

TODAY'S READINGS

Whatever you did for one of the least brothers of mine, you did for me. (Matthew 25:40)
 What do you think of when you think of a king? A regal throne? Valiant knights? A luxurious lifestyle? How about a shepherd? How about someone who spends his time "in the fields" taking care of his subjects and risking his life for his people?

The shepherd was a common image the prophets used to remind Israel's kings of their calling. They preached that being a king wasn't about wielding power or increasing wealth. It was about serving the people and taking special care of the neediest among them.

When Jesus spoke of his Second Coming, he used the image of a shepherd to describe the kind of ruler he was going to be and the kind of kingdom he was going to establish. He wants a kingdom where people care for the most vulnerable: the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the homeless, and the forgotten. He wants his citizens to treat these "poor ones" just as they would treat him.

This emphasis on caring for the poor is at the heart of Catholic social teaching. According to this body of doctrine, Jesus, our King, doesn't want any of his people to be without food, clothing, and shelter. Those who have more should care for those who have less. They should lift up the lowly and help establish a world where justice and peace take priority over profit and gain.

Every human being is created by God and has been redeemed by Jesus. This means that every person has great dignity and should be treated as the treasure he or she is. Poverty, homelessness, abandonment—they all inflict deep wounds on a person's soul. Let's do everything we can to reverse these conditions! Let's make it a point to see Christ, our King, in all people, rich or poor, and to treat them with the dignity they deserve.

"Lord, teach us to stand up for the poor and forgotten. Help us follow your example of love and service."

Taken from *The Word Among Us*, November 2014, Vol. 33, Number 10: Used with permission.

THIS WEEK'S READINGS

Sunday 23 Ez 34:11-12,15-17 / 1 Cor 15:20-26,28 /

Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe Mt 25:31-46

Monday 24 Rv 14:1-5 / Lk 21:1-4

St. Andrew Dung-Lac and his companions

Tuesday 25 Rv 14:14-19 / Lk 21:5-11

St. Catherine of Alexandria

Wednesday 26 Rv 15:1-4 / Lk 21:12-19

Thursday 27 Is 63:7-9 / 1 Cor 1:3-9 / Mt 11:25-39

Friday 28 Rv 20:1-4,11-21:2 / Lk 21:29-33

Saturday 29 Rv 22:1-7 / Lk 21:34-36

Sunday 30 Is 63:16b-17,19b; 64:2-7 / 1 Cor 1:3-9 / Mk 13:33-37
First Sunday of Advent

WELCOME!

Visitors to the Cathedral, we want you to know how welcome you are—whether you have come from another part of the country, from across the world, or from another parish here in the Archdiocese or across the river. Thank you for praying with us. Thank you also for your generosity, which helps us to celebrate our liturgies in a fitting and beautiful way, and to offer a wide range of services to needy people in the Washington, DC area. Enjoy your visit!

PARISH CALENDAR

November 23 – 30

Sunday 23—Las clases de Catequesis, Catecumenado y Catequesis Familiar continúan a las 11:00 de la mañana. An Organ Recital is given in the Cathedral at 3:15pm.

Monday 24—The Social Justice & Community Services Committee meets at 6:45pm in the East Conference Room.

Tuesday 25—El grupo de Oración se reúne a las 7 de la tarde en el salón de conferencias del Oeste.

Wednesday 26—Breaking Open the Word meets at 7pm in the West Conference Room.

Thursday 27—**Thanksgiving Day.** A bilingual (English & Spanish) Mass of Thanksgiving is celebrated at 10am, the only Mass of the day. The Cathedral opens at 9:30am and closes after the Mass. There are no Confessions. **The parish offices are closed.**

Friday 28—The Cathedral opens at 7:30am and closes at 1pm. Masses are celebrated at 8am and 12:10pm. There are no Confessions. **The parish offices are closed.**

Saturday 29—The monthly rosary procession to the Planned Parenthood abortion clinic begins at 10:45am.

Sunday 30—**First Sunday of Advent**
 Las clases de Catequesis, Catecumenado y Catequesis Familiar continúan a las 11:00 de la mañana.

