

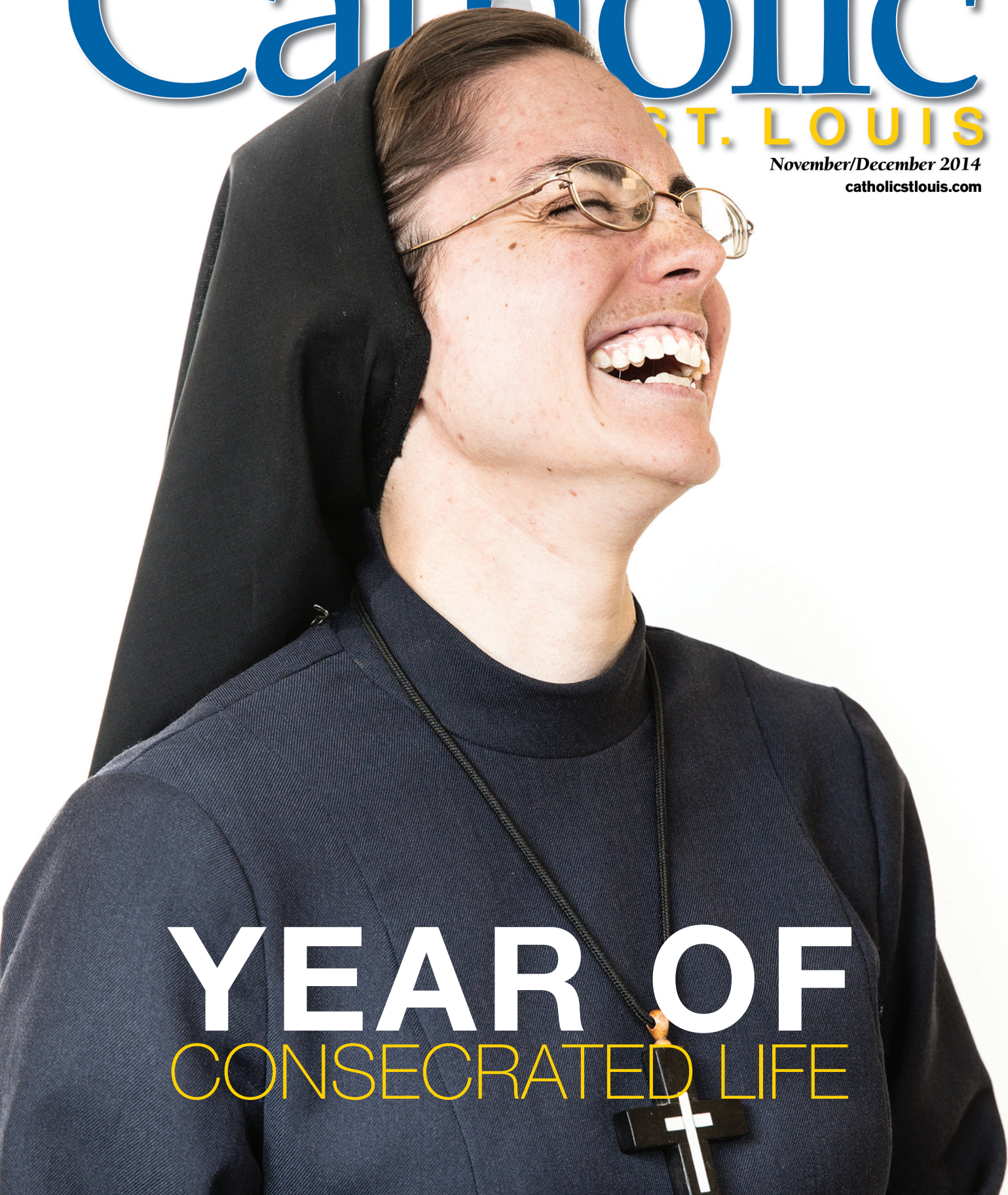
THE MAGAZINE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

Catholic

ST. LOUIS

November/December 2014

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YEAR OF
CONSECRATED LIFE



Our blessings multiply...
when we share them with others.

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Merry Christmas.



Recognize those being called

Support vocations to religious life, priesthood

Priests frequently tell my wife and me that our son looks like a priest. When he was 6 months old, a priest declared that Jack looked like a monk. Others have said he has the eyes of spiritual wisdom, or hands shaped for consecration. This happens frequently enough that we often joke that priests must receive the gift of vocation intuition upon ordination. Maybe they have religious radar.

Jack turns 3 this month, so he has many years to consider whether he's being called to the priesthood or religious life. His sister, Lucy, has the joy of a nun. Of course, she just turned 1, so pretty much everything is joyous to her. Ann and I sometimes wonder to which vocations they'll be called. ... Married life? We love it; they might, too. The dedicated single life? Good for them. Religious life or the priesthood? That seems like something of which to be particularly proud.

Surveys and anecdotal evidence suggest that the greatest impediment to answering the call to religious life is lack of support from families and communities. Perhaps our culture favors material pursuits or fears what it perceives as a boring life commitment. But the photos of men and women religious on page 16-17 tell a better narrative. Boredom? Goodness, no. That's pure joy.

And there is great hope. A 2009 study of religious by the National Religious Vocation Conference and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate revealed that more than 70 percent of religious communities had members in formation; more than 20 percent had at least five members. New members to religious communities tend to be more diverse in all ways, compared to the 20th century.

Pope Francis has called this the Year for Consecrated Life, running from the First Sunday of Advent, Nov. 30, to the World Day of Consecrated Life, Feb. 2, 2016. In this year, we're called to "make a grateful remembrance of the recent past" and support the future with hope.

As a community, we owe it to our Church to support those discerning religious life and to engage the religious among us. They're great servants, friends and role models. They're important parts of the body of Christ that must be nourished.

Perhaps we all should develop our vocation intuition and religious radar, so we fully recognize those being called.



>> Teak Phillips is the director of publications for the Archdiocese of St. Louis. He and his family are parishioners of St. Ambrose Church on the Hill. He can be reached at editor@archstl.org or follow him on Twitter: @teakphillips. *Catholic St. Louis* is supported by the Annual Catholic Appeal.

Consecrated Life by the numbers

60 religious orders of women in the St. Louis Archdiocese

279 School Sisters of Notre Dame in the archdiocese – the largest religious community of women in the archdiocese

167 Jesuits in the archdiocese – the largest religious community of men in the archdiocese

143 religious brothers in the Archdiocese of St. Louis

25 religious orders of men in the St. Louis Archdiocese

354 religious priests in the Archdiocese of St. Louis

18 parishes in the archdiocese that are administered by religious priests (as of Nov. 3, 2014)

12 Lovers of the Holy Cross sisters – the newest congregation to arrive in St. Louis

1,396 religious sisters in the Archdiocese of St. Louis

196 years that the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) has continuously provided ministry to our Catholic people in the archdiocese

4,438 religious sisters in the archdiocese in 1964 – the largest number ever

85 contemplative nuns in the archdiocese

8 the typical number of years for a sister's formation before professing final vows

Source: offices of Pastoral Planning and Consecrated Life

God gave us two gifts

What we share with Mary



A friend of mine thinks the Blessed Mother probably had days, after Jesus' Ascension, when she said: "But I still miss Him."

we have to admit that our experience of the holidays is never a perfect fulfillment of all that we long for. That's God's second gift to us. There's something else He's longing to tell us about heaven: that it's more than anything we can experience on earth. So, along with the joys of the season, He also lets us be unsatisfied. As a result, our hearts can't find perfect rest here on earth.

As He did with the Blessed Mother, God gives us two gifts: 1) a little satisfaction, which is a taste of heaven in our own experience; and 2) a little dissatisfaction, which tells us that there is something more to come.

C.S. Lewis wrote that a man's thirst doesn't prove that he will get a drink – he may die in the desert. His thirst proves, however, that he is the sort of being who was made for a drink.

The same is true of our longing for heaven, for a fulfillment that no earthly pleasure satisfies. The longing doesn't prove that we will get there. But it shows what we were made for.

A sweet kind of longing is in the air at this time of year. Through the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays – both the satisfaction and the dissatisfaction that they bring – God is teaching our hearts something about heaven. Let's have the ears to hear what He's saying.

Of course, she always was perfect in her faith. And she would have known Jesus' presence in many ways, including and especially through the Eucharist (which, if you think about it, she would have received from the hands of the apostles).

But I think my friend is on to something. It means that God gave Mary two gifts: 1) a little satisfaction, which was a taste of heaven in her own experience; and 2) a little dissatisfaction, which told her that there was something greater still ahead, something yet to be fulfilled in heaven.

In the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, God offers us similar gifts.

There is a special kind of joy in being together with friends and family at this time of year. There's something God is longing to tell us about what heaven is like and He tells it, in part, through the joys of the season.

But, whether you're a child who didn't get the toy he wanted or an adult who didn't find the peace she wanted,

What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him, this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

(1 Corinthians 2:9)



>> **Archbishop Robert J. Carlson** is the ninth Archbishop of St. Louis. Follow: @abp_carlson

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Teak Phillips
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What the family rut leaves in its wake

Notice and pray about how we relate to one another as family members



Do you ever fall into a rut with your family members? You know: You love them ...

but they don't bring out the best in you, and you don't bring out the best in them? You fall into old, stale patterns of relating to each other, then leave Thanksgiving and Christmas gatherings frustrated, muttering to yourself, "Why do I do that?" (Or, "Why do I let her do that to me?")

