access and exit. They enable us to join others or separate ourselves from them. They keep us safe, but they can also keep us isolated and alone. The Incarnation opened the door between God and humanity, a door that will never again be shut.

The Church has given us this Holy Year for a purpose. But we must be willing to ask ourselves the hard questions: Which doors have been closed in my heart? Which doors have I shut tightly against God? Which doors have I used to keep people away? Whatever they are, God wants to open them. He doesn't care how long they have been closed.

Jesus is knocking. He is asking us to let Him in. He is inviting us to leave the small spaces we have made our souls' quarters, the prisons of anger, shame, and fear that teach us not to hope. Jesus is knocking, and He will not stop. We may cover the ears and eyes of our hearts, but He is there, waiting for us to crack open the door.

As the Archbishop of Paris knocked on the doors of the restored Mother Church of France, the whole world was inspired. That is because liturgy is not simply an artform refined over 2,000 years; it is alive with the deep truths it conveys.

Splendor and reverence are largely absent from our daily lives, and mostly abandoned by the dominant secular culture that casualizes almost everything. Whether our world holds anything sacred or not, it fails to treat anything as if it is. Solemnity tells us to look deeper; it challenges and trains us to recognize that some things mean far more than what they seem. Perhaps that is why so many of us search for meaning but do not find it. All the markers have been removed.

And yet, liturgy is written into human nature. Liturgy gives us far more than a seat in the audience of divine drama. Liturgy invites us to take part in it.

The Church has designated 2025 a Holy Year, an Ordinary Jubilee (held every 25 years) dedicated to the virtue of hope. It began with the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome on Christmas Eve. This was followed by similar ceremonies at the other three major basilicas in Rome — St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul Outside the Walls — and at a prison.

Doors that have been sealed, literally bricked up on the inside, will be opened. This is how the Holy Father will invite us to cross the next spiritual threshold that lies before us, to open ourselves to a fresh outpouring of grace, to more fully embrace the gift of hope.

This is more than symbolism. Ever since sin and death entered the world, the human heart has been sealed shut. Ours is a history

Scripture Reflection for Jan. 12,
Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

The Lord's Baptism Begins Our Union with Christ

BY FATHER JOSHUA J. WHITFIELD
OSV News

Through the liturgy of the Church, we are brought into intimacy with the Lord.

Catholic worship always carries us there — to the real person of Christ and to His Passion. That is, it is no mere memorial what we Catholics experience in worship; rather, the liturgy always brings us to a sacramental point, to an immediacy, to a moment in which the Lord looks at us and we at Him — when He washes us, touches us, feeds us.



This, to be honest, is the thing that made me a Catholic, the belief that Jesus is truly present in the Church, that He is sacramentally contemporary.

What I mean is clear when we step back and look at how the Church's

liturgy has been guiding us these past several weeks. In Advent we were nudged to watch and prepare for the coming of Christ, and then we were asked to contemplate His birth at Christmas. Next, we were invited to notice how God took flesh to begin His work of salvation within the intimacies of a holy family. But the very next week we were asked to see how this family holds the king of all — of all kings and the universe, that this child born for us is the God-king, that this small thing is bigger than all things.

And then we come to this Sunday and to the baptism of Jesus. In this feast, as it follows Epiphany, we are, as I said, brought to a sacramental moment. We contemplate how this epiphanic Lord of all things humbles Himself to receive baptism, the baptism we share together with Him. This is the moment, how we are brought intimately into contact with this Christ we've been looking for and whom we've worshipped with angels, shepherds, and kings.

By this act, by submitting to the baptism of John, Jesus united us with Himself in the baptism He would later command His disciples to give those who believed — to us.

That is, we see in this feast of the Lord's baptism an opening, the beginning of our union with Christ. Contemplating the Lord's baptism, we immediately contemplate our own. Advent and Christmas, you see, have brought us to this moment of intimacy, this moment of sacramental union, and we wonder at the graced fact that in baptism, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* simply puts it, "we become members of Christ" (CCC 1213). How is Christmas relevant? What does it mean for us?

In this Sunday's feast we receive the answer: Christmas touches us first in baptism and then in the sacramental life born from it. That's what I mean by saying the liturgy always carries us into intimacy with Jesus, because in the liturgy flowers the sacramental.

And it's a sacramental union that changes us. Read St. Paul's letter to the Romans — chapters 5 through 9 especially — to learn what such change looks like both spiritually and morally. Baptism is our rebirth and adoption, enabling us to call God our Father. Through baptism, we can walk in "newness of life" (Rom 6:4). In baptism we are free in the Spirit.

