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Third annual Lenten Pilgrimage takes participants to five historic Covington churches as part of a spiritual journey

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

For the past two years, faithful of the Diocese of Covington have gathered to walk a Lenten Pilgrimage visiting five churches in downtown Covington. The route, which totals 4.3 miles, connects the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, St. Benedict Church, St. Augustine Church, St. John Church and Mother of God Church. These five churches, storied in their art and architecture, provide respite during the pilgrimage for quiet meditation and prayer.

The goal of the pilgrimage, which takes place April 12 from 9 a.m.–2 p.m., is to provide pilgrims the opportunity for prayer and adoration as Easter draws near.

Margie Springelmeyer, one of the organizers for the pilgrimage, said, “I think it’s a beautiful opportunity to usher in Easter week. If you look back at our Jewish ancestors this is what they did, they made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.”

“It’s a spiritual journey, the whole thing is a spiritual journey and the cherry on top is the beauty of the churches and the beauty of the art and architecture of the churches,” said Mrs. Springelmeyer.

The pilgrimage has a set route, but pilgrims are invited to walk the route in the order that best suites them. There will be a volunteer stationed at each of the five churches on the route handing out a booklet with prayers and a map, allowing the pilgrims the flexibility of starting at a church of their choosing.

Jim Hess, director of the Office of Stewardship and Mission for the Diocese of Covington, said, “You can start anywhere on the route so it is really flexible, all of the churches will be open. We are hoping they will all have Eucharistic Adoration ongoing and confession ongoing during that time, but there will be more signs and information coming out as it gets closer.”

The pilgrimage was inspired by Mrs. Springelmeyer’s time in prayer where it seemed that God called her to explore the beauty of these five Covington churches. Answering Gods call, Mrs. Springelmeyer and five of her friends parked at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption and began to walk the 4.3 miles.

“We walked to St. Bens, and it was closed because it was a Saturday morning. We sat down and prayed a decade of the rosary

and as soon as we did that the bells started ringing at St. Bens. So, then we walked over to St. Augustines and the same thing, it was locked but we sat down, and we prayed another decade and the bells rang again. We walked up to St. Johns, same thing, sat down, it was locked, the bells rang. We were very excited about this,” said Mrs. Springelmeyer.

Start and end your individual journey on foot or by car at any of the five historic churches on the 4.3 mile pilgrimage route



Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption



St. Benedict Catholic Church



St. Augustine Catholic Church



St. John Catholic Church



Mother of God Catholic Church

When they arrived at the final church, Mother of God, the door was open.

Mrs. Springelmeyer said, “You walked into this beautiful church after making that trek that was a little bit up hill, and you were able to sit down and rest and just be rejuvenated by the beauty of the Church inside. It was just wonderful; it was like the Lord was saying every stop people make they’re going to be able to experience that rejuvenation.”

It is estimated that over 400 pilgrims have walked the route over the last two years. Everyone in the Diocese of Covington is welcome to walk between the historic, storied churches.

This year, as it is a Jubilee Year, walking the route and participating in the pilgrimage puts participants one step closer to receiving a plenary indulgence. Bishop John Iffert has said that a plenary indulgence “restores, so that it removes us from the temporal punishments that is also due to us because of our sin. It actually fixes us in a way, it restores us to health.”

“It really is a flexible beautiful opportunity to get to know five historic churches in Covington and to do something special this year for Lent and especially during the Jubilee year,” said Mr. Hess.

The scouts of the Diocese gather to be recognized with badges and awards

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent
As part of a long-standing Diocesan tradition, the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, was the site of the annual Scout Mass. A celebration of scouting across the parishes in the Diocese of Covington, which has a dedicated committee to scouting.

“We have a committee on scouting here in the Diocese that helps to guide and direct the scouting here in the Diocese of Covington and to build that relationship between our churches and parishes and the scout organization,” said Bishop Iffert in his homily.