Here's an insight that might change your approach to those frustrating interactions: Maybe the enemy of human nature can "infect" our relationships.

Think about it this way: When a spirit is present, it leaves a kind of "wake." While a boat leaves a physical wake, a spirit leaves, well, a spiritual wake. A good spirit leaves behind love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and so on. An evil spirit leaves behind rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, dissension, factions and so on. A spirit is like a boat in this sense: Even if you can't see it, you can detect its presence by the "wake" it leaves behind.

I've encountered this dynamic in groups. Each person, individually, was fine. But put all of them together – a group of priests, a group of students, a group of family members – and something happened. The whole was greater than the sum of the parts, but in a bad way. It was puzzling; it didn't make any sense when I counted the sum of the visible parts. Maybe I needed to count something I couldn't see.

Don't get the wrong impression. The enemy is a parasite; it can't work in our relationships

unless there's something in us that feeds it. No alcoholic can say, "The problem isn't me, it's just our interactions." Likewise, none of us can say, "The problem isn't me, just our relationship."

Still, the enemy is a spirit – an evil spirit. And a relationship is a spiritual reality. So, the enemy that's preying on us can manifest itself by affecting our relationships.

What can we do?

Notice. This kind of discernment doesn't take a complex diagnostic tool. Look at the list of works and fruits in Galatians 5:19-23, and you'll be well on your way to noticing spirits by their "wakes."

Pray. Ask Jesus to remove the oppressive spirit. Ask Him to heal any wound in you – and in others – that may be feeding it. Then invite the Holy Spirit to come and fill that space with life.

Here's one caution: This process of noticing and praying doesn't make every relational problem go away immediately. In many cases, especially with our families, we've been building up patterns of thinking, feeling and acting in cooperation with the enemy for years. We don't replace those old patterns with new ones over night.

But this kind of prayer does make a difference. Through it, Jesus opens up a renewed space in relationships. We still have to step into that space and interact with each other in new ways. Then, we need to build new habits of thinking, feeling and acting by stepping into the space again and again. But as the oppressive spirit is lifted, the process can begin, and our family relations can become richer than ever.

This Thanksgiving and Christmas, give it a try.



Now, the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.** (Galatians 5:19-23)

» **Ed Hogan** is the director of the Paul VI Institute, the adult formation ministry of the archdiocese, and associate professor of systematic theology at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary. He, his wife, Jen, and children are members of St. Dominic Savio parish in Affton. Paul VI Institute is supported by the Annual Catholic Appeal.

Exercise your faith this Advent



- Is there a relationship where love is weak or broken? What can I do to improve the situation? Ask the Lord to show you one thing you could do or change or refrain from doing
- To seek the Lord's will through His word, to grow in love in one relationship is a very concrete way of watching and waiting for the Lord so that your heart is more ready for Him this Christmas.

2nd Sunday of Advent (Dec. 7)

- See Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11.
- Do you pray for those you love – regularly?
 - Do you ask God through His Holy Spirit to help you love Him more?
- Address these two areas in your life in this second week of Advent. As you do, God will generously respond to your desire to grow in love. You will find new strength, a new desire to follow Him.

3rd Sunday of Advent (Dec. 14)

- Read Philippians 4:4-7 and Luke 3:10-18. The third Sunday of Advent could be called the “What should we do Sunday.” The crowds ask John the Baptist what they should do to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, and he tells them, “Be just in all your dealings, be merciful and generous to the poor.”
- Ask yourself – am I? Is there any way I am failing in these areas? What can I do or change? Make your decision concrete in this week.
- Paul tells the Philippians: Joy and thanksgiving should characterize your dealings with others. The Lord is near. Be thankful!
- Does your “house” reflect those desires?
 - What can you do or change to be more ready to receive Him? Ask the Holy Spirit for strength and wisdom.

4th Sunday of Advent (Dec. 21)

Luke 1:39-45. Mary had just received a momentous, life-changing announcement. She could have used a little time for herself – almost any woman would feel that way – yet she traveled to the hill country to care for her older cousin, Elizabeth.

We have almost a week – Christmas is not until Friday. Where do you need to forget yourself and meet the needs of another? I guarantee you, if you reach out, you will know Christ's pleasure in you and, even better, He will find, as a result, more of a home in your heart. There is no joy in life greater than that.

- “Behold, O Lord I come to do your will.”
- Am I able to pray that prayer from the reading to the Hebrews 10:5-10? Am I able to make that prayer my own?
- It is the Holy Spirit who prepares the house of our hearts and minds. If we ask, He will do the work.
- Are you willing to make that surrender? God's grace can work miracles if we assent. As someone once said to me: “The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. He only comes where He has been invited.” My prayer is that you will invite Him more fully into your life this Advent; if you do, Christmas will find you rejoicing in the home of your heart, in the presence of a Savior who loves to save.

Don't let this brief but spiritually packed season of grace get away from you. It is too precious, too full of God's gifts, to miss. Here are four spiritual exercises to help your Advent be spiritually fruitful.

1st Sunday of Advent (Nov. 30)

Read Psalm 25: “To you O Lord, I lift up my soul. Your ways, O Lord make known to me; teach me your paths.” Then, look at 1Thessalonians 3:12: “May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ...”

Take this first week of Advent and ask yourself some questions in light of these Sunday readings.

- Do I seek to know and do the Lord's will in my daily life? How can I grow in this area during Advent? Just choose one area to change or grow.

>> Sister Ann Shields is a renowned author and a member of the Servants of God's Love.

Avoiding confession?

What's your excuse?

Many people avoid the sacrament of reconciliation, and they all have their reasons or excuses. I regularly hear these 10:

I can just tell God I'm sorry on my own.

There is a difference between saying "I'm sorry" and asking for forgiveness. Asking for forgiveness demands a response. Confession is a gift that God gives us to hear the words and know, without a doubt, that sins are forgiven. When we sin, we offend both God and the Church, so we need forgiveness from Him and the Church. Confession reconciles us with both.

It's embarrassing.

Yep. Just like going to the doctor's office can feel a bit embarrassing, so can going to confession. Nobody likes to reveal weaknesses. But remember, there is a difference between embarrassment and humility. God doesn't shame us – a humble and contrite heart He won't spurn. Confession can be one of the most intimate experiences of God's love if we allow it to be.

When I was young, a priest yelled at me during confession.

That guy is probably dead. What he did was wrong, but don't allow the human frailty of one priest keep you from experiencing God's grace.

I seem to always be confessing the same things.

St. Paul struggled with a "thorn in his flesh" that never seemed to leave him, but he recognized in that struggle he was encountering God's grace. Virtue isn't the absence of temptation; it's the habit of consistently resisting temptation. God never grows tired of forgiving us. So don't give up! Sometimes, we are



allowed to struggle with a particular sin to keep us from falling into the deadliest sin of all, pride. That leads us to our next objection.

I can't think of anything to confess.

Scripture tells us that anyone who says "I have not sinned" is a liar. Need help thinking of things to confess? The Church encourages all of us to examine our consciences at the end of each day. If we never examine ourselves, we can become blind to sin. If you still can't think of any sins you might have committed, ask your spouse, your siblings, your friends or coworkers. I'm sure they will help.

I'm married with kids. What does a priest know about my sins?

Just because your doctor never has had West Nile virus doesn't mean she can't diagnose it. Our circumstances in life are different, but all of us are involved in the same spiritual struggle. Pride, lust, greed, etc. might look different depending on whether we are single or married, male or female, young or old. All sins are manifestations of how we attempt to fill our

hearts with things other than God. That is something priests know a lot about.

Priests are sinners, too. What gives them the right?

God could have chosen angels to be His priests, but He chose men who understand and have the same experiences as others. Priests regularly go to confession as well. The Book of Hebrews states that because priests themselves are beset by weakness, it allows them to be patient and loving towards others.

I don't want to feel guilty all the time.

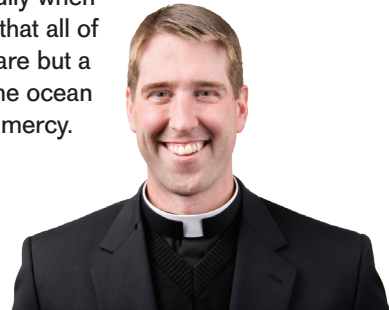
Ahh, Catholic guilt. Well, if you have done something wrong, you should feel guilty. This is the result of having a conscience. If you didn't have one, you'd be a sociopath. This is called dynamic guilt, which acknowledges a wrong I have done and resolve to do better. This is different than feeling like a bad person, or static guilt, which isn't of the Holy Spirit and should be rejected.

I don't believe in hell.

Well, Jesus did, so ...

My sin is too big for God to forgive.

This is the most dangerous of all lies and temptations. This is the sin against the Holy Spirit. Many of us can feel that we are unworthy of God's forgiveness, and we are. But God freely chose to give Himself to us on the cross. Can you stand before Jesus on the cross and tell Him that He didn't suffer enough for you? Of course not! St. Faustina put it beautifully when she said that all of our sins are but a drop in the ocean of God's mercy.



