Minister sees Jesus in the face of prisoners

JANET JONES
The Catholic Lighthouse

“I was in prison and you visited me,” a verse from the Gospel of Matthew, was one of the things that convinced Hermes Silva to be a co-director for an ACTS retreat at the Stevenson Unit prison in Cuero. Silva said a group out of Fredericksburg started the ACTS prison retreats and another ACTS team member from Victoria had called and asked him to be part of a retreat in 2011.

“I didn’t have a clue about prison ministry at all, and it took me by surprise when he called,” he said.

Then, he said, he spent some time in prayer while considering this. A few things came to his mind: the verse from Matthew, the criminal who was executed beside Jesus and repented before his death, and the fact that Jesus himself was arrested, judged, condemned and executed. “Those two things really struck me,” he said. “If Jesus were here today, I’m sure we could find him in the prison talking and dining with the prisoners and the outcasts.”

He served at that retreat and the following year he was asked to be the director of another prison ACTS retreat.

Silva has stayed involved in prison ministry and now is part of the formation team for the Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition.

Most recently, he and a deacon from the Diocese of Brownsville

... and you visited me

The need for Spanish-language resources is still great in the Catholic Church in the U.S., but the Diocese of Victoria began making big strides in 2021 when Aldo Camacho came to work for the diocese as a part-time coordinator of Hispanic Ministry.

It didn’t take long before his job demanded full-time hours. And a

Promise Pointe’s new chapel was a spark of light in a dark hour

JANET JONES
The Catholic Lighthouse

In one of his weakest moments, God gave Promise Pointe volunteer Frank Reyes a new project – building a chapel at the community of tiny homes that helps the homeless find stable, permanent housing.

Reyes was in treatment for Stage 4 lung cancer that also spread to his hip and spine. At one time he was about a week or less away from being paralyzed, he said.

“I had a lot of sleepless nights,” Reyes said. “One night I hear a voice that says, ‘Build the chapel.’”

Although he was on heavy medication and was going through a bad time physically, he didn’t ignore the message, but he was a bit confused. “I don’t have the plan,” he remembers saying.

He also didn’t know how he would get it done. God assured him, “I’ll get you the people and the money.”

The next morning he sketched out the design that God inspired. “It’s His design. I was just his hands and instrument to do it all here. I just followed what he wanted me to do,” Reyes said.

In July the chapel was complete and on Nov. 9 a dedication service took place with the Rev. Albert Yankey, chaplain for the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Convent, presiding. Sister Rebecca Janacek, IWBS, is the executive director, and Sister Laura Toman, another Sister from the IWBS community, is in residence there, working as well.

The chapel, which is small like the homes surrounding it, has a clean, simple, minimalist look. Above the altar is a cross, fashioned

See Promise Pointe’s new chapel, pg. 9

See Office of Hispanic Ministry, pg. 2

See Promise Pointe’s new chapel, pg. 9

The sketch
Frank Reyes
drew of the
chapel after a
long night dur-
ing his cancer
treatments.
Pray in Advent that we can root out causes of violence

As he spoke, some of the themes of the pastoral letter from El Salvador came to my mind and heart.

We have not been indifferent to the suffering of Ukraine. There are Ukrainian Knights of Columbus who are receiving and distributing much-needed supplies to people on the ground. Our Catholic Relief Services is on the ground giving assistance and offering care to refugees from the violence. Archbishop Gudziak acknowledged the support of the U.S. government that helps the Ukrainian army fight the Russians.

Archbishop Gudziak also shed light on the need to acknowledge who the aggressor is and to hold the aggressor accountable. As we are praying for peace in Ukraine, I believe he has challenged us to pray for the victory of Ukraine.

We are now praying in the liturgical season of Advent. Our faith leads us to reflect on God’s saving actions throughout human history. As individuals and as peoples we have sinned -- through our own idolatry, indifference and lack of holding people accountable. In this season, we can confess our sins, offer penance and spiritually unite ourselves to those who are suffering throughout the world. As we do so, we can be united with those who are suffering in our families and communities -- maybe offering a phone call or a visit, maybe offering charitable contributions to some of the charities that serve those in need in our community.

This leads to the precious gift of Christian hope.

Both Archbishop Alas and Archbishop Gudziak amaze me with their hope in the sharing of their suffering and pain. They realize and communicate that God is victorious, and that in every season we celebrate that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and the Holy Spirit gives us true power.

God gives us the chance in every season to admit the ways in which we have sinned and to turn our hearts to Him in love.

May you and your families have a blessed and holy season, and may we remain confident in the victory of Jesus Christ and the power He gives to each person who trusts in Him.

Let’s keep each other in prayer.

+Brendan

Office of Hispanic Ministry established

Continued from pg. 1

Few weeks ago, Bishop Brendan Cahill established the first Office of Hispanic Ministry for the diocese and Camacho accepted the position as the director of that office.

In a short time, Camacho has developed leadership teams in many parishes, and he organized a successful first-ever Hispanic Catholic Conference, with more than 270 people attending.

“He did a good job getting to know people – to collaborate and appreciate what has been done,” Bishop Cahill said of Camacho.

On Nov. 5, Bishop Cahill presided over a certification Mass for the second group to complete their formation to provide Hispanic leadership in their churches.

During a reception for the group, Sister Rosario Resendez recalled that Bishop Cahill started putting more emphasis on Hispanic ministry when he hired her because of her ability to speak Spanish. She was, at the time, a novice with the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament, and a novice sister becoming an administrative assistant to the bishop was very unusual, she said.

Bishop Cahill has said that he also felt strongly that he wanted to celebrate Mass in Spanish early on after being ordained as the third bishop of the Diocese of Victoria in order to connect with people of the diocese.

Getting to the point of having an office dedicated to Hispanic Ministry has taken some time and has come about in many phases. A lot of people started in 2016 V Encuentro process to help train and educate people who wanted to serve the Church in Spanish. Some of the leaders at that time have moved into other leadership roles and Bishop Cahill has moved prayerfully on the development of this office.

“‘Time is more important than space,’ as Pope Francis likes to say,” Bishop Cahill said, explaining that “Things unfold in God’s time.”

The following received certifications in Hispanic ministry leadership formation:

- Completion of Christian Formation Course: Josefina Hernandez, Perla Hernandez, Ma Estela Ortiz, Maria Patino, Reyna Rosales, Romy Guzman, Mari Guillen Garcia, Fidelina Figueroa, Natalia Ruiz, Minerva Chavarria, Jose Carrera, Clara Carrera, Jesus Carrera, Lolis Carrera, Alice Figirova, Maria Guadalupe Brito, Zenaida Sanchez, Alicia Gonzalez, San Juan Vargas, Veronica Canelo, Maria de Jesus Torres Soto, Elia Josefina Vallejo, Mauricio Santiago, Juan Carlos de la Rosa, Martha Gonzalez, Alejandra Olguin, Annie Moreno Paniagua, Sergio Paniagua, Marisol Moreno-Ibarra, Faustina Tamez and Veronica Diaz.

- Completion of Fundamental Course of Faith: Jose Luis Lozano, Marielo Lozano, Ambrosio Moreno, Mary Moreno, Ramon Moreno, Serafin Olachia, Elia Martha Olachia, Yelile Villalon, Victoriano Echartea, Jo Ann Echartea, Angelica Fortanelli, Silvia Pena de Rodriquez, Nancy Rodriguez, Noelia Gonzales, Christina Espinosa, Silvia Hernandez Martinez, Janie Rubio, Sandra Melendez and Ramon Melendez.
### December