NEWS AND NOTES



Thanksgiving Day Mass

Thursday, November 27

10:00am

Bilingual Liturgy (English and Spanish)

Stewardship Thought for the Week – “Stewardship plays an important role in the lives of people who seek to follow Christ. In particular ... Christians must be stewards of their personal vocations, for it is these that show how, according to the circumstances of their individual lives, God wants them to cherish and serve a broad range of interests and concerns: life and health, along with their own intellectual and spiritual well-being and that of others; material goods and resources; the natural environment; the cultural heritage of humankind—indeed, the whole rich panoply of human goods, both those already realized and those whose realization depends upon the present generation or upon generations yet to come.” (*Stewardship: A Disciple’s Response*; USCCB November 2002; page 15)



Friends of the Cathedral Christmas Mailing

– Mark your calendars for this event – a fun evening of refreshments and envelope stuffing for our annual fundraising mailing to donors across the country. We will gather in the North Conference Room on Thursday, **December 4** at 6pm. If you can give an hour or two to support this critical appeal, please contact us at 202-587- 5143 or Reply@stmatthewscathedral.org.

November Remembrance – This month we remember our deceased loved ones in a special way. In the pews are donation envelopes on which you may write the names of deceased relatives and friends, to be given to the sacristan or placed in the collection basket. Your loved ones will be remembered at Mass each day of the month. The envelopes will be placed on the altar in the Wedding Chapel.

SYNOD NEWS

Extraordinary Synod on Marriage and Family – Much has been published in the media about the initial results of the recent synod of bishops’ meeting to discuss issues regarding marriage and the family. The Vatican has released the results of the bishops’ discussions on its official website. This document forms the basis for bishops around the world to have appropriate discussions in preparation for the synod to be held in 2015. The synod summary includes the discussion narrative, followed by the relevant votes of the bishops. Cardinal Wuerl was a key member of the committee charged with preparing the summary document. Parishioners are encouraged to visit the Vatican webpage containing the official version of the synod document at:

<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/18/0770/03044.html>.

Cardinal Wuerl gave his own personal reflections on the synod in an interview with the *Catholic Standard* that can be read at

<http://www.catholicstandard.org/Content/News/New/Article/Cardinal-Wuerl-s-interview-on-Synod-on-the-Family/2/2/6299>.

MUSIC

St. Matthew’s Festival Singers Auditions – Each year, we invite experienced singers of the parish to join the Schola Cantorum for our *Advent Lessons and Carols* and *Christmas Eve Choral Prelude and Mass*. Singers must be able to attend all rehearsals but are not obligated to sing at both events. We are looking for singers with an ability to read music, a pleasant voice, previous choral experience, and a commitment to work diligently and cooperatively. The rehearsal schedule includes most Mondays and Wednesdays beginning December 1.

Advent Lessons and Carols

Mondays, **December 1 & 8**, 6:45-8:45pm: Rehearsal

Wednesdays, **December 3 & 10**, 7:45-8:45pm:

Rehearsal

Sunday, **December 14**, 7:30–9pm: Lessons and

Carols (6:30pm arrival)

Christmas Eve Prelude and Mass

Monday, **December 15**, 7:15-8:45pm: Rehearsal

Wednesday, **December 17**, 7:15-8:45pm: Rehearsal

Monday, **December 21**, 6:45-8:45pm: Rehearsal

Wednesday, **December 24**: 9:15pm Prelude;

10pm Mass (8pm arrival)

To schedule an audition or for more information,

contact Tom Stehle at 202-587-5141 or

tstehle@stmatthewscathedral.org.

FAITH IN ACTION

Monthly Rosary Procession for Life – New date & time – This month's rosary procession to the Planned Parenthood abortion clinic will take place on Saturday, **November 29** at 10:45am, before the 12:10pm Mass. To participate, please gather inside at the main entrance of the Cathedral. For more information on service opportunities and involvement with the Respect Life Ministry, contact Justin Silvers at stmatthewsrespectlife@yahoo.com.

World AIDS Day Vigil – Volunteers Needed – The Respect Life Ministry will once again hold the World AIDS Day Vigil, a bilingual candlelight vigil scheduled for Monday, **December 1** after the 5:30pm Mass on the steps of the Cathedral (see the flier). A reception will follow. To serve as a volunteer the day of the vigil, email Justin Silvers (contact info above).