>> Father Christopher Martin is the director of the archdiocesan Office of Vocations, which is supported by the Annual Catholic Appeal. He can be reached at 314.792.6462. Follow him on Twitter: @stlvocations

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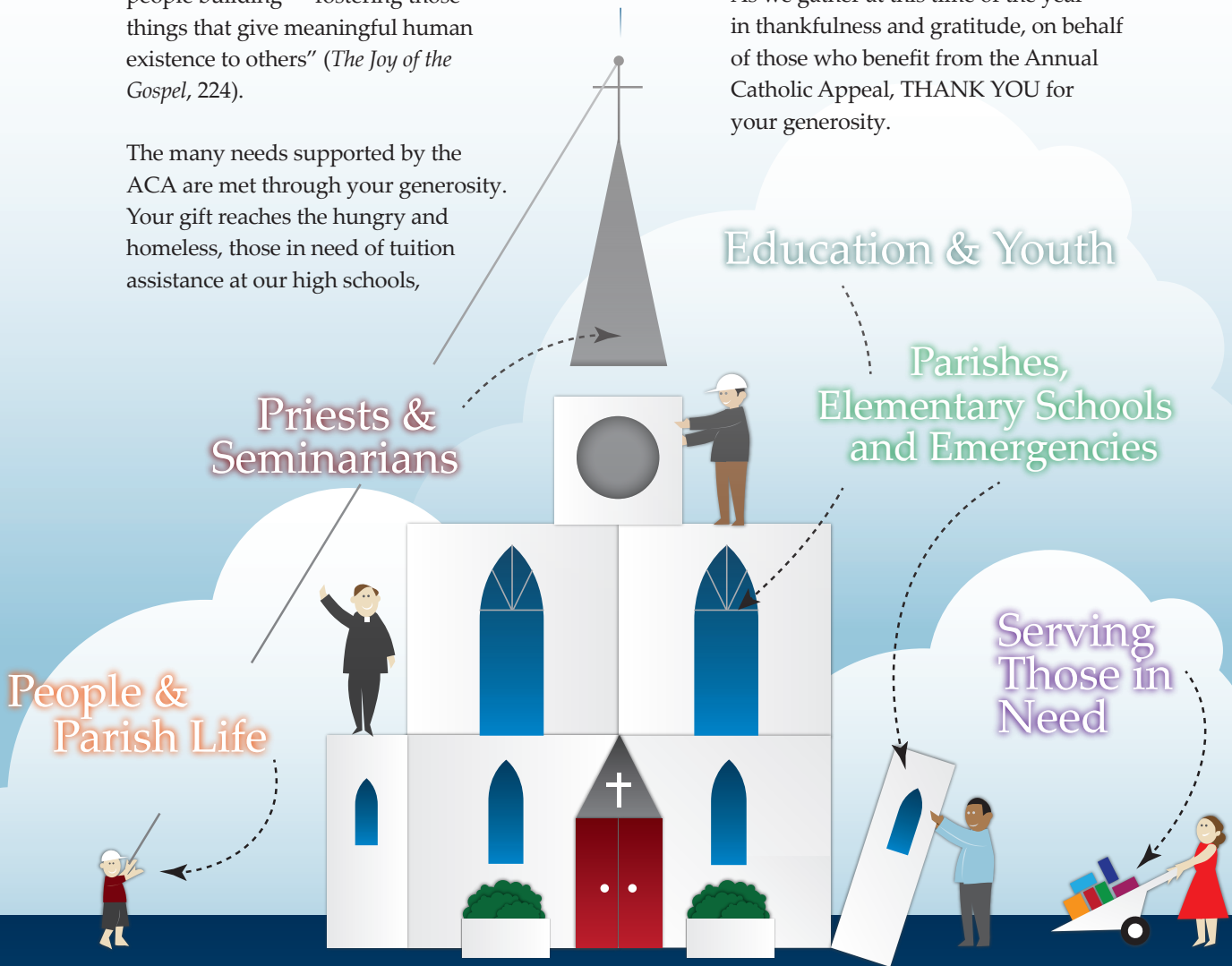
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Leading kids to Christ at Christmas

Christmas displays at major retailers bombard parents earlier every year, adding to the challenge of helping children to understand the non-material celebration of Christ's birth. A local nonprofit leader, a Catholic retailer and a mother of five offer tips to parents trying to focus on the reason for the season.

Show children the meaning of giving

Teaching children the importance of Jesus' call to give to the less fortunate is an important lesson, but can be difficult since many volunteer programs can't allow children to participate. Mike Whelan, development director at Good Shepherd Children and Family Services, said that's the main reason they created a program called Collect to Connect. Families in Good Shepherd's foster care and maternity programs have Christmas "wish lists," including both entertainment items and basic necessities, that families or groups can use to shop. "When they collect something, what we invite them to do is bring it down here," said Whelan, which helps children by "connecting to the experience and seeing where the services are." Children who've participated in Collect to Connect get "a sense that, like them, (our clients) simply long for a family and a home." While helping to drop off at her parish's diaper drive donation, one young lady was so inspired by all of the services Good Shepherd offers that she then raised more than \$100 on her own and went shopping to purchase more diapers and other gifts.

Create fun faith-based traditions

Catholic parents can create traditions connected to important feast days and the Advent season well before Christmas itself. Julie Kuhnert, her husband, Andy, and their five children are members of St. Dominic Savio Parish in Affton. "We

put a ton of emphasis on Advent as a family" through daily devotionals, she said. The children participate in different roles, with older ones lighting candles on the Advent wreath and reading the devotion, and younger ones blowing out the candles.

"We always see the Way of Lights at Our Lady of the Snows," Kuhnert added, "and we always go to an interactive 'Journey to Bethlehem' experience."

The Catholic Supply stores offer families a chance to "meet" St. Nicholas. "Kids love meeting with him and taking a picture," said Lara Traina of Catholic Supply of St. Louis, noting that they tie the saint's appearance "with a storytime so kids can learn about the saint who became Santa." They have books and other products about St. Nicholas, and also will host appearances with a local children's book author.

Make gifts meaningful

Traina has noticed "more people, especially grandparents, are giving fewer gifts, but gifts with more meaning and significance." She said keepsakes, like personalized Bibles and jewelry, are gifts "the kids will have their whole lives and remember (grandparents) by" later in life. The stores also offer more interactive gifts, such as LEGO brand Nativity sets, which, Traina noted, are "a great way to engage your kids while using it as a learning tool." A soft Nativity playset "is great to bring to church as a quiet time toy."

Limiting gifts can be difficult, but the Kuhnerts feel that it has benefitted their children. "When our children were young, we asked that our extended families not give our children gifts. We just felt like it was too much and the kids were ... really losing the meaning of Christmas," Julie said, adding that their children's behavior improved in the days following Christmas when they received fewer gifts. The Kuhnerts also focus on "experiential gifts, like getaways and cooking classes."

>> **Beth Lauver** and her husband, Eric, are members of St. Dominic Savio Parish in Affton and are the parents of a preschooler.



Relativism feeds our moral obesity

Reclaiming marriage and family starts with saying 'I'm sorry'

By Jennifer Brinker | jbrinker@archstl.org | Twitter: @jenniferbrinker

When Pope Francis convened the 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family in October, he said the discussion would focus on the “challenges of marriage, of family life, of the education of children, and the role of the family in the life of the Church.”

Among the topics for discussion: cohabitation, birth control, divorce and the impact of social and economic pressures.

While the synod participants considered the issues from a global perspective, the American experience of family and marriage is something for which we need to sound the warning alarm. Consider these national statistics:

- More than 40 percent of all children are born outside of marriage
- Single-parent families have grown from 7 percent in 1950 to 32 percent in 2013
- The percentage of men and women who don't marry has doubled in the past 50 years
- Forty-three percent of all single-mother families live below the poverty line

Our culture is eating up relativism – a concept that truth and morality are not absolute. Truth becomes subjective and relates to what is reflected in our current culture and society. It means no one is wrong and anyone can do just about whatever they want in the name of tolerance. There's nothing for which to apologize.

Speaking at the Missouri Catholic Conference Annual As-

sembly in October, Ed Hogan, director of the archdiocesan Paul VI Institute, said that people are growing “morally obese” on relativism for two reasons:

- It feeds our pride.
- It feeds our cowardice, and we don't speak the truth.

Onésimo Sandoval, co-director of the Public and Social Policy PhD Program at St. Louis University, who shared the above national statistics at the MCC Assembly, said, “Marriage and family are becoming separated from one another.” And there is evidence that the consequences are bad, he said. It's creating a further divide in economic classes and people's ability to obtain a good education and future employment.

“We need families to improve our social conditions,” he said.

How do we follow God's plan for marriage and families? How do we reclaim our culture?