“The relationship between scouting and the Church have been so close because our mis-

(Continued on page 10)



Bishop John Iffert poses with the scouts of the Diocese for a photo.

First step to being a witness of Christ and loving others is to love yourself, says Bishop Iffert at Pro-Life Essay contest

Laura Keener
Editor

The top 20 finalists of the 2025 Pro-Life Essay Contest gathered, March 13, with Bishop John Iffert and Faye Roch, director, Pro-Life Office, for an evening of celebration and to award the top three finishers. The essay contest is organized and hosted each year by the diocesan Pro-Life Office and is sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. This year, Rick and Celesta Arnold, Culture of Life Couple, from the Knights of Columbus Kentucky State Council and Jan Buchner, K of C, Northern Kentucky Council, were in attendance.

Nearly 250 eighth graders from Catholic schools in the Diocese of Covington submitted an essay for this year’s contest. The theme, taken from the Jubilee Year of Hope, asked students to “describe how you, a young person, can be a witness to others and convert hearts showing that all life is good and worthy of our care and protection.”

“Your being here tonight, you stand above the crowd,” said Mrs. Roch to the 20 finalists. “Your essays were chosen in the top eight percent of the essays received. That’s pretty incredible. We congratulate you on your achievement. You give us inspiration and hope that the tide is turning and that it will be your generation that can make a difference in promoting the culture of life.”

This year’s top finishers are: Kyndall Ruebusch, St. Anthony School, Taylor Mill, first place; Piper Hagley, Holy Cross Elementary School, Latonia, second place; and Ryan Bennett, Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills, third place. Each of the top finishers receives a scholarship from the Knights of Columbus to attend a local Catholic high school. Ms. Ruebusch’s winning essay is published on page 5.

Drawing from the theme, Bishop Iffert emphasized the importance of being a witness for Christ.

“We need the witness of committed disciples of Jesus. We need to live that faith out, and that witness is what is so important,” said Bishop Iffert. “So that theme that you had today, ‘how do I witness to the value of life in my life?’ that’s an extraordinary theme, and I hope it’s a question you ask yourself every day. I hope that you’re growing in that understanding every day of your life, because that means you’re growing towards Christ.”

He also encouraged the students to not only see others as a gift from God, but themselves too.

“How do we witness to the value of life? We accept ourselves as God gives us — our bodies, our minds, our spirit, our limits — and we love ourselves. Having loved ourselves, we can truly love others,” he said. “We’re all the

same, going through life having received ourselves as gift and trying our best to be truly grateful for the gift we received. Give that witness. Love yourself. Value yourself the way you are. And when you make friends with that process, then you will be able to love everyone else. Thank

you for your witness tonight. And please, please, please, know how good, powerfully wonderful you are, how much are loved in this room and beyond. Love yourself truly, not like ‘I’m so great,’ but ‘I am sheer gift from God to the world.’”



(top left) As one of the top 20 finishers in the 2025 Pro-Life Essay Contest, David Grosser, St. Mary School, Alexandria, and (top right) Molly Bakis, St. Pius X School, Edgewood, accepts their award certificates from Bishop John Iffert.

(above left) Paul Meisenhelder, Pro-Life Committee member, reads excerpts from the top finishing essays.

(above right) Bishop John Iffert congratulates the top three authors for their winning essays (from left) Ryan Bennett, Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills, third place; Piper Hagley, Holy Cross Elementary School, Latonia, second place and Kyndall Ruebusch, St. Anthony School, Taylor Mill, first place.



Bishop John Iffert and the top 20 finishers in the 2025 Pro-Life Essay Contest.

Step two of the Walk with One journey is to intercede in communion with the Holy Spirit

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

This year, during the holy season of Lent, the *Messenger* has encouraged its readers to take part in the Walk with One evangelization effort. This initiative from the National Eucharistic Congress is a way for people to participate in the call to evangelize, to be fishers of men. In the March 7 and 14 editions of the *Messenger*, readers were encouraged to participate in the first of four steps as they began their Walk with One journey. That step, identifying someone in a spirit of humility, involves prayer and close connection with the Holy Spirit. The second step, interceding in communion with the Holy Spirit, involves much of the same.

