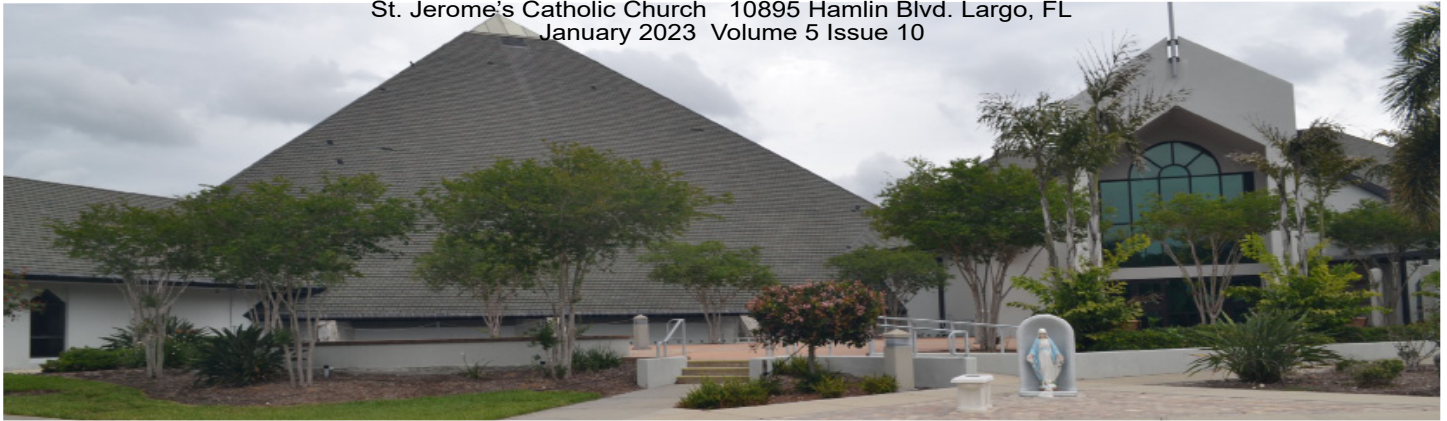


# KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Divine Mercy of Jesus Council 17249

St. Jerome's Catholic Church 10895 Hamlin Blvd. Largo, FL  
January 2023 Volume 5 Issue 10



## January 1, the Celebration of Mary, the Mother of God

The Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, is a feast day of the Blessed Virgin Mary under the aspect of her motherhood of Jesus Christ, whom she had circumcised on the eighth day after his birth according to Levitical Law. Christians see him as the Lord and Son of God. It is celebrated by the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church on January 1. This solemnity is a Holy Day of obligation in areas that have not abrogated it. The feast is a celebration of Mary being the mother of Jesus. The English title "Mother of God" is a literal translation of the Latin title *Mater Dei*. The Second Vatican Council stated: "Clearly from earliest times the Blessed Virgin is honored under the title of Mother of God," and at an early stage the Church in Rome celebrated on January 1 a feast that it called the anniversary of the Mother of God. When this was overshadowed by the feasts of the Annunciation and the Assumption, adopted from Constantinople at the start of the 7th century, January 1 began to be celebrated simply as the "eighth day" on which, according to Luke 2:21, the child was given the name Jesus. In an Apostolic Letter, Pope Paul VI explained: "This celebration, placed on January 1, is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the Holy Mother



through whom we were found worthy to receive the Author of life.' It is likewise a fitting occasion for renewing adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels, and for imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace."



### FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF INTEREST TO CATHOLICS

Pope Francis calls on religious not to be discouraged by 'lack of vocations or by aging'

Parishioner's labor of love restores vandalized statue at California church

Priest laments state of apparition site of Our Lady of Fatima in Spain

Pope wrote resignation note in case of health impediment

Hand grenade found among donations to Beatitudes Home in Peru

Catholic archdiocese defends policy to not admit children who reject their biological sex

Only religious community in the world for sisters with Down syndrome seeks American sisters

Sunday Mass obligation re-instituted for Catholics in the Archdiocese of Chicago

Migrants using Catholic Charities to shield themselves from ICE

## FROM THE DESK OF THE GRAND KNIGHT



Bill McClelland

Brothers,  
I hope your Christmas celebration was one of peace and joy. I also hope you remembered the reason for the season and had time to reflect on all the gifts we have been given.  
At last count, we have at least 21 ladies who indicated they want to be part of the Columbiette organization we are forming. I am excited about the opportunity to work with this group and to collectively do even more for our parish.  
As we move into the second half of our fraternal year and the first day of the new year, I am grateful for all of you. Your enthusiasm and selfless service continues to inspire me daily!  
Vivat Jesus, Bill

**LAUGHTER**  
is the best  
**MEDICINE**

The officer said, "You drinking?" I said, "You buying?" We just laughed and laughed.... I need bail

Day 12 without chocolate. Lost hearing in my left eye.

Scientists say the universe is made up of protons, neutrons and electrons. They forgot to mention morons.

## FROM THE DESK OF OUR PASTOR



Fr. Tom Morgan

On New Year's Eve or New Year's Day, the household gathers at the table or at the Christmas tree or manger scene. Many people make New Year's Day a day of prayer for peace.