- First, we need to understand that God has written laws into the universe, Hogan said. Some are physical, like the law of gravity, or the ability of a man and woman to create a new life together. Others are spiritual, like the law of apology, which when exercised genuinely can open up a relationship to start again
- As families, we can promote mercy, just as Pope Francis has been doing. With mercy, said Hogan, it means something is wrong, and someone needs to be forgiven. This is where relativism fails. “It denies the need to ask for forgiveness, and it denies the need to give it,” he said. “Families can be at the forefront of building a culture of mercy on the building blocks of apology and forgiveness.”

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- Archbishop Robert J. Carlson



ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

Called to the

The Year of Consecrated Life is upon us, running from Nov. 29 through Feb. 2, 2016 – the World Day of Consecrated Life. But what exactly does all this mean?

Back in January, Pope Francis declared the Year of Consecrated Life, which basically puts the focus on men and women living in the different religious orders – brothers and priests for the men; sisters for the women – with emphasis upon growing vocations among young people. According to the Vatican, the celebration provides for “a grateful remembrance of the recent past” while embracing “the future with hope.”

Stories by Dave Luecking | daveluecking@archstl.org | Twitter: @stlreviewscribe



Sister Mara Lester, right, prepared dinner with Sister Mary Kathleen Ronan, left, and Sister Marysia Weber for their community – the Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Mich. – after a full day of prayer and work at Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

Sacraments and prayer life lead Sister Mara Lester, RSM, to discover call

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religious life

The year also commemorates the 50th anniversary of *Perfectae Caritatis*, a decree on religious life, and *Lumen Gentium*, the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

Numerous orders of sisters, brothers and priests reside in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. With 1,893 professed consecrated men and women in 85 religious orders (60 of women, 25 of men), St. Louis is nicknamed "Rome of the West."

In this issue of *Catholic St. Louis*, we tell the stories of Sister Mara Lester, RSM, and Brother John McCusker, a Benedictine monk, who are among the many women and men religious serving in the archdiocese.

• Photos by Lisa Johnston | lisajohnston@archstl.org | Twitter: @aeternusphoto

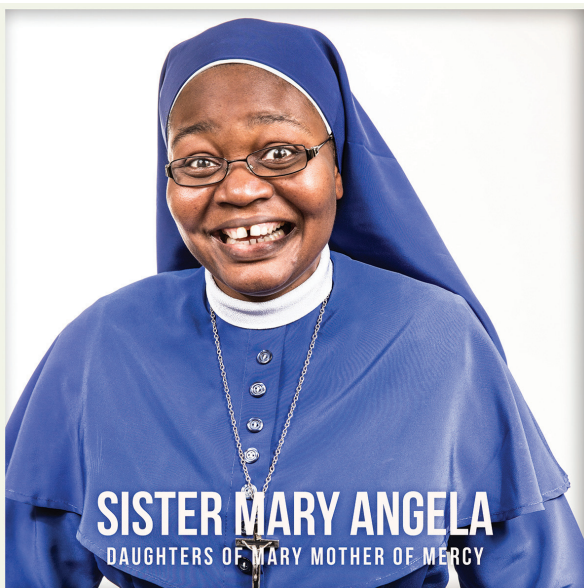


Brother John McCusker, center, felt the call to the priesthood while a student at St. Louis Priory School in Creve Coeur but needed time for discernment before joining the Benedictine monastery after graduating from the University of Notre Dame.

Brother John McCusker 'always had an attraction toward theology and God'

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CELEBRATE THE REL



To learn more about these and other men and women religious in St. L

IGIOUS IN ST. LOUIS



FR. VASQUEZ
OF MARY



SISTER CHRISTINE RATTINI
APOSTLES OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS



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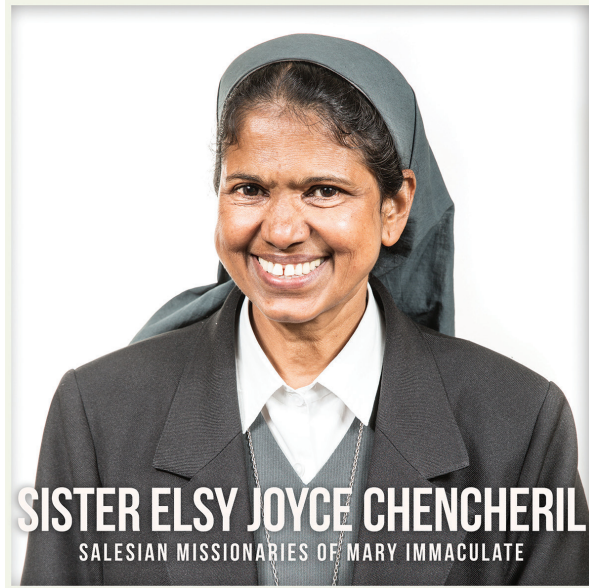
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SISTER TERESA LIU
SISTERS OF THE SOCIETY DEVOTED TO THE SACRED HEART



SISTER ELSY JOYCE CHENCHERIL
SALESIAN MISSIONARIES OF MARY IMMACULATE

St. Louis, visit the photo gallery at www.stlouisreview.com/consecratedlife



Outside the psychiatry clinic at Barnes-Jewish Hospital, Sister Mara Lester, RSM, consulted with a fellow doctor, Ravikumar Chockalingam.

Sister Mara Lester drew inspiration for medicine from her perilous arrival

Sister Mara Lester and her twin Andrew often joke that they're "the quarter-million-dollar babies."

Born at 27 weeks to Fran Lester and husband Ted Lester on June 26, 1984, they spent more than two months in a hospital after arriving 10 weeks premature for a twin birth.

Andrew weighed just under two pounds at 1.958; Briana – Sister Mara's birth name – was 2.002. They're among 1 percent of babies born that early, commonly with low birth weights and an 80 percent to 90 percent chance of complications.

Fran delivered Andrew naturally, and saw him right away. Briana came via emergency Caesarean section 30 minutes later, after her heartbeat began to fade. The babies were rushed to Miami Children's Hospital and Fran didn't see them for five days.

"They didn't look like normal babies," said Fran, who endured bed rest as well as several hospital visits while pregnant. "They were thin, had no meat to them. Really, there was nothing to them."

Yet, the Lester twins not only survived but thrived. Andrew, known as Drew, is a dancer for the Twin Cities Ballet in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area; Sister Mara is both a religious sister and a third-year psychiatry resident at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis. Younger brother Clay, who arrived on time, is working toward medical school.

Fran and Ted Lester feel blessed that their

children have done so well, especially the twins. Other than Drew needing glasses from a young age, they had no adverse effects from their harrowing arrival and first few months of life.

"They're 30 years of age now and very healthy," Fran said, adding, "You'd never know" that they were premature.

Life's work

Sister Mara's interest in medicine came because of her tenuous arrival, as a premature existing on the precipice between life and death.

"My life has been so affected by medicine; I just wanted to give back in many ways," she said recently in a Central West End cafe not far from her office at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. "I always had a high interest – from an intellectual pursuit to the serving qualities, just interacting with human beings."

Her devotion to her faith – and ultimately her vocation as a religious sister – began as a teenager wanting to learn more about it. Without a Catholic education background – she attended public schools – she had no



Sister Mara Lester, RSM, prayed in the community's chapel.

comeback when good friend Kristin Walker challenged her about her faith.

“She really took me to task,” Sister Mara said. “She said, ‘You say you’re Catholic, but what do you mean by that? You don’t even know the Hail Mary, and you’re in eighth grade!’ It was the truth; it was just kind of glaring in my face: ‘I don’t even know my faith.’ But I had a yearning.”

That, she did. Fran Lester describes her daughter as “driven,” and Briana Lester learned about her faith with the same intensity she showed academically, athletically, as a state-caliber gymnast and one of the first woman pole vaulters at her high school, and musically, as a clarinet player who received a music scholarship to St. Mary’s University in Winona, Minn.

Briana grew in her prayer life, joined a youth group in her “wonderful diocese” of Duluth, Minn., (the family had relocated to Baxter, Minn., when the twins were 6) and went on “beautiful retreats,” as she called them. She absorbed the Catholic faith “like a sponge,” according to her father. Ted Lester simultaneously became more involved in the Church.

Sister Mara believes the sacraments helped her reach that crucial point in her life. Though she didn’t know a lot about Catholicism, she had received baptism, holy Eucharist and reconciliation. She later received confirmation.

“I believe the grace of the sacraments really protected me and helped guide me at an age where I really started to question, ‘I’m Catholic; what does that really mean?’” she said. “I saw such a fullness that was expressed in people who lived their faith, and it resonated with me. . . . I wanted that; I wanted the joyful life. Not to say that my family wasn’t happy; we were really content in many ways, but your heart can take so much more.”



On the weekends, Sister Mara Lester, RSM, is as busy as any of her other sisters. On “work Saturday” the community was busy with outdoor chores in the garden.

Transformation

Two events helped transform Briana into Sister Mara and ultimately the religious sister doctor. At a vocation camp, she met a religious sister who also was a doctor. Sister Marie Paul Lockerd became a role model, demonstrating that a woman can do both.

Then, the summer before leaving for college, Briana attended World Youth Day in Toronto to see St. John Paul II. She was struck by the universality of the Church. “All of the countries represented their faith,” she said, calling that a “powerful experience.”

Briana began to more seriously consider religious life and spent her one year at St. Mary’s discerning what she wanted to do.