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>University of St. Thomas Board meeting; Houston</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8:15 a.m. School Mass and Visit with St. Anthony Catholic School; Columbus</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 p.m. Sons of the Republic of Texas Presidio La Bahia Awards Program at Presidio Nuestra Señora de Loreto Chapel; Goliad</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• 11 a.m. Mass for Conquistando Las Naciones Retreat at the Spiritual Renewal Center; Victoria • 3 p.m. Open House for Our Lady’s Healing Center at Stella Maris Ranch</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>• 11:30 a.m. Confessions and Mass at UHV; Victoria • 7 p.m. Mass with Spanish prayer group at St. Rose of Lima; Schulenberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>• 9 a.m. Legion of Mary Praesidium meeting; Cathedral Center • 3 p.m. Pastoral Institute Certification event; Chancery</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>11 a.m. Mass Galveston Seafarer’s Center; Galveston Seafarer’s Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chancery Office Closed • 8:15 a.m. School Mass and Visit with Nazareth Academy; Victoria • 2:30 a.m. U.S. Engagement Committee for Catholic Relief Services; virtual</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>• 3 p.m. Lessons and Carols at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory; Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>• 6 a.m. Mass at Our Lady of Sorrows in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe; Victoria • 10 a.m. Chancery/Emmaus/SRC/Presidio Office Staff Advent Retreat at Incarnate Word Convent; Victoria • 6:30 p.m. Penance Service at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory; Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>• 9 a.m. Legion of Mary Praesidium meeting; Cathedral Center • 5 p.m. Mass and Christmas gathering for Equestrian Order at Victoria Country Club; Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Day of prayer for priests and Bishop Guillory’s 50th anniversary; Beaumont</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>• Noon Mass and Lunch with Serra Club at Colony Creek Country Club; Victoria • 6 p.m. 75th Anniversary for KC Council at the KC Hall; Bay City</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>10 a.m. Catholic Relief Services Board Teleconference; virtual</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>• Noon Mass and Lunch with Serra Club at Colony Creek Country Club; Victoria • 6 p.m. 75th Anniversary for KC Council at the KC Hall; Bay City</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>5 p.m. Mass and Appreciation Dinner at the Spiritual Renewal Center (first of two); Victoria</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Noon Meal with IWBS Sisters at IWBS Convent; Victoria</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>• 6:30 a.m. Morning Air interview • 9 a.m. Legion of Mary Praesidium meeting; Cathedral Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2:30 p.m. Finance Board Meeting; Chancery • 4 p.m. Building Board Meeting; Chancery</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2:30 p.m. Finance Board Meeting; Chancery • 4 p.m. Building Board Meeting; Chancery</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2:30 p.m. Finance Board Meeting; Chancery • 4 p.m. Building Board Meeting; Chancery</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Jan. 2 • 6:30 p.m. Mass and Appreciation Dinner at Holy Family; Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>• 5 p.m. Confessions and 6 p.m. Mass at St. Anthony Catholic Church; Palacios</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>• 9 a.m. Mass for Mary Mother of God at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory; Victoria</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Noon Mass with Missionary Catechists; Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>• 5 p.m. Mass and Appreciation Dinner at the Spiritual Renewal Center (second of two); Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>• 6:30 p.m. Penance Service at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory; Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>• 4 p.m. Christmas Mass for IWBS Healthcare Sisters at IWBS Convent; Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>• 6 p.m. 75th Anniversary for KC Council at the KC Hall; Bay City</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>11 a.m. Mass for Holy Innocents at Rafael’s Refuge; Flatonia</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>6 p.m. Serra Christmas Mass and Dinner at Holy Family; Victoria</td>
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### In Memoriam

#### Deacon Frank Tilley’s wife, Esther, passes away

Esther Tilley, age 68 of Victoria, peacefully passed away Nov. 14, 2022, surrounded by family. She was born April 8, 1954, in Victoria to the late Joe Gomez and Irene Soto.

She is survived by her husband Deacon Frank Tilley of Austin; daughter Bianca Tilley of Austin; son Patrick Tilley of Denver, CO; sisters Stella Torres of Victoria, Emma Cavazos (Ray) of Victoria, Elvia Arriaga (Walter) of Victoria, and Mary Ellen Reyna (Henry) of Victoria; brothers Joe Gomez (Gloria) of Victoria, and Johnny Gomez of Victoria.

A Funeral Mass was celebrated at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Victoria, on Nov. 18. Burial followed at Resurrection Cemetery.

Esther attended school at Victoria College. She worked in retail at Lulu’s, Dillard’s, and Green Bros. before enjoying an early retirement. Esther had a large giving heart and was loved by everyone who knew her. She had a strong Catholic faith and was involved with ACTS retreats, music ministry, and various other volunteer efforts with the church.

Esther and Frank were married on July 4, 1981. She enjoyed planning events and had a creative flair for design. The best wife and mother who taught her children the value of a good work ethic and integrity.
**Education of Seminarian Fund**

The Education of Seminarian Fund is a fund in which all of the monies donated to this fund, as well as the earnings, are available to cover the cost of educating seminarians. The proceeds of the special collection on Holy Thursday are deposited into the Education of Seminarian Fund. Publication of this fund will appear when new contributions are received.

**Donation categories:**
- Lector - $0.01 - $99.99
- Acolyte - $100 - $499.99
- Candidate - $500 - $1,499.99
- Transitional Deacon - $1,500 - $2,499.99
- Priest - $2,500 or more

Please remember in prayer the priests of the Diocese of Victoria, who were ordained during the month of December:

- **Lector**
  - Paz Morales
  - In memory of Father Dan Morales
  - Jocelyn M. Mrkwa
  - In memory of Father Don Ruppert

- **Candidate**
  - John K. and Anne E. Marek
  - Transitional Deacon
  - David and Sherry Heyer

- **Priest**
  - Rev. Gabriel Oduro Tawiah
  - St. John Nepomucene Church, New Taiton (12/06/97)
  - Rev. Parmenio Florez-Garcia
  - Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Victoria (12/05/98)
  - Rev. Samuel Kwabenya Ovusu
  - St. Philip the Apostle Church, El Campo (12/05/04)
  - Rev. John K. and Anne E. Marek
  - Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church, Shiner (12/05/04)
  - Rev. Michael Odartey-Lamptey
  - St. Peter the Apostle Church, Port Lavaca (12/05/04)

**To contribute to the Education of Seminarian Fund, send contributions to:**

Diocese Of Victoria
Education of Seminarian Fund
P. O. Box 4070
Victoria, TX 77903

**Please remember in prayer the priests of the Diocese of Victoria, who died during the month of December:**

- Rev. Richard Bediako
- 12/03/11
- St. Michael Church, Cuero
- Rev. Eliecer Paniño-Hurtado
- 12/01/07
- St. Anthony Church, Palacios
- Rev. Michael Odaruty-Lamprey
- 12/05/04
- Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church, Shiner
- Rev. Samuel Kwabenya Ovusu
- 12/05/04
- St. Philip the Apostle Church, El Campo
- Rev. Parmenio Florez-Garcia
- 12/05/98
- Our Lady of Sorrows Church, Victoria
- Rev. Gabriel Oduro Tawiah
- 12/06/97
- St. John Nepomucene Church, New Taiton

**Let us pray for more vocations to the priesthood**

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**Seminary Endowment Fund**

Seminary Endowment Fund (formerly known as Seminary Burses) is a permanent fund used for the education of future priests for the Diocese of Victoria. The goal of each burse is $15,000. The interest from this amount is applied yearly to the education of seminarians. The burses are in memory of or in honor of an individual priest or layperson, living or deceased. Publication of the burses will appear periodically when new contributions are received.

**Donation Categories:**
- Lector - $0.01 - $99.99
- Acolyte - $100 - $499.99
- Candidate - $500 - $1,499.99
- Transitional Deacon - $1,500 - $2,499.99
- Priest - $2,500 or more

**November 16, 2022**

**General Seminary Burse**
- Acolyte
- In memory of Samantha Holub by Leon and Hattie Kristynik

**Josephat R. Janak Seminary Burse #2**
- Acolyte
- Donation in memory of Joe R Janak on the 24th anniversary of his death (11/30/1998) by Rose Marie Janak and Family

**Donald F. McDonald, Sr. Seminary Burse #3**
- Priest
- Donation in memory of Donald F. McDonald by Mrs. Olivia McDonald

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**Dec. 10-11 collection helps retired religious**

The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) announces that on Dec. 10-11, the Diocese of Victoria will hold the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection in parishes throughout the diocese.

Last year, the parishioners of the diocese donated $39,070.64 to the collection. In 2022, the Missionary Catechists of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary received a total of $107,877.51 in financial support made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious.

About the upcoming collection, NRRO Executive Director Sister Stephanie Still, a member of the Sisters of the Presentation of Jesus and Mary, said, “The care of our aging religious presents an enormous financial responsibility. It is our privilege to care for those who gave a lifetime of tireless service, and I feel we are deeply blessed by all the members and the funds available to support their care. As a result, many now lack adequate retirement savings.

The 2021 appeal raised nearly $28.5 million, and the NRRO distributed funding to 271 U.S. religious communities. Donations also underwrite resources that help religious communities improve elder care and plan for long-term retirement needs.


For more information, visit retiredreligious.org, or contact Robin Cabral, Campaign Director, by phone at 508-685-8899 or email at robincabral@retiredreligious.org.

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Join in listening to Bishop Brendan Cahill every third Tuesday of the month at 6:30 a.m. on Relevant Radio Morning Air with John Morales. Listeners can call in with questions or comments. You can listen to past podcasts online.