All make the sign of the cross. The leader begins:

Let us praise the Lord of days and seasons and years, saying:  
Glory to God in the highest!  
R/. And peace to his people on earth!

Our lives are made of days and nights, of seasons and years, for we are part of a universe of suns and moons and planets. We mark ends and we make beginnings and, in all, we praise God for the grace and mercy that fill our days.

Then the Scripture is read, Book of Genesis 1:14-19:

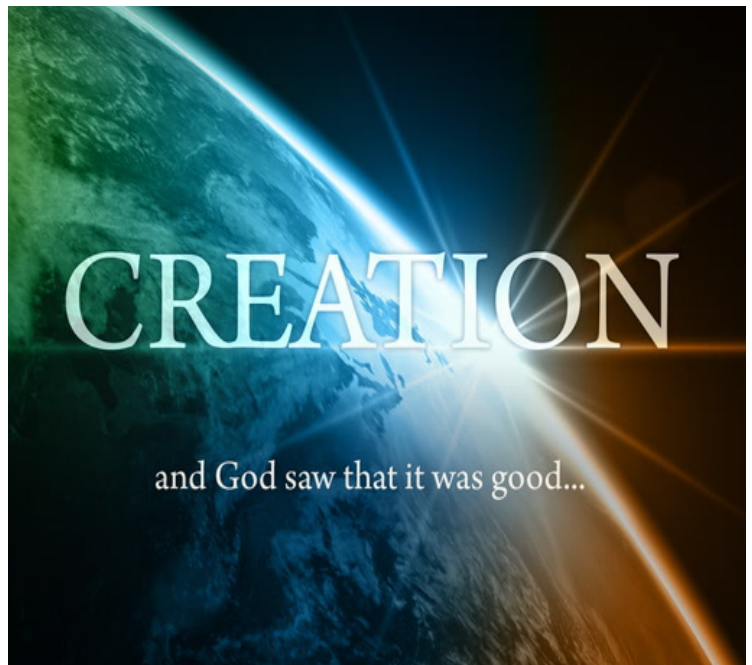
God said: "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the fixed times, the days and the years, and serve as luminaries in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth." And so it happened: God made the two great lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night; and he made the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was. Evening came, and morning followed.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.  
Responaw: Thanks be to God.

Let us now pray for God's blessing in the new year.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.  
O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
R/ Amen.

The leader says:  
Let us bless the Lord.  
All respond, making the sign of the cross:  
Thanks be to God.





# JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



Tom Deebes  
January 1



John Bordeaux  
January 6



Bill Bannon  
January 7



Tom Giotta  
January 9



Bob Daughterty  
January 9



Matt Frizzle  
January 11



Bob Kimsel  
January 14



Jim Dolan  
January 18



Edgar Lecuyer  
January 20



Mark Wisner  
January 21



Pete Nunes  
January 21



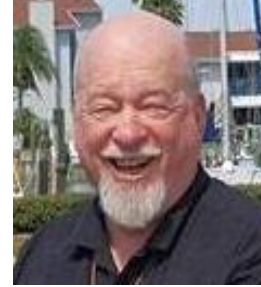
Charlie Scott  
January 22



Ron Nader  
January 22



Pat O'Leary  
January 27



Ed Garnier  
January 28



Jim Cullinan  
January 31

## Sculpture Portrays the Plight of the Homeless



"Shelter," sculptured by artist Timothy Schmalz

"A call to action, a work to make the often 'invisible' poor, visible, a sculpture to remind us of 'spiritual duty to the poor.'"

This was how Timothy Schmalz,  
The Knights of Columbus Council 17249.....

provide material and spiritual help to people suffering from homelessness, as the Church prepares to celebrate the 6th World Day of the Poor.

"It was absolutely moving to see  
.....January 2023.....

renowned Canadian artist and author of the sculpture 'Sheltering,' described his latest work of art as he expressed gratitude to the Holy Father for blessing his statue.

The bronze statue seeks to promote the Vincentian Family's "13 Houses Campaign" to provide material and spiritual help to people suffering from homelessness, as the Church prepares to celebrate the 6th World Day of the Poor.

a sculpture that for months, if not a year, has been in my studio, in the darkness of my dingy studio, in a sense, being brought out in the spotlight of Saint Peter's Square and having the attention of Pope Francis bless the sculpture."

The Pope's blessing of the work devoted to bringing attention to the plight of the homeless came at the conclusion of this morning's General Audience, ahead of the World Day of Care for the Poor, which Pope Francis instituted during the Jubilee Year he proclaimed on Mercy.

Yet, this work, which he described to us as "a call to action," meant to make "visible," the poor who are "so often invisible," is the latest in a series of sculptures that the Holy Father has blessed in the Vatican, including 'Angels Unawares' that has found its home within the colonnade of St. Peter's Square bringing attention to the plights of refugees.

# Knights Enjoy Christmas Dinner Fellowship

I presented the food selections to the restaurant owner/caterer. "How many?"

It's a question I had been trying to avoid. "Possibly 80-85," I said.

"Possibly?" he asked, eyebrows raised.