“I was asking questions like, ‘Should I consider this or not?’” she said. “I had a great longing to live for Christ in some dimension; I just didn’t know how that would work. I also had this longing to be a

doctor. I obviously was attracted to being married some day, but how could I be a doctor, be married and raise a family as I would want to in the greatest love possible? So, I was throwing it around in my prayer life trying to reconcile this.”

Eventually, she determined that although the desire to have a family might be there, “it pales in comparison to the ultimate desire of being one with God.”

Sister Mara had met several religious communities and visited them to learn more about consecrated religious life, before joining the same order as Sister Marie Paul – Religious Sisters of Mercy of Alma, Mich. – at age 18 after one year of college. A relatively young order, refounded in the U.S. in 1973 and originally in Ireland in 1831 by Venerable Mother Catherine McAuley, it consists of women accomplished in medicine and education, but living their lives for Christ.

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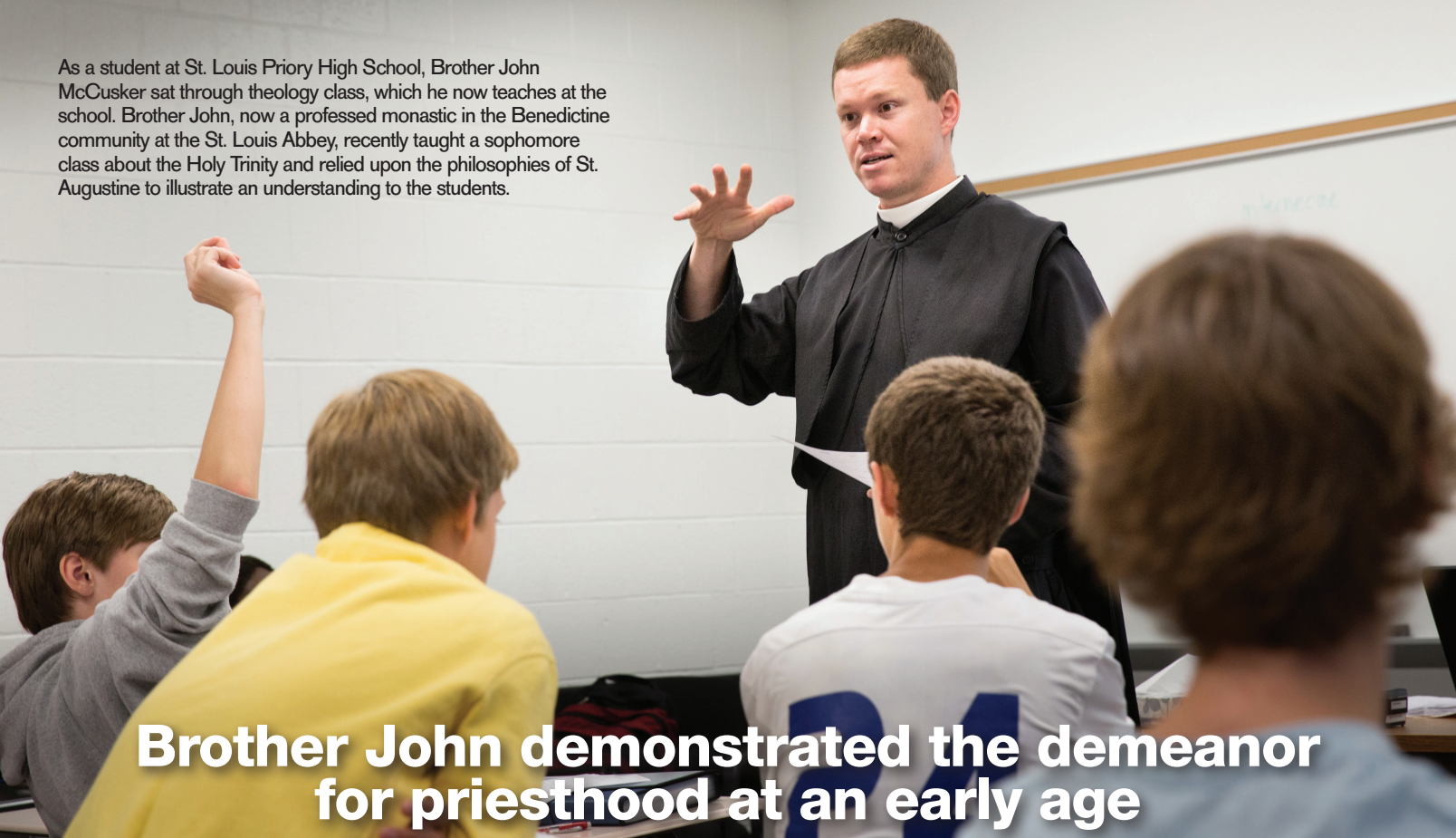


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As a student at St. Louis Priory High School, Brother John McCusker sat through theology class, which he now teaches at the school. Brother John, now a professed monastic in the Benedictine community at the St. Louis Abbey, recently taught a sophomore class about the Holy Trinity and relied upon the philosophies of St. Augustine to illustrate an understanding to the students.



Brother John demonstrated the demeanor for priesthood at an early age

As a young boy, Michael McCusker demonstrated the disposition that would serve him well in life. He is now a brother with the Benedictine monks of the St. Louis Abbey, and will be a priest in the next year or so.

“From his youngest days, he showed a great kindness and concern for others,” said Denis McCusker, his father. “We certainly could see he was the kind of person who would be great in this vocation.”

One memory stands out for Denis McCusker. Michael and his younger brother by 15 months, Kevin, were learning to ride bicycles in their driveway in Warson Woods, and Kevin picked it up before his 4-year-old brother. This delighted Michael, who was neither envious nor upset.

“It was amazing how excited and happy Michael was for his brother; it just didn’t bother him at all that his younger brother learned to ride a two-wheeler before he did,” Denis McCusker said. “That was typical of the way he looked at other people”

Not that Denis and his wife, Susan, had young Michael “pegged for the priesthood at 5 years old,” as his father said, but they saw in him the empathy and demeanor for it.

“I don’t think we were surprised when he told us he was leaning in that direction,” Denis said.

Neither were his siblings – older brother Pat; older sister Kate; and Kevin.

“I asked them, ‘Are you surprised?’ and they said, ‘No. Not really,’” said Brother John, Michael’s religious name. “They saw it in me. This life, this vocation of priesthood, fits who I am.”

Life choice

Michael McCusker started his journey toward the priesthood after graduating from the University of Notre Dame as a history and theology double major in 2005.

College had been a time of discernment, a time in which Michael met challenges to his faith, asked and answered questions about it and grew deeper into it. Entering Notre Dame had been something of a culture shock. Although his grandfather taught there and his father and siblings went there, he needed to adjust to the sheer size of the student body – 12,000, or about 30 times more than he had experienced at St. Louis Priory School in Creve Coeur.

Michael attended Priory, home of the Benedictine Monastery, for six years – seventh through 12th grades. He went to St. Genevieve du Bois School through grade 6.

“Notre Dame was a big, big change – a different environment,” he said. “You’re more free, you have more responsibility and there’s a chance to meet new people.”

Some of those people challenged his faith.

“Even though I was in a very Catholic environment, I met atheists and people like that,” he said. “I was at a stage where I was deciding what to make of the Catholic faith. I was questioning my faith and deciding whether to embrace it and at what level.”

So, Michael studied it, read about the saints, prayed the rosary and worshipped



Brother John McCusker prayed at St. Louis Abbey.

daily. Rather than giving up soda for Lent, he attended daily Mass for the 40 days leading to Easter of his freshman year.

“It just so happened I was in a place where the practice of daily Mass made sense; we had Mass at the dorm every night – 10 p.m.,” he said. “I really liked it, so I kept going.”

He also started praying the rosary at Notre Dame’s grotto dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes, which is across campus from “Touchdown” Jesus.

“I do think that was a significant moment in the development of my vocation – the devotion to Our Lady,” he said. “I’m sure her intercession had something to do with it at some level. The deepening of my faith coincided with my devotion to Mary.”

After studying business as a freshman, Michael switched to history and later added theology.

“I’ve always had an attraction toward theology and God,” he said. “I’ve always had this knack for thinking of the significant questions of life: What’s the purpose of life? What makes us happy? What happens after death? What is God? What is the truth about religion? Is it really true? All these things.

“That led me more and more to discover the richness of the Catholic faith, to embrace it as true and come to know Christ and God in a prayerful, personal way that just kept growing.”

Taking the plunge

Still, upon graduation from Notre Dame, Michael McCusker “wasn’t ready yet” to join the monastery, a thought he first had while a student at Priory.

“I had always taken my faith relatively seriously; I remember there was a point



Brother John McCusker coaches seventh grade football at Priory, where he played offensive line and linebacker while in high school.

in high school where I realized that I liked going to Sunday Mass,” he said. “I wasn’t really sure why, and again, I always had an interest in theology and philosophy.”

He also had an interest in a layman’s life.

“I’ve always been drawn to the vocation of marriage,” said Brother John, who has eight nieces and nephews. “I’ve definitely experienced the sacrifice of not having children, but the monastic lifestyle is structured around prayer, and that singular devotion to God and Christ wouldn’t be possible at the same intensity or level as a married layperson. ... Making God and Christ the center of your life is very, very compelling to me.”