Relevant Radio® has been helping people bridge the gap between faith and everyday life through informative, entertaining, and interactive programming twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. The Relevant Radio network is currently serving the Church with 127 stations and interactive programming twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. The Relevant Radio network is currently serving the Church with 127 stations and interactive programming twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week.
COLUMBUS — The 4th Degree Knights of Columbus of the Diocese of Victoria participated in the Veterans Day parade in Columbus. Sir Knights and their assemblies are John Zarboch (1126), Joe Vervet (1131), Chris Boyd (1126), Bryan Sturm (1126), Eddie Longoria (1126). (Contributed Photo)

WEIMAR – St. Michael Catholic School students recognized veterans and the woman’s auxiliary at a morning Mass on Veterans Day. They also prepared gift bags to present to the veterans after Mass. (Contributed Photo)

**Vocation Posters Available**

The Diocese of Victoria Vocation Posters are now available. Call the Chancery Office at (361) 573-0828 to place an order for your school, parish, organization or any individual that would like to have a poster.

**Do you have a vocation to the priesthood or religious life?**

Contact:
Father Kristopher Fuchs
Director of Vocations
361-573-4328
evocations@victoriadiocese.org
Start off the new year with plans to encounter Christ while connecting with other young women from the Diocese of Victoria through fellowship and fun! The retreat will be held Jan. 13-15, 2023, at Camp Kubena in Ledbetter, Texas with limited space of 30 high school age young women. If transportation poses a challenge, please contact the Youth Office. Cost is $85 per person (includes a $25 nonrefundable deposit). Registration deadline is Dec. 16, 2022. To register go to www.victoriadiocese.org and click on ministries, Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Retreat For Girls - In His Image or scan the qr code.

Christianity’s story unfolds in Lessons and Carols

The Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory will host an Ecumenical Service of Lessons and Carols on Dec. 11 at 3 p.m. The Victoria Civic Chorus will join the celebration this year. All are invited to this ecumenical service.

During the Advent celebration, nine Bible passages are read to tell the story of Christianity from the beginning – from the fall of Adam and Eve to God’s promise of a Savior and the birth of Jesus Christ. The readings are followed by prayers and carols reflecting the message of the lesson.

Some of the carols may be well known and others may be unfamiliar to the ears of the congregation.

According to Dr. Glenn Hunter, director of music for the cathedral, Lessons and Carols is a tradition going back to the 19th century. Our Lady of Victory has been hosting the celebration since 2016.

Last year Christian pastors from Communities of Faith, a group that includes leaders from Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths, helped present the “lessons,” and an ecumenical group of singers and musicians provided the “carols.” Bishop Brendan Cahill, a member of Communities of Faith, will preside again this year.

Emory Matias reads the first of the biblical passages during the ecumenical Lessons and Carols service in December 2021.

In His Image

VICTORIA — Sister Louise Marie Jones, IWBS, who holds a certificate from the School of Christian Healing in Jacksonville, Fla., and leads the Incarnate Word Prayer Group, will lead “The Healing Touch of God,” a workshop/retreat on Dec. 10 at the Amor Meus Spirituality Center, 1101 N. E. Water St., at the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament campus.

The event is for anyone who feels that something is holding them back from being the person God created them to be. Anyone experiencing pain from a past memory or is feeling chained by a lack of forgiveness is encouraged to attend.

“God wants to set us free, to heal us – spirit, soul, and body. Forgiveness and healing of memories bring peace of mind and heart,” according to a release from Amor Meus. “This prayerful, reflective time is to experience the love of the Father bringing wholeness to areas of hurt and brokenness in our past and present lives. It is intended to be experiential, a manifestation of God’s salvific love at work in our lives, touching us beyond mere intellectual knowledge.

Sister Louise Marie Jones has served as the secretary at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Victoria. She has also worked as a teacher’s aide, and as a vocation directress. She also holds a certificate of accounting from the Texas Vocational School in Victoria and works in the business office at Incarnate Word Convent.

To register for the retreat, call 361-575-7111 or email amormeuscenter@gmail.com.

Sign in is at 9:30 a.m. and the retreat begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m. Participants should bring a lunch with them. Parking is in front of the convent.

A free-will offering will be accepted.
Christ the King
EL CAMPO -- The Catholic Community of El Campo celebrated the feast of Christ the King, the last Sunday of the liturgical year, with a Eucharistic procession and a chance to view the Eucharistic miracles and see the relic of Blessed Carlo Acutis, the teenager who helped create an online exhibition of the Eucharistic miracles in history and shared his great love for the Eucharist until his death at age 15.

Eucharistic Revival has lots of momentum

CAROL ZIMMERMANN
Catholic News Service

Baltimore (CNS) -- The U.S. bishops’ three-year Eucharistic revival, which will culminate in a National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis in 2024, is in full swing, according to Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minnesota.

Bishop Cozzens, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, which is spearheading the revival, reminded the bishops Nov. 16 during their annual fall general assembly how they overwhelmingly voted in favor of the revival during their meeting a year ago.

It has “incredible momentum,” he told them, pointing out how the three-year initiative launched this summer on the feast of Corpus Christi with Eucharistic processions around the country.

The effort is meant to revitalize Catholics’ understanding of and love for Jesus in the Eucharist. The ultimate goal, said Bishop Cozzens, is that this “this encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist” will move Catholics who have been part of this experience to be missionary disciples who would in turn lead others to the faith.

This first year of the revival is focused on the diocesan level and the second phase next year will focus on the parish level and resources aimed at increasing Catholics’ understanding of what the Eucharist really means.

Part of the impetus prompting this effort was a Pew study in the fall of 2019 that showed just 30 percent of Catholics understand the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Bishop Cozzens pointed out that a more recent study conducted by Center For Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University had some different findings showing that 50 percent of Catholics know the teaching on the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist and only 40 percent believe this teaching. The study also showed that only 15 percent of Catholics attend Sunday Mass on a weekly basis.

In a discussion with reporters prior to giving his report to the U.S. bishops, Bishop Cozzens said the leaders of this initiative hope to reach those who are not attending church regularly. He said participants will hopefully “invite people not at church to church,” which he said is part of the missionary nature of what the Eucharistic revival is all about.

Bishop Cozzens urged his fellow bishops to pray for the revival, which he described as a “divine visitation” and a “work of God.”

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EDITOR’S NOTE: The following sermon was written for the fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle A. Father Kram titled it, “The Coming of Jesus.”

The birth of Jesus was perhaps the most unusual event in human history. Conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, truly God and truly man, like us in every way except sin, his coming took a few strange turns, which are truly interesting to consider.

For example, I’m sure most of us are a little puzzled as to just what kind of marriage actually existed between Mary and Joseph at the time of the conception of Jesus.

Jewish couples enter into marriage in three steps. First there was the engagement, then there was the betrothal and, finally, there was the marriage.

The engagement was usually set up by the parents or by a professional matchmaker. Often the engagees were still children at the time. Often they were strangers.

The reasoning behind all this was that marriage is too important to leave to chance and the undependability of human emotions.

Once the marriageable persons were engaged, the engagement was confirmed by a solidly binding betrothal. The girl did not have to marry the boy to whom she was engaged, but once she was betrothed, the betrothal lasted for one year, and then it was time for the marriage.

During the year of betrothal, the couple was already known as husband and wife, and the only way out of it was by divorce, but actually they did not as yet have the rights of marriage.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit during the one-year period of betrothal, as is evident from the fact that Mary and Joseph had not yet lived together, yet he was called her husband and he was considering divorce.

Actually, Joseph could have solved the problem in three possible ways:

First, he could have charged Mary with adultery, but he was too kind, even in the face of that much circumstantial evidence. He could not believe that she was guilty.

Secondly, he could have married her under circumstances that would leave them both open to suspicion of having taken undue liberties during their betrothal.

And, thirdly, he had the choice of sending Mary away somewhere and then not marrying her at the end of the betrothal. An annulment of the betrothal would free her to become betrothed to someone else if she chose.

Mary might have tried to explain to Joseph what had happened, but would he have understood? She remained silent, and God, whose very special providence had raised such delicate questions, also provided the answer. So Joseph married Mary and gave her a home into which her child could be born under respectable circumstances.

Child to be born was to be called Jesus (which means Savior), because He would save his people from their sins. Actually, the name Jesus is a Greek name. In Hebrew, it is Joshua, which means “Yahweh is Salvation.” And then there is the name Emmanuel, meaning “God with us.”

It would be hard to imagine how God could be any more with us than He is in Jesus, or how He could be any more our salvation than he is in Jesus. We are no longer alone on our little planet; God has joined us and has become seeable and hearable and touchable; He has gone much further for us than we were willing to go for Him.