"Well, yeah. Given the fluidity of the situation. Anyway, your menu states, 'Full tray feeds 20-25 people.' And I listed 5 trays. Don't you think that's enough?" I asked.

"It depends on how much they eat," he replied.

Duh! Thanks friend! Sensing my anxiety level rising, he paused. "That should be enough."

Fluid the situation was, indeed.

Subsequent to the decision to hold a council event, and due to unanticipated circumstances, invitations were sent to Knights outside our council. As the date approached, the additions and cancellations were forwarded to me.

There was also the question of walk-ins. How and when would I communicate a final number to the Setup Mgr, Greg Musick, so he could provide and position the correct number of tables and chairs. How would Pete, Zeke Ganio and the youth group volunteer servers deal with rationing (AND KITCHEN CLEAN-UP)? How would Ralph Frizzel and Dave Unkrich maintain order yet

provide entertainment while Bill Woodard and Nick Cambardella made sure that no one forgot (as I did) to pay upon entry?

The solution to it all? Invoke the intercession of the Blessed Mother via a rather simple prayer taught me by Salesians some time ago: "Mary, help of Christians, pray for us."

At the conclusion of the event, the kitchen was spotless, the parish center was all cleaned, one third of the food left, one bag of rolls, and fifty-two Knights were fed and satisfied.

"Mary, help of Christians, Thank You!"

~by Art Corby



# Parishioner Restores Statue Damaged by Vandals

In the darkness of an early Saturday morning last March 19, Father Steve Davoren and his golden lab, Blue, came out the back exit of the rectory at St. Mel's Church in Woodland Hills, California, for a pre-dawn run. But before he could start, the priest's heart sank when he saw what the floodlights pointing at the church's iconic statue cluster of Jesus and three children revealed.

Grainy security footage only captured the arm of a person repeatedly swinging an unidentified weapon at the statues. Pieces fell from what has been a longtime centerpiece of the parish, in a highly visible spot off busy Ventura Boulevard.

Chunks of the marbled concrete that came off the twisted, exposed rebar were everywhere: in the raised flower bed flanked by white rose bushes, in the parking lot, on the sidewalk next to the parish office.

Davoren immediately called the church's business manager, Lisa Feliciano, who threw on a hoodie and came right over. "It was horrific," Feliciano said. "But now we were putting pieces in a box, crying. I couldn't believe anyone could have this much hate to do this."

Feliciano filed a police report along with the surveillance video, which she described as "two minutes of torture. I see it and it still makes me cry," she said.

It fell to Davoren to explain the attack to parishioners the next day at Sunday Masses, preaching understanding and forgiveness in the place of anger and frustration. "To me, the irony of this was the person who did this had to be a broken person himself," said Davoren, pastor at St. Mel's since 2018. "Through Scripture we know we need to pray for people who feel they have to destroy."

Michael Stucchi heard Davoren's message loud and clear that weekend. A systems software engineer by trade, Stucchi has found satisfaction working for the parish to restore four in-church statues in the past as well as Nativity scene statues. He has been their humble go-to, fix-it man. But this was something bigger.

"I admit, I was angry, mad, indignant because the statues were special to me and my family," said Stucchi, whose son works in the parish office. "But then I heard his sadness and concern for the mental state of the person who damaged the statues. That's so much like him. This really altered my paradigm from reactive to proactive — to ask if I could look

into ways of repairing them.

Father Steve's compassion is what Jesus would want us to have. All the people who work here are in the same mindset of love and forgiveness. We have no idea what terrible things are in that person's life."

Stucchi and Feliciano started the reconstruction by collecting and studying photographs of the statues to examine all their features. The depiction of Jesus is about 6 feet tall and weighs about 1,000 pounds; each child on its own concrete base weighs about 300 pounds.

Feliciano had contacted the Los Angeles Archdiocese about filing an insurance claim and was told it might cost as much as \$30,000 to repair.

Stucchi said he could take care of it, with no charge to the parish.

That didn't surprise Feliciano, who calls Stucchi "a true angel."

"Look at the difference between someone filled with hate and destruction ... and then someone like Michael who spends his time showing pure love and joy putting it back together," Feliciano said. "Both are our neighbors; they live among us. How can there be such a vast difference in someone's heart and soul?"

Michael Stucchi has pieced together the statues at St. Mel's Church in Woodland Hills, California, to where they may even be in better condition when finished.

Stucchi experimented with different combinations of compounds — crushed marble, white Portland cement, and waterproof exterior grout. Most of the work had to be done on site, with some pieces taken to his home garage.

"I was super cautious about not making anything worse," said Stucchi, not-

ing the materials often dried too quickly in the summer heat, causing more delays.



"The saddest part to me was the damage to Jesus. We know enough about the pain and suffering Jesus went through in his life, but to see an image of him obliterated, that's too much."

Slowly and meticulously, Stucchi has pieced together the statues to where they may even be in better condition now because of the ways weather and age already caused cracks and decay before the vandalism.

Seven months later, Stucchi has a few finishing touches — and plenty of gratitude — still left.

"As a priest's sacrifice and commitment are beyond my comprehension or capabilities, having seen their dedication and that of the other volunteers and staff, I felt it's the least I can do," Stucchi said. "Notwithstanding, the Catholic Church was always there for me when I was a child and young adult."