The Catholic Business Network of Washington

D.C. (CBN-D.C.) – CBN-D.C. will host an evening networking reception, Thursday, **December 4**, 5:30-7:30pm in the Great Hall of St. Matthew's Rectory. The purpose is to give thanks and celebrate CBN-D.C.'s first year by awarding over \$50,000 to DC Catholic schools. CBN-D.C. is an independent nonprofit organization bringing together businesses and individual professionals to create valuable networking opportunities through monthly receptions and an annual gala. All fundraising proceeds go to support students in need at Catholic schools in Washington, D.C. For more information or to register, please visit www.cbndc.org or contact Justin Silvers at 202-957-5188 or jsilvers@cbndc.org.

FAITH FORMATION

Be an RCIA Sponsor! – Are you looking for a way to grow in your faith? Consider being an RCIA sponsor, and share your faith with someone who is discerning full initiation in the Catholic Church. A sponsor is a companion who models how to live the faith in daily life, meets with the person s/he is sponsoring to discuss their faith journey, prays for that person, and participates in the stages and rituals of the RCIA process. To learn more, contact Theresa Prymuszewski, Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation, at tprymuszewski@stmatthewscathedral.org or 202-587-5139.



Advent Morning of Recollection – “The O Antiphons” – Did you know that there is a “code” embedded within a familiar Advent hymn? Come discover a deeper meaning of the Lord’s coming during this early Advent Morning of Reflection. Join us in the North Conference Room on Saturday, **December 6** from 9am to Noon for this spiritual preparation. You may be surprised when we crack the code together. All are invited to stay for the 12:10 Mass. Please contact Theresa Prymuszewski (contact info above) for more information.

Adult Confirmation Preparation 2015 – Each spring during the Easter season, St. Matthew's offers adult Confirmation preparation for active, baptized Catholics who already have received their First Eucharist. Preparation includes five Thursday evenings (**April 16, 23, 30, May 7 and 14**) and one Saturday (**May 16**). Registration forms are available from Theresa Prymuszewski (contact info above).

MASS INTENTIONS

November 23 – 30

Sunday, November 23

5:30pm (November 22 vigil) – Marie Mendi Viderot
7am – All Parishioners
8:30am – Dr. James Dennis Carroll (living)
10am – Charles Warner
11:30am – Fred Paras
1pm – Wilhem Plate-Canepa (living)
5:30pm – All Souls

Monday, November 24

7am – All Souls
8am – Teresita Bernabe
12:10pm – Klaus Schaefer
5:30pm – Marina Miranda

Tuesday, November 25

7am – Teresa De Fino Mannen
8am – All Souls
12:10pm – Alise Allan Tucci
5:30pm – Kevin O'Brien

Wednesday, November 26

7am – Charles Dietzler
8am – Conrado Sabelino
12:10pm – All Souls
5:30pm – Elizabeth Aldo (living)

Thursday, November 27

10am – Mr. Jim Moran

Friday, November 28

8am – All Souls
12:10pm – George Gantner, III

Saturday, November 29

8am – Helen McArdle
12:10pm – All Souls
5:30pm – All Parishioners

Sunday, November 30

7am – All Souls
8:30am – Consolacion Baluyot
10am – Francisco & Guillermina Campo
11:30am – Timothy Sweeney
1pm – Gabriela Sotelo
5:30pm – Peter Genovese

*You may arrange a **Mass intention** by speaking to our receptionist in the Rectory. There is no fee but an offering is customary. Intentions are reserved in advance so particular dates may be unavailable.*

LECTURAS DE HOY

Cuando el Hijo del hombre venga... se sentará en su trono de gloria. (Mateo 25, 31) es la Solemnidad de Jesucristo, Rey del Universo, el "Rey de Reyes y Señor de Señores", al que un día todas las creaturas aclamarán con grandes voces diciendo: "Al que está sentado en el trono y al Cordero, la alabanza, el honor, la gloria y el poder, por los siglos de los siglos" (Apocalipsis 5, 13). La semana que hoy comienza es la última del año litúrgico.