The person that was identified through prayer and dis-

cernment in step one will become the person that is interceded for in step two. There are a few ways to intercede for someone communion with the Holy Spirit: writing down the person's name on a sticky note and keeping it in a wallet to remember during prayer; asking God to open the heart of the person identified in step one so that they are receptive to him and/or offering a Mass or Holy Hour for that person.

"The other piece for this intercede step ... is that it's a really important step to ensure that we don't get into the mindset that this other persons conversion is based on our work, our own effort," said Kris Frank, vice director of growth and marketing for the National Eucharistic Congress.

Mr. Frank continued saying, "God is the one who changes hearts and so as we go before the Blessed Sacrament and intercede for that person, not only is God



To hear from Father Michael Hennigen, vocations promoter for the Diocese of Covington, and Sister Leslie Keener, vocation promoter for the Congregation of Divine Providence, about how intercede in communion with the Holy Spirit, scan the QR code.



filling that person with grace and hopefully beginning the work in the depths of their soul but ... it reminds me that I am not the savior of this person, and this person needs Jesus."

High school students invited to get outside and 'live their faith' this Holy Week with the Holy Week Mission of Mercy

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

This year, the Diocese of Covington's youth ministry office will be partnering with the Regnum Christi movement to bring a Holy Week Mission of Mercy to high school students across the diocese.

"It's a culmination of the Holy Spirit, the bishop's theme of mercy and the Eucharistic Revival all coming together," said Angie Poat, diocesan youth minister. "This event brings all of those pieces together during the holiest of holiest weeks."

With the combined efforts of the office with Father Michael Hennigen, who will serve as chaplain for the event, the event planners for the SUMMIT retreats, as well as members of the Regnum Christi movement, the Mission of Mercy spans multiple days of prayer and service across Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday — and youth are invited to partake in the Diocese of Covington's first hosting of this mission.

Evangelization is a big part of the Holy Week Mission of Mercy, said Mrs. Poat, "which will entail students inviting people in neighborhoods to join them for Mass on Holy Thursday." And, in conjunction with the Franciscan Daughters of Mary, they'll be handing out candles which community members are invited to bring with them to the Holy Thursday Mass at St. Benedict Church, Covington — which participants will also be attending.

On Good Friday, students will be participating in what Mrs. Poat calls a "cross walk," where they'll be walking from Holy Cross District High School to the Covington Cathedral — collecting prayer intentions along the way that will be displayed on a carried cross. Additionally, "the cross walk is open to families and anybody who wants to participate," said Mrs. Poat.

Other activities of the Mission of Mercy include attending Good Friday service, and hosting an Easter celebration for the children of the community of St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill.

Registration for the event is open until April 10, with more information available online at <https://covidio.org/youth/>. Angie Poat and the diocesan youth office invite students to come "live their faith."

"It's outside the box, outside of the building, outside of a book," she said. "Come live your faith."



(right) A girl wears a sweatshirt with the Holy Week Mission of Mercy logo in this promotional photo.

Reelin It In Season II

Lent is fish fry season for many parishes in the Diocese of Covington. Again this year, the *Messenger's* Bella Bailey and Maura Baker will highlight a parish fish fry each week. New this year, the highlight will feature two short videos instead of one longer video. Check it out and subscribe at www.youtube.com/@TheDioceseofCovington.



Diocesan Public School Baccalaureate Mass



High school seniors attending public schools or homeschools, and their families, are invited to attend a Baccalaureate Mass with Bishop John Iffert, April 23, 5:30 p.m., at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

RSVP at covidio.org/youth (or by utilizing the QR code) by April 9.