Without God as our Final End, and without him to show us the way, our lives would be confused and meaningless and empty.

Although the Chosen People misunderstood the ancient prophecies about his coming and rejected Him, Jesus came nevertheless and remains with us. In fact, some Christians believe that even if Adam had not sinned and we were not a fallen people in need of a savior, He would have come nevertheless to be the center of our race.

So the season of Advent is the time to shed our loneliness and renew our happiness in having Jesus with us. “Joy to the world, the Lord is come.”

Lord Jesus, thank you for coming to be with us and be our savior. Help us always to make you feel welcome and wanted in our midst. Grant that, like Mary and Joseph, we too, may be able to faithfully follow your will, wherever you may wish to lead us. Amen.
JAMES RAMOS
Catholic News Service

SPRING, Texas -- Disability ministry leaders, advocates, family members and others gathered recently at St. Ignatius of Loyola Catholic Church in Spring for the annual conference of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability.

Charleen Katra, the organization’s director, said the goal of the conference was to raise awareness about disability issues in the church, but more importantly it was to train church communities on how to “create a welcoming and hospitable” campus, parish, school and diocese.

“You want to do more than just include someone,” she said. “You want to help create a home for the person with a disability, in the church, to where they move from just being included. We want to move people from inclusion to belonging in the church.”

Katra said the recent synod discussions in the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese have helped bring new issues to light that the church community and its leaders have overlooked in the past.

The main message, she said, is that people with disabilities and their families “want to feel a sense of belonging in the church, and they do not feel like they have been on many occasions.”

Part of the programming for the Oct. 21-22 conference included a sensory-friendly celebration of the Mass. The liturgy featured subdued lighting and music, softer or fewer instruments and spoken parts and other shortened segments for people with processing delays, as well as an American Sign Language interpreter and assistive listening devices and large print missals.

The sensory-friendly Mass was a new experience for Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria, Texas, who was a keynote speaker at the conference.

Drawing from St. John Paul II, he asked participants to look beyond the evil things in the world, to “see what’s positive in others,” and to “maintain a love of God for them.”

“Everyone should look on his neighbor, without any exceptions, as another self, bearing in mind, above all, his life and the means necessary for living it in a dignified way,” he emphasized, taking the “without exceptions” phrase from Second Vatican Council documents.

Part of the work of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability is to encourage and increase sensory-friendly Masses in the church, a ministry that’s starting to grow both in the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese and across the country.

“Parishes are starting to see and understand this is a real need,” Katra said. “If you want to accompany people, if you want to be a synodal church, offering a sensory-friendly Mass is as equally, if not more important, for Catholic identity than, again, the importance of adapting catechetical programs and other events and programs in a parish to make them physically accessible and adapted to the various needs of diverse learners.”
Minister sees Jesus in the face of prisoners

“We are blessed to start here and we thank God for people like Hermes Silva and Aldo Camacho. And we thank God that we are able to serve,” Bishop Cahill said. “They are very, very thankful for you to be there to listen to them. They want to know more about the Good News.”

Ministering to the incarcerated population is eye-opening, Silva said. Hearing their personal stories made him realize that many of the people there weren’t getting a second chance at a relationship with Jesus, they were getting their first chance because they had grown up in such hard circumstances.

“It’s heartbreaking. They haven’t received a hug for years and years,” Silva said. “Many have been forgotten. They have no support. A lot of these guys they come from broken families, without fathers, surrounded by drugs. This is what they knew. No direction in their lives.”

But given a chance, many will soften their hearts and share their pain, he said. “A lot of times they minister to us as well.”

Silva said the ones who want to come to the Masses or the Bible studies are hungry to learn. “They are very, very thankful for you to be there to listen to them. They want to know more about the Good News.” And, he added, he sees Jesus in the faces of the prisoners.

Through Kolbe Prison Ministries, the organization that serves the incarcerated in Texas, Silva said there are RCIA programs, Bible studies in English and Spanish and retreats. The Rev. Francis Nguyen, parochial vicar of St. Joseph in Yoakum, celebrates Mass and provides the sacraments regularly at the Stevenson Unit.

Silva said he has witnessed some major transformations through the years and some of the former inmates have helped minister after their release.

But there’s a lot more that’s needed, Silva said. Especially volunteers who have the willingness to open their hearts and minds to ministering to inmates and considering the formation process to learn about the ministry as well as how the prison system works. The formation includes seven classes covering six modules and is accomplished over about three months.

The local prison ministry is currently preparing for their sixth annual Christmas giving at the prison. Each prisoner will get some necessities and two Christmas cards, one to keep and one they can send to a loved one. Because of the prison’s regulations, all inmates must get identical packages. He said 1,400 packages will be put together Dec. 10 at Holy Family Catholic Church in Victoria and help is appreciated. Anyone interested in helping with the project can call Silva at 361-894-2014. Or email hsilva@victoriadiocese.org.
What Jesus asks of us requires faith, not reason

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves … Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?” … As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.” (John 6)

Since June I have been commenting on fragments from the Liturgy of the Mass which are especially meaningful to me. This month we enter into the Eucharistic Prayer, and I highlight two parts: 1) the epiclesis from the Greek meaning to “call upon:” when the priest appeals to the Lord to make holy our gifts by “sending down your spirit upon them like them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Eucharistic Prayer II); and, 2) what happens when we “Do this in memory of me” – the anamnesis.

Each Eucharistic Prayer has an epiclesis of consecration. The precise wording and timing differ among them and it may be difficult to determine when this request for consecration is happening. It is recognizable by observing the movements of the priest and deacon. Just before the epiclesis, the deacon will remove the pall from the chalice and join the faithful in kneeling. While praying, the priest will extend his hands, palms downward, covering the gifts and making the Sign of the Cross. Traditionally, this moment is accompanied by a one-time ringing of bells that call our attention to this joyful and sacred action.

Detecting when the epiclesis is happening is not as important as appreciating what is happening. Rather, Who is happening. Consider the connection between the consecration and Incarnation. In the Incarnation, Mary is told that it is the Holy Spirit who “will come upon you … overshadow you.” (Luke 1:35) Similarly, in consecration, the hands of the priest come upon the gifts, overshadowing them, while the Holy Spirit births them into the Body and Blood of Christ.

An early Church Father, St. Justin Martyr, noted this Incarnation-Eucharist connection: “Just as truly as God became man in Mary’s womb at the Incarnation, so the Incarnate Jesus becomes present on the altar at the moment of consecration in the Mass.” In other words, the Eucharist is the Incarnation continued on earth until the end of time. Note also, that in the epiclesis we witness again how God invites us to participate in the Divine and Trinitarian cycle of love by receiving, responding and returning. Although the wording varies in each, the Eucharistic Prayers carry the same action: We return to the Father “from the gifts you have given us” (EP I) and ask him to receive them. He responds by sending the Spirit upon them so that we can in turn can “receive the most holy Body and Blood of your Son.” (EP I)

Immediately following the consecration (epiclesis), we are drawn into the narrative of the Lord’s Supper and hear: “TAKE THIS ALL OF YOU…FOR THIS IS MY BODY … FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD. … DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.” The word we translate as “memory” is from the original Greek word anamnesis, which carries a more profound meaning than simply remembering dates and state capitols, or even important events like weddings or birth of a child. Instead, anamnesis is a remembrance so profound and mysterious that it effectively makes the past present. In this case, we are not repeating the action of the past or reenacting what once had happened; we are entering into the very same and perpetual action. When we have engaged in a “full, active, and conscious participation” in the Mass, we are not simply recalling what happened to Christ. Through anamnesis we are present to them and them to us. We are at the cross, with the Real Presence, through a faith beyond our understanding.

AT THE CROSS: There is no “re-sacrifice” of Jesus at each Mass. Understand that God is not constricted to our time and space and so can offer us an experience into the singular moment in historical time at Calvary that is continually being offered across time and space and eternally in heaven. This is not a repeat of the one, true sacrifice or a symbolic reenactment; it is the re-presentation of Christ’s once, but perpetual, offering of Himself. What truly and visibly occurred at Golgotha is truly and invisibly offered at the altar.

WITH THE REAL PRESENCE: Transubstantiation – the conversion of the substance of the bread and wine into the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ Jesus – is the “source and summit” of our Christian life. What was bread and wine before the words of consecration is the Real Presence of the Christ after. Writings of the Early Church fathers, declarations from Church councils and commentaries by our most brilliant theologians have attempted to explain and promote this reality. None however outweigh the clearest and most definitive words, “THIS IS MY BODY.” This is not symbolic language. We can believe that the bread and wine is the Body and Blood of Christ because Jesus said so himself. And so, my friends, Jesus in the Eucharist is doing what Jesus on the Cross did – offering Himself to His children now as He offered Himself to His Father then.