Reflexionando sobre el significado de esta solemnidad, se nos vienen a la mente algunos de los atributos divinos de nuestro Rey: su omnisciencia, omnipresencia, su naturaleza divina e inmutable, etc. Pero Jesús es también la revelación del Padre, que se presentó a Moisés como el "Dios tierno y compasivo". Él es el Buen Pastor, que cuida a su rebaño, buscando a sus ovejas y llevándolas a buenos pastos; es el Mesías de Dios, que se conmueve por los pequeños y los enfermos, por los que sufren y por los que tienen hambre de la Palabra de Dios.

Infinitas son la ternura y la misericordia de nuestro Rey, y él quiere que sus fieles tengamos su mismo espíritu de compasión y generosidad. En efecto, el Señor sigue visitando, por intermedio nuestro, al hambriento, el sediento, el enfermo, el sin casa, el encarcelado, y utiliza las manos y pies de sus discípulos para llevar ayuda a quienes necesitan alimento, ropa, albergue y un oído atento y compasivo. Aunque las obras de caridad no sustituyen a la fe para la salvación, nosotros también seremos juzgados por las obras que hagamos o dejemos de hacer.

Los servicios que hagamos demuestran cuánto amamos a Jesús, porque él también está presente en los pobres, los postergados y los indefensos. Cuando nuestro Rey vuelva en gloria, qué alegría será escuchar su invitación: "Vengan, benditos de mi Padre; tomen posesión del Reino preparado para ustedes desde la creación del mundo".

"Dios y Señor nuestro, concédenos una mayor parte de tu amor para que se nos agrande el corazón y aprendamos a reconocerte en los demás y servirte en ellos."

Escogida con el permiso de *La Palabra Entre Nosotros*, Vol. 33, Número 10: noviembre 2014.

LECTURAS DE LA SEMANA

Domingo 23 Ez 34:11-12,15-17 / 1 Cor 15:20-26,28 /
 Nuestro Señor Jesucristo Rey del Universo Mt 25:31-46
Lunes 24 Apc 14:1-5 / Lc 21:1-4
San Andrés Dung-Lac y compañeros
Martes 25 Apc 14:14-19 / Lc 21:5-11
Santa Catalina de Alejandría
Miércoles 26 Apc 15:1-4 / Lc 21:12-19
Jueves 27 Is 63:7-9 / 1 Cor 1:3-9 / Mt 11:25-39
Viernes 28 Apc 20:1-4,11-21:2 / Lc 21:29-33
Sábado 29 Apc 22:1-7 / Lc 21:34-36
Domingo 30 Is 63:16b-17,19b; 64:2b-7 / 1 Cor 1:3-9 /
Primer Domingo de Adviento Mc 13:33-37

NOTICIAS DE LA PARROQUIA

Misa del Día de Acción de Gracias – Únase a la celebración de la Misa de Acción de Gracias, que será bilingüe, el día **27 de noviembre** a las 10:00 de la mañana. Monseñor Jameson será el celebrante y predicador con nuestros padres de la parroquia concelebrando Juntos demos gracias a Dios, el dador de todo bien, por las muchas bendiciones que ha derramado sobre nosotros a través del año.



Procesión mensual del rosario por la vida – Nueva fecha & hora – La procesión mensual del rosario a la clínica de aborto, Planned Parenthood, será el **sábado 29 de noviembre** a las 10:45 de la mañana, antes de la misa del mediodía. Para

participar por favor encuétranos en la entrada central dentro de la catedral. Para más información sobre el Ministerio de Respeto a la Vida, póngase en contacto con Justin Silvers al stmatthewsrespectlife@yahoo.com. Para español, llame a la rectoría al 202-347-3215.

Se Necesitan Voluntarios para la Vigilia del Día Mundial del SIDA –El Ministerio de Respeto a la Vida, que forma parte de los Ministerios de Justicia Social, está organizando la Vigila del Día Mundial del SIDA, que se llevará a cabo el **lunes, 1 de diciembre**. La vigilia con velas será bilingüe y será después de la Misa de las 5:30 de la tarde (en inglés) en las gradas de la Catedral. Luego habrá una recepción en el salón de conferencias del Norte. Si está interesado en servir como voluntario el día de la vigilia, mande un correo electrónico a Justin Silvers al stmatthewsrespectlife@yahoo.com o llame a la rectoría al 202-347-3215.