Terese Meeks to retire after 35 years of service

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

After 35 years of dedicated service to the Holy Cross District High School, Covington, community, Terese Meeks, religion teacher, campus minister and religion department chair, is retiring.

The beginning of Mrs. Meeks formative tenure was in 1990 after Bill Goller, former principal of Holy Cross, hired both Mrs. Meeks and Michael Koch, former religion teacher.

“He was crazy enough to think that we both had something to offer,” said Mr. Koch, “we worked together for 17 years and then she continued for another 18 years after I left.”

Mrs. Meeks soon became more to the Holy Cross community than a religion teacher and counselor, she became a cornerstone.

“Holy Cross has such a rich tradition that goes back decades and decades, yet Terese kind of created this additional tradition, she really brought out the spiritual side of the school and community ... She has such a unique way

of touching human beings in a meaningful way and dare I say it, borderline saved the lives of a lot of kids through the years,” said Mr. Koch.

Once, in a Mass organized by the faculty of Holy Cross, Mr. Koch recalls that Mrs. Meeks picked a song for the faculty to sing to the students. “I believe it was called ‘Christ has no body now but yours.’ The words of that song, I think, truly capture who she was as a coworker, as a friend, as a teacher, a counselor, campus minister and all of those roles that she played. She, I think, holds a special place in a lot of people’s hearts, just made a tremendous impact on the community.”

He continued saying, “she was really a driving force behind supporting kids spiritually and emotionally through counseling, through spiritual direction. When she was doing that ... the kids flourished having her as a guidepost, spiritually and emotionally.”

The impact Mrs. Meeks had on the community is immeasurable, what made it special, Mr. Koch said, was how she showed the love of Christ. “Just being loving ... she was absolutely the hands, the feet, the face of Christ to people she encountered. Whether it was adults on the retreats, students she worked with or the parents of students.”

In a column written for the August 13, 2004, edition of the *Messenger* Mrs. Meeks said, “every single person, in every single moment can make a difference in the lives of others. So, the challenge of the upcoming year begins to focus — what I can and must do each and every day to carry the message of Christ’s love into the world?”

That is the legacy Mrs. Meeks leaves behind, not only in Room 4, but in the hearts and lives of all those she encountered at Holy Cross District High School.



(above left) Terese Meeks hugs long time friend Michael Koch at a surprise retirement party. (above right) Former faculty, staff and students clap joyfully as the room fills with family and friends of Terese Meeks.



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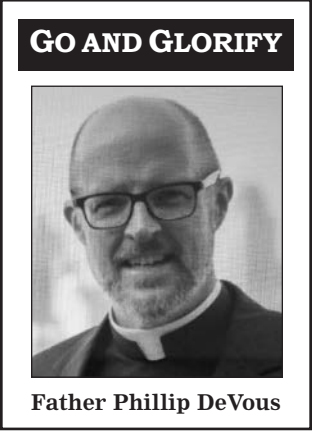
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Likeness to God and the confession of our lowliness

The readings for the Third Sunday of Lent — Cycle C — are: Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15, 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12 and Luke 13:1-9.

“O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer, and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness...”

If we fail to grasp that the point of the Christian life, of being a disciple of Jesus Christ, is theosis — the transformative process of yielding to grace — becoming like



God and participating in the divine life of the Trinity, then the aspirations of our opening collect will make little sense to us. Our spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are not meant to be a purely negative act of self-denial. Rather, they are meant to be a positive striving from the lower things of nature and the passing things of this form of the world into the higher realm of the holy, the divine, of God in his Mystery.

Further, these acts of prayer, fasting and almsgiving correspond to the theological virtues of faith, hope and love, which raise us up into the likeness of God. Prayer is an act of faith in someone beyond us. Fasting is an act of hope in things beyond the god of the stomach (Cf Phil 3:17-19). Almsgiving is an act of love, given from our substance, not just from our convenience. As we practice these spiritual disciplines with devotion, we begin to see they are the not just how we battle against spiritual evils, but their very practice begins to reveal to us the contours of the spiritual battle itself.