From a business perspective, Feliciano said the experience has taught her about the need for better security. The statues also were previously vandalized in 2021 when someone painted the faces a green color, but they were easy enough to repaint white.

"As a parishioner, the kindness of Michael reminds me that there is goodness in the world," said Feliciano, who noted the 100-degree days Stucchi spent with the statue last summer. "I am reminded to pray for the person who was filled with enough hate to do the damage and thank God for blessing us with Michael."

Father Davoren believes that "to some degree, we're all broken and damaged, but our faith in the love of God allows people like Michael the tenderness to painstakingly put those pieces of the statue back together.

"It's about giving people the right amount of grace to rebound in their lives."



Michael Stucchi and the refurbished statue

# Our Lady of Guadalupe

According to a 17th-century account, the Virgin Mary appeared four times to Juan Diego, an indigenous Mexican peasant and once to his uncle, Juan Bernardino. The first apparition occurred on the morning of Saturday, 9 December 1531. Juan Diego experienced a vision of a young woman at a place called the Hill of Tepeyac, a suburb of Mexico City. According to the accounts, the woman, speaking to Juan Diego identified herself as the Virgin Mary, "mother of the very true deity". She was said to have asked for a church to be erected at that site in her honor. Based on her words, Juan Diego then sought the Archbishop of Mexico City to tell him what had happened. Not unexpectedly, the archbishop did not believe Diego. Later the same day, Juan Diego again saw the young woman (the second apparition), and she asked him to continue insisting. The next day, Sunday, December 10, 1531, Juan Diego spoke to the archbishop a second time. The latter instructed him to return to Tepeyac Hill and to ask the woman for a truly acceptable, miraculous sign to prove her identity. Later that day, the third apparition appeared when Juan Diego returned to Tepeyac. Encountering the same woman, he reported to her the archbishop's request for a sign, which she consented to provide on the next day (December 11).

However, Juan Diego's uncle, Juan Bernardino, became ill, which obligated Juan Diego to attend to him. In the very early hours of Tuesday, December 12, Juan Bernardino's condition having deteriorated overnight, Juan Diego journeyed to Tlatelolco to get a Catholic priest to hear Juan Bernardino's confession and help minister to him on his deathbed.

To avoid being delayed by the Virgin and ashamed of having failed to meet her on Monday as agreed, Juan Diego chose another route around Tepeyac Hill. The Virgin intercepted him and asked where he was going (fourth apparition); Juan Diego explained what had happened and the Virgin gently chided him for not having made recourse to her. In the words which have become the most famous phrase of the Guadalupe apparitions and are inscribed above the main entrance to the Basilica of Guadalupe, she asked "¿No estoy yo aquí que soy tu madre?" ("Am I not here, I who am your mother?"). She assured him that Juan Bernardino had now recovered and told him to gather flowers from the summit of Tepeyac Hill, which was normally barren, especially in the cold of December. Juan Diego obeyed her instruction and he found Castilian roses, not native to Mexico, blooming there. According to the story, the Virgin

arranged the flowers in Juan Diego's tilma, or cloak, and when Juan Diego opened his cloak later that day before Archbishop Zumárraga, the flowers fell to the floor, revealing on the fabric the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

The next day, December 13, Juan Diego found his uncle fully recovered as the Virgin had assured him, and Juan Bernardino recounted that he also had seen her after praying at his bedside (fifth apparition), and that she had instructed him to inform the archbishop of this apparition and of his miraculous cure. He also said that she had told him she desired to be known under the title of Guadalupe. The archbishop kept Juan Diego's mantle, first in his private chapel and then in the church on public display, where it attracted great attention. On December 26, 1531, a procession formed to transfer the miraculous image back to Tepeyac Hill where it was installed in a small, hastily erected chapel. During this procession, the first miracle was allegedly performed when a native was mortally wounded in the neck by an arrow shot by accident during some stylized martial displays performed in honor of the Virgin. In great distress, the natives carried him before the Virgin's image and pleaded for his life. Upon the arrow being withdrawn, the victim fully and immediately recovered.



Fred Belzel Shares His Life's Story

Born and raised in Irvington, New Jersey, a suburb of Newark, New Jersey and New York City. Fred went to Catholic kindergarten, a Catholic grade school, and a Catholic high school. He received his BS degree in Business Administration from Seton Hall University, a Catholic university in South Orange, New Jersey. Fred met the love of his life, Christa, while in college. He graduated from Seton Hall, Christa graduated from Union College in Cranford, New Jersey, and they were engaged on the same day. Christa had only been in America since 1963. She lived in Nuremberg, West Germany, for two years after escaping alone as a teenager from East Berlin to West Berlin one month and two days before the Berlin wall was built on August 13, 1961. Fred worked for a CPA Firm in NYC

after graduation until entering the Navy Reserves. He spent two years active duty at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and Key West Florida. After active duty they moved to Florida, where Fred started working for Sears in Tallahassee, Florida. He held Store Controller positions in Tallahassee, FL, Gainesville, GA, and Clearwater, FL. In Clearwater, he was Controller of the downtown Clearwater store, Countryside, St. Petersburg Tyrone store, and Port Richey, Florida as Accounting Group Controller. While working at Sears, he earned his CPA Certification. After 22 years at Sears, Fred retired and started working for the city of Clearwater. While at Clearwater, Fred held positions as Senior Accountant, Controller, and Department Director. He retired from the city after 15 years and is now preparing tax returns during the tax season. As a teenager Fred was a Colum-

