St. Ambrose Parish

December 5, 2021
BEEHIVE

Love the people the world rejects

Below is an edited text of Pope Francis' weekly Wednesday audience, delivered on Nov. 17, 2021.

On December 8, 1870, Blessed Pius IX proclaimed Saint Joseph Patron of the Universal Church. One hundred and fifty years on from that event, we are living a special year dedicated to Saint Joseph, and in the Apostolic Letter "*Patris corde*," I gathered together some reflections on him. Never like before, today, in this time marked by a global crisis made up of several components, can he offer us support, consolation and guidance.

The name Joseph is Hebrew for "may God increase, may God give growth." It is a wish, a blessing based on trust in providence and referring especially to fertility and to raising children.

Indeed, this very name reveals to us an essential aspect of Joseph of Nazareth's personality. He is a man full of faith, in providence: he believes in God's providence, he has faith in God's providence. His every action, as recounted in the Gospel, is dictated by the certainty that God "gives growth," that God "increases," that God "adds": that is, that God provides for the continuation of his plan of salvation. And in this, Joseph of Nazareth is very similar to Joseph of Egypt.

The Son of God did not choose Jerusalem as the place of his incarnation, but Bethlehem and Nazareth, two outlying villages, far from the clamor of the news and the powers of the time.

The first geographical reference to Joseph, Bethlehem and Nazareth, also assume an important role in our understanding of him.

In the Old Testament, the city of Bethlehem is called Beth Lechem, that is, "House of bread," or also Ephrathah, after the tribe that settled there. In Arabic, however, the name means "House of meat," probably because of the large number of flocks of sheep and goats in the area. Indeed, it is not by chance that when Jesus was born, the shepherds were the first to witness the event (cf. Lk 2:8-20). In the light of the story of Jesus, these allusions to bread and meat refer to the mystery of the Eucharist: Jesus is the living bread descended from heaven (cf. Jn 6:51). He will say of himself: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (Jn 6:54).

Bethlehem is mentioned several times in the Bible, as far back as the Book of Genesis. Bethlehem is also linked to the story of Ruth and Naomi, told in the short but wonderful Book of Ruth. Ruth bears a son named Obed, to whom in turn Jesse is born, the father of King David. And it was from the line of David that Joseph, the legal father of Jesus, descended. Then the prophet Micah foretold great things about Bethlehem: "You, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are so little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel" (Mi 5:1). The evangelist Matthew would take up this prophecy and connect it to the story of Jesus as its evident fulfilment.

Continued on page 2...

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, is the patronal feast of the United States, and as such it is a Holy Day in this country. Since the early 1700's, the Immaculate Conception is observed on December 8th. This feast honors Mary, the Mother of God, and celebrates the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary in the womb of her Mother Saint Anne.

At. St. Ambrose, Masses for the Holy Day will be offered on Wednesday, December 8th at 10:00 in the morning and at 7:00 in the evening. It's a good day to gather the family to pray for the guidance and protection of Mary for these United States.

Christmas with our Neighbors

Many people in our neighborhood are still in need of extra help at Christmas this year. However, due to Covid-19, we must once again make changes to our usual Adopt-a-Family program. We know many of you would love to help a family at Christmas if you could do it in a safe way. We would like to encourage those of you who have helped in years past to do so again but in a different way. What we could use are Meijer gift cards as a means to provide families with food and toys or clothes for their children. If you would like to donate one or more gift cards, please try to drop them off at the rectory no later than Friday, December 10. If you would like to adopt a family in a person-to-person way — by contacting the family and then shopping for them — please contact the rectory (no later than Wednesday, December 8) and we will put you in touch with a family of the appropriate size for your resources. When you adopt a family in this way, you provide food and gifts for the children. Thanks for your generosity.

St. Ambrose Conference of the
St. Vincent de Paul Society

St. Joseph teaches us to love the people the world rejects

Continued from page 1

In fact, the Son of God did not choose Jerusalem as the place of his incarnation, but Bethlehem and Nazareth, two outlying villages, far from the clamor of the news and the powers of the time. Yet Jerusalem was the city loved by the Lord (cf. Is 62:1-12), the "holy city" (Dn 3:28), chosen by God as his dwelling (cf. Zech 3:2; Ps 132:13). Here, in fact, dwelt the teachers of the Law, the scribes and Pharisees, the chief priests and the elders of the people (cf. Lk 2:46; Mt 15:1; Mk 3:22; Jn 1:19; Mt 26:3).