Michael spent a year after college as a volunteer with the Augustinian Friars in

Chicago, teaching religion and vocabulary at St. Columbanus Catholic Grade School. He called it a “good transition,” living with priests at a religious house and praying the Divine Office.

He joined the Benedictine monks at the Abbey of St. Mary and St. Louis in August of 2006, and was clothed and received his religious name, John, in 2007 when he professed first vows. Brother John spent time studying at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary and professed solemn final vows in January 2011. He has been studying theology and philosophy at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., for the past three years and has a semester to go before ordination, first as a deacon and then as a priest.

continued on page 22 >>

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Though driven to medicine and serving others, she would follow whatever path for which her superior thought she was best suited. Ultimately, her superior assigned her to begin her studies in medicine. She received her bachelor's degree in human biology with pre-med emphasis at Michigan State in East Lansing, Mich., and her medical degree at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., before coming to St. Louis for the residency program through Washington University.

"I couldn't do what I do without my sisters, without my prayer life" she said, noting that an RSM's day is scheduled around "communal prayer morning, evening and night ... to really refocus on Jesus Christ, His love and how am I manifesting that love to others? I'm so blessed in that way."

>> from page 21

As a priest, he'll get to do the cool stuff, praying the Mass and consecrating the Eucharist, which is the body of Christ. Brother John calls the Eucharist "infinitely deep, mysterious, profound and real. That special Catholic doctrine is the crown jewel of our faith."

In the meantime, he's back in St. Louis, teaching sophomore theology at his alma mater. A football player in high school – he was a center and tackle on the offensive line, and an outside linebacker on defense – he's also an assistant coach for seventh grade football and regularly runs a couple of miles "to clear my head" and remain fit.

Ultimately, he expects to be a teacher, building his workday around the prayer of his order.

"I've always wanted to be a teacher," Brother John said. "The vocations fit well together – the life of a teacher, the life of a monk, the life of a priest. I feel deeply drawn to all three."

**Want to learn more about the religious life?
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U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of Clergy,
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– At the Mass to open the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family Oct. 5

“No religious, political or economic reasons can justify what is happening to hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women and children (in ongoing violence in the Middle East.)”

– At opening of a summit Oct. 2-4 at the Vatican to deal with violence in the Middle East

“The fundamental right to work cannot be considered a variable dependent on financial and monetary markets. It is a basic good in respect to dignity, the formation of a family, the realization of the common good and peace.”

– Address to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace Oct. 2

“Real prayer comes from the heart, out of the moments one is living. (People turn to prayer) in times of darkness, when there is no hope in life, when you can’t see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

– In a morning homily Sept. 30

“Because – I have said this many times – the Church seems like a field hospital. And when one goes to a field hospital, the first task is to heal the wounded, not to measure cholesterol ... this will come later ... Is this clear?”

– Address to participants of the Focolare movement Sept. 26



Pope Francis preached during a Mass of Thanksgiving in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican Oct. 12 for two Canadians he canonized April 3 without requiring the verification of a miracle or a canonization ceremony.

Paul Haring | Catholic News Service



Loretto Sister Ann Manganaro examined a child held by her mother in a health clinic in a village in El Salvador during a civil war in that Central American nation in the 1980s. Sister Ann is remembered by her colleagues at SSM Cardinal Glennon Medical Center for her concern for others and for her example of following a Gospel-based life. (Photo by Mev Puleo)

When an angel passes through our lives

The inspiring life of Sister Ann Manganaro

By Joseph Kenny | jkenny@archstl.org | Twitter: @josephkenny2

Many years ago, Ellen Rehg visited Sister Ann Manganaro at the Catholic Worker house in St. Louis, where she lived and was a co-founder. The room she shared was a partitioned space in an unheated attic. “Where’s all your stuff?” Rehg recalled asking.

But there was no “stuff” – just a bedroll.

“One really can live by the Gospel, a life following Jesus’ example,” Rehg said of Sister

Ann. At Karen House, the Catholic Worker community that served the poor in the tradition of Dorothy Day and elsewhere, the woman religious-

pediatrician “didn’t try to be the star, she followed the light,” Rehg said.

Marianne Dunston, who worked with Sister Ann at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children’s Medical Center, recalled hauling a mattress to the Catholic Worker house to give to Sister Ann. Dunston learned later that Sister Ann gave it to someone else in need. “I bet it didn’t last a day,” Dunston noted. “She always would say thanks and

give things away.”

A nurse in the emergency room at Cardinal Glennon in the 1980s, Elaine Thompson knew that the doctor with whom she worked had an extraordinary ability to relate to people and to handle stressful situations.

It was obvious Sister Ann was a person of great faith. She wasn’t preachy. Instead, the young woman showed her Catholic faith by her example. She showed courage in the face of injustice and stood with people on the margins of society. She inspired others to service.

She was, as Bishop Eduardo Alas Alfaro of Chalatenango, El Salvador, later explained, “an angel passing through our lives. She served the people and gave us hope.”

Thompson learned that the woman she knew as Dr. Manganaro was also a member of the Sisters of Loretto. “She was a kind, sweet soul,” Thompson said. “She was an ‘everyman’ kind of person, not above anyone, and the way she interacted with families stood out.”

While others around her sometimes lost patience in a tense situation, Sister Ann “was unflappable. She took everything in stride,” she added.

Sister Ann attended St. Louis University Medical School 1978-82 and was a Glennon pediatric resident 1983-85, before joining the faculty and serving there until 1988. She left St. Louis for the battle zones of a country in the midst of a civil war, helping to found a health clinic in Guajila, El Salvador, and working there 1988-93. She already had been diagnosed and treated for breast cancer when she left for the village in Central America where she lived through helicopter attacks, night raids and more. The cancer returned, and she died in 1993 at age 46.

In August, the Cardinal

Glennon Children's Foundation and the medical center invited friends and family of Sister Ann to the SSM Cardinal Glennon Chapel for the unveiling of a portrait of Sister Ann. A group of doctors who knew her worked with the Glennon administration to establish the memorial to Sister Ann, which is outside the chapel.

Dr. Dennis O'Connor, a pediatric hematologist/oncologist and infectious disease specialist at Cardinal Glennon, said Sister Ann "didn't make a big show of her faith. ... She just lived it." In remarks at the unveiling of the painting, he said the gathering was a way of thanking her "for being the person she was and teaching us that, at its core, our profession is one of service."

When people pause and reflect on the painting, he said, "our hope is that ... they might

experience Ann and the holiness that was her life, that the experience might inspire them and evoke in them an examination of their own sense of mission and service."

Dr. William Keenan, a neonatologist at Cardinal Glennon, said Sister Ann was a model for him and changed his perspective on his work. She urged her colleagues to take extra efforts at helping the babies under the most stress, he said, and often could be seen holding and comforting those babies. He called it her "love-based medicine. Ann's gift continues in the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) today," he said.

Mercy Sister Judith Carron, coordinator of the Footprints

program at Cardinal Glennon, recalled seeing Sister Ann in the hallways rocking babies. Deeply spiritual, "her love of God flowed over," Sister Judy said, and was reflected in her care for the poor.

Dede Coughlin recalled Sister Ann's work in El Salvador, where a repressive military funded by the United States ruled the country. Casting your lot with the

poor, as Sister Ann did, "means exposing yourself and opening your heart" to tragedy and suffering, Coughlin said, an experience that tore apart those with less strength.

The portrait artist, Patricia Watwood, said that she grew in her Christian faith through learning of Sister Ann's "beauti-

ful commitment to following the path of God. Ann was a teacher even after her passing. She touched me, and she has continued to teach and inspire me."

The artwork depicts Sister Ann holding an infant in El Salvador. It is derived from a bombing on a late Sunday morning that left five civilians dead, including four children, in a village down the road from where Sister Ann lived. Sister Ann had taken the infant depicted in the painting to the hospital.

The late Jesuit Father John Kavanaugh wrote of Sister Ann that "out of a profound experience of the Gospel she sees that the people she brings her healing skills to – refugees, victims of war, the homeless and voiceless – are a special presence of Jesus in this world."



Loretto Sister Ann Manganaro visited a child in the village in El Salvador where she established a health clinic. A physician who worked at SSM Cardinal Glennon Medical Center in St. Louis, she died in 1993 at age 46. Her former colleagues at Cardinal Glennon commissioned a portrait of her as a remembrance of and example to others of her deep faith and her concern for the poor. (Photo by Mev Pulso)

Documentary

"Set My Hands to Heal," a documentary about the life and ministry of Sister Ann Manganaro, SL, in El Salvador, is available by writing to Marilyn Lorenz (c/o St. Louis Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America: ifcla@ifcla.net). All donations support the clinic in Guarjila, Chalatenango, El Salvador, where her work continues as a model for community-based health care more than 20 years after her death.

Healing presence

Sister Ann Manganaro is remembered as a gifted healer and teacher whose life demonstrates the call to service, the love of the poor and the journey of faith.