THROUGH FAITH BEYOND UNDERSTANDING: To be sure, the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist “is a difficult statement” to understand and, like the disciples who heard directly from Christ, many present-day self-proclaimed disciples withdraw from it. What is truly needed, however, is not our understanding but our faith to trust what we don’t understand. Recall the healing of the hemorrhaging woman. (Matthew 9:20-22), Jesus did not say, “You were healed by your understanding and reason.” He said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.”

Nor did Jesus say, “Unless you figure out how this is my flesh and this is my blood, you have no life in yourselves,” or, “Take this and when you can understand it, then you can eat it.” He does not say, “Understand this in memory of me.” Take this, eat this, do this are calls to our faith not to our reason, for it will be through the eyes of faith that we can see what we don’t understand. Please do not take this as my rejection of the effort to grow in the understanding of what we believe. Nor is this a criticism of those of us who at times wrestle with the teachings of our faith. Rather, it is a suggestion that, when on the search for understanding and when we are confronted by other “difficult statements,” that we remember the motto of St. Anselm, “Faith seeking understanding.”

Pax tibi,
Deacon Michael Tankersley
I n a November 2022 article for the Victo-
ria Advocate, Father Kirby Hlavaty was
quoted saying, “Oftentimes we associate Our
Lady of Guadalupe only with Mexico, but that
is simply limiting our understanding. She is
the patroness of all of the Americas.”

Dec. 12, amidst the season of Advent,
we celebrate Our Lady of Guada-
lupe. I don’t think her celebration is a competition
when it comes to the upcoming
Christmas celebration, but it is
a day in which we can remember that, during a
time when Christianity was being introduced (kind
of violently) to the indigenous people of the
“New World,” Our Lord chose another way.

I’ve said it many times: God has access to
all of creation. He could have used anything
or anyone to introduce Himself to the native
people, but He chose to send His mother. He
wanted the people to be brought to Him, so he
did it in the most gentle form — by sending a
gentle woman inviting all with the love that
only a mother can give.

Many times I have reflected on this. Jesus
heard the cry of the people. He heard how the
indigenous people were being forced to
convert into Christianity. He saw the violence.
Though He wanted the people with Him this
would not be the way He would want it to
be done. He heard the cries of the people,
He listened to them and He sent His mother.

How did she approach this? She came
looking like the people. She came talking like
the people. She came loving the people. She
came in a way the people would recognize
her, and humanity trusts that which we rec-
ognize. However, she never indicated that she
was a goddess; she always indicated that she
wanted the people to come to her Son. The
Lord listened, Mary came to invite people to
her Son (One can even say she catechized by
her actions.), and the people fell in love with
the faith and our Lord.

I see a parallel with this event and what
has taken place in our diocese. Since I began
working with Bishop Cahill, one thing that
was resounding among the people in our dio-
cese was the need for Hispanic ministry. For a
few years, Bishop Cahill heard the “cries” of
the people — they wanted adult formation in
Spanish. At times it looked like he was mov-
ing very slowly in acting on what the people
were asking for in our diocese. V Encuentro
happened and the people asked for a director
of Hispanic ministry and for adult formation
classes. All across the United States it seemed
like that was what was on the top of the list
of needs. Still, we moved slowly.

We moved in stages, going to a Convoca-
tion for Catholic Leaders in Orlando, Fla.,
with a group of 12 people. We went through
V Encuentro, and, when that was concluded,
the leaders who began from the Convocation
phased out to new leaders from V Encuentro.

Then the diocese hired a coordinator of
Hispanic ministry, Mr. Aldo Camacho. From
the start, he began adult formation classes. He
started building a team of Hispanic leaders to
work with their home parishes. After this, the
leaders from V Encuentro phased out and the
Hispanic Ministry team was created.

Elsewhere in this paper, there is an article
about how we now have an Office of Hispanic
Ministry, a historical event as this is the first
Office or Department of Hispanic Ministry
for our Diocese. Bishop Cahill was not mov-
ing slowly; he was moving gently, but he
was listening to the people. Aldo came and,
like Mary, he immediately reached out to the
people. The people responded and the min-
istry is growing exponentially. People who
may have had little knowledge of their faith
are now falling in love with it and our Lord.

The Lord knows what we need. He also
knows how to approach the situation at hand.
When people cry out to us, we have to discern
if it is the Lord calling to us through them. If
it is His will and we follow it, amazing things
will happen.

If we are aware and we are open to it, we
can see God working in our lives through
parallel events or new ones.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the
Americas, pray for us.

“We also are awaiting the descent of the
Holy Spirit, who will make us see the paths
evangelization by which the Church must
continue and must be reborn in this great
continent of ours. We also wish today and in
the days ahead to devote ourselves to prayer
with Mary, the Mother of our Lord and Mas-
ter — with you, Mother of hope, Mother of
Guadalupe.” St. John Paul II
They went marching in
HALLETTSVILLE — Sacred Heart School students in grades two through four processed into church before Mass on All Saints Day, Nov. 1, dressed as their favorite saints. Some students chose saints that bore their names, while others selected certain ones that they admire most and strive to imitate daily. This is an annual tradition at Sacred Heart, and, thanks to the Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament, the school has been spreading the Gospel since 1882. (Contributed Photo)

Special guest presentation
PORT LAVACA — Erin Dent, far left, a 2016 Our Lady of the Gulf graduate, visited the school and gave a presentation to the fifth- through eighth-graders about internship trip to the Costa Rican rainforest to study social justice, its ecosystem and environmental problems. Dent is currently a junior at Texas A&M University where she is studying at the College of Geosciences. “We love when OLG alumni come to visit, especially when they get to teach a class!” Jessica Garza, marketing and communications coordinator stated in an email to the Lighthouse. (Contributed Photo)

Saintly second-graders
WEIMAR — On Nov. 1, the second grade presented their patron saints. Each student picked a saint that was special to them and portrayed that saint at Mass. A saint is a holy person known for their “heroic sanctity.” The Roman Catholic Church recognizes more than 10,000 saints – a diverse group of people, including kings, queens and everyday people who dedicated their lives to the loving pursuit of God. As Catholics, we see them as examples of lives well lived in faith, often facing the same struggles, hardships and doubts. When we pray to the saints, we ask them to help us by praying for us just like we ask our friends and family to pray for us. From left are, front row, Kassie Moeller as St. Catherine of Siena; Finley Marshall as St. Therese of Lisieux; Parker Helmcamp as St. Anthony of Padua; Jesse Janecka as St. Patrick; Mason Bittner as St. Sebastian; and, back row, Lane Anders as St. Joseph of Cupertino; Myla Pavlu as St. Catherine of Bologna; Grant Janecka as St. Matthew; and Beau Anders as St. Peter, the first Pope. (Contributed Photo)
When you think of Advent, what are some images or memories that come to mind? What are some things you expect to see or hear when this season rolls around? Is it the Advent wreath with its candles counting down the weeks to Christmas, the purple vestments and decorations, or the almost-filled Nativity scene? For me, I am always waiting to sing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (Are there any other Advent songs?), because in that song is expressed some of the deepest desires of the human heart and human history.

For a long time I struggled with believing in God. He seemed too abstract and distant -- someone I couldn’t really have a relationship with. He was up above and far away, and all our prayers were like practices of pretend to make us feel a little better. I wanted more. I wanted something close and concrete. I wanted a God who was WITH me. I wanted Emmanuel (See Matthew 1:23).

Do you know someone who might feel the same way? Someone who is stuck in the isolation and confusion of not knowing how to be near the One who made us? Or have you ever experienced that -- wanting a more tangible connection to God?

I believe there are a lot of people out there who are wanting more, even if they don’t realize it, because we’re all working so hard in one way or another for more joy, pleasure, admiration, harmony and peace, and we want it to never end. Built within all of us is a yearning for eternity and for the Eternal One, for the only one who can finally give us what we’re looking for and to make it last. Like St. Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

In the song “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” we give voice to this desire for God and cry out, “Come to us, O Lord God, and set things right! Come fulfill us! Come give rest to our restless hearts! Come be WITH us!”

More precisely, this cry is taken up through the perspective of God’s Chosen People, the Israelites, before the arrival of the Messiah, giving context to our yearning and situating it within God’s loving plan of salvation. When we sing with the ancient Israelites, we can realize that we aren’t the only ones who have longed for a deeper relationship with God, for a Mighty Deliverer to save us, or for One to abide WITH us in peace.