This is why the choice of Bethlehem and Nazareth tells us that the periphery and marginality are preferred by God. Jesus was not born in Jerusalem, with all the court … no, he was born in a periphery and spent his life, until the age of thirty, in that periphery, working as a carpenter like Joseph. For Jesus, the peripheries and marginality were favored. To fail to take this fact seriously is equivalent to not take seriously the Gospel and the work of God, who continues to manifest himself in the geographical and existential peripheries. The Lord always acts in secret in the peripheries, even in our souls, in the peripheries of the soul, of feelings, perhaps feelings of which we are ashamed; but the Lord is there to help us move forward. The Lord continues to manifest himself in the peripheries, both geographical and existential.

In particular, Jesus goes in search of sinners; he goes into their homes, speaks with them, calls them to conversion. And he is also rebuked for this: "But look, this Master," say the doctors of the law, "Look at this Master: he eats with sinners, he gets dirty." He goes in search also of those who have done no evil but have suffered it: the sick, the hungry, the poor, the least. Jesus always goes out to the peripheries of our heart, the peripheries of our soul, this is, that slightly obscure part that we do not show, perhaps out of shame.

In this respect, the society of that time is not very different from ours. Today, too, there is a center and a periphery. And the Church knows that she is called to proclaim the good news from the periphery. Joseph, who is a carpenter from Nazareth and who trusts in God's plan for his young fiancée and for himself, reminds the Church to keep her eyes on what the world deliberately ignores.

Today, Joseph teaches us this: "Do not look so much at the things that the world praises, look into the corners, look in the shadows, look at the peripheries, at what the world does not want." He reminds each of us to consider important what others discard. In this sense he is truly a master of the essential: he reminds us that what truly matters does not attract our attention, but requires patient discernment to be discovered and appreciated. To discover what matters. Let us ask him to intercede so that the whole Church may recover this insight, this ability to discern, this capacity to evaluate what is essential. Let us start again from Bethlehem, let us start again from Nazareth.

I would like to send a message to all the men and women who live in the most forgotten geographical peripheries of the world, or who experience situations of existential marginalization. May you find in Saint Joseph the witness and protector to look to. We can turn to him with this prayer, a "homemade" prayer, but one that comes from the heart:

Saint Joseph,you who have always trusted God,
and have made your choices guided by his providence
teach us not to count so much on our own plans but on his plan of love.
You who come from the peripheries, help us to convert our gaze
and to prefer what the world discards and marginalizes.
Comfort those who feel alone and support those who work silently
to defend life and human dignity. Amen.

Franciscus

All Things Considered

The great Francis of Assisi had an extraordinary awareness of how God interfaced with humanity in the person of Jesus – who was truly human and truly divine. This led him to set up the first Nativity Scene in an Italian town of Greccio in 1223. This was not your dining room crèche — it was a full-blooded, living Nativity Scene, complete with an actual ox and donkey and a life-sized manger.

St. Francis saw the living Nativity Scene as a way to "excite the inhabitants" to commemorate Christmas with "great devotion," according to St. Bonaventure, one of his early biographers. It appears to have had its desired effect, as Bonaventure describes it: "The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise. Francis stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy."

Today's **Night in Bethlehem** has much in common with what St. Francis did back 798 years ago. The outdoor setting for today's event was inspired by the loss of the use of our buildings after last summer's flood – but the rustic environs may just be what we need to see, that is the birth of Jesus happened in a setting that wasn't anything glamorous or even convenient.

I want to thank Pat Moceri and our St. Ambrose staff who took on this special project on behalf of the parish.

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American songwriter Stephen Sondheim died last week and I came across one of his lyrics from his musical, **Into the Woods**. It seems appropriate for us adults who are leading youngsters into the holiday season and into the rest of life.