These disciplines help us attain genuine humility through a sincere acknowledgment of our lowliness. Humility is what you might consider a coordinating virtue which opens us up to faith, hope, and love, directing those virtues so that we see God, hear God, obey God, and participate in His being. Curiosity drew Moses to the fire flaming out of the bush, but it was humility that allowed him to hear the voice of God, bowing down in obedience before the presence of the holy Immortal One.

Moses experiences a theophany — a visible and audible manifestation of the Glory of God. In this theophany God reveals his name to Moses so that he might enter a covenantal relationship with the Israelites. The name of God, “I Am Who Am” is a revelation of God’s nature: God is infinite being and he enters into relationship with his creation in freedom, His and ours. His transcendence is non-competitive — God is not trying to enslave us; he is trying to free us and share his being with us.

God is infinite being, the One whose essence is to exist, without beginning or end, independently of all other things that exist (Cf., St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae 1, 13, 11). This aspect of the mystery is seen in the burning bush, where the fire of divine presence burns undiminished without need of created realities to generate or sustain itself. As St. Gregory Nazianzen says of this revelation of the divine name, “God names Himself ‘is’ when speaks to Moses on the mountain, for he is a limitless ocean of being who, neither starting or stopping transcends every notion of time and nature” (CCC 203-13).

Contemplating the transcendence of God is a necessary meditation, especially if we are to witness against that recursive relationship between materialism, atheism and narcissism that forms the disintegrating ethos of our age. In contemplating the transcendence of God in humility we can enter a saving relationship to God. As we recognize the Lord is communicating to us His being and life, we can respond from the depths of our hearts,

(Continued on page 19)

Pro-Life Essay Contest winning essay

Jeremiah was told that before God formed him in his mother’s body, God chose him, that before he was born, God set him apart to serve God. (Jer 1:5) I believe I was set apart also.

Have you ever considered the possibility of never having the chance to live the life you were blessed with? I’ve



reflected on this possibility multiple times. Knowing there was a chance of not being alive in this world is daunting.

People take life for granted daily. Our society puts a major emphasis on money, power and status. From my perspective, I’m amazed by the gifts that God has provided for us. The sun’s radiant colors, the earth’s beautiful landscape, or the diversity of individuals fortunate enough to be born and

experience these gifts.

Although I was always wanted and wished for, my parents would never receive the joy of having a child to call their own. My mom and dad tried everything, but it was becoming unhealthy for my mom. It was also pulling them further away from God. They would ask God every day why they couldn’t have a son or daughter of their own? That’s all they wanted.

God knew their purpose in life; he wanted them to adopt a child, and help that child see and be who he made them to be. From there, they decided to turn their focus to adopting someone who needed a miracle as much as they needed one, too. My parents fought hard to have me, but they always say I was worth it. Knowing what they went through, makes me feel important. I wasn’t something ordinary that just happened. I was something they worked hard for.

I was adopted by the most loving and amazing family. They didn’t care that I wasn’t their biological child. They only cared that I was “their” child who they loved unconditionally.

From a young age, I often wondered why I didn’t look like my parents. I am interracial and both of my parents are white. To me, that is completely normal. People would ask questions as to why I have dark skin and curly hair. They would judge my mom on why she has a darker child and give her dirty looks.

Instead of letting that discourage them, they learned how to take care of my skin and my hair. They ignored the way people would stare. Instead, my mom would look at other girls and see that they had braids and beads in their hair. Their curly hair was so perfect and pretty. She felt like she wasn’t doing enough. She bought beads and asked her friends about products to put in my hair. I would tell her, “Mom, I don’t want those beads in my hair.”