Even better, we can have confidence that just as the Lord heard this prayer in the past, He will hear it again for us today. “Rejoice! Rejoice, O Israel! Because Emmanuel is on His way!”

In fact, the Good News is that He has already answered this prayer, and, on top of that, has revealed a yearning for us that is greater than ours for Him. Advent is a reminder that God did come to us, taking on a human nature in Jesus Christ. He came to us as the fulfillment of the promises made to the Israelites and the satisfaction of our hearts. He has opened a way into eternity for us and has given us all we need to follow Him there. He has become for us God-with-us.

Isn’t this what He’s trying to tell us in every Mass? In the breaking of the bread, Jesus the Messiah is made known and tells us to rejoice, because Emmanuel has arrived and is here to stay. He reminds us again and again that He wants to abide and remain with us.

In the Eucharist, He gives us a tangible connection to eternity, as our Savior is really and uniquely present -- Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. The risen Jesus Christ who sacrificed Himself for us pours out heaven and constantly gives us more. The yearning that we have, or better the hunger that we have for God and His hunger for us, is here begun to be satisfied. In the Mass, at the Holy Table of God, the mutual appetites of the divine and human meet and we anticipate when we will be made fully content.

As we celebrate Advent this year during our national Eucharistic Revival, maybe we could think of that common Advent song in a new way and switch it around: Jesus Emmanuel is already here. O Come, O Come Israel; O Come, O Come, Church of God to His table! Come receive the One you hunger for and let Him cause you to rejoice!

Rejoice, O Israel! Because Emmanuel is already here. O Come, O Come, Church of God to His table! Come receive the One you hunger for and let Him cause you to rejoice!

The Very Rev. Jacob Koether is Episcopal Vicar for Evangelism and Catechesis for the Diocese of Victoria.
Oremos que podemos eliminar causas de la violencia

Queridos hermanos y hermanas,

En marzo de 2017, hice referencia a una carta pastoral escrita por el Arzobispo de San Salvador, “Yo en la Ciudad Violencia y Discordia.” Reflexioné sobre la historia de su país y la continuidad de la violencia a lo largo de su historia.

Creo que se ofreció, a la luz de las Escrituras y de nuestra fe católica, algunos comentarios reflexivos sobre las causas profundas de la violencia -- idolatría, indiferencia y impunidad.

Nuestra respuesta es reconocer y vencer estas tres raíces del pecado: la idolatría del dinero y poder, la indiferencia ante el sufrimiento de los demás y la falta de castigo para los que ofenden.

El mes pasado, en nuestra reunión de obispos de EE. UU., el Arzobispo Boris Gudziak, Metropolitano de la Iglesia Católica Bizantina Ucraniana de Filadelfia, se dirigió a nosotros sobre la situación en Ucrania. Puedes encontrar esta charla en YouTube (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pd5ly2zAil).

Mientras hablaba, me vinieron a la mente y al corazón algunos de los temas de la carta pastoral de El Salvador.

No hemos sido indiferentes al sufrimiento de Ucrania.

Hay Caballeros de Colón de Ucrania que están recibiendo y distribuyendo suministros muy necesarios a las personas en el terreno. Nuestros Servicios Católicos de Ayuda están sobre el terreno brindando asistencia y ofreciendo atención a los refugiados de la violencia. El Arzobispo Gudziak reconoció el apoyo del gobierno de los Estados Unidos que ayuda al ejército Ucraniano a combatir a los Rusos.

El arzobispo Gudziak también arrojó luz sobre la necesidad de reconocer quién es el agresor y responsabilizar al agresor. Mientras oramos por la paz en Ucrania, creo que nos ha desafiado a orar por la victoria de Ucrania.

Ahora estamos orando en el tiempo litúrgico de Adviento. Nuestra fe nos lleva a reflexionar sobre las acciones salvíficas de Dios a lo largo de la historia humana. Como individuos y como pueblos, hemos pecado, a través de nuestra propia idolatría, indiferencia y falta de responsabilidad a las personas. En esta temporada, podemos confesar nuestros pecados, ofrecer penitencia y unirnos espiritualmente a aquellos que sufren en todo el mundo. Al hacerlo, podemos unirnos con aquellos que sufren en nuestras familias y comunidades, tal vez ofreciendo una llamada telefónica o una visita, tal vez ofreciendo contribuciones caritativas a algunas de las organizaciones benéficas que sirven a los necesitados en nuestra comunidad.

Esto nos trae el precioso don de la esperanza.

El Arzobispo Alas y el Arzobispo Gudziak me sorprenden con su esperanza al compartir su sufrimiento y dolor. Se dan cuenta y comunican que Dios es victorioso, y que en cada temporada celebramos que Jesucristo resucitó de entre los muertos y el Espíritu Santo nos da verdadero poder.

Dios nos da la oportunidad en cada época de admitir las formas en que hemos pecado y de volver nuestro corazón a Él en amor.

Que ustedes y sus familias tengan una temporada santa y bendecida, y que permanezcan confiados en la victoria de Jesucristo y el poder que Él da a cada persona que confía en Él.

Mantengamos unos a otros en oración.

+Brendan

Oficina de Hispano Ministerio establecido

La necesidad de recursos en español sigue siendo grande en la Iglesia Católica en los EE. UU., pero la Diócesis de Victoria comenzó a dar grandes pasos en 2021 cuando Aldo Camacho comenzó a trabajar para la diócesis como coordinador de tiempo parcial del Ministerio Hispano.

Y hace unas semanas, el obispo Brendan Cahill estableció la primera Oficina del Ministerio Hispano de la diócesis y Camacho aceptó el cargo de director de esa oficina.

En poco tiempo, Camacho ha desarrollado equipos de liderazgo en muchas parroquias y organizó una exitosa primera Conferencia Católica Hispana, a la que asistieron más de 270 personas.

“Hizo un buen trabajo conociendo a la gente, colaborando y apreciando lo que se ha hecho”, dijo el obispo Cahill sobre Camacho.

El 5 de noviembre, el obispo Cahill presidió una misa de certificación para que el segundo grupo completara su formación para brindar liderazgo hispano en sus iglesias.

Durante una recepción para el grupo, la hermana Rosario Resendez recordó que el obispo Cahill comenzó a poner más énfasis en el ministerio hispano cuando la contrató por su habilidad para hablar español. Ella era, en ese momento, una novicia con las Hermanas del Verbo Encarnado y el Santísimo Sacramento, y una hermana novicia que se convirtió en asistente administrativa del obispo era muy usual, dijo.

Llegar al punto de tener una oficina dedicada al Ministerio Hispano ha tomado algún tiempo y se ha dado en muchas fases. Muchas personas comenzaron el proceso del V Encuentro 2016 para ayudar a capacitar y educar a las personas que quieran servir a la Iglesia en español. Algunos de los líderes en ese momento se han trasladado a otros roles de liderazgo y el obispo Cahill se ha movido en oración en el desarrollo de esta oficina.

“El tiempo es más importante que el espacio”, como le gusta decir al Papa Francisco”, dijo el obispo Cahill, explicando que “las cosas se desarrollan en el tiempo de Dios”.

Los siguientes recibieron certificaciones en formación de liderazgo en el ministerio hispano:

Finalización del curso de formación cristiana: Josefina Hernandez, Perla Hernandez, Ma Estala Ortiz, Maria Patino, Reyna Rosales, Rosy Guzman, Mari Guillen Garcia, Fidelina Figeroa, Natalia Ruiz, Minerva Chavarria, Jose Carrera, Clara Carrera, Jesus Carrera, Lolis Carrera, Alice Figirova, Maria Guadalupe Brito, Zenaida Sanchez, Alicia Gonzalez, San Juana Vargas, Veronica Canelo, Maria de Jesus Torres Soto, Elia Josefina Vallejo, Mauricio Santiago, Juan Carlos de la Rosa, Martha Gonzalez, Alejandra Olguin, Annie Moreno Paniagua, Sergio Paniagua, Marisol Moreno-Ibarra, Faustina Tamez and Veronica Diaz.

Finalización del Curso Fundamental de Fe: Jose Luis Lozano, Mariela Lozano, Ambrosio Moreno, Mary Moreno, Ramon Moreno, Serafin Olachia, Elia Martha Olachia, Yelitl Villalon, Victoriano Echartea, Jo Ann Echartea, Angelica Fortanelli, Silvia Pena de Rodriguez, Nancy Rodriguez, Noelia Gonzales, Christina Espinosa, Silvia Hernandez Martinez, Janie Rubio, Sandra Melendez and Ramon Melendez.
Blessing of Night

As the daylight hours give way during the month of December, the night calls our attention. Darkness invites us into its mystery, to gaze into its star-filled sky with wonder. As we watch and wait for the Light during the season of Advent, the darkness of a particular night can be a powerful setting for prayer.