"Careful the things you say,
Children will listen.
Careful the things you do,
Children will see.

And learn.
Children may not obey
But children will listen.
Children will look to you

For which way to turn,
To learn what to be.
Careful before you say,
'Listen to me.'
Children will listen."

✠✠✠

There are some legends of doubtful authenticity that the Blessed Mother's intervention may have saved the life of General George Washington on several occasions; it's also recorded that she encouraged him at the most trying time of the American Revolution, appearing to him at his headquarters in Valley Forge during the terrible winter of 1777-78. He later described her as a "woman of singular beauty," and related how she said, "Son of the Republic, look and learn!" In the vision of the future he was then given, Washington saw the colonies take root and thrive, only to be fiercely attacked and dreadfully scourged on three different occasions—the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and a future conflict some say will still take place.

Has the United States remained true to its founding ideals? The answer to this questions is obviously a negative one – and so you and I are called to pray, fast, and sacrifice for the moral and spiritual renewal of the United States, and for the mitigation and prevention of deeper conflicts – domestic and foreign – involving our country.

The patronal feast of the United States, Mary Immaculate, comes up on Wednesday of this week. It's a Holy Day of Obligation for U.S. Catholics. And I can't think of anything better for Catholics to do these days than to just come together and pray. No polemics, no grandstanding nor hidden agendas – just prayer. Gather the family for mass on Wednesday. We have two scheduled. One is at 10:00 in the morning and the other is at 7:00 in the evening. Accordingly, there will be no Thursday evening mass this week.

✠✠✠

The first meeting of our ad-hoc Infrastructure Committee will meet this Thursday evening at 5:30 in the church building. The group will come together to evaluate the assets, the wreckage, and the challenge of flooding that have become part of life in Grosse Pointe Park and Detroit's Jefferson-Chalmers community.

Dr. Rory Bolger has agreed to chair this group. In 1989, Rory came to Ambrose along with fellow parishioners from St. Martin on the Lake in flood-prone Jeff-Chalmers where he lived for 30 years and raised three kids with his late wife, Susan Keenan. I'm counting on his 36 years working at the Detroit City Planning Commission to help us navigate the complications of multiple jurisdictions, climate change, capital agendas, and good planning for the future. He will be joined by a very knowledgeable group of parishioners, including Robert Klacza, John Mogk, Dan Clark, Lorri White, Lauri Read, M. L. Elrick, and Dale Krajniak.

Writing to them, Rory said: *"Fr. Pelc has asked me to head up this committee, which will try to understand, on behalf of the parish and the broader community, just what our stormwater capabilities and limitations are, what went wrong on June 25-26, and what is needed to help avoid a repeat of this past summer's disaster.*

We will be meeting in the church building itself for the simple fact that Ambrose's other meeting spaces have been wiped out for now because of the flooding. This architectural, spiritual, and social jewel of the east side suffered extraordinarily. As a committee we will discuss, listen, and ask questions in hopes of preservation of the parish and the neighborhoods in its broad shadow."

I believe that what we do impacts more than just us, so the meeting is open to parishioners and the interested public – but rules of good order need to apply.

TRP

Name

_____

_____

Home Phone

_____

Work Phone

_____

Email Address

_____

- ❑ I would simply like to learn more about the Catholic Faith.
- ❑ I desire to prepare for my Baptism into Christianity.
- ❑ I've been Baptized as a Christian and now desire to join in Catholic Communion.
- ❑ I'm non-Catholic, but married to a Catholic, and now wish to join the Catholic Church.
- ❑ I'm Catholic and I would like to complete my initiation into the Catholic Church by celebrating Confirmation and/or Communion.
- ❑ I'm Baptized Catholic and would like to learn more about my faith and how to practice it.
- ❑ I want to propose someone for Catholic Church membership and offer to serve as their sponsor.
- ❑ I would be willing to help with an R.C.I.A. program.
- ❑ I have other needs, requests, and questions. Please contact me.

Return this to the Parish Rectory or place it in the Collection basket.