CATHEDRAL OF ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE

World AIDS Day Candlelight Vigil *Vigilia de Oración para el Día Mundial del SIDA*

“I am the light of the World” Jn 8:12

“Yo soy la luz del mundo” Jn 8:12

In solidarity with those affected by HIV/AIDS
En solidaridad con los afectados por el VIH/SIDA

Monday, December 1, 2014

6:00 – 6:30pm

On the steps of the Cathedral

Lunes, 1 de diciembre de 2014

6:00 - 6:30 de la tarde

En las gradas de la Catedral

Join us for a bilingual service of reflection
with readings and prayers

*Únase con nosotros para el servicio bilingüe de reflexión
con lecturas y oraciones*

Refreshments will follow in the
North Conference Room

*Se servirán refrescos después de la
Vigilia en el Salón del Norte*

For more information | *Para más información*

St. Matthew's Respect Life Ministry | *Ministerio del Respeto a la Vida*

Justin Silvers, stmatthewsrespectlife@yahoo.com

Rectory Office: Fr. Rafael Barbieri or Norma Canedo at 202-347-3215

Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle
Office of Music Ministry

Presents

Organ Recital



Paul Hardy
Cathedral Organist

Featuring works of
J. S. Bach
Marcel Dupré
Dietrich Buxtehude
Jean Langlais

Sunday, November 23
3:15 pm

Free-will offering, Open to the public.

Donations will support the completion of the Great Organ of the Cathedral
For more information, please contact the Office of Music Ministry
at 202/587-5141



St. Matthew's Cathedral Adopt-A-Family Program Christmas 2014



The Social Justice Committee is once again sponsoring the Adopt-A-Family program to provide assistance to low-income families in our parish community. The goal is to help meet their basic needs by providing grocery gift cards, household items, clothing and coats, toys for the children, and other gifts of necessity. Last year, we provided gifts for 56 families, over 80 guests from our Homeless Ministry Program, and homes from the L'Arche Community. This year, we are also including children from DC General Shelter's Playtime Project.

You can help by picking up gift tags with specific gift requests or making a monetary contribution during the Masses beginning in November:

- 1) To participate in the **Giving Tree**, choose as many gift tags as you like from the table at the main entrance of the Cathedral after Mass, the weekends of **November 8 & 9, November 15 & 16, November 22 & 23, November 29 & November 30, and December 6 & 7**. Please purchase the specific item(s) and return the gift(s) wrapped.

Please do not take a card unless you know you will be able to purchase the gift(s) and bring them to the Cathedral on time. Please notify the coordinator if you picked up a card, but are suddenly unable to purchase the gift listed on it. Thank you.

- 2) You can make a **financial contribution** of any amount. Checks are welcome! Please write checks to St. Matthew's Cathedral (add "Adopt-A-Family Christmas" in the note line) and put your donation in an envelope clearly marked **Adopt-A-Family**. Envelopes are available at the main entrance of the Cathedral.

You can drop-off the envelopes and gifts with the volunteers at the main entrance after Mass during the weekends listed above. Your financial contribution can also be sent or turned into the Rectory.

We would like to receive donations by **December 7** to allow time for shopping before Christmas. Any donations that we receive above what is needed for Christmas, will be used to assist the families with grocery gift cards and other emergency assistance during the year.

For more information, please contact Pam Quinn at pquinn505@aol.com.

You may also call the rectory at (202) 347-3215.

Thank you for your generosity!



Looking for a convenient way to support our parish offertory?

Faith Direct is the innovative solution that allows you to support our parish using electronic funds transfer from either a credit card or bank account. It is a hassle-free, simple solution for today's busy families.

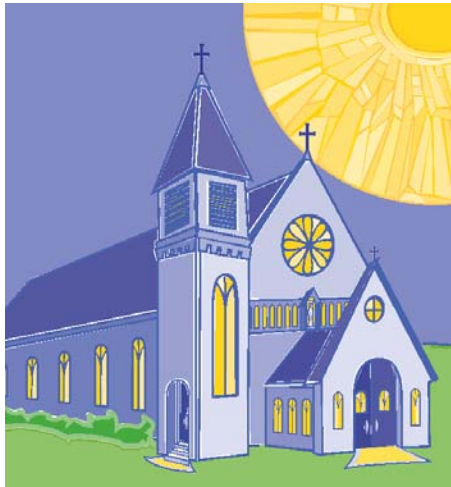
Sign up using the enrollment form on the other side or go online to www.faithdirect.net and use our parish code **DC284** to enroll today!