When I was young, all I wanted was to look like my parents. I hated my curly hair and would beg them every day to straighten it. Every time my parents would tell me how beautiful I was and how they wanted to look like me someday. As I got older, strangers would tell me how I look like my parents. I would say, “But mom, I don’t look like you.” She would tell me to just smile, and then we would move on with our day. As our day went on, I still couldn’t comprehend how I could look like them?

People still say that I look like my parents. I just smile and say thank you. I may not resemble them on the outside, but everyone is made in God’s image, and I look just like them on the inside.

I am now 13 years old, becoming a strong and confident young adult. With their love and guidance, I’ve learned to love myself for who I am. My mom and dad have taught me that my purpose is to show people that we are all extraordinarily important in our own way.

The Catechism states, “The covenant between God and mankind is interwoven with reminders of God’s gifts of human life.” (CCC 2260) What I have gone through is a blessing that I will not take for granted, no matter what we look like on the outside, because I am a witness to God’s love. My hope is that I can be a reminder, too, by sharing my story, spreading the Gospel and not judging people on what they look like.

Kyndall May Ruebusch is an eighth-grade student at St. Anthony School, Taylor Mill, Ky. This is her first-place essay in this year’s Diocesan Pro-Life Essay Contest.

Loved into existence

The date of this edition of The Messenger, March 21, is a very important day for my family and for our community, it is World Down Syndrome Day.

My youngest brother Sean was born with Down Syndrome. As a matter of fact there are 3 sisters in our community who have siblings with Down Syndrome! This day has been celebrated as a global awareness day



which has been officially observed by the United Nations since 2012 to help people understand and support those with Down Syndrome better.

Down Syndrome occurs at the moment of conception when the 21st pair of chromosomes has one — or half of one — extra chromosome. This additional genetic material alters the course of development and causes the characteristics associated with Down Syndrome. Typically, the

nucleus of each cell in humans contains 23 pairs of chromosomes, one set from the mom and one set from the dad, to give us 23 pairs, or 46 chromosomes each. The extra genetic material makes these people extra special!

After they told my Mom that Sean may have Down Syndrome — they were not sure at first — Mom was afraid to tell my father about the diagnosis, but after she did, he looked at her and said, “He’s got 10 fingers and 10 toes. He’s perfect!” With my father’s support and accept-

ance, Mom knew she could get through anything.

With Down Syndrome, there’s no way of knowing how far their intellect, motor skills and other abilities will develop. The beautiful part of having a family member like Sean is that every time there’s even a little advancement in learning, it is a reason to celebrate. Like the day he said his first word, or fed himself, or took the first step on his own, spoke his first sentence, and so on. With each mile-marker, our family celebrated with hands clapping and shouts of joy and encouragement.

People have always been very taken with Sean. For the first 7 or 8 years of Sean’s life, he was the poster child for United Way and has met many celebrities, including Yogi Berra, Joe Pesci, several Miss Americas and other celebrities.

He is also the motivation for the professions of two of my siblings, who are both teachers for special education students — and the reason I am pro-life today. While I was at a church event one day, a friend was sharing that Sean came to the Youth Group she was in charge of, sharing how much fun it was to have him there. I told her that my brother has always been the heart and soul of our family and he taught us what real love is all about, that he sort of “glued” our family together at a critical moment in our family’s life right after he was born.

She said to me, “Wow! People really need to hear that, would you be willing to tell that to other people?” I, of course, said that I’d be honored to. So she replied, “Great! We are hosting a Pro-Life Prayer Vigil in 2 weeks...”

I have no recall what she said after that because of all the bells and whistles going off in my head. You see, at the time I was not Pro-Life. But being a person of my word, I was not about to retract my, “Yes!”

(Continued on page 6)

Facing fear with Jesus can set faithful free, pope’s catechesis says

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Change can be frightening, but the Holy Spirit encourages the faithful to face their fears, follow Jesus’ light and be “born again,” Pope Francis said in a prepared text.