Faith Formation Station

"Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem.
May we let ourselves be drawn by the light of God made man." – Pope Francis

RITE OF INSCRIPTION: 12/4 - This past Saturday December 4, 2021, fifteen faith-filled and dedicated Confirmation candidates will be presented to the St. Ambrose parish community; they will be invited up to the sanctuary to declare their intent to seek the Sacrament of Confirmation with the parish community as witnesses. In return, the community agrees to support and pray for them, and everyone involved in their journey of faith. The candidates will receive a special blessing and an inscribed Bible from Fr. Tim. Following the liturgy, the students and their sponsors will stay in church for a mini retreat focusing on discipleship and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This Sunday we celebrate the 2nd Sunday of Advent. We light the second candle on our advent wreaths and pray for peace. We also celebrate the feast days listed below. Religious Education families are encouraged to check out the many supplemental videos, activities, and other resources posted on our St. Ambrose Rel. Ed. Flipgrid page. Don't forget to ask your child/ren to share with you all the wonderful things they are learning in class: all the unique ways our program is celebrating this holy season.

FEAST of ST. NICHOLAS: 12/6 - St. Nicholas Day is celebrated each year on December 6th. Tradition holds that kids who leave their shoes out on the hearth or by the door before they go to sleep on December 5th will wake up with their shoes filled with candy or small treats, which means St. Nicholas has been there!

Nicholas (died about 350) came from a wealthy family, with parents who always were generous to the poor. When they died, Nicholas gave their money away to help people in need. He became a priest and was soon made a bishop. He was known for caring for children in trouble, healing the sick, feeding the hungry and saving sailors from storms. He often performed secret acts of kindness, such as leaving coins in the shoes of those who left them out for him. After he died, stories of his goodness spread to many countries. He became known as Nicholas the Wonderworker.

FEAST OF ST. AMBROSE: 12/7 - Saint Ambrose is the patron saint of beekeepers. His patronage of bees and beekeepers originates in the legend that when he was an infant, a swarm of bees settled on his face while he lay in his cradle. The swarm left him unharmed with a drop of honey on his face.

FEAST of IMMACULATE CONCEPTION: 12/8 - The feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary celebrated on December 8th is a holy day of obligation. There are many misconceptions about this feast day. It is not, as many Catholics believe, the virginal conception of Jesus Christ in Mary. Nor is it the virginal birth of Jesus by Mary. The Immaculate Conception means Mary was always free of original sin. The word immaculate literally means pure, or without blemish. It's important to note that Mary was not "immaculate" by any merit of her own, but by the saving ("sanctifying") grace of Jesus Christ, her savior. That's the same grace that washed us free of the stain of original sin at our baptism. But in the case of Mary, the saving grace of Jesus Christ preserved her from being stained by original sin in the first place. She was conceived with the same original innocence, holiness, and justice that Adam and Eve possessed before they broke away from God. She was, as the angel Gabriel declared, "full of grace."

PROGRAM REMINDERS:

Night in Bethlehem: This Sunday, December 5th, during our regulat class time, all our religious education students will be participating in the Night in Bethlehem celebration in the parish parking lot. Students are to be dropped off and picked up from their classrooms as usual. Be sure to be on time and dress warm! We look forward to the adventures that await us all in Bethlehem.

Kelly Woolums

When Your Donation Is Worth 7% More

As we come upon the last days of the calendar year, it means we are also coming up to the end of a fiscal tax period. **If you intend to make an end-of-the-year gift to the parish, you'll need to date it before January 1st and get it into our office in an envelope marked "Christmas Collection." Gifts made in this manner are free from the usual Archdiocesan taxation of 7%.**

When it comes to calculating your charitable deductions for the Internal Revenue Service this coming April, the cutoff date for 2021 deductions is December 31st. So, it's now time to review your tax strategy.

A significant portion of our parish operating revenue comes from end-of-the-year contributions which can be in the form of cash, securities, stock, real estate and other negotiables. Consult your tax preparer who can guide you as to the best way of making a donation to St. Ambrose. Or, our own parish accountant can also be of assistance if you call the rectory.

Pregnancy Aid by Mail

For 28 Advent seasons now, we have erected a Pregnancy Aid Giving Tree in our church building as a demonstrative way of supporting our pro-life convictions. This Giving Tree outreach program benefits the local Pregnancy Aid Society at their new location at 15847 E. 8 Mile Rd. in Eastpointe, where women with unplanned pregnancies can find positive alternatives to abortion.