bian Squire. His dad was a 4th Degree Knight, his mom was a Catholic Daughter, and A Columbiette. Fred became a Knight in 1977 when his cousin was Grand Knight at the St. Patrick's Council. Fred enjoys staying active in the church. He served on St Jerome's finance council. He and his wife are Eucharistic Ministers and do cash counts and deposits every other month at St Jerome's. Fred and Christa have been married for 54 years and have four children: Keith, Jennifer, Brian, and Hope. They also have nine grandchildren (two girls and seven boys). Fred and Christa have been living in Largo since 1975. When Fred retired he fulfilled his long-term dream to own an antique car. He purchased a 1930 Ford Model A Roadster convertible. It is in original condition. He also fulfilled his long time dream to have a Camaro when he bought a 2017 Camaro RS in 2017.



**Q:** I scratched the car and told my husband I didn't know how it happened. Is that a sin? Should I confess?

**A:** Although I find it somewhat humorous to imagine God keeping a multivolume resource titled SINS on His celestial shelf, one that details all the ways humans can mess up: engage in a fake phone call to avoid talking to chatty neighbor; damage a vehicle and lie to spouse about it, I don't actually suspect that this is the case. Rather, I think of sin more as an overarching category of mindset that includes thoughts, words, and actions that alienate people from God and from their fellow humans. This means that I can't exactly tell

you if your car incident and subsequent lying are sins, but instead will ask: Does being dishonest with your husband do damage to your relationship with him, yourself, or God? My suspicion—though I could be wrong—is that it does. I don't think you would be writing to an advice column for input if your actions weren't weighing on you. My thought is that we have enough burdens in life without creating additional ones for ourselves, so why not lift this weight by confessing and apologizing?



**Q:** My neighbor keeps doing favors I did not ask for—watering my lawn, shoveling my driveway, dropping my newspaper on my porch, etc. I want to be grateful but sometimes I enjoy doing this work myself. How can I respectfully decline his kindness?

**A:** I've never been much of a fan of the expression "it's a good problem to have," because—as a person who generally prefers the path of least resistance in all things—no problem is a good problem as far as I'm concerned. Choosing Christmas card designs wears me out, for heaven's sake. I prefer a problem-free life, no matter the nature of the problems. With that in mind, I felt for your trouble as I read your inquiry, even as your situation might fall into the "good problem to have" category for many people. It's wonderful that you have a thoughtful and helpful neigh-

bor. It's not-so-wonderful that he's removing tasks from your plate that you would prefer to keep. Given how considerate your neighbor seems to be, I would suggest declining his help in a similarly kind fashion. Perhaps you might bake him cookies or pick some flowers from your yard, and as you deliver the neighborly gift, broach the conversation. A simple, "I so appreciate your help, but I enjoy yard work; would you mind letting me do these tasks?" combined with your warm countenance will convey your desires as well as your respect.

# NPR Airs Recording of Woman's Abortion

NPR listeners heard the sounds of a woman's abortion aired on radio recently.

"You're going to hear this machine turn on now, okay, it makes a loud noise," someone tells the unidentified Michigan woman who is 11 weeks pregnant.

The loud whir of the vacuum aspirator machine that will suck the unborn baby out begins, followed by the woman's moaning.

At the beginning of the story, NPR issued a warning that some listeners would be disturbed by the story's details. "Most patients are partially awake during the procedure," she describes. "They get IV medication for pain and anxiety. The lights are dimmed, there's soothing music, it actually feels a lot like a childbirth, a medical gown, your bare legs in stirrups, and a person next to you saying, 'You can do this.'"

"Here's my hand, just keep breathing," she encourages the pregnant woman undergoing the abortion as she monitors vital signs. Wells called it an example of "women guiding other women."

Throughout the abortion, staffers kept encouraging the pregnant woman through her moans and heavy breathing. "Blow it out, blow it out, breathe through it, breathe through it," she says. "Keep breathing."

The abortion is done in a couple of minutes, Wells reports. When the woman thanks everyone in the room, they start encouraging her, "You did good, you did great! You did just fine," while laughing.

For those of us not in position to witness an abortion first hand, we must rely upon the pictures of abortion that we can see. Having seen them, what language can we possibly use to justify such brutal violence?

National pro-life leaders responded to the NPR segment. "My prayer is often that the truth about abortion is 'brought into the light' but nothing prepared me for what this audio recording of an abortion would sound like," March for Life President Jeanne Mancini tweeted. "What's happening here is the taking of an innocent human life. Heartbreaking.