The portrait of Sister Ann outside the chapel at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center seeks to:

- Strengthen and nourish all who stand before it
- Invite and inspire a call to serve others
- Deepen our compassion
- Affirm the healing ministry of Cardinal Glennon to reveal the presence of God

In a letter about the commissioning of the portrait, Dr. Dennis O'Connor and Dr. Sarah Legett wrote that the idea was to capture "how this gentle servant and healer made everyone around her better, not just her patients, but all of us as well."

The letter noted that her example serves as a reminder that "we are to serve with love and commitment to those in need. That the practice of medicine is a vocation, a commitment to bring healing and compassion to all who suffer."

Gifts in Sister Ann's memory will be used to continue to treat children who need specialized care regardless of financial means. Tax-deductible donations can be made to Cardinal Glennon Children's Foundation, 3800 Park Ave., St. Louis, MO 63110 or via www.glennon.org/ann-manganaro.

Say what?

A visitor to St. Louis might be perplexed, to say the least, when asking a local for directions.

With FAR-tee and FAR-tee FAR, gra-VOY and SHOW-tow, our city can be a navigational nightmare. It's a good thing God gave someone the ability to invent Garmins.

For us Catholics, StL can be even more confounding. For example, the Old Cathedral/New Cathedral conundrum.

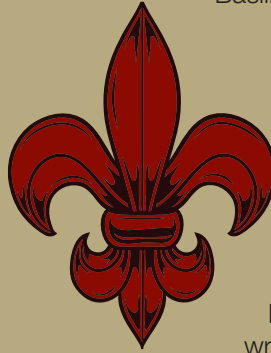
Both have "Basilica of St. Louis" prominent in their official names, but which is which? An out-of-

townner looking for Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis – recently named the top attraction here by TripAdvisor and USA Today – might be sent downtown to Basilica of St. Louis, King of France.

But it would take two seconds for a native St. Louisan to direct a visitor to the 100-year-old New Cathedral, in the Central West End at Lindell and Newstead, or to the 180-year-old Old Cathedral, downtown on Memorial Drive and Walnut.

In a nod to our city's quirkiness, we present 10 parish names that St.

Louisans sometimes – well, often – get wrong. (The parishes are listed in alphabetical order, as opposed to a subjective order of difficulty.)



By Dave Luecking | daveluecking@archstl.org | Twitter: @stlreviewscribe

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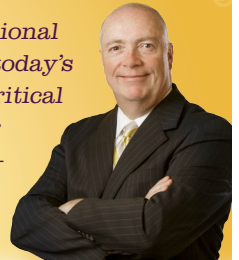
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Parish | Correct pronunciation | St. Louis-speak

Annunziata | a-noon-tzee-AH-ta | a-NUN-cee-ah-ta

Curé of Ars | q-RAY of ARE-suh | KEY-your of ARE-s

Immacolata | e-mack-oh-LAH-ta | im-MACK-oh-lah-ta

St. Anthony of Padua | PUH-doo-ah | PADGE-oo-uh

St. Catherine Laboure | la-burr-AY | LAB-oar-ay

St. Charles Borromeo | bor-oh-MAY-o | BORE-oh-me-oh

St. Dominic Savio | SAH-vee-oh | SALVE-ee-oh

St. Joachim | yo-ah-HEEM | JOE-ah-kim

St. Gerard Majella | my-ELL-ah | magde-JELL-ah

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque | ah-la-CUCK | a-LAH-co-kwee

With thanks to Dan Nickolai, director of the language resource center at St. Louis University.



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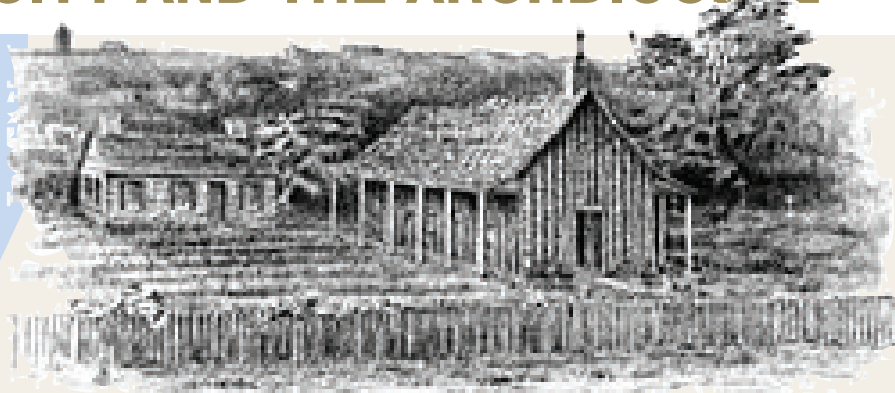
A HISTORY OF THE CITY AND THE ARCHDIOCESE

1759

Founding of Ste. Genevieve Parish by French-Canadian Jesuits

1764

Founding of the city of St. Louis



A sketch of the first building to serve as a church in St. Louis.



1845

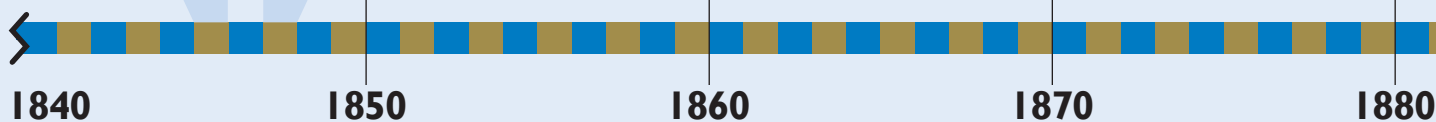
Four parishes created in the city of St. Louis; creation of first St. Vincent de Paul society in U.S.

1847

St. Louis elevated to archdiocese; Peter R. Kenrick is first archbishop



A sketch of the Basilica of St. Louis King of France (Old Cathedral) as it looked in the 1830s.



1945

John Joseph Glennon is named cardinal

1947

Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter completes integration of Catholic schools in St. Louis



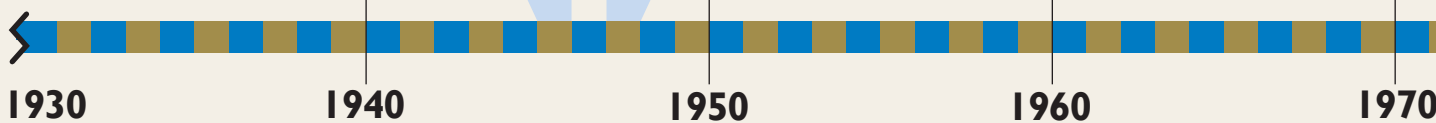
ST. LOUIS REVIEW FILE PHOTO

Cardinal Joseph E. Ritter distributed ashes on Ash Wednesday in 1960 at the New Cathedral.