How does Faith Direct work?

Faith Direct is a secure system that works directly with your bank or credit card—much the same as other direct payments you may have set up for utility bills or mortgage payments.

When do transactions take place?



Transactions take place once per month on the 4th or the next business day. The total amount of your gifts for that current month (both offertory & second/special collections) will be debited in one monthly total. The Cathedral will receive the funds 4 business days later.

Can I stop, increase, or decrease my payment at any time?

Yes, by calling *Faith Direct* at 1-866-507-8757 (toll free) by emailing info@faithdirect.net, or by logging in to your account through www.faithdirect.net.

How does the Cathedral benefit from my participation with Faith Direct?

The Cathedral will see a substantial increase in net revenue, a decrease in administrative costs, and a clearer picture of cash flow for their needs.

If you have any questions about the *Faith Direct* program, please call 1-866-507-8757 {toll free} or send an email to info@faithdirect.net, or contact Pam Erwin at the Rectory at 202-347-3215 x537 or perwin@stmatthewscathedral.org.

E-GIVING ENROLLMENT FORM



Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle
1725 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

To enroll online, use code
below or scan here: →

DC284



C

Faith Direct • Attention: Enrollment • P.O. Box 7101 • Merrifield, VA 22116-7101 • 1-866-507-8757 {toll free} • www.faithdirect.net

Process my gifts on the: 4th *or* 15th of the month *(please check only one box)*

"As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." (Peter 4:10)

Weekly Offertory Gift: \$ _____

*(Note: The total amount will be determined by the number of
Sundays in the month. Some months have 5 Sundays.)*

You may also choose to give to the following second and special collections as part of the regular monthly transaction.

Organ Completion Fund: Weekly Gift: \$ _____ Monthly Gift: \$ _____ One-Time: Gift \$ _____

COLLECTION	AMOUNT	MONTH	COLLECTION	AMOUNT	MONTH
<input type="checkbox"/> Cathedral Maintenance	\$ _____	Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Holy Father	\$ _____	June
<input type="checkbox"/> Music Ministry	\$ _____	Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Catholic Communications & Human Development	\$ _____	August
<input type="checkbox"/> Poor Box/Outreach	\$ _____	Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/> Assumption	\$ _____	August
<input type="checkbox"/> Solemnity of Mary	\$ _____	January	<input type="checkbox"/> Catholic University	\$ _____	September
<input type="checkbox"/> Church Missions within the US	\$ _____	January	<input type="checkbox"/> Propagation of the Faith/ World Missions	\$ _____	October
<input type="checkbox"/> Ash Wednesday	\$ _____	March	<input type="checkbox"/> All Saints Day	\$ _____	November
<input type="checkbox"/> Churches in the Developing World	\$ _____	March	<input type="checkbox"/> All Souls Day *	\$ _____	November
<input type="checkbox"/> Holy Thursday	\$ _____	March/April	<input type="checkbox"/> Archdiocesan Priests' Retirement	\$ _____	November
<input type="checkbox"/> Holy Land	\$ _____	March/April	<input type="checkbox"/> Retirement Fund for Religious	\$ _____	December
<input type="checkbox"/> Easter Flowers	\$ _____	March/April	<input type="checkbox"/> Immaculate Conception	\$ _____	December
<input type="checkbox"/> Easter Sunday (In addition to regular Sunday gift)	\$ _____	March/April	<input type="checkbox"/> Christmas Flowers	\$ _____	December
<input type="checkbox"/> Catholic Relief Services	\$ _____	May	<input type="checkbox"/> Christmas	\$ _____	December

** Please call the church at 202-347-3215 with the names of your intentions for this collection.*

I would like to enroll in the Faith Direct program for the benefit of the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle. I understand that my **total** monthly contribution amount will be transferred directly from my checking account or credit card as stated above, a record of my gifts will appear on my bank or credit card statement, and my transfers will begin on the 4th or next business day of the month following my enrollment. I understand that I can increase, decrease, or suspend my giving by contacting Faith Direct toll free at 1-866-507-8757.