Our "Tree" was lost in the flood, and given the "iffy" nature of church attendance and shopping over the next few weeks, it makes sense to extend the collection time for Pregnancy Aid this year − take a pass on the gift tags − and accept mailed packages, too.

Usually we would ask that gifts arrive here during the actual Christmas masses. However, because of current circumstances, gifts to Pregnancy Aid will be welcomed now through the end of December. Although cumbersome when it comes to storage, it is better for the good of the whole to get this done earlier rather than later. If you want to make an online purchase from a vendor, please have it sent directly to the parish office with a marking "**Pregnancy Aid"** somewhere on the label.

The Pregnancy Aid Society has a wish list − things that are practical, educational and essential. All these items are part of an inventory from which Pregnancy Aid draws all year long. Your gifts would best be here for transport by December 28th.

Pray Every Day

Could you be searching for a fresh new way to pray every day of the year? Daily Prayer 2022 is your guide to prayer that includes scripture, psalmody, a brief reflection, general intercessions, and a closing prayer. It is ideal for personal and family reflection upon the word of God. This also makes an excellent gift for a senior, newlyweds or for a student away at college.

These prayerbooks are $10 each — which is a modest investment in someone's spiritual formation. To pick up a copy of this year's Daily Prayer 2022, call the rectory office at 822-2814.

Online Gifts Will Be Matched

Are you thinking about signing up for recurring electronic giving at St. Ambrose? If you are, now is the time – your new gift (or if you currently donate through Givelify or SimplySaid/CFCU and move your recurring gift to ParishSoft) will earn matching donations from ParishSoft.

For every new recurring gift added between now and December 31, 2021, ParishSoft will match each gift, up to $50, with a maximum match of $1,000 per organization. To be eligible for the matching gift, donors must set up more than one installment and the first recurring gift must be transacted by December 31, 2021.

In the past month, 14 St. Ambrose parishioners have either started recurring giving or moved their existing recurring giving to ParishSoft, resulting in a total of $505.00 in donations toward the matching goal of $1,000.

The Beehive

is the parish weekly bulletin of the
St. Ambrose Catholic Community
Detroit/Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

Pastor: Rev. Timothy R. Pelc
Pastoral Minister: Charles Dropiewski
Religious Education: Kelly Anne Woolums
Minister of Music: Dr. Norah Duncan IV
Office Manager: Peggy O'Connor
Secretary: Mary Urbanski

Sacramental Celebrations

Masses: On the Lord's Day –
Saturday Vigil - 4:00 p.m.
Sunday - 8:30 & 11:15 a.m.
Baptism: Arrangements for both adults and infants to be made by contacting the rectory.
Penance: As announced and by appointment.
Marriage: Couples should contact the rectory office a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed date to make arrangements.
Funeral: Normally celebrated within one week after the deceased's passing.

Directory

Parish Office: 15020 Hampton
Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan 48230
Tel: (313) 822-2814 **Fax:** (313) 822-9838
Email address: stambrose@comcast.net
Religious Education: (313) 332-5633
Pastoral Ministry: (313) 332-5631
Ark Scheduling: (313) 822-2814
Parish Website: stambrosechurch.net

Liturgy Schedule

Monday, December 6
St. Nicholas, bishop
Tuesday, December 7
St. Ambrose, bishop & doctor
8:30 a.m. – Mass – Living and Deceased Parishioner of St. Ambrose
Wednesday, December 8
Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary
10:00 – Mass – Peace in our time
7:00 p.m. – Mass - Peace in our time
Thursday, December 9
St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin
No evening mass
Friday, December 10
Our Lady of Loreto
12:00 – William & Florence Ciamitaro
Saturday, December 11
St. Damasus I, pope
4:00 p.m. – Mass – For All People
Sunday, December 12
Third Sunday in Advent
8:30 – Mass – For All People
11:15 – Mass – For All People