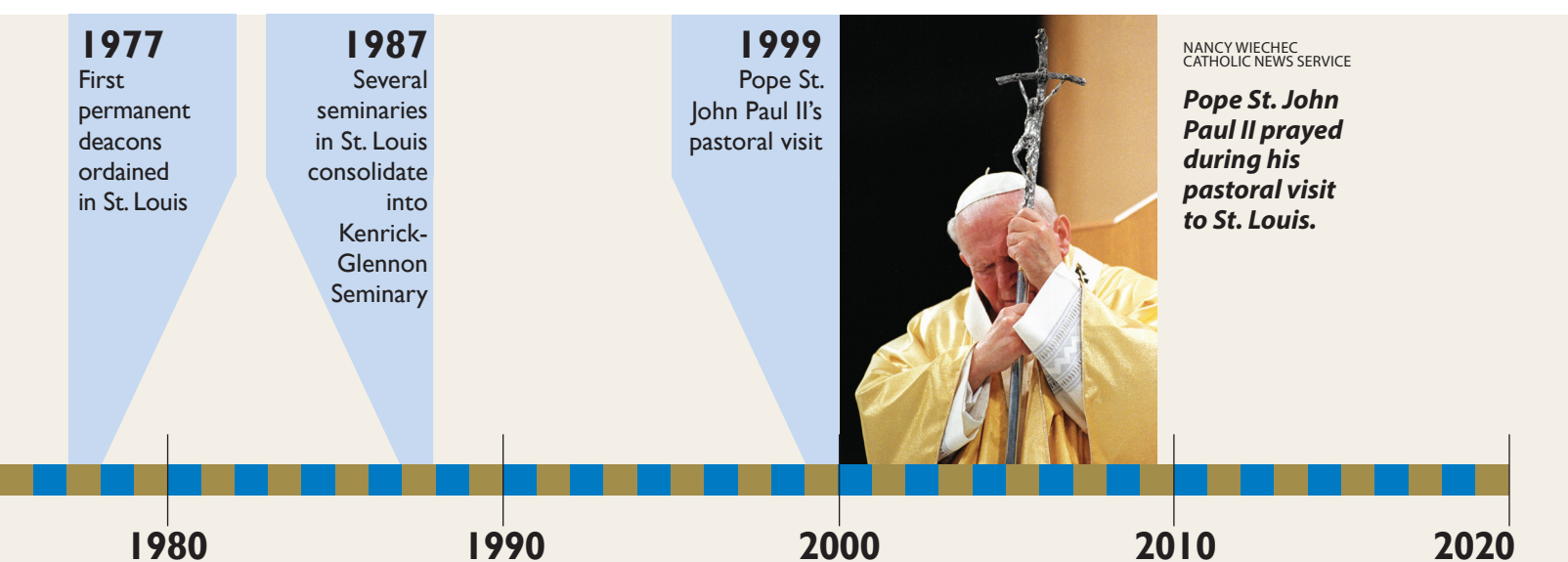
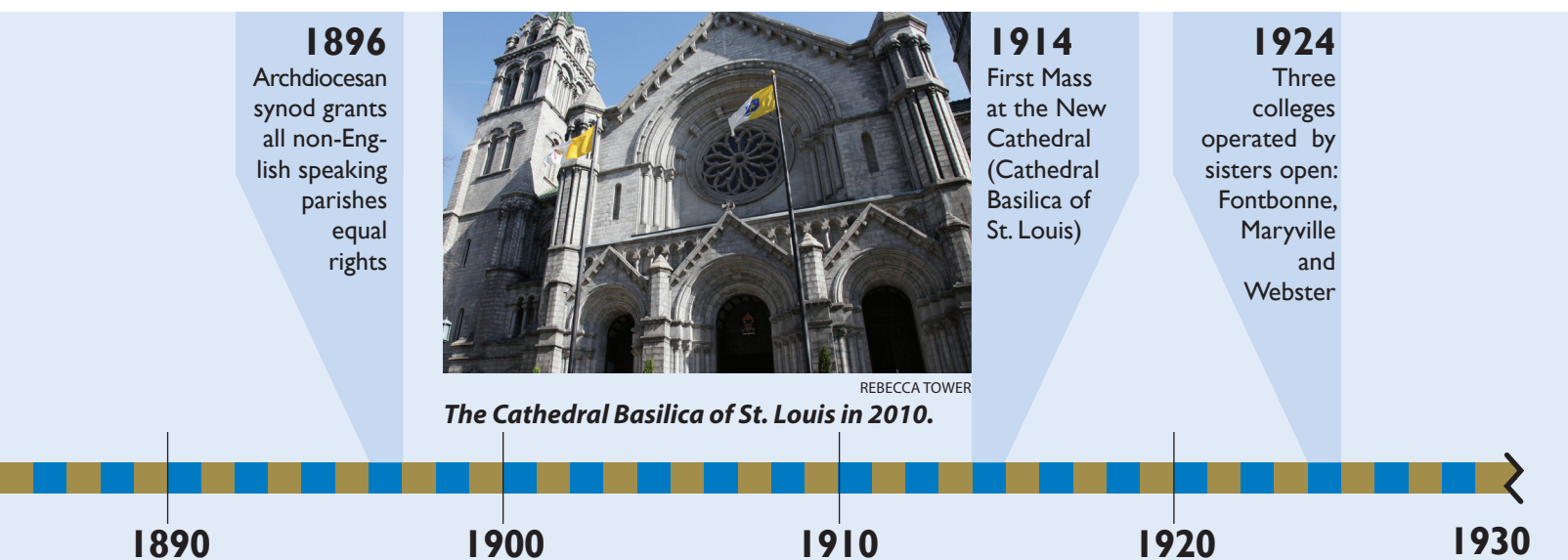
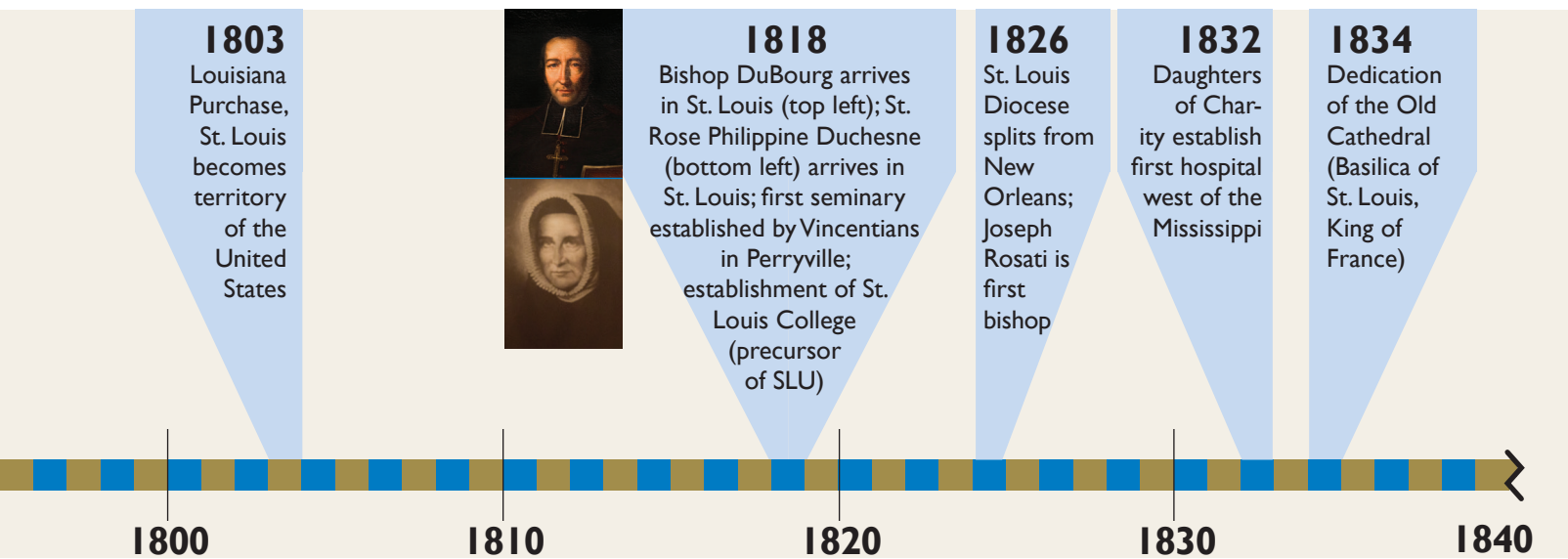


1973

Cardinal John J. Carberry forms Archdiocesan Pro-Life Committee, the first in the nation



Since even before the city of St. Louis was founded in 1764, the area has been greatly influenced by the Catholic faith. In honor of the city's 250th anniversary, we take a look at some highlights in the Archdiocese of St. Louis' history. To learn more, visit www.stlouisreview.com/Y2c.



Offering up rational worship

James Comninellis, who entered the Byzantine Rite on Easter Sunday, was looking for a Church that nurtured the mind and spirit

James Comninellis, as told to Dave Luecking | daveluecking@archstl.org
Twitter: @stlreviewscribe

Photo by Lisa Johnston | lisajohnston@archstl.org
Twitter: @aeternusphoto

An intern with the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Archdiocese of St. Louis, James Comninellis, 25, is a newcomer to the Catholic faith, entering the Byzantine Rite of the Catholic Church on Easter Sunday. The Byzantine rite is among the Eastern Catholic rites that are in communion with the Roman (Latin) rite and the Bishop of Rome. A graduate student at St. Louis University, Comninellis is pursuing a master's degree in theological studies, specializing in religious education.

How did you become Catholic?

I'm mostly from Kansas City, and my parents were medical missionaries with the Southern Baptist Mission and lived in Angola when I was born. So, the first two years of my life I spent in southern Africa. My biographical story has a nice circle to it. My grandfather grew up Greek Orthodox and came over from Greece in the '50s. My father was Greek Orthodox, but converted to Evangelical Protestantism in college. I had the opposite experience; I grew up an Evangelical Protestant, and I became an Eastern Catholic when I was in my 20s.





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HELPING YOU GET TO HEAVEN

Why did you leave your Protestant tradition?

I grew up in a faith tradition that was either very intellectual or very emotional, and I found myself unable to worship in the highly emotional, charismatic way. I couldn't grow any more in my mind and I couldn't worship in the way the traditions are worshipped in. So, I was in a two-year dry spell, basically being out of worship and looking for churches and trying to find communities where I could fit in.

Where did you find the community?

In the midst of this dry spell, I was invited to study at a small university in Canada – Augustine College in Ottawa. The dean of students is an Eastern Catholic deacon and ambassador for religious freedom, in the Canadian government. He took me under his wing and said, 'Why don't you come to a Divine Liturgy?' I went to a morning prayer service at the Ukrainian Church and I was hooked. I grew up in a tradition that is incredibly scriptural, and I went to a place where they were singing Scriptures. I could worship for the first time in years.

What happened next?

When I came to St. Louis, I found out there was a Byzantine Catholic community, an Eastern Catholic Church. I said, "OK, let's try this." I threw all the questions I had about my Protestant faith to the priest, and Father Steven Hawkes-Teeples, who teaches at SLU, alleviated a lot of my tensions. The most important line that hooked me came in the morning prayer – "We offer up this rational worship." The key word was "rational." I could worship in a way I felt like I didn't have to abandon my mind.

How will you use your theology degree?

"I'd love to be a teacher. I've worked with kids in several different settings, but I also see that the things I'm doing here in the inter-religious office are educational. Instead of a classroom where the teacher is the educator, in an inter-religious setting, everyone is an educator and I consider that an educational setting. If I get an opportunity to continue it, I'd like to.



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