Wait for an evening when the sky is clear and the wind is still; gather family and friends and walk outdoors. Find a place where the view of the night sky is unobstructed. Invite everyone to join in this Blessing of Night.

OPENING PRAYER
Lord of Peaceful Night, in your creative wisdom you created light to rule the day and darkness to rule the night. It is the darkness of night that draws our need for the virtues of hope and trust: Remind us to delight in the comfort of rest and solitude. Let the night encircle us and instruct us to seek more deeply your wisdom and peace. May Your Hand rest upon us. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Song of Praise: Verses from Psalm 139

LORD, you have probed me, you know me:
You know when I sit and stand:
you understand my thoughts from afar.
You sift through my travels and my rest;
with all my ways you are familiar.

Response: Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.

Where can I go from your spirit?
From your presence, where can I flee?
If I ascend to the heavens, you are there;
if I lie down in the nether world, there you are.

Response: Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.

If I say, “Surely darkness shall hide me,
and night shall be my light”—
Darkness is not dark for you,
and night shines as the day.
Darkness and light are but one.

Response: Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.

How precious to me are your designs, O God;
how vast the sum of them!
Were I to count them, they would outnumber the sands;
when I complete them, still you are with me.

Response: Blessed are those who have not seen yet believe.

Selective Readings from Scripture: Psalms 148:3-6; Isaiah 40:4; Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12

CLOSING BLESSING
God of wonder and hope, we thank you for your everlasting presence. Though we feel lonely and estranged at times, never are we abandoned by You. May the night always be a reminder to us to see your face. You, who govern the night, inspire in us a faith like our ancestors of old, a faith that casts our needless fear and crippling despair. We ask you to bless this night. May it increase our longing for the fullness of your kingdom, more bountiful than all the stars that cover the sky. Awed by the immensity of night, may we live as vigilant pilgrims, always ready to walk when you call us home. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Bishops advance cause for sainthood for 3 American women

BALTIMORE — At their annual fall Plenary Assembly, the bishops of the United States held a canonical consultation on the cause of beatification and canonization for three American women. By a voice vote, the bishops expressed support for the advancement of the cause of beatification and canonization on the diocesan level.

The women include a religious sister, a mother of three who converted to Catholicism, and a young Catholic laywoman who died of cancer at age 31.

Brief biographies follow:

Servant of God Mother Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy, foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate. (Biography provided by the Archdiocese of San Antonio.)

Margaret Mary Healy was born on May 4, 1833, to Jane Murphy Healy and Richard Healy in Cahersiveen, County Kerry, Ireland. When she was only 5, her mother died in childbirth. In the next few years, Margaret watched her family struggle to survive the ravages of famine in Ireland.

Margaret immigrated to America with her father when she was 12, and her father died shortly after their arrival. She, her brothers, aunts, and uncles made their way to Mexico, where they operated a hotel. Upon marrying John Bernard Murphy in 1849, Margaret and her family moved to Texas. While her husband was traveling for business, Margaret ministered to the pastoral and material needs of her neighbors, reportedly even riding 35 miles on horseback to secure medicine for Yellow Fever victims.

With the Civil War brewing and her husband away, most likely for safety, Margaret moved to Corpus Christi, Texas, helping her neighbors with chores and cooking meals for those in need. After the war, Margaret volunteered at St. Patrick’s Parish, even as the Yellow Fever epidemic reached the city. She worked alongside the pastor, the Rev. John Gonnard, who later died from the illness. One of the patients Margaret tended to — Mrs. Delaney — entrusted her daughter, Minnie, to Margaret’s care. Margaret and John adopted Minnie and sent her to a boarding school in New York with the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur. They also adopted Margaret’s goddaughter, Lizzie, who had lost her mother as well. Upon graduation, both girls entered the religious life with the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Sisters.

Following the death of her husband in 1884, Margaret operated a tuberculosis hospital in Corpus Christi. After a few years, she moved to San Antonio. In 1887, responding to a plea from the bishops during the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, she was inspired to use her own finances to build the first black Catholic Church and school in the city. With racial prejudice prevalent, she struggled with securing finances to sustain her project and maintain a stable faculty. In 1893, with the blessing of Bishop John C. Nezra, Margaret founded a new religious congregation, the Sisters of the Holy Ghost, now known as the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate. These sisters supported Margaret’s mission of working with the poor and people of color. Mother Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy died on Aug. 7, 1907, leaving behind 15 sisters, two postulants and three missions. Today, her congregation continues “manifesting the compassion of Jesus to the poor” in the United States and Zambia.

On June 28, 2022, Archbishop García-Siller announced his intention to formally open the diocesan phase of investigation into the life of Mother Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy.

Servant of God Cora Louise Evans, lay woman. (Biography provided by the Diocese of Monterey.)

Cora Evans was born July 9, 1904, and was raised as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She married Maclellan (“Mack”) Evans in the well-known Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City, Utah. She later claimed that the ceremony left her disillusioned and disappointed with her faith, especially the doctrine that placed man-made gods above the God of Abraham. “I was without a God and religion but had gained a very wonderful husband. As I looked at him and learned to love him more and more, I resolved to help find a God for him. After 10 years of searching, we found the One True God in the Roman Catholic Church,” she said.

In the decade that followed, Cora and Mack had three children. When they suffered the loss of their child, Bobby, when he was 10 months old, Cora looked into many religions for comfort and consolation. Her upbringing prevented her from inquiring about Catholicism.

On Dec. 9, 1934, while living in Ogden, Utah, Cora was ill in bed and the radio was on the other side of the room. Too ill to get out of bed to change the station when the Catholic Hour began, Cora listened to Monsignor Duane Hunt talk about the Blessed Mother and the teachings of the Catholic faith. His message conflicted with the negative stories Cora had been told about Catholics, and as soon as she recovered from her illness, she went to nearby St. Joseph Catholic Church to inquire about the faith and have her questions answered. This led to a series of meetings, including debates in her home between the parish priest, the Rev. Edward Vaughn, and several Mormon bishops. Cora appreciated Father Vaughn’s demeanor and the clarity of his responses to questions about Catholic doctrine.

Cora was baptized into the Catholic Church on March 30, 1935, and received her first Holy Communion the next day. Her husband and daughters, LaVonne and Dorothy, followed her lead a few months later. She died March 30, 1957.

Cora influenced many Mormons to visit St. Joseph Catholic Church, inviting them to open house gatherings, and years later, Father Vaughn wrote a letter confirming that through Cora’s evangelization efforts, there were hundreds of conversions of Mormons to the Catholic faith.

Michelle Duppong, lay woman. (Biography provided by the Diocese of Bismarck.)

Michelle Christine Duppong was born on Jan. 25, 1984, to Ken and Mary Ann Duppong. At the age of 1, her family moved from Colorado to a farm in Haymarsh, N.D. Michelle cherished the small country church of Saint Clement’s located near their home and, as an adult, she frequently made trips there to visit her Beloved Lord Jesus.

After graduating from Glen Ullin High School in 2002, Michelle attended North Dakota State University. During her years of education there, she continued to grow in her faith and spiritual life, which especially blossomed through the ministry of FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) at Saint Paul’s Newman Center. After completing her degree in horticulture in 2006, Michelle’s desire to bring others closer to the Lord was realized by becoming a missionary with FOCUS, whose mission is to help young people on college campuses grow in their relationship with Jesus and His Church. During her six years with FOCUS, she mentored hundreds of students.

See Bishops advance cause, pg. 18

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Catholic News Service
WASHINGTON -- The inaugural Symposium for the Advancement of Catholic Health Care on Nov. 12 didn’t try to advance policy proposals, but it had a single message: Keep fighting.

Catholic health care professionals who see the tenets of their faith challenged by a push for abortion, gender-altering surgery and euthanasia as well as threats to conscience rights protection have a new advocate in the Catholic Health Care Leadership Alliance founded in January.

The daylong symposium, which was held at the Columbus School of Law of The Catholic University of America in Washington and drew about 50 people, has as one of its goals “scholarly research in the future Catholic Health Care Leadership Alliance founded in January.”

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The symposium for the Advancement of Catholic Health Care, which needs “unity and coherence,” said Stephen Payne, dean of the law school.