“If we do not accept to change, if we close ourselves up in inflexibility, in habits or our ways of thinking, we risk dying. Life resides in the capacity to change to find a new way to love,” he said in the catechesis prepared for his general audience March 19.

During the Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis’ general audience talks have focused on “Jesus Christ our hope.” Since he was hospitalized for treatment of bilateral pneumonia Feb. 14, the Vatican has continued to publish the texts prepared for his general audience each Wednesday.

After reflecting on Jesus’ infancy and childhood, he wrote, “we will begin to contemplate some of the encounters narrated in the Gospels to understand the way Jesus gives hope.”

The first reflection was dedicated to Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus, a teacher and leader of the Jews, who visits Jesus at night.

This episode with Nicodemus, the pope’s text said, “shows that it is possible to emerge from darkness and find the courage to follow Christ.” That darkness can have symbolic meaning, he added, and refer to “the darkness of doubt” or when “we no longer understand what is happening in our lives and do not see clearly the way forward.”

Nicodemus seeks Jesus, the catechesis said, because he has sensed that he can illuminate this darkness in his heart.

“Nicodemus senses that something no longer works in his life. He feels the need to change, but he does not know where to begin,” the text said. “This happens to all of us in some phases of life.”

“Jesus speaks to Nicodemus of a new birth, which is not only possible but even necessary at certain moments in our journey,” the text said.

“If we allow the Holy Spirit to generate new life in us, we will be born again. We will rediscover that life, which was perhaps fading in us,” it said.

Nicodemus shows that change is possible, the pope’s catechesis said, as he will be among those who go to Pilate to ask for Jesus’ body.

Nicodemus no longer needs to stay in the night, the catechesis said. He comes to the light and is reborn.

“Changes sometimes frighten us,” the text said. “At times we desire them, but on the other, we would prefer to remain in comfort. Therefore the Spirit encourages us to



CNS photo/Pablo Esparza

Drawings and messages are seen at the base of a statue of St. John Paul II outside of Rome’s Gemelli hospital March 19, 2025.

face these fears.”
“Only by looking into the face of that which frightens us can we begin to be set free,” the pope’s message said.

Loved into existence

(Continued from page 5)

So in those two weeks prior to the event, I tried to get all the information I could about abortion, etc. and as Providence would have it I had an opportunity to go to the National March for Life in Washington, DC. So, I went.

The morning of the Prayer Vigil came and there was Mass with a Rosary procession to where it was taking place — across the street from an abortion center! After prayers and several presentations, including a priest and a Protestant pastor, it was my turn.

I didn’t really know what I was going to say, because my heart still wasn’t there, so I began with, “I’m just here to tell you about someone who is very special to me...” It was in that moment that, like St. Paul, the scales fell from my eyes and I realized that the reason people argue to keep abortion legal is that they might be like my brother!!!! I became completely incensed! To me, that’s like giving the love of God himself away!

I don’t remember what I said after that point, but many people said it was very good. Afterward, I got into very active pro-life work and it is the reason that after I heard a call from the Lord to a spousal relationship with him in the religious life, it had to be with a community dedicated to pro-life works of mercy.

It seems that everyone who meets Sean falls instantly in love with him, even if at first they are visibly uncom-

fortable. To illustrate what I mean, one year I was planning a trip with Sean to the National March for Life in Washington, DC that our parish was running. However, we arrived late for the bus and could not sit together: Sean had to sit next to middle-aged lady that pretended she was asleep and turned her head the other way. He was very respectful and gentle with her, but by the time we were getting close to arriving, they were laughing together and she was sharing her lunch with him!

Sean is a huge Elvis fan and has competed in many Elvis impersonator contests at a yearly event that takes place in Asbury Beach, NJ. After a few years that Sean began participating, he took Second Place! Not because he’s a great singer, because he’s not! He won because he puts his whole heart into it and the judges really love seeing him compete each year.

Sister Veronica says about her sