A Child is born in the poverty of Bethlehem. But that child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and held in the embrace of his loving mother, is the Most High God, the Word become Flesh, our flesh. He humbled himself sharing our humanity so that we might share in his divinity. This is the Mystery celebrated on that Holy Night, that Silent Night when God became one of us — so that we can be with him, and become like him.

See Archbishop Thomas Wenski’s column, page 4.
Synod: Focus on goals

ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO
Florida Catholic staff

MIAMI | Winnowing thousands of concerns and hopes into a handful of specific, attainable goals is a daunting task. But members of the Synod focus teams have been plowing through the mountain of suggestions since October, and a couple of teams have already scaled them down to actionable goals.

The liturgy team was the first to finish its task, with the teams on youth ministry, campus ministry and the permanent diaconate due to complete their work mid-December. There are 14 focus teams with more than 530 members in all.

What is all the more impressive is that the teams — composed of as many as 50 people in some cases — have to do their work over the space of three, three-hour meetings.

The fact that the work is getting done — and the Synod is on schedule — is due in large part to the skills and tools provided by the Catholic Leadership Institute, which is helping facilitate the process. Although this is the first time the institute coordinates an entire Synod process, its representatives are utilizing the same tools they teach priests in their “Good Leaders, Good Shepherds” program.

“This is what they use in leadership training throughout the country,” said Rosemarie Banich, Synod director. “They have customized it for the Synod.”

But Mother Adela Galindo, a member of the Synod leadership team, also credits the Holy Spirit. “I kept saying, ‘Look at the Holy Spirit working,’” said the founder of the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary as she and other leadership team members paused for lunch Dec. 11 at the Pastoral Center.

They were sharing the cafeteria with members of the young adult ministry team who were about to start their second of three meetings.

Indeed, over the past two months, the Pastoral Center has turned into a way station for the members of the Synod focus teams, who figuratively tag in and out each day.

When the Synod focus team on adult faith formation held its first task: to group the many Synod listening session suggestions into several manageable categories, so that team members can study them and make concrete recommendations to Archbishop Thomas Wenski. (PHOTOS BY ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO | FC)

Members of the Synod focus team on adult faith formation hold their first meeting in November. They are the first task: to group the many Synod listening session suggestions into several manageable categories, so that team members can study them and make concrete recommendations to Archbishop Thomas Wenski. (PHOTOS BY ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO | FC)

When those sessions were over and the results were tabulated by the Synod staff, each of the leadership team members was given 300 cards, each containing one hope and one concern voiced by participants at the listening sessions. They were told they had 10 minutes to look them over and decide whether the hope and concern were relevant or irrelevant.

“You realized that what you thought was relevant was not as relevant as something else,” said Vilma Angulo, also a member of the leadership team.

“When we got together, 90 percent of the cards we had chosen were the same,” Mother Galindo said. “They gave us the responsibility of choosing” five priorities.

“All of us had at least four that were exactly the same,” said Angulo. “We hugged each other and said, ‘We made it!’”

Mother Galindo recalled:

It’s a method of working that is being used, with the same results, at the focus team level.

“We go in three months from a huge topic — young adult ministry, or whatever it may be — to that 30,000-foot level and in three months that group produces three very specific ground-level goals,” said Banich, who has facilitated more than half of the focus team meetings and has also been present at all the leadership team meetings.

By ground-level goals she means they have to be “attainable in three years,” and attainable “in a way that we can measure,” said Mother Galindo.

An example of that would be setting a goal of increasing Mass attendance across the archdiocese by 10 percent in three years.

“We cannot desire things that are going to take 20 years. So that was a challenge for us because we desire many things,” Mother Galindo said.

At the same time, said Angulo, “We have to honor what the people of God in this diocese said.”

Also helpful is the fact that the leadership and focus teams are working along parallel lines, with the leadership team feeding off the suggestions of the focus teams.

The teams are composed of “people who are involved in the life of the Church, serving in this area. They can inform us all because they’re there, in the field,” said Mother Galindo.

“It’s just neat to be involved in the process,” said Bryan Garcia, a seminarian who serves on the young adult ministry team.

He is about halfway through his nine-year formation process, serving his pastoral year at St. Louis Parish in Pinecrest. “As a seminarian, if I’m studying to be a priest in this diocese, this is going to affect me and others in the future,” he said.

When the speakers were youths or young adults. “So many were talking about the same thing — the desire to be involved, the desire to be connected,” he said.

So perhaps winnowing down a mountain of suggestions into a handful of priorities is not as difficult as coming up with specific, attainable goals for satiating those desires — the final step for both focus team members and, ultimately, the Synod leadership team and Archbishop Wenski.

Angulo said even before it concludes, however, the Synod is yielding benefits for the archdiocese.

“It’s like leadership training for 500 people,” said the veteran catechist and director of religious education. “It translates for us in our ministries.”

“All the information is very useful for me,” agreed Josephine Gilbert, a leadership team member and presiding officer of the Miami Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women. “I’m so happy with the opportunity.”

Visit the archdiocesan website, www.miamiaarch.org, for a list of all the Synod focus teams and their members.
NEW BUILDING AT LAW SCHOOL

St. Thomas University Law School Dean Douglas Ray, left, and Frances Guasch De La Guardia, president of the St. Thomas Law Alumni Association, cut the ribbon for the school’s new building Nov. 27. Archbishop Thomas Wenski blessed the new center for Professional Development, a 5,000-square-foot building that will house offices for career services and alumni relations staff, offices for those engaged in providing pro bono legal services, and a high-tech classroom for keynote speakers and presentations. (ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO | FC)

TELEVISION OPPORTUNITIES

Show your stuff.

The Archdiocese of Miami High School Invitational Student Art Show is looking for artworks created by students attending high schools in the archdiocese. The deadline to turn in artworks and registration labels is the week of Jan. 14-18, 2013. Works should be held June 17-2 July 2, 2013, at St. John’s Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minn. The choir is led by Axel Theimer and its founding director, Benedictine Father Anthony Ruff. The choir admits U.S. students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin. Applications and auditions are due March 18, 2013. Apply online at www.CatholicYouthChoir.org. For more information, call 320-363-3154 or email dkantor@csbsju.edu.

Youth choir seeks singers.

The National Catholic Youth Choir is seeking high school singers to audition for the 2013 camp and multistate concert tour to be held June 17-2 July 2, 2013, at St. John’s Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minn. The choir is led by Axel Theimer and its founding director, Benedictine Father Anthony Ruff. The choir admits U.S. students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin. Applications and auditions are due March 18, 2013. Apply online at www.CatholicYouthChoir.org. For more information, call 320-363-3154 or email dkantor@csbsju.edu.

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December 2012 www.thefloridacatholic.org
Embrace Christ, gain everything

A Child is born in the poverty of Bethlehem. But that child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and held in the embrace of his loving mother, is the Most High God, the Word become Flesh, our flesh. He humbled himself—sharing our humanity—so that we might see him in his divinity. This is the Mystery celebrated on that Holy Night when God became one of us—so that we can be with him, and become like him.

This Mystery is not only a long-past event but also a present reality. At every Mass during the preparation of the gifts, the priest or deacon pours wine into the chalice and then adds a drop of water. As he does so, he prays silently: “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”

Pope Benedict said in his first Christmas as pope: “(Jesus’) way of showing that he is God challenges our way of being human. By knocking on our door, he challenges us and our freedom; he calls us to examine how we understand and live our lives.”

Christ is the Light of the World. Without that light which we have received through the gift of faith, we cannot understand God and his loving plan for us; nor can we truly understand ourselves, who we are, why we are. Fifty years ago, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council insisted: “It is Christ in the mystery of the Word made Flesh that the Mystery of humanity truly becomes clear” (Gaudium et Spes, No. 22).

Today’s world needs that light more than ever — because without that light we do not know how to live, we do not know how to be with him. Without that light, we can become like the character Scrooge in Dickens’ famous novel, who thinks the value and worth of people is measured by what they have and not for who they are, creatures made in the image and likeness of God. Without that light, we can become like Herod who believed, like so many of this world’s kings and rulers still believe today, that might makes right. He massacred the Holy Innocents in a vain effort to advance his self-interests.

Without that light of Christ people today trample on the rights of the vulnerable, the weak, the poor, sacrificing them on the altars of their own self-indulgence. Without that light of Christ, that of the same Christ Child who in his mother’s arms and under the protection of his foster father Joseph crossed into Egypt as a faceless, and undocumented, refugee, we will not see the other in need as a brother or sister but only as an alien threat.

Shepherds come and worship, the Magi too offer their gifts and adore him. These guests around the crib represent all humanity, the poor and the rich, the simple and the wise. We too are invited to approach the Child who awaits us in the manger. His hands are stretched forth, reaching out to each one of us. He reaches out not to take anything from us, but to give to us. Christ reaches out to embrace us all and to bathe us in his light: He becomes one of us, sharing in our humanity that we might share in his divinity.

During this Year of Faith, we are reminded that to believe in Jesus Christ we lose nothing that is truly human; on the contrary, we gain everything.

Al abrazarnos a Jesucristo, lo ganamos todo

El Papa Benedicto XVI dijo en su primera Navidad como Papa: “La manera en que (Jesús) nos muestra que Él es Dios daña nuestro modo de ser humano. Al llamar a nuestra puerta, nos desafía a nosotros y a nuestra libertad; nos llama a examinar la forma en que entendemos y vivimos nuestras vidas”.

“Cristo es la luz del mundo. Sin esa luz, que hemos recibido por medio del don de la fe, no podemos comprender a Dios y su designio de amor por nosotros, ni podemos comprender verdaderamente a nosotros mismos, quiénes somos, por qué somos y por qué es-tamos. Hace 50 años, los Padres del Concilio Vaticano II enfatizaron esto: “Es sólo en el misterio del Verbo hecho carne donde el misterio de la humanidad se hace verdaderamente evidente” (Gaudium et Spes, No. 22).

El mundo de hoy necesita de esa luz más que nunca: porque sin esa luz no sabemos cómo vivir, no sabemos cómo ser humanos. Sin esa luz, podemos llegar a ser como el personaje de Scrooge en la famosa novela de Dickens, que piensa que el valor y la dignidad de las personas se miden por lo que tienen y no por lo que son: criaturas hechas a imagen y semejanza de Dios. Sin esa luz, podemos llegar a ser como Herodes, que creía — al igual que muchos de los reyes y gobernantes de este mundo siguen creyendo hoy — que el poder hace el derecho. Herodes masacró a los Niños Inocentes en un vano esfuerzo por promover sus propios intereses. Sin esa luz de Cristo, la gente de hoy piensa los derechos a los más vulnerables, de los débiles, de los pobres, sacrificándolos en el altar de la conveniencia, en aras de su propia autoindulcencia. Sin esa luz de Cristo, la de ese mismo Niño Jesús que en brazos de su madre y bajo la protección de su padre de crianza, José, entró en Egipto como un inmigrante sin rostro y sin documentos, no veremos nunca al otro, al necesitado, como un hermano o una hermana, sino sólo como una amenaza extraña.

Los pastores vienen y lo adoran; los Reyes Magos también le ofrecen sus regalos y lo adoran. Estos invitados, reunidos en torno del pesebre, representan a toda la humanidad: a los pobres y los ricos, al sencillo y al sabio. Nosotros también estamos invitados a acercarnos al Niño que nos espera en el pesebre. Sus manos están extendidas y llegan a cada uno de nosotros. El las extiende no para tomar nada de las nuestras, sino para darnos. Cristo extiende sus manos para abrazarnos a todos, y nos baña con su luz. Se convierte en uno de nosotros, y comparte nuestra humanidad para que podamos participar de su divinidad.

Durante este Año de la Fe, se nos recuerda que al creer en Jesucristo no perdemos nada que sea verdaderamente humano, sino que, por el contrario, lo ganamos toda.
Damnificados de Sandy apelan a la solidaridad del Adviento

Diócesis de Holguín pide ayuda para las necesidades concretas de la población

El avión de Miami Air Cargo despega del Aeropuerto Internacional de Miami el 19 de noviembre con un cargamento de 8.500 libras de comida para distribuir en la Arquidiócesis de Santiago de Cuba. El avión fue financiado por la Diócesis de Miami con la ayuda de los católicos de Miami. El cargamento incluyó alimentos para consumo humano y animales, así como medicamentos y suministros médicos.

Arquidiócesis de Santiago está en proceso de hacer “plan de reconstrucción definitiva”

Una iniciativa de la Arquidiócesis de Santiago es el “plan de reconstrucción definitiva” para ayudar a los damnificados del Huracán Sandy. El objetivo es reconstruir las viviendas dañadas y proporcionar ayuda financiera para los hogares que necesitan reparaciones. La arquidiócesis ha establecido un fondo especial para este propósito y ha invitado a la comunidad a donar.

Ayuda de Miami llega a Cuba

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En el caso de las familias más afectadas, se ha creado un programa para brindarles ayuda de manera específica. Se han establecido comités locales que se encargan de distribuir los alimentos y medicamentos de manera eficiente. Además, se ha establecido un programa de educación financiera para ayudar a las familias a reconstruir sus hogares y volver a la normalidad.

Los damnificados del Huracán Sandy en Cuba son atendidos con cariño y dedicación. La solidaridad de la comunidad internacional es fundamental para que estos hogares puedan subsistir y recuperarse.
ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AROUND THE ARCHDIOCESE

Jesuit Father Pedro Suarez, president/principal of Belen Jesuit Preparatory School, blesses the Nativity scene Dec. 7 as Father Jorge Rojas, spiritual counselor for the sixth grade, looks on. During the blessing, students sang, read poetry and offered prayers to the Holy Family. The Nativity scene is located in the heart of the school’s campus.

“It is important for our students, faculty and parents to have this depiction of the first family as representation of the real importance of why we celebrate Christmas,” said Father Rojas. (COURTESY PHOTO)

The bishops of Florida gather for Mass Dec. 2 at America’s first parish, the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine. From left are Bishop John Noonan of Orlando; Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito of Palm Beach; Bishop Robert N. Lynch of St. Petersburg; Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami; Bishop Felipe Estevez of St. Augustine; Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice; and Bishop Gregory Parkes of Pensacola-Tallahassee. (DON BURK | ST AUGUSTINE CATHOLIC)

Our Lady of Lourdes High School singers entertain the crowd as Mercy Hospital hosted a Christmas tree lighting ceremony Dec. 6, featuring free churros, cookies and hot chocolate. Santa Claus arrived on a fire truck and legendary Miami Dolphins football coach Don Shula did the countdown to the lighting of the tree. Employees and the community were invited to the event and were asked to bring a new, unwrapped gift to help light up a child’s holiday. Shula is part of Mercy’s legacy because in 1972, Mercy was the official hospital of the Miami Dolphins.

Archbishop Thomas Wenski joins Santa Claus and others on a fire truck Dec. 9 which led thousands of motorcyclists, including the archbishop, in the 25th annual Florida President’s Council Toys in the Sun Run. This is the second year the archbishop took part in the run. Riders paid a $10 entry fee and brought one new unwrapped toy per person. The proceeds benefited the Joe DiMaggio Children’s Hospital Foundation in Hollywood. (PHOTOS BY MARLENE QUARONI | FC)

Placido Domingo Jr., right, and Terry Lamberto, a member of the adult choir, applaud each other at the end of a concert Dec. 1 at St. Rose of Lima Parish. Domingo recorded a Christmas CD during a live concert with the adult and children choirs of the Miami Shores parish.
‘We must have younger members to carry on’

Miami members of family-friendly Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver seek youths to pass on their faith

Editor’s note: This article is part of an ongoing series about papal and chivalric orders in the archdiocese.

TOM TRACY
Florida Catholic correspondent

MIAMI | Born in Overtown in 1924, retired educator Gwendolyn Welters remembers when Booker T. Washington was the only high school she could attend as an African-American during segregation. Welters went on to earn education degrees from Florida A & M and Columbia in New York City. And she has been an active leader with the local black archives project preserving the history of Overtown, Miami’s traditional black neighborhood.

But now Welters wonders if enough is being done to pass on the black Catholic traditions of education and service to the community in what has been a minority faith group within Miami’s historic black community.

“I have been here all of my life and I have always had the belief that if I can help someone who needed me I would do so, and we were always in the community helping people whether they were in our church or not,” said Welters, who is a Miami member of the ladies auxiliary of the Knights of Peter Claver, the national black Catholic fraternal organization. “We do need some new members right now because I am 88 and several of us are, and we must have younger members to carry on this tradition.”

Based in New Orleans, the Knights of Peter Claver was founded in 1909 in Mobile, Ala., for black men who were barred from other organizations in the Catholic Church. Named for St. Peter Claver, a Jesuit priest from Spain who ministered to African slaves in Cartagena, Colombia, in the 1600s, it has units in more than 400 Catholic parishes in the United States and South America.

As the nation’s largest lay organization for African-American Catholics, the Knights of Peter Claver follows the organizational model of the Knights of Columbus. The ladies auxiliary was added in 1929, and the Junior Knights and Junior Daughters, in the 1930s. Geralyn Shelvin, the organization’s supreme lady, its highest elected post, said that these additional branches are integral to the Knights’ longevity.

Members of Miami’s Ladies of Claver follow the organization’s supreme lady, its 18,000 members nationwide will be in its particular church.”

“We pride ourselves in being a family organization based on the fact that we have divisions for children, then a ladies and a men’s divisions, so that allows whole families to join,” Jones said. “My daughter was a dues-paying member as a youth.”

For more information on the Knights of Peter Claver, visit http://www.kofpc.org

Bernadette Poitier, Grand Lady of Miami’s Mother Katharine Drexel Court 288, poses with Margaret Stanley, assistant Junior Daughter Counselor.

Dorothy Graham, 96, poses with Grand Lady Bernadette Poitier, center, of the Miami Ladies of Peter Claver, and Bria Lumpkin, 10, — the past, present and future — after a special gathering Dec. 2 at Holy Redeemer Church in Liberty City. (PHOTOS BY MARLENE QUARONI | FC)

Peter Claver say they are working to install their values and traditions in younger generations as their membership ages and as other area churches and mega-churches have competed for their African-American membership.

The mission of the ladies auxiliary is to render service to God and His Church, according to Grand Lady Bernadette Poitier of Miami’s Mother Katharine Drexel Court 288.

A member Holy Redeemer Parish in Liberty City, and before that a longtime member of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Overtown where she served as religious education coordinator for 20 years, Poitier was in New Orleans in 2009 when the order celebrated its centennial. She and other Miami members have attended regional and national conferences over the years, enriching their contact with the wider black Catholic communities around the U.S.

Local membership includes two members from St. Mary Cathedral Parish, four from St. Philip Neri Parish, one from St. Monica Parish and one from Visitasion Parish, and about 12 from Holy Redeemer.

“Many years we black Catholics were not cherished because when you told people in the community you were Catholic they looked at you kind of funny, and particularly today mega-churches are drawing people in by the droves,” said Poitier, a 33-year employee of Miami Dade Public Schools who started her teaching career at Holy Redeemer School.

“A cradle Catholic” and graduate of Spelman College in Atlanta, Poitier added, “Our gifts as women of Peter Claver enrich the Church by engaging the young people and teenagers in our parishes to take an active role in ministry. We nurture them and attempt to instill an opportunity to grow and mature as fine black Catholics, not only by word of mouth but by deed.”

Over the years, the order in Miami has recruited religious education students from Overtown, and held prayer breakfasts or luncheon fundraising events to support a student scholarship program. Throughout the year, districts, states, subordinate units, chapters and assemblies have awarded scholarships not only to individuals, but also to educational institutions to advance the cause of education throughout the country, organizers say.

Local members also raised money for sickle-cell anemia projects and work closely with the Missionaries of Charity in Overtown. During the holiday season, they have partnered with the Missionaries of Charity in Overtown. During the holiday season, they have partnered with the Missionaries of Charity in Overtown. Through the mission of the Knights of Peter Claver enrich the Church by engaging the young people and teenagers in our parishes to take an active role in ministry. We nurture them and attempt to instill an opportunity to grow and mature as fine black Catholics, not only by word of mouth but by deed.”

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Donors see their money at work

First of 2013 campaign dinners held at St. John Vianney College Seminary, which ABCD helps fund

ANA RODRIGUEZ-SOTO
Florida Catholic staff

MIA | While being thanked for their generosity, Miami-Dade donors to the Archbishop’s Charities and Development appeal had an opportunity to see where their money is going.

The first of four dinners — and two lunches — for the ABCD 2013 campaign took place at St. John Vianney College Seminary Dec. 4. The archdiocese reported that 23 percent of the money collected by the 2012 campaign will be spent this year in the formation of seminarians and on the ministry to priests, deacons and religious.

The seminary has 90 students, representing all seven of Florida’s dioceses as well as other dioceses.

Carlos Arazoza of Epiphany Parish exhorts his fellow ABCD donors to “dig deep” and be especially generous this year.

Father Roberto Garza, rector, said the students reflect “the highest number in the history of the college seminary.”

The seminarians served as acolytes, lectors, choir and ushers at the Mass. They also parked guests’ cars and ferried them across the seminary grounds in golf carts.

“It is a big investment of you to educate these men,” Archbishop Thomas Wenski told the 250 or so people gathered for the Mass which preceded the dinner, an outdoor affair on a balmy, breezy night on the seminary campus.

Speaking in St. Raphael Chapel, Wenski recalled his own education there, which was being built when he was 13. Back then, St. John Vianney was a high school seminary and a two-year college. Archbishop Wenski graduated from the high school in 1968, from the college in 1970, and then went on to St. Vincent Wenski Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, where he graduated in 1976 — the same year he was ordained.

“‘The Church can do beautiful things. But it can only do beautiful things with the cooperation of its people,’ Archbishop Wenski told the donors.

Some of them had ribbons on their name tags denoting the number of years they have been contributing to ABCD: “One in faith” donors have been giving for two years; “one in hope” donors have been giving for five; and “one in charity” donors have been giving for 10.

“One in faith, one in hope and one in charity” is the theme for the 2013 ABCD campaign — and perhaps a brand for future ones. Pledges will be taken up in January in all the archdiocesan parishes.

“Other showed his support of the ABCD by serving as chairman of the annual campaign. To Arazoza and his wife’s family, the way they were treated by the staff at Mercy, he told the donors.

“Why he gives to ABCD: His wife, Maria, was born at Mercy Hospital in Miami — in exchange for three pints of blood. At the time, Maria’s father was a Cuban exile who delivered ‘continuas’ (meals) to people’s homes. When he and his pregnant wife arrived at Mercy, he told the staff that he had no money with which to pay for the birth of the child. The staff told him he could pay by donating three pints of blood — so three family members donated a pint each.

Two decades ago, Maria’s father showed his support of the ABCD by serving as chairman of the annual campaign. To Arazoza and his wife’s family, the way they were treated at Mercy Hospital represents the many quiet works of charity performed by the Catholic Church, and of many reasons to support the annual campaign.

“The reality is that ABCD is one of the most supporting organizations, not just of our Catholic community but of South Florida as a whole,” Arazoza said. “Anything I can do for ABCD is a good thing.”
**CUBA**

*FROM 5*

en Haití y el noroeste de los Estados Unidos. En su correo electrónico, Sánchez incluye una actualización de las necesidades en las tres diócesis más afectadas, en orden de prioridad,

- Santiago de Cuba: Artículos de higiene; colchas; techos; ayuda a campesinos; reconstrucción y construcción de casas (puntuales).
- Guantánamo: Colchas; artículos de higiene; artículos del hogar; apoyo a campesinos; techos; construcción de casas.
- Holguín: Colchas; artículos de higiene; artículos del hogar; apoyo a campesinos; techos; construcción de casas.

El arzobispo indicó que las edificaciones de la Iglesia, al igual que las del resto de la ciudad, “en su mayoría eran construcciones antiguas, algunas coloniales, llevaban muchos años sin un adecuado mantenimiento y renovación y no estaban preparados para resistir un embate tan súbito”.

La arquidiócesis ha acordado:
- Hacer una evaluación rigurosa del estado de todos los edificios dañados.
- Hacer inventario de materiales con los que cuenta y lugares para adquisición de los necesarios.
- Vincular a interesar a la comunidad en la reparación de los inmuebles.
- Que los sacerdotes, religiosas y diáconos se dediquen principalmente a su función inseparable de alentar a las comunidades, mantener la pastoral y estar cercanos al pueblo que espera de ellos una palabra de fe y esperanza.
- Preparar las condiciones para hacer un plan de reconstrucción definitiva y a mediano plazo.

En su comunicado expresó que para lograr una mejor organización, “deseamos que las ayudas lleguen a través de las Caritas diocesanas, conglomeraciones religiosas o directamente a la arquidiócesis”. Del mismo modo, indicó Mons. García, “las promesas y deseos de ayuda humanitaria que nos han hecho desde el extranjero deben de coordinarse a través de Caritas Cuba y de las diócesis y agencias católicas respectivas”.

Para información, aquellos que quieran ayudar deben comunicarse con: economia@arssantiago.co.uy o enviar donaciones a: Our Lady of Charity of Cobre Foundation: P.O. Box 40368, Glen Oaks, New York 11004-0368.

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CHRISTMAS
Masses, vigil, Monday, Dec. 24, 5:30 p.m. and midnight, bilingual; Tuesday, Dec. 25, 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., Spanish; St. Agatha, 1111 S.W. 107 Ave., Miami. No confessions before Masses. 786-223-0522.


COMMUNITY EVENTS
St. Andrew Parish festival, Jan. 24-27, 2013, 7 p.m., 9950 N.W. 29 St., Coral Springs. Rides, games, food, vendors, entertainment for the whole family. 954-501-4985.

CONCERTS


Tony Meléndez en concierto, sábado, 26 de enero, 8:30 p.m., St. Agatha, 1111 S.W. 107 Ave., Miami. Gran concierto y testimonio del cantautor católico que toca la guitarra con sus pies, $10. Fondos recaudados serán utilizados para enviar a jóvenes a la Jornada de la JMJ LI, 7525 N.W. 29 St., Coral Springs. 305-501-4985.

FAITH EDUCATION

St. Marys Concert Series, Sunday, Jan. 27, 3 p.m., St. Martha, 9301 Biscayne Blvd, Miami. Opera diva Helen Donath and her husband, conductor/pianist/magician Klaus Donath. $10 general admission; $20 Blue Circle post-concert reception with artists included. www.saintmarthas.org, 1-800-955-4840.

DIOCESAN EVENTS
Natural family planning classes, Saturday, Jan. 5, 2013, St. Patrick, 3716 Garden Ave., Miami Beach. Second of three-part series of introductory classes offered by Couple to Couple League to learn about medically safe, morally acceptable, effective family planning methods. For more information, visit www.coupletocouplemiami.org, 305-321-4420.

Camino del Matrimonio, 12-13 y 26-27 de enero, Southeast Pastoral Institute (SEPI), 7700 S.W. 56th St., Miami. Programa arquidiocesano de preparación matrimonial en español para parejas que desean contraer matrimonio en la Iglesia Católica, en el área del liderazgo laico en las iglesias. Clases en español.

MASSES/PRAYER SESSIONS
First Saturday devotions: • St. Brenda, 8725 S.W. 32 St., Miami, 6 a.m. Procession, rosary, Mass. Communion of reparation and adoration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. 305-539-3390.
• St. Andrew, 9950 N.W. 29th St., Coral Springs, 8 a.m. Devotion To Our Lady of Fatima, rosary and holy Communion. 954-753-1783.

Ultreya, monthly meetings after Cursillo experience. Open to cursillistas and those seeking to learn more about Cursillos de Cristianidad. 305-710-0121.
• Second Sundays, 3 p.m., St. Louis, 7270 S.W. 120 St., Pinecrest. 305-412-7250.
• Third Sundays, 7 p.m., St. Bartholomew, 8005 Miramar Parkway, Miramar. 954-442-2185.
• Last Sundays, 7 p.m., St. John Neumann, E. 1215 S.W. 107 St., Miami. 954-753-8841.

Youth Retreat Center, 3333 S.W. 120 St., Miami. Hosted by Archbishop Thomas Wenski. To register, log in to www.virtualon.org; click on the yellow word “registration” located on the left-hand side of the page; choose Miami as your “organization”; view list of available sessions, e-mail jrayburn@theadom.org or call the host entity: Saturday, Jan. 5, 2013, 9 a.m., en español; St. Louis, Pinecrest.
• Wednesday, Jan. 16, 6 p.m., St. Coleman School, Pompano Beach.
• Saturday, Jan. 19, 10 a.m., St. Bernard, Sunrise.

To report abuse by someone representing the archdiocese: 1-866-802-2873 (toll-free); or report all abuse allegations to civil authorities: 1-800-962-2873.

SCHOOLS
St. Agnes Academy Application through Jan. 31, 2013, 122 Harbor Drive, Key Biscayne. Tours by appointment only. 305-361-3245, ext. 203.

Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory entrance exams, Saturday, Jan. 26, 7:45 a.m., 500 E. Chaminade Drive, Hollywood. Tuition grants for students scoring in the 90th percentile or higher. Pre-registration required: www.admissions.cmc.edu, 1-888-950-3915, ext. 136.

Support Groups
Betania, primeros miércoles de mes a las 7 p.m., St. Brendan, 8725 S.W. 32 St., Miami. Estructuralmente, padres y madres que han perdido hijos. 305- 221-3761, 305-219-2757.
Nueva Vida for individuals suffering from addiction and codependency. Sessions in English. 786-254-1683.
• Fridays, 8 p.m., St. Louis (choir room), 7270 S.W. 120 St., Miami.
• Thursdays, 7:30 p.m., St. Bartholomew (school church), 8001 Miramar Parkway, Miramar.

Cancer support ministry, third Mondays, 7 p.m., St. Anthony Parish, 3716 S.W. 151 N.E. 10 Ave., Fort Lauderdale. Spiritual, emotional and informational support for 11:30 a.m. Retreat Room, 3333 S. Miami Ave., Miami. Hosted by Amor en el Principio, desculus de procurar una red de apoyo y para encontrar un nuevo amigo para un crecimiento espiritual. 305-856-3404.

Divorce care, Wednesdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m., St. Patrick, 3716 Garden Ave., Miami Beach. Support group for people who have gone through divorce and need a safe place to talk. Mary@UAdon.com, 305-531-1124.

VOCATIONS

Service week and retreat, March 2-9, 2013, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, 30 Jeffs Neck Road, Ipswich, Mass. For single Catholics ages 18-25, discerning a call to religious life. Includes service with migrant workers, education seminars, guided prayer and discussion, homemestay with local families. sistermarylnd@nden.org.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS
Evanagizing youth workshops, St. Padre Pio Center, 3333 S. Miami Ave., Miami. These workshops are designed to help communities participate in the Year of Faith. Learn new methods and resources to evangelize young people and their families. $54/person, includes meals and lunches. Register at www.cmdnet.org, 305-856-3404.

Youth Encounter, Jan. 18-20, 2013, St. John Vianney, 333 S. Miami Ave., Miami. For young people ages 16-23. $65 in advance; $75 at the door. Conoce a tener una experiencia personal con Jesucristo. 305-605-4677.

St. Augustine’s young adults group, meets Tuesdays, 7:30 p.m., 1405 Sunset Road, Coral Gables. Serves college grads, grade students, and young adults between the ages of 25-35. Rosary followed by peer or guest-led discussion or presentation on the faith. staugay@gmail.com.

Voceros de Cristo, miércoles, 8-10 p.m., St. Agatha, 1111 S.W. 107 Ave., Miami. grupo de jóvenes adultos entre 18 y 35 años, para conocer, vivir y proclaimar la palabra y acción de Dios. vocerosdecristo1@hotmail.com.

Juventud Peregrina, todos los viernes, St. Catherine of Siena, 9200 S.W. 107 Ave., Miami. Invitamos a todos los jóvenes a ser parte de la Juventud Peregrina del Papa Benedicto XVI: “Todo cristiano está invitado a ser amigo de Dios y con Su ayuda, ¡ahora puede ser el gran amigo Él a sus propios amigos!”. 786-397-2688, juventudperegrina2012@gmail.com.

XLT, Thursdays, 7:30 p.m., St. Patrick, 3716 Garden Ave., Miami Beach. In partnership with a live contemporary Christian music, praise and worship, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. 305-531-1124.
Post-Christmas play at St. Thomas the Apostle focuses on joyful mysteries

TONI PALLATTO
Florida Catholic correspondent

MIAMI | By the time Dec. 25 rolls around, most Christmas plays and concerts have been acted and sung. Not so at St. Thomas the Apostle, where the stage play “Epiphany of Light” will be performed Jan. 11 and 12, 2013, in the outdoor Meditation Garden.

The play was written to celebrate the joyful mysteries of the Annunciation, the Visitation and the birth of Christ. Christian Cozier, a parishioner at St. Thomas and accountant by trade, is the play’s writer, producer and director. He wrote the play to be entertaining and “evangelizing.” The purpose of the play is to illustrate God’s divine love for all of humanity, his place as the “one true light” of the world.

“Typically, we experience Christmas in a very secular way. We are presenting this play after the rush of the holiday to hopefully portray the humility and the simple way in which Our Lord and Savior entered into this world,” Cozier said. “It brings to life John 3:16. For God so loved the world, that he sent his only Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”

The script focuses on the humble circumstances that surrounded the arrival of the King of kings, without the pageantry typically attributed to nobility and royalty. The lowly shepherds were the first ones to experience the Epiphany.

“Consider the social standing of the uneducated shepherds,” said Cozier. “They were even considered ritually impure because they came in touch with animals and dead carcasses. God chose the meek and humble to be the very first to reveal his majesty and glory, as manifested in the constellations that led them to the baby Jesus.”

“Epiphany of Light” also focuses on the Magi, who possessed riches, power and influence, but, in their restlessness, were seeking more.

“Their quest was to find the source of divine light and when they did, share their treasures,” Cozier said. “I hope to show that this is what we all are supposed to do in this lifetime. We are to share our gifts, and in so doing, we are transfigured into the light of Jesus for others to witness.”

The cast of “Epiphany of Light” consists of a core of about 16 people, all volunteers, with dozens of extras filling in for Joseph and Mary’s wedding party and the choir of angels. Stagehands will help build the stage, facilitate the production and assist with the live animals integral to the play.

Casting calls took place this summer — including the weekend that Hurricane Isaac hit South Florida — and were open to parishioners from all over the archdiocese.

“I am a preschool teacher for kids with special needs,” said Victoria Perez, who will play the lead angel. “I teach those with cerebral palsy and autism, and I do a lot of playing with them. I wanted to try something different, and I know I can contribute to this production by playing an assigned role, as well as contributing with my ‘craftiness.’”

The role of Joseph is being played by Stefano Murcia, an electrical engineering senior at Florida International University who is very active in the Catholic Panthers, the Catholic campus ministry.

The role of Mary is being played by Rosa Mendez, a psychology graduate from FIU who began theater studies in her native Cuba at the age of 15. She combined her study of psychology with theater studies at the Conservatory in Theater Arts at Teatro Prometeo, where she participated in a number of productions.

The play is being staged by Miami Easter Theater in collaboration with FAITH (Feed and Inspire the Homeless) and St. Thomas the Apostle. Founded in August 2012, Miami Easter Theater is, according to its website, “a collaboration among various parishioners in the Archdiocese of Miami as a platform for artistic expression for Judeo-Christian faith-based theatrical plays, dance performances and classical music in South Florida.”

WHERE TO GO

• “Epiphany of Light” will be presented Friday, Jan. 11, 2013, at 7 p.m., and Saturday, Jan. 12, 2013, at 4 and 7 p.m. in the Meditation Garden of St Thomas the Apostle Parish, 7377 S.W. 64 St., Miami.
• Tickets are $15 for adults, $10 for those 65 and older, and $5 for children under 12. Net proceeds from the play will benefit the homeless, including those served at the Missionaries of Charity shelter in Miami. Those attending the play also are asked to bring a nonperishable food item.
• Tickets can be purchased online at www.miamieastertheater.org. For more information, contact 786-477-7608 or christian.cozier@gmail.com.
‘Loving mother’ enshrined

Vietnamese community dedicates massive statue of Our Lady of La Vang at St. Helen Church

JAMES DAVIS
Florida Catholic correspondent

FORT LAUDERDALE | Many Vietnamese Catholics believe the Virgin Mary appeared in the 18th century to aid refugees in their homeland. And many believe she still helps them. Those in South Florida acknowledged her protection Dec. 9 by dedicating a marble statue to her at St. Helen Parish, home of the Vietnamese Apostolate in the archdiocese.

Our Lady of La Vang, as the manifestation of Mary was called, has become at once a focus of devotion, a rallying point for the people, and a reminder of their homeland.

“She is a symbol for the Vietnamese people,” said John Tran of Miramar, president of the Vietnamese community at the parish. “Our Mother has been protecting the Vietnamese people for many years and she will protect us for many years to come. This we believe strongly.”

About 1,000 people — mostly Vietnamese, along with a few Anglo, Hispanic and Haitian parishioners as well — gathered on the parish’s front lawn, which boasted a host of festive colors. Strings of pennants fluttered overhead in red, white, blue and yellow. About 180 members attended from the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Society, in age-coded kheo being of red, green, blue and other hues.

Many women came in the national dress, a tunic and pants set called the ao-dai — royal blue for the choir, light blue for a women’s prayer society, red and yellow for the traditional national colors of Vietnam. A few also wore the crescent-shaped headress known as a khanh dông.

Mirroring their garb was the 12-foot-6-inch statue itself, sculpted in Vietnam. Aside from the image of Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms, the artwork also depicted her devotees and the jungle near Hue, Vietnam, where the apparition happened.

It took place during a wave of persecution in Vietnam starting in 1798. Many Christians fled into the forested mountains, where they suffered from hunger, cold, animal attacks and sickness. But they continued to pray and say the rosary.

One night they saw a vision of a beautiful lady in an ao-dai, holding a child and flanked by angels. She advised them to boil leaves from the surrounding plants, a medicine that healed them of their ills. The site then became a shrine for prayer and pilgrimage.

The theme of protection emerged as well at St. Helen, in the prayer of blessing for the image that was offered by Father Robert Ayala, who presided at the dedication.

“You chose the blessed Virgin Mary as the mother and companion of your Son, the image and model of your Church, the mother and advocate of us all,” prayed Father Ayala, parochial vicar at St. Helen. “May your children who have provided this image of Mary know her protection and trace in their hearts the pattern of her holiness.”

The women then sang “Kinh Thanh Xuc Mau La Vang” as they approached and laid orchids, tiger lilies and red and yellow roses at the image’s feet. Just then, the skies opened and torrents of rain sent everyone dashing to the church.

Mass in Vietnamese was followed by a dinner of delicacies including quail egg soup, sesame balls and pastries wrapped in banana leaves. Some diners tried their singing talents at a karaoke machine, emceed by Father Joseph Long Nguyen, administrator of the Vietnamese Apostolate.

Dedication of the Marian image was a landmark for the Vietnamese community, whose 1,000 members come from as far as West Palm Beach and Homestead to attend Mass in their language at St. Helen.

“When there’s a Vietnamese parish, the first thing they want is a picture of Our Lady of La Vang,” Father Nguyen said. “When they see her, they feel comfortable. They have a loving mother to take care of them.”

The Vietnamese community began raising funds for the Marian statue about two years ago, and managed to raise $100,000 with some help from other groups in the parish. The image was crafted by workmen in Da Nang and arrived in September.

But the statue was 25 percent larger than expected, along with its base-relief setting, it totaled 24 tons. The church needed heavy equipment and a bigger foundation.

Enter Amy Le, an air-conditioning contractor who lives in Loxahatchee. With a crane and a six-man crew — and 30 Vietnamese volunteers for various tasks — she set the image aright in time for the dedication.

Like most of her fellow Vietnamese parishioners, Le fled her homeland after South Vietnam fell to the north. In 1979, at the age of 9, she became one of the “boat people,” drifting for a week with 187 other people without food or water. Then they were picked up and placed in a camp in Thailand along with 280,000 other refugees.

After enduring about six months there, she was raised in a large family in Utah, where she attended Catholic school for various tasks — she set the image aright in time for the dedication.

Vietnamese is only one of the languages spoken at St. Helen, where Mass is also celebrated in Spanish, Creole and English. For the rest of the community, said Father Lesly Jean, St. Helen’s administrator, the statue has another name: Mary Queen of the Universe.

“Whatever your background, you can come here and show your dedication to Mary,” Father Jean said. Indeed, some non-Vietnamese at the dedication made the same connection.

Sally Schwartz of Fort Lauderdale was charmed by the exotic Vietnamese Mass, which she attended on an invitation from a friend.

“If I couldn’t understand a word,” she said with a laugh, “but it was a beautiful service, joyful, with a lot of singing. It shows the Church is universal.”

“It’s the same Virgin Mary in any country,” said Delfina Idaybayo of Tamarac. She said the Vietnamese show the same kind of devotion to Our Lady of La Vang as her fellow Cuban-Americans show for Our Lady of Charity.

Father Ayala, himself a Cuban-American, noted the link as well. “Both peoples have faced communism and come to America. Both realize that freedom cannot be taken for granted.”

With Our Lady of La Vang in place, the Vietnamese community is planning its first events. Following 2 p.m. Mass on Christmas, they will hold a concert in the church parking lot. After that comes the Vietnamese New Year on Feb. 10, 2013, — the Year of the Snake — with food, music and a lion dance.