In his remarks at the symposium, Rienzi told attendees: “You will have enemies because of who you are and what you believe. It will always be tempting to hide, or to close your doors. Their endgame is to beat you with public pressure. If Catholic health care is to survive, more need to stand up.”

When it comes to abortion, gender dysphoria and suicide pills, these enemies “prefer the darker world without you. They want to tell the darker story.”

Also discussed at the symposium were plans for a new medical school, the St. Padre Pio Institute for the Relief of Suffering, on the campus of Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas. Plans were first announced in September.

Founders hope to raise $120 million for the School of Osteopathic Medicine so it can open before the end of the decade. Its founders aim to have it regarded as “the most Catholic medical school in the world,” fully faithful to the magisterium. The school is being built in partnership with Catholic Healthcare International.

Doctors of osteopathic medicine practice in all medical specialties, including primary care, pediatrics, OB-GYN, emergency medicine, psychiatry and surgery.

Information provided by the USCCB.
Looking for a place for your family reunion?

The Spiritual Renewal Center (SRC) is located on approximately 40 acres nestled along the banks of the San Antonio River and about a 25-minute drive from Victoria. The SRC participates in the mission of the church of Victoria as well as the universal Catholic Church by providing a place apart from the demands of everyday life where individuals may go seeking God more deeply in their lives. The SRS is open for small or large group which can be a one-day or over night with a kitchen staff to provide meals. There is also an open pavilion for outdoor activities. Handicap accessible. For more information or to reserve the SRC contact Matthew Boyle, director, by email src@victoriadiocese.org or at 361-572-0836.

ACTS Retreats – Anyone needing any information regarding ACTS retreats in the diocese should e-mail dovactschapter@victoriadiocese.org.

Catholic Family Services – To find Catholic organizations that focus on family, visit the Catholic Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers at http://www.nacflm.org.

Courage – Ministers to persons with same-sex attractions and their loved ones. The ministry also has an outreach, EnCourage, which ministers to relatives, spouses, and friends of persons with same-sex attractions. It is a Roman Catholic Apostolate endorsed by the Pontifical Council for the Family. For information, visit http://www.couragerc.net.

Crisis Pregnancy Center of Victoria – A sister organization to the Gabriel Project staffed by volunteers that offers help to girls and women who find themselves in a difficult situation due to an unplanned pregnancy. Office located at 1501 E. Red River, is open 1-4 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Free pregnancy tests offered and medical referrals are made for prenatal care. New volunteers are welcome. For information call 361-575-6171.

Emmaus Center – Offers individual, couple, family, adolescent and children’s counseling, as well as specialized support groups. Spiritual direction is also available if requested. To make an appointment, call 361-212-0830.

Engaged Encounter – 2022 Dates: Nov. 11-13. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Fee must accompany registration form. For information, call 361-573-0828 or visit http://www.victoriadiocese.org.

Gabriel Project of the Crossroads – Helps women experiencing a crisis pregnancy as an alternative to abortion. Our mission is to protect the unborn by providing spiritual and emotional support as well as supplies. We provide housing through the Bethlehem Maternity Home and have an outreach ministry that visits pregnant women in our community. Our services cover Victoria, Calhoun, Colorado, DeWitt, Fayette, Goliad, Jackson, Lavaca, Matagorda and Wharton Counties. For more information, please contact our helpline at 361-576-1156.

Grief Ministry – Are you an adult, 18 years or older experiencing the death of a loved one? Grief Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Thursday evenings from 6:45 to 8 p.m. at Holy Family Catholic Church. Please call Sharon at 361-578-7572 before attending.

Grief Ministry – For those parents with children who have died meets on Aug. 9 at Assumption Church parish hall, 1086 St., in Ganado from 6:30 to 8 p.m. For more information, please call Pat Hoelscher at 979-257-9984.

i.d.9:16 Ministry – For adults in their 20s and 30s, single or married. Held at Holy Family in Victoria every first Saturday of the month. Starts with 6 p.m. Mass followed by dinner and a talk live streamed from the headquarters in Michigan and fellowship. It is open to all young adults of the diocese. For information, or to RSVP for events, e-mail id916victoria@gmail.com.

Incarnate Word Prayer Group – Praise and worship 7:30-9 p.m. Mondays in the auditorium at Incarnate Word Convent, 1101 N.E. Water St. For information, contact Sister Louise Marie Jones at 361-575-7111 or e-mail amormeus@yahoo.com.

Mothers of Grace – A mothers’ group at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Victory. For information, contact Leslie Book at book.leslie@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/Mothersofgraceolv/.

Natural Family Planning – NFP is the only church-approved form of family planning. For the CREIGHTON MODEL Fertility Care System (CrMS) featuring NaPro TECHNOLOGY™ contact Susanne Koch in Wharton at 505-710-0903 or mailto:susannekoch614@gmail.com. Also in the Cuero area contact, Ashley Rodriguez at 361-293-0700 or e-mail ashleyfay09@gmail.com.

Raphael’s Refuge – Raphael’s Refuge is the home of the Monument to the Innocents which honors babies who have died (from conception to one year). We are a non-profit organization located outside of Flatonia, Texas. Peer counseling is available for those suffering the loss of a baby due to miscarriage, stillbirth, infant death or abortion. For information, call Therese at 361-258-1514, e-mail raphaelsrefuge@att.net, or visit http://www.raphaelsrefuge.org.

Retrouvaille – Retrouvaille, meaning “rediscovery,” is a marriage-healing ministry offered in the diocese to couples in difficult marriages. Contact John and Jennifer Vincent at jbvjo@sbglobal.net or 361-580-2770; or call 800-470-2230; or visit http://www.helpourmarriage.org
The First Sunday of Advent 2022 was Nov. 27, exactly four weeks before the Sunday of Christmas this year, and while the Church provides this time to allow you to be caught by the joy of the Incarnation, you can be easily caught by surprise that it is Christmas.

To help remedy this surprise, the Church provides songs, signs, and symbols to enter into the season of Advent more fruitfully. Here are three ways the Church teaches us about the meaning of the season:

**Advent hymns**

Many of the customary hymns for Advent highlight the movement of the soul toward what Pope Francis termed in a 2014 homily on Advent as a “horizon of hope.”

No hymn epitomizes this better than “O Come, O Come Emmanuel,” with its overtones of expectation and its mournful remorse over the state of man, captive to sin. The cultivation of hope and expectation is also seen in Advent hymns such as “O Come Divine Messiah” and “People Look East.”

The commingled darkness and hope that God will fulfill his promises, a theme characteristic of Advent, deepens with songs like the Spanish carol “Alepun.”

The lyrics of “Alepun” move the faithful into an experience of waiting with a pregnant Blessed Virgin Mary while the rhythm and percussion evoke donkey hooves clattering across the plains of Israel to Bethlehem. **Church décor**

Advent is a season of penance marked by joy and, in many ways, a little Lent. This is why the colors of purple and pink — with their ties to penance and the Lord’s Passion, and the joy of Laetare Sunday when Lent is almost over — are the colors of Advent.

But did you know that the deep purple of Advent has a blue hue to it to teach the faithful in symbol about the Marian heart of the season? The lack of church decor also teaches about the penitential nature of the season. In the weeks leading up to Christmas, the lack of flowers on the altar, the restrained use of instruments, and the absence of the resounding and angelic Gloria all lead to a deliberate emptiness.

The emptiness will first be filled on the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, and, later, flowers will be allowed on Gaudete Sunday as the first expression of the festivity of the coming Christmas.

**Saints and solemnities**

Following the solemnity of Christ the King, Advent begins with echoes of the power of Christ coming in glory before it stretches forward to the humble beginnings of the mystery of the Incarnation.

This means there is a certain focus the Church helps people enter into even in the way the liturgical calendar is marked by very few memorials of saints: just five in the course of the four weeks, most of whom are deeply embedded in the celebration of and preparation for Christmas in various countries.

St. Nicholas is the best known of the five: the generous bishop whose gifts inspired generations of lore and giving. St. Lucy, whose desire to give charity to prisoners in the catacombs meant she wore candles in her hair to free her hands, is another well-known saint with connections to Christmas whom we celebrate in Advent.

The Church also shows forth the importance of Mary during this season, which places her Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8, a solemnity and holy day of obligation, at the very beginning of the liturgical year. Combined with the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12, the Church shows forth what God has wrought in a soul full of grace — a foreshadowing of the entire mystery of salvation in one soul.

Though there are many more signs and symbols that communicate the meaning of Advent, these can assist you as you enter the season of expectation, building anticipation for the celebration of Christmas so it doesn’t catch you by surprise.