Scriptures for the 2nd Week in Advent

December 6
Is 35: 1-10
Ps 85: 9ab, 10-14
Lk 5: 17-26
December 7
Is 40: 1-11
Ps 96: 1-3, 10ac, 11-13
Mt 18: 12-14
December 8
Gn 3: 9-15, 20
Ps 98: 1-4
Eph 1: 3-6, 11-12
Lk 1: 26-38
December 9
Is 41: 13-20
Ps 145: 1, 9-13b
Mt 11: 11-15
December 10
Is 48: 17-19
Ps 1: 1-4, 6
Mt 11: 16-19
December 11
Sir 48: 1-4, 9-11
Ps 80: 2ac, 3b, 15-16, 18-19
Mt 9: 35-10: 1, 5a, 6-8
December 12
Zep 3: 145-18a
(Ps) Is 12: 2-6
Phil 4: 4-7

The Third Sunday in Advent
December 11th-12th

Saturday Mass at 4:00 p.m. *(Broadcast online on Sunday starting at 8:00 a.m.)*
Sunday Masses are celebrated at 8:30 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.

There is no limit on seating capacity – but distancing is still required.
. Contact tracing and temperature taking are no longer required. Wearing face masks at St. Ambrose is asked of the vaccinated and unvaccinated.

To participate electronically, go to: facebook.com/stambroseparish where the Saturday liturgy will be available for viewing starting at 8 a.m. on Sunday.

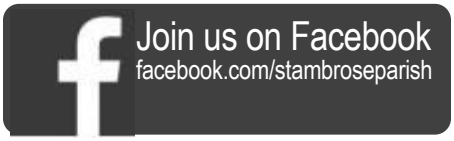
For specifics on the law of Sunday Obligation go to:
aod.org/comehometohope-dispensation

Your Envelope Speaks ... the Inside Story

To operate, each week our parish requires a *minimum* of..... $10,100.00

On Sunday, November 28, 2021

in envelopes we received $2,438.00
in the loose collection $1,345.00
in electronic donations $3,176.86
for a total of $6,959.86
Under budget for the week.....$3,140.14
Number of envelopes mailed 627
Number of envelopes used 40



Our Sick

Please pray for those who are seriously ill or who are hospitalized: Pat Blake, Karen Culver, Donald Miriani, Bonnie McKenna, Jeanne Noto, David Schumacker, Matthew Elias, George Bucec, Emilie Kasper, Darby O'Toole, Anna Noto Billings, Eileen O'Brien, Liz Linne, Donna Barnes, Alexandra Cullen, Charmaine Kaptur, Frank Gregory, Alex Billiu, Jerry Scopel, Jackie Walkowski, Kristen Kingzett, Maria Simcina, Brian Tague, Sharif Hannan, Shirley Whelan, Anne Purvis, Jerry Gutowski, Kevin O'Connor, Albina Checki, Judy Sivanov, Matthew Brown, Ernie Ament, Charlie Merz, and those suffering and hospitalized worldwide with COVID-19.

Our Dead

A funeral liturgy was celebrated on December 4th by Fr. Timothy Pelc for long-time parishioner, **Dr. Giovanni Morreale**.

Dr. Morreale was born in Sicily and came to the United States at the age of 37. He served in the Italian Army during World War II. He also enjoyed traveling and met his wife, Lisa during a trip on board an ocean liner.

Dr. Morreale enjoyed many hobbies which included sailing on his boat named Vital Signs, opera and cooking his famous minestrone.

Giovanni was predeceased by his parents, and siblings Vincenzo, Angelo, Angela. He is survived by his loving wife, Lisa, children Victoria (David), John (Mary) and Stephanie (Brent). Also surviving are his sisters Vincenza and Lila. He will be missed by his 7 grandchildren and the rest of his family and friends. Please remember Giovanni in your prayers.

Opłatek

Before sitting down to Christmas Eve dinner, many families with roots in Poland and other Eastern European countries will take part in the opłatek tradition. The sharing of this unleavened bread with another person is a time to tell each other, 'I love you, I care about you.' These wafers are sold through our parish, at our office or after mass in church. White wafers are for the human members of the family; pets get the tinted ones.