Another way to think about this is to pay attention to the words of the Father, the voice from heaven heard at Jesus's baptism. "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Lk 3:22). These words bear two truths about Christ which become, through baptism, two truths about us.

The first truth is royal, that Christ is Son and King, the heir of David (Ps 2:7). The second truth is sacrificial; in these words, Jesus is figured as the mysterious servant that Isaiah prophesied, who will both suffer and bring justice (Is 42:1). That is, Christ in his baptism is declared by the Father to be both king and servant, which is, as I said, what we're supposed to be by means of the grace of baptism — kings and servants, all of us. That is who Jesus is, and it's what we are too, which is the moral gift of Advent and Christmas. Having watched and celebrated the birth of Jesus, the universal Lord, we now celebrate our having been conformed to Him in baptism. We remember that by faith and the Spirit we too live now in Christ as king and servant. Which, if you think about it, prepares us for the weeks ahead as we begin next Sunday to follow and walk with Jesus to Calvary — a journey for which we are ready insofar as the liturgies and Advent and Christmas have shaped us.

To send letters to us please use one of the following:

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SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for January 12, 2025

Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11; Luke 3: 15-16, 21-22

Following is a word search based on the First and Gospel readings for the Baptism of the Lord, Cycle C: getting ready for the Lord. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

JERUSALEM PREPARE VALLEY JUDAH WATER PRAYING A DOVE	DOUBLE THE WAY MADE LOW FLOCK SANDALS HEAVEN VOICE	WILDERNESS HIGHWAY HERALD HEARTS FIRE DESCENDED BELOVED
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Deaths

AURORA—St. Peter: David B. Hipp, 85, Dec. 19;

DIXON—St. Patrick: Anne Lاهی, 89, Dec. 24;

FREEPORT—St. Thomas Aquinas: John F. Gusloff, 88, Dec. 28;

GENOA—St. Catherine of Genoa: Teresa Knur Odiorne, 76, Dec. 25;

HUNTLEY—St. Mary: Romer Wilsek, 87, Dec. 6; Arnaldo Garcia, 83, Dec. 11; George Burger, 77, Dec. 16; Donald Argall, 74, Dec. 19; Reinhold Mertinat, 88, Dec. 19; Nancy Banach, 91, Dec. 22;

ROCK FALLS—St. Andrew: Esther Bohms, 96, Dec. 13;

ROCKFORD—Holy Family: Sergio Petti, 74, Dec. 7; Steve Kretzinger, 79, Dec. 17; Margaret Goral, 90, Dec. 19;

SAVANNA—St. John the Baptist: Larry Schreiber, 80, Oct. 19; Russ Gies, 82, Oct. 20;

SPRING GROVE—St. Peter: Dennis Wille, 84, Oct. 30; Marian Streb, 87, Dec. 6;

STERLING—St. Mary: Rogelio Velazquez, 94, Nov. 25; Connie S. McCormick, 76, Dec. 8; Paisley Ann Eberhardt, 0, Dec. 10; Maria Abarca, 78, Dec. 12.

Sister Antoinette Schreiber, SSSF

MILWAUKEE—Sister Antoinette Schreiber, who lived her religious vocation in education, died Nov. 22, 2024, at Sacred Heart retirement and health care home in Milwaukee. She was 102 years old.

Sister Antoinette was born Jan. 2, 1922, in Pierron. She was received into the School Sisters of St. Francis on June 13, 1940; made her first profession of vows on June 21, 1942; and final (perpetual) vows on June 21, 1948.

Beginning in 1944, Sister Antoinette ministered in Illinois and Wisconsin.

In the Diocese of Rockford, she served as principal at St. John the Baptist



(Photo provided)
Sister Antoinette Schreiber, SSSF

OBITUARY

† David B. Hipp

AURORA—David B. Hipp died peacefully on December 19, 2024.

Dave was born on September 20, 1939, the son of Margaret and Urban Hipp. He had two sisters, the late Barbara Fiore, and Nancy Brown. Dave graduated from West Aurora High School, the University of Notre Dame, and the University of Illinois Law School. While in law school, he met Sandy Swanson, and they married in 1964.



They had six children, Dave (Mollie) Hipp of Pinehurst, North Carolina; Tom (Julie) Hipp of Geneva, Illinois; Dan (Julie) Hipp of Aurora, Illinois; Christopher Hipp who died as a child; Brian (Stephanie) Hipp of Aurora, Illinois; and Sarah Hipp of Aurora, Illinois. They have 14 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Dave went to work at Barber-Greene in Aurora and was a system analyst, Controller, V.P. Operations, Group Vice President, and Senior Vice President of U.S. Operations, as well as Director, until the company was sold in 1985.