{All gifts provided to your Church originating as Automated Clearing House transactions comply with US law.}

Signature: **X** _____ Date: _____

Name(s): *(please print)* _____

Street Address: _____

Church Envelope #: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Name as I/we would like it to appear on Offertory Cards: _____

I do not wish to receive Offertory Cards to place in the collection basket as a sign of my electronic giving.

If you choose to enroll by mail, you can contact Faith Direct at 1-866-507-8757 {toll-free} to set up online access to your account.

For Bank Account Debit: Please return this completed form and a voided check to Faith Direct Enrollment.

For Credit/Debit Card: Please complete the following... VISA MasterCard American Express Discover

Credit/Debit Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____

If you have any questions about the Faith Direct program, please contact us at 1-866-507-8757 {toll free} or info@faithdirect.net.

Experiences of Marriage and Family

Pope Francis noted this in a recent homily: “Families are the first place in which we are formed as persons and, at the same time, the ‘bricks’ for the building up of society.”

The Extraordinary Synod of Bishops just concluded its first session concerning issues affecting marriage and the family. Much public comment has been made about what the synod bishops have been discussing. *America*, a Catholic magazine published by the Jesuits, recently included a special section containing a series of six personal reflections about the beauty and messiness of marriage and family. *America* has given us permission to reprint these reflections in our parish bulletin. This is the fourth of those personal reflections.

-- Deacon Merella

Necessary Network

By Maurice Timothy Reidy

When my family decided to adopt a child, it seemed only natural to work with a Catholic adoption agency. I went to Catholic schools through high school, and adoption was, in my mind, part of the robust array of social services offered by Catholic organizations around the country. My wife and I knew the process would not be easy, but we were comforted by the idea that we would be guided by fellow believers with the proper sensitivity and expertise.

Our experience turned out to be different. After doing our homework, we found that a secular adoption agency best met our needs. In addition to guiding us through the adoption process itself, the agency offered a full suite of counseling and post-adoption services. This was key for us, especially as we entered into the process of open adoption, whereby we maintain a degree of contact with our child's birth parents. So far we have been very happy with our decision. We visit the adoption agency every year for summer barbecues and Halloween parties.

I suspect that our experience is not unique. There are still many excellent Catholic adoption agencies around the country. But they are not the only option, and in some cities there are none. In Boston, the archdiocese has withdrawn from the arena entirely because of governmental pressures to offer adoption to nontraditional families. The same could happen in many other parts of the country. This is a very sad development. The Catholic Church has many years of experience in the field of adoption. The pro-life cause is best served when multiple agencies are working in multiple ways to find homes for children.

[see reverse]

I expect that the Synod on the Family will, in one way or another, praise adoption as a life-giving choice. And so it is. But I hope that the delegates are also sensitive to the changing nature of adoption today. Open adoption, for example, can be a healthy choice for children struggling with a sense of their own identity. It can also provide a ray of hope for birth mothers who are struggling to decide whether to bring a child to term. Some women cannot imagine giving birth to a child they will never see again.

Adoption should also be discussed with a frank understanding of the challenges involved. It is sometimes too easy to say to couples struggling with infertility, “Well, you can always adopt.” The adoption process can take years, especially when couples try to adopt from countries abroad. Domestic adoptions are increasingly difficult, especially in states with lax abortion laws. Costs can be in the tens of thousands of dollars. Sometimes a birth mother decides to raise her child rather than place her with a prospective adoptive family—an admirable decision, but not one without heartache for the potential adoptive parents. Adoption is a lifelong commitment; it does not end on that happy day when the child comes home.

Couples who choose to adopt need support, especially from their faith communities. Sometimes adoptive families will look a little different. Adoption across ethnic and racial lines is more common today. I am happy to say that for most people I know this choice is not an issue, but that does not mean it is easy to raise a multiracial family. Too many subtle prejudices endure. A pro-life community must be actively welcoming to families of all types.

Our adoption agency recently changed its mission to focus on finding homes for foster children and children with special needs. The decision was prompted in part by circumstance—fewer newborn babies are available for adoption in the Northeast—but it is brave nevertheless. Any conversation about adoption today must recognize these changing dynamics and seek to provide networks of support for families willing to take on these challenges.

Maurice Timothy Reidy is an executive editor of America.