Saint Ambrose shaped relations between church and state

The Feast Day of St. Ambrose is this Tuesday. As the relationship between Church and state in our nation grows more hostile, St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa took a look back at our namesake's profound influence on Church-state relations in the late fourth century. This is a summary of a lecture given by Msgr. Francesco Braschi of the Accademia Ambrosiana in Milan.

Saint Ambrose, a rising political leader in Milan, Italy, walked away from power and prestige to become a bishop whose leadership meshed the best of Roman tradition with the demands of the Gospel message. Ambrose was ordained a bishop in 374, a period of relative peace from a secular point of view, but one of division between two factions of Christians. It was an era when the emperor and the Church were seeking to define their mutual relations. "The words and actions of the bishop of Milan were of 'worldwide' interest, and could make him either a Court bishop … or the most challenging Church's spokesperson to the 'Christian' Emperor," Msgr. Braschi observed.

Prior to his ordination, Ambrose was a young governor of Milan and a catechumen who "felt it was his personal duty to go to the church where the various factions were heavily discussing, each trying to impose its own leader." His leadership skills and compassion inspired Catholics to call for him to serve as their bishop. Ambrose resisted their pleas. He and other believers recognized the serious commitment required of the baptized and thus delayed baptism until well into adulthood. For Christians, baptism "required an actual commitment to serve God's will through one's own life and work," Msgr. Braschi said. Ultimately, "the consent of the emperor and the persistent cries of the people for (Ambrose) to be made bishop appeared to him to be a clear sign of the divine will, which he did not wish to oppose."

As bishop, Ambrose shaped a cultural vision for Christian faith. "The time when (Ambrose) lived was a transitional one. The ancient pagan and Roman imagery was more and more useless in order to answer questions arising from everyday life: the meaning of life, death, of begetting children, of working … Ambrose was able to build up — using Bible stories and examples, but also Roman history and traditional custom — a new vision of the world that was able to preserve all that was good in Roman tradition (sense of loyalty, honor, love for right, law and justice …) and in the same time to re-shape it according to the Gospel." Through his preaching, teaching and personal example, Ambrose proved it is possible to live fully in the world, appreciating his cultural heritage, while not being afraid to take new, courageous and innovative positions.

The Bishop of Milan defended the Church's (and believers') "freedom in front of political power …. He could not think of a political power that pretends to overcome and subdue man, taking for itself the place of God." Nonetheless, "he never forgot his duty as a bishop, to love even the emperors and to care for their souls and for their salvation. This was an enormous change of perspective, caused by Ambrose's genuine Christian spirituality: even the man who is in charge of a high office, like the emperor, deserves to be regarded as a man, needing someone to care about him. This always moves me, Braschi said, when he thinks of people — even in the Church — that are only able to despise, to lodge accusations, but often forget to look at their opponents as human beings."

One important example of Ambrose's influence on today's Church can be seen in his vision of social justice, Msgr. Braschi said. "He did make decisions that were unexpected, for instance when he ordered that golden sacred vases and even chalices be fused and made into gold bars in order to pay for the liberation of hostages kidnapped by the Barbarians. This clearly stated that people are above things, even above the Church's furniture and worship accessories."

Ambrose's leadership compares with that of Pope Francis, Braschi said: "The main aspect that makes me think of Ambrose, when I look at Pope Francis, is the perfect fusion of tenderness, love, openness and good attitude toward all people with clear-mindedness and firmness about Christian doctrine. And it is clear that both for Ambrose and Francis, Christian doctrine is not just a series of ideas, principles and obligations, but is the concrete and living person of Christ. Both Francis and Ambrose love Christ, not as an idea, but as a person that is present to them."

*From **The Catholic Messenger**, Davenport, Iowa*

Allemon's Landscape Center
Propane · Kerosene · Firewood · Garden Statuary
Screened Topsoil · Peat · Shrubs · Trees
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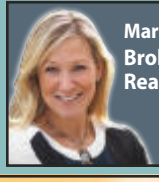
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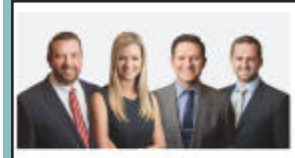
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