He then started Hipp Temporary

School in McHenry (1966-1973). At Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Aurora, she served as a teacher in the school (1989-1994), as a parish sister (1994-1998), and as a tutor (1998-2001).

Sister Antoinette retired and served in the ministry of prayer and presence at convents in Campbellsport, Wis., and Milwaukee from 2011 until the time of her death.

She is survived by cousins, nieces and nephews, many friends, and the School Sisters of St. Francis community with whom she ministered for 84 years.

A funeral liturgy was held on December 3 at St. Joseph Hall in Milwaukee, followed by a burial service at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Milwaukee.

Stewardship Moment

Stewards of God's creation: The human person is in a relationship with God's creation and this creation is affected by the decisions

Skills, a staffing company in Aurora, which at its peak, had offices in five different towns. Dave never really retired, as he enjoyed working with his family and loved his daily routines.

Dave was active in the community. He was a Director of Lyon Metals, served on the Advisory Board of Mercy Center and Aurora University, was Chairman of the United Way and the Aurora Foundation, was a Director of the Valley Industrial Association, and was active in his parish, St. Peter, Aurora.

He also wrote a book chronicling the history of the Aurora manufacturing industry.

Dave was an avid bridge player, Sudoku champion, Wordle expert, and loved Northwoods fishing at his place in Manitowish Waters, Wisconsin. He was a die-hard Notre Dame and Cubs fan most of his life.

Visitation was held at The Healy Chapel, 322 W. Downer Pl., Aurora on January 4, 2025 from 1-4 p.m.

Donations may be made in his name to the Community Foundation of the Fox River Valley to the Urban and Margaret Hipp Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 4786, Aurora, IL 60507-9807.

For further information please call 630-897-9291 or visit www.healychapel.com to leave an online condolence.

of people. Creation and the human person are not isolated entities, but are intimately connected in a loving union. We are called to be responsible stewards of these special gifts.

Courtesy of Parish Publications "Stewardship" newsletter

Mass Meditation

Jan. 12 (Baptism of Our Lord): Jesus, whom God called "my beloved Son," is also the "servant" of whom Isaiah speaks in the first reading. We who are baptized in Christ must follow His example and use our time and resources in the service of God and neighbor.

Courtesy of Sharon Hueckel

Life Moment

Pray: That every unborn child may be brought safely to the waters of baptism, and to the joy of hearing the Good News of salvation.

Courtesy of www.priestsforlife.org

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Editor's note: "On Streaming Services" will not run this week and "On TV" will include offerings from EWTN only, as the main media reviewer for OSV News is on a brief break. The regular home viewing roundup will resume soon. *The Observer* apologizes for the inconvenience.

At the Movies

Kraven the Hunter

O R (Columbia)
Morally wayward action adventure story surrounding the Marvel Comics character. On an African safari with his Russian gangster father, he has a near-fatal encounter with a lion. But a magical potion given to him by a stranger not only revives him but endows him with superpowers. Once grown, he uses these gifts to track down criminals to whom he doles out do-it-yourself justice.
PARENTS: THIS FILM CONTAINS excessive graphic violence with gore, benignly viewed vigilantism, an occult theme, profanities, rough language and crude talk.

The Lord of the Rings: The War of the Rohirrim

A-II PG-13 (Warner Bros.)
Catholic novelist J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth is the setting for this animated drama chronicling the adventures of a warrior princess who joins her father in defending their kingdom against an attack by a childhood friend-turned-enemy. The fantasy is often lovely to behold and its moral values are mostly in order, but there's a static feel to the proceedings. Acceptable for most, other than little kids.
PARENTS: THIS FILM CONTAINS stylized combat and violence, characters in peril, grim images, one mild oath.

Mufasa: The Lion King

A-I PG (Disney)
This visually sweeping but insubstantial musical adventure looks back to the bond between two princely lions who meet when one rescues the other from being eaten by crocodiles. Although the pair become adoptive brothers, complications involving a lioness they both befriend drive them apart. The script flirts with shamanism and ideas of immortality, which may give some parents pause.
PARENTS: THIS FILM CONTAINS scenes of combat and peril.