Live Action President Lila Rose emphasized, "This is what Hell sounds like."

warned her bridegroom he would be punished. When the governor heard this he ordered the guards to gouge out her eyes; however, in another telling, it was Lucy who removed her eyes to discourage a persistent suitor who greatly admired them. When her body was being prepared for burial, they discovered her eyes had been restored. This and the meaning of her name ("light" or "lucid") led to her patronage with eyes, the blind, eye trouble, and other eye ailments



## ST. LUCY

St. Lucy is a virgin and martyr of Syracuse in Sicily, whose feast is celebrated on December 13th. According to tradition, Saint Lucy was born to rich and noble parents in the year 283. Her father was of Roman origin, but his early death left her dependent upon her mother, whose name, Eutychia, seems to indicate that she was of Greek heritage. Like so many of the early martyrs, Lucy had consecrated her virginity to God, and she hoped to devote all her worldly goods to the service of the poor. Her mother arranged a marriage for her, but for three years she managed to postpone the marriage. Lucy prayed at the tomb of Saint Agatha to change her mother's mind about her faith. As a result, her mother's

long illness was cured, and she consented to Lucy's desire to live for God. Saint Lucy's rejected bridegroom denounced Lucy as a Christian. The governor planned to force her into prostitution, but when guards went to fetch her, they could not move her even when they hitched her to a team of oxen. The governor ordered her to be killed instead. After a gruesome torture which included having her eyes torn out, she was surrounded by bundles of wood which were set afire, but the fire quickly died out. She prophesied against her persecutors and was then executed by being stabbed to death with a dagger. According to later accounts, Lucy

Oh, St Lucy, you chose to have your eyes pulled out rather than renounce the faith and defile your soul; and God, in an astonishing miracle, restored them with another set of sound and flawless eyes to honor your virtue and faith, naming you the guardian against eye illnesses. I came to you to ask that you safeguard my vision and heal the disease in my eyes. St. Lucy, keep the light in my eyes so that I can see the wonders of creation, such as the brilliance of the sun, the color of flowers, and the smiles of children. Preserve also the eyes of my soul, the faith, by which I can know my God, grasp His teachings, recognize His love for me, and never lose sight of the path that will bring me there where you, St Lucy, can be found in the company of angels and saints. St. Lucy, safeguard my sight and my faith. Amen.



## Council to Lose Valuable Member

Chuck Lake gave an emotional farewell speech at one of our council meetings. He and Dolly are moving to NY at the urging of family. He has a Physician's Assistant (PA) in the family, who only be about 15 min. away.

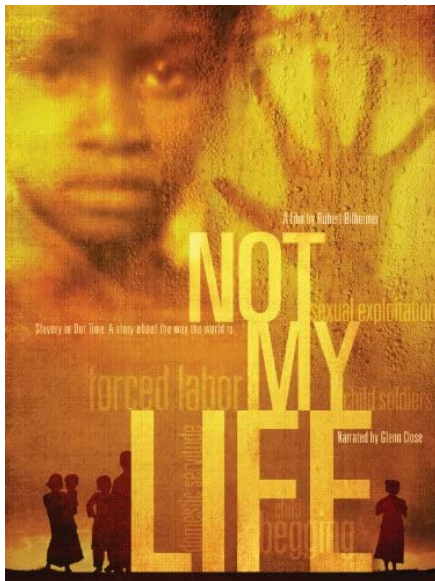
We believe they plan to leave in Februry, after selling their home.

While this is a great loss to his Florida Knights family, it is in their best interest for long-term care.



Chuck and Dolly Lake

"May the road rise up to meet you, may the wind be ever at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face and the rain fall softly on your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the hollow of his hand."



*Not My Life* is the first film to depict the cruel and dehumanizing practices of human trafficking and modern slavery on a global scale.

Filmed on five continents, in a dozen countries, *Not My Life* takes viewers into a world where millions of children are exploited, every day, through an astonishing array of practices including forced labor, domestic servitude, begging, sex tourism, sexual violence, and child soldiering. "Human traffickers are earning billions of dollars on the backs and in the beds of our children," says the film's director, Academy Award nominee, Robert Bilheimer, "and yet no one knows this is happening." We have a huge responsibility, right now, to learn the truth and act on it.

Since January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month, St. Jerome will be presenting the movie, *Not My Life*, a film about this worldwide problem, and one in which the Tampa Bay area is a major player. It is important for all of us to be informed.

**St. Jerome's Parish will show the movie at 7:00 PM in the parish center on January 12.**

There will be a short discussion afterwards. Refreshments will be available.

**This movie is not appropriate for younger viewers.**

## Saint Januarius: Famous for the Miracle of the Annual Liquefaction of His Blood

The blood of St. Januarius liquefied in Naples for the third time this year. The local newspaper reported that the "miracle of the liquefaction" occurred at the Chapel Treasury of St. Januarius in the Naples Cathedral. When Monsignor Vincenzo De Gregorio, the abbot of the chapel treasury, first opened the safe containing Saint Januarius' reliquary, the blood inside appeared completely solid in the morning, but a phase change occurred two hours later.

Dec. 16 marked the anniversary of Naples' preservation from the 1631 eruption of Mount Vesuvius. It is just one of three days each year when the reliquary is displayed and local Neapolitans gather to see if the dried, red-colored mass confined to one side of a reliquary changes to cover the entire glass. The reputed miracle is locally known and accepted, though it is yet to receive official Church recognition.

St. Januarius is the patron saint of Naples. The bishop is believed to have been martyred during the Christian persecution of Emperor Diocletian. In local lore, the failure of the blood to liquefy signals war, famine, disease, or other disaster.

