God reveals his mysteries, not to the wise and learned, but to those who are childlike, that is, to people who are humble and fear the Lord, Pope Francis said in a morning homily on Nov. 29.

"Fear of the Lord isn't fright. No. It is living the command God gave our father Abraham, 'Walk in my presence and be blameless.' Humble. This is humility. The fear of the Lord is humility," the pope said.

During morning Mass in the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where he lives, the pope reflected on the day's readings. When the prophet Isaiah talks about a small shoot sprouting from the stump of Jesse, the pope said, he is illustrating God’s way of revealing himself through small, simple things. The Lord will come not as the leader of a great army to liberate his people, the pope said, but as a tiny bud.

Jesus, too, in that day's Gospel reading from St. Luke, says God keeps things hidden "from the wise and learned," but reveals them to "the childlike."

With Advent, the pope said, people can reflect on how Christ's birth was about small things: a tiny stable, a small manger, a child born to a simple mother and father — people with "big hearts, but childlike in their attitude."

That attitude helps people understand what humility and fear of the Lord are, he said. This is how the faithful live, knowing the Lord is watching over them and giving them the strength to go on in their daily lives.

The pope warned against taking on a "theatrical" humility, marked by boasting, "I am humble, but proud of it!"

True humility, he said, means walking simply with the Lord, serving others and never speaking ill of them.

Advent is also a time to reflect on the many ways people can encounter Christ, the pope said in his homily Nov. 28 — the day after the beginning of Advent and the start of the new liturgical year. Advent, in fact, is "a time to walk and go meet the Lord, that is, a time to not stand still," he said.

People can encounter the Lord in three ways, he said: being vigilant in prayer, joyful in praise and diligent in charity.

Charity is more than just making a donation, the pope said. It is also "tolerating people who bother me, putting up with the kids at home when they're making too much noise or with your husband or wife when there are problems or your mother-in-law, I don't know, just tolerate it, put up with it."

The important thing is, he said, is to never stand still, keep moving toward the Lord "and there will be a surprise, because he is the Lord of surprises."

The great surprise is that the whole time people have been wandering, searching, moving, God was already there, determinedly seeking them out first, he said.

"We take one step and he takes 10. Always. The abundance of his grace, his love, his tenderness that never tires of looking for us."

All God asks, he said, is that people sincerely desire to encounter him and take at least one small step in good faith; God then does the rest.

In fact, that personal encounter is essential to the Christian faith, not knowing everything about dogma, he said.

"The doctors of the law knew everything, everything about the dogma at the time, all about the morality of that time, everything. (But) they didn't have faith because their hearts were far from God," he said.

Having the strength to take a step toward God, "this is the grace we ask for today."

_CNS • Catholic News Service_
UPCOMING EVENTS

12/18  Nativity Play and Carol Sing
Immaculate Heart of Mary, Williston
1 to 3 pm
The Nativity play will be told with scripture and song. There will be a carol sing after the play. This will be followed by cookies, cocoa and cider.  FOR MORE INFO: (802) 318-2422

12/19  Dr. Tortolano’s Schola Christmas Performance
Nativity-St. Louis Parish, Swanton
7:30 pm
Dr. William Tortolano, Saint Michael’s College organist emeritus and fine arts/music professor emeritus will conduct the VT Gregorian Chant Schola (a men’s vocal group). Founded 15 years ago by Tortolano, the Schola has given more than 100 concerts and sacred services in New England, Quebec and on public television. A free will offering will be taken up at the performance.  FOR MORE INFO: (802) 868-4262

12/25  Christmas Day!
The liturgical season of Christmas begins with the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve and concludes on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, this year, on Jan. 10. During this season, we celebrate the birth of Christ into our world and into our hearts, and reflect on the gift of salvation that is born with him. FOR MORE ON THE SEASON OF CHRISTMAS: goo.gl/vQCeks

01/01  World Day of Peace
The theme for Pope Francis’ annual World Day of Peace message for 2017 is: “Non-Violence: a Style of Politics for Peace.” In his 2017 Message for the World Day of Peace, Pope Francis urges us to practice active nonviolence and work to prevent conflict by addressing its causes, building relationships, and facilitating healing and restoration. FOR MORE INFO: goo.gl/jzJVmx

01/02  Catholicism Series
St. Jude, Hinesburg • 7 pm
St. Jude the Apostle Church is hosting a movie series about Catholicism. The series began Nov. 15 and ran the 22, 29, Dec. 6 the remaining dates are Jan. 3, 10, 17, 24, and concludes on Feb. 3. All are welcome.  FOR MORE INFO: (802) 482-2290

01/09  Steubenville East Sign-Up Deadline
Join YOUTH from the Diocese of Burlington as they travel to the 2017 ELEVATE Steubenville East Conference. Sign-up for this weekend filled with great presentations, music and spiritual enrichment with teens from around the NorthEast. Over 3,000 were in attendance during last year’s conference, 130

01/08-14  National Migration Week
Nativity Play and Carol Sing
Immaculate Heart of Mary, Williston
1 to 3 pm
The Nativity play will be told with scripture and song. There will be a carol sing after the play. This will be followed by cookies, cocoa and cider.  FOR MORE INFO: goo.gl/81mQ4V or (802) 658-6110 x1130

01/08-14  National Migration Week
The theme for the 2017 National Migration Week is “Creating a Culture of Encounter.”
FOR MORE INFO: goo.gl/WP0HU0

02/22  Domestic Violence Workshop
Holy Family Parish Center, Essex Junction
10 am - 2 pm
The Diocese of Burlington is hosting a free workshop titled, “Responding to Domestic Violence in Our Communities”. The event is directed to priests, parish secretaries, parish staff, directors of religious education, youth ministers, lay people and the wider counseling and medical community. Lunch will be included.  FOR MORE INFO: (802) 658-6110 x1453

THE DIOCESE OF BURLINGTON CAREERS:
• Immigration Specialist and Executive Assistant for the Chancery, Vocations & Finance Departments
• Development Donor Systems Professional
FOR MORE INFO: vermontcatholic.org/careers

BISHOP’S FUND
2016 REPORT*

WE’RE ALMOST THERE
If we receive 1,000 gifts of $100 by the end of the year, we’ll reach our Bishop’s Fund goal.
We have a matching gift of $20,000 that will apply to any new gifts received during the month of December. Supporters who give $24 or more will automatically receive the new Vermont Catholic quarterly magazine. Please consider helping us to reach the finish line.

The Bishop’s Fund supports many vital programs and services including Vermont Catholic magazine, Vermont Catholic Charities’ Emergency Aid Fund, youth ministry, catechesis, Catholic schools and Catholic cemeteries.
To make a gift, visit: BISHOPSFUND.ORG

MARCH FOR LIFE | 2017
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THURSDAY, JANUARY 26
6:45PM DEPART FROM SOUTH BURLINGTON
55 JOY DRIVE. ADDITIONAL PICKUPS: SERENITY AND FAIRHAVEN

MARCH FOR LIFE
MORNING RALLY FOR LIFE
1PM MARCH FOR LIFE
6:00PM DEPART FOR VERMONT
DROP-OFF DEPART AT APPROX 8AM. SERENITY, FAIRHAVEN AND SOUTH BURLINGTON

COST: $75 PER PERSON. DOES NOT INCLUDE MEALS
REGISTER ONLINE: goo.gl/Abdwoy (AFTER NOVEMBER 1)
A YOUTH PROGRAMME WILL BE OFFERED SEPARATELY VISITING 3 NATIONAL SHRINES IN THE AREA. FOR MORE INFO: goo.gl/CA520

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