(OSV News photo/Disney)

Mufasa: The Lion King

Sonic the Hedgehog 3

A-II PG (Paramount)
Along with hyperkinetic antics and rapid-fire jokes, this adventure shows unexpected layers of emotional pain. The recurring antagonist experiences abandonment issues and tries to connect with his grandfather. And a secondary character not only suffers unjust imprisonment but also sees his only friend perish in battle. Takes on subjects that little kids, and even some younger teens, would find too challenging.
PARENTS: THIS FILM CONTAINS Mature themes, intense action sequences, the death of a child, and cartoonish physical violence.
— OSV News.

New Christmas Song Features 3,000 Catholic Students

MANILA, Philippines (OSV News)—In a heartwarming collaboration, 3,000 Catholic school children from the Philippines made their pop debut in a new Christmas song by Black Eyed Peas members Apl. de.Ap, Keith Harris and David "DQ" Quiñones.
The song, "It's That Time of Year," was released in November, followed by a music video Dec. 13. Performed by students from the Sisters of Mary School in Cavite, the jazzy Christmas lullaby features

handbells and a festive choir.
Apl, who has Filipino roots, was inspired by a visit to the school, where he saw the incredible resilience of the children, many from poor farming or fishing families.
The Sisters of Mary School, founded by Venerable Father Aloysius Schwartz in 1985, provides free education, food, shelter and health care to children in need. Their goal is to equip students with technical skills to support their families after graduation.



(OSV News photo/courtesy production team)

Black Eyed Peas drummer and producer Keith Harris talks to members of the handbell choir.

The song's royalties will be split between the producers, Apl's foundation and the school, with hopes it will raise funds for tuition and awareness for the schools.

— By Simone Orendain, OSV News.

On TV

Broadcast times may vary; check local listings.

"Explore with the Miracle Hunter" — Jan. 11, 5-5:30 p.m. (EWTN): Michael O'Neill, the "Miracle Hunter" and Diocese of Rockford parishioner, investigates how the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe emblazoned on St. Juan Diego's tilma has inspired millions of believers (TV-G).
"Solemn Mass for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord" — Jan. 12, 2:30-4:30 a.m. (EWTN): Mass at the Basilica of the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. Encore: 5:30 p.m. (TV-G).
"Life is Worth Living" — Jan. 13, 5:30-6 p.m. (EWTN): The late archbishop Fulton J. Sheen discusses timeless issues of Catholicism. Encore: Jan. 14, 4:30 a.m. (TV-G).

OSV classifications (OSV News)	
A-I	— general patronage
A-II	— adults and adolescents
A-III	— adults
L	— limited adult audiences, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling
O	— morally offensive
MPAA ratings (Motion Picture Association of America)	
G	— general audiences, all ages admitted
PG	— parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children
PG-13	— parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13
R	— restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian
NC-17	— no one 17 and under admitted (age limit may vary)

"Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist" — Jan. 14, 5:30-6 p.m. (EWTN): The sisters explore their calls to religious life and interview

Catholics about their faith journeys. Encores: Jan. 15, 4 a.m. (TV-G).
"Walsingham Stories" — Jan. 15, 4:30-5 a.m. (EWTN): A presentation on the Shrine of Our Lady of Montligeon, which is dedicated to praying for the Holy Souls in Purgatory and assisting bereaved loved ones (TV-G).
"Fathers for Good" — Jan. 16, 10:30-11 p.m. (EWTN): Father Francis Gustilo and Frank Padilla discuss the leadership roles of men in their homes, parishes and communities. Encore: Jan. 18, 2 a.m. (TV-G).
"Icons: The Way of St. James" — Jan. 17, 9:30-10 p.m. (EWTN): A group of pilgrims traveling along Spain's Camino de Santiago learn the significance of the route traveled for centuries by those seeking spiritual growth (TV-G).

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Liturgical Music Coordinator/Parish Musician needed at St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Freeport, beginning in February 2025.



The Liturgical Music Coordinator/Parish Musician is responsible to make sure that we have musicians assigned for our weekend Masses and for some of our weekday Holy Days, and for funerals.

The Coordinator chooses music selections for each weekend of the liturgical seasons as well as for Holy Days, and makes the various music groups aware of the selections. The Coordinator may rehearse the various groups or cantors when new music is involved, or as needed.

This is a part-time position that requires approximately 5-7 hours a week. It is helpful, to have skills in playing piano and/or organ. The pay is negotiable, and can be hourly, or a mutually agreed upon salary. Knowledge of Catholic liturgy is helpful but can be learned.

A job description is available from the parish office.

If you have interest, please contact our parish:

Business Manager, Karen Sopcic or

Fr. Peter Snieg, pastor, to set up a meeting.

Call 815-232-3225 or email sta@stthomasfreeport.org.



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