The liquefaction traditionally happens at least three times a year: Sept. 19, the saint's feast day, the first Saturday of May, and Dec. 16, the anniversary of the 1631 eruption of nearby Mount Vesuvius.

Speaking to the people who had gathered in the chapel for the December anniversary, Monsignor De Gregorio shared a story of a miraculous healing attributed to the intercession of St. Januarius this year.

"There was a very young father with a baby girl only a few months old in his arms and his tearful wife next to him. They explained that this little girl had been diagnosed with a malignant tumor, and one can imagine the

bewilderment and heartbreak," he said.

"They were here today, giving thanks to St. Januarius because shortly after while they prayed to the patron saint the news came that the tumor was benign, and the baby was safe."



## Only Religious Community in the World for Sisters with Down Syndrome Seeks American Sisters

Deep in the hills of southern France, a community of religious sisters with Down syndrome faithfully live out their vocation of contemplative prayer. It's the only religious community in the world that welcomes sisters with Down syndrome, Mother Line — who serves as prioress — told CNA. And now, the community seeks able sisters from America to join it. The Little Sisters, Disciples of the Lamb was founded by the "joining of two vocations," Mother Line told CNA.

In 1985, a young woman with Down syndrome — Sister Veronica — met Mother Line. Sister Veronica had already received her vocational calling to become a nun but had been turned away by several religious communities. Mother Line recognized Sister Veronica's call to become a nun, so the two began living together — hoping that other young women with Down syndrome who felt a call to religious life would join the community. Mother Line said that at the time, the Church and religious communities did not understand "...how a person with Down syndrome could have a call from God..." to join religious life. But Mother Line, who had studied psychology and taught the Catechism for many years, saw that the people she worked with who had Down syndrome were "very spiritually inclined."

As time went on, more women with Down syndrome joined the community, and the Church saw the need for its existence.

In 1999, the Little Sisters was established as an official religious institute of contemplative life by the archbishop of Bourges, Pierre Platteau. Soon, the community moved to Le Blanc where the sisters reside now. Today, seven sisters with Down syndrome live alongside Mother Line and Sister Florence, where they fulfill their vocations together.

The Little Sisters live in a beautiful priory, tucked away in the French countryside, where the divine meets ordinary life. Their private chapel, built in 2010, is situated on rolling acreage within a park, surrounded by woodlands, and especially conducive to private prayer and contemplation. Mother Line says those with Down syndrome are "...particularly inclined to the contemplative life," and that the sisters have taken up the saying of St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa): "Do small things with great love."

"We follow the path of Teresa: major actions are beyond our realm. We will never be great theologians. Our life is very simple and without a doubt similar to the secret life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph of Nazareth."

While the Little Sisters organize each day around prayer and worship, they also are inspired by the Benedictine way of life, which balances prayer and work. "It is very important for the Little Sisters to be kept busy," Mother Line said.

As such, the sisters spend much of their time cultivating their gardens, harvesting vegetables, weaving scarves and bags, and even making tea from medicinal herbs — which they sell in special shops where other convents sell their goods.

Most important of all, Mother Line said, is for others to recognize that these women have a genuine calling. "We are not an institution for people with disabilities, we are a community," Mother Line said, emphasizing how each sister chose to come and live in the community.

"They really have a call from God; it's a vocation," she said. "It's not the parents who decided that they are going to live with the community simply because it's a really good place to live. It is really the sisters who made the decision."

Mother Line says that the Little Sisters are able to fulfill their religious vocations because they have the support of "able-bodied sisters" like her and Sister Florence, who have dedicated their lives to this mission. She says the community especially prays that able sisters from America may join them. "In Europe, it's very, very difficult looking for help — for young women who would like to join the community and share their lives with people with Down syndrome," Mother Line said.

She added that Americans have a different outlook on those with Down syndrome than Europeans do. "They are considered as human beings [in America]," Mother Line said. "In Europe, most people with Down syndrome go to live in institutions. It is right that in the United States people with Down syndrome stay in their family."

The sisters said they hoped CNA's article "...will maybe help find young women who want to come to France" to join the community. "We're ready and happy to welcome a young American woman," Mother Line said. She

added that the community was ready to welcome young women with a call to come and live in the order so that they can take what they learn with the Little Sisters back to the United States and start similar communities that will flourish and thrive.

For young able women who have already received their religious vocation, the Little Sisters offer retreats for those who want to see whether the Lord has called them to this mission.

Mother Line emphasized that the call to live with sisters with Down syndrome is a "lifelong commitment." "You have to be trustworthy and faithful," she said, adding that the lifestyle could be demanding at times and requires a lot of patience.

But for Mother Line, the joys of life with the Little Sisters outweigh any challenges. "We learn from them, particularly spiritually and a lot about forgiveness. They're very good at forgiving, and that's a difficult one," Mother Line said.

"They are teaching us how to be on the path to God."



# "To Be Or Not To Be." How To Deal with Death

Human beings are no stranger to death. Our first parents were created to walk hand in hand, so to speak, with God. After the first sin, evil entered the world. Our nature was tainted by the inclination to do wrong and offend God. Our relationship with Him was changed. And death entered our reality.

Our relationship with death is complicated. We rightly grieve when a loved one dies, and we naturally have an aversion to the thought of our own death. Sometimes, in despair, we might have suicidal ideation due to a traumatic event or mental illness. Think of the fictional character Hamlet weighing this earthly life of suffering and the endless sleep of death: "To be, or not to be, that is the question..." Hamlet is even pictured in the play soliloquizing to a human skull, a profound symbol of death.

The Greek philosopher Plato even wrote that philosophy itself is "about nothing else but dying and being dead." This was also a common theme of the philosophical school of thought known as stoicism which meditated on death often. It is this tradition of meditating on death that gives rise to the Christian exploration of death in the Memento Mori tradition and aesthetic. Memento Mori in Latin means: "Remember death." It is the same call of Ash Wednesday: "Remember Man that thou art dust and unto dust, thou shalt return." Though seen by some as macabre, this philosophical and theological tradition is full of wisdom to live life well.

If we live our life with the daily reminder that we are going to die one day, perhaps we will make bet-

ter choices. Perhaps we will choose to pray more, to love more, to fully live more. We can think of how Moses prays in Psalm 90 that God might teach the people "...to number our days so that we may get a heart of wisdom."

Our life on earth is short and fleeting. As Isaiah says, "The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on it; surely the people are grass."

When the ancient pagans meditated on death, there were several who took this as an invitation to party. The ancient Romans even had a phrase for this mindset: *nunc est bibendum* (now is the time to drink). The Christian tradition's meditation on death, of course, does not bear the same weight. In fact, the Christian notion does not motivate us to throw caution to the wind and embrace the mid-2000s notion of Y.O.L.O. (you only live once). Instead, we are called to meditate on our last end and act accordingly in the present.

Scriptures teach us: "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." Death does not pity anyone, and it comes for everyone. Life is short and shortly it will end.

In the end, we die. Our death is our soul's separation from our body. It is a consequence of evil and original sin. However, death is a grace, in God's timing and providence, because it ends our toiling in the valley of tears and draws us to Himself.

Upon our death, our soul appears from Jesus Christ, the Judge, who commends our soul to Heaven or condemns us to Hell.

We are not so much damned as to say we damn ourselves by our actions



Yorick's skull in the gravedigger scene in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

here on earth. If we are in a state of unrepentant mortal sin upon our death, we will be judged to Hell, but the choice is ours.

God loves us immeasurably and desires our salvation. He wants us to be in Heaven with Him for all eternity, but will not force His love on anyone. If there are any vestiges of venial sin on our soul or attachments to sin, then we may need a "time" of purification in Purgatory, for nothing unclean can enter Heaven. Then, at the end, comes the General Judgment and the resurrection of our body. With the establishment of the new Heaven and new Earth, with our newly resurrected bodies reunited to our soul, we enjoy eternal life or punishment. Death comes to all, much like taxes. The answer is what are we going to do about it? We can run from it, but it will chase us to the tune of the ticking of the clock. By embracing the memento mori tradition, we are embracing living a life of grace here and now and persevering in cooperating with God's grace.

Do not despair at death. Instead, live out the call to holiness today.

## Pope Francis Signs Letter of Resignation Early

Pope Francis said that in case of not being able to continue governing the Catholic Church due to an impediment to his health, he has already signed his resignation and has given it to one of the Vatican cardinals. "I have already signed my resignation," Pope Francis replied, adding that he did so when the Vatican secretary of state was Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone. "I signed it and told him: 'In case of impediment for medical reasons or whatever it may be, here is my resig-

nation.' They already have it. I don't know who Cardinal Bertone gave it to, but I gave it to him when he was secretary of state," he said.

Cardinal Bertone was appointed secretary of state by Benedict XVI in 2006 and continued in office until Aug. 31, 2013, during the pontificate of Pope Francis.

When asked if he wanted this to become known, Francis replied, "That's why I'm saying it."

"Now someone will go to ask Bertone

for it: 'Give me that piece of paper!' "the Pope said, laughing. " "He probably handed it over to Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the new secretary of state. I gave it to Bertone as he was the secretary of state," he said.

During the interview, Francis said that he hasn't delved "at all" into a statute to specify the definition of pope emeritus.

"I didn't even have the idea of doing it. It must be that the Holy Spirit has no interest in me being concerned about those things," he said.

## St. Jerome's Knight of Columbus Council 17249 Wins Star Award

Star Awards recognize outstanding achievement in membership, insurance, programming, and overall operations. Earning a Star Award is the marker of a high performing Knights of Columbus unit and the goal to which every council, district, and assembly should strive. Star Council, Star District and Star Assembly Awards can be earned by completing criteria designed specifically for each division of the Knights of Columbus.

Sir Knight District Deputy Pete Grasso prepares to shake the hand of Worthy Advocate Sir Knight Gregg Appel who is in charge of membership, and also Grand Knight Bill McClelland as they accept the Knights of Columbus annual Star Award. This is not the first time our council has won the award. We thank our brothers for their hard work.

My past, O  
Lord, to your  
mercy; my  
present, to  
your love; my  
future to your  
providence.  
~~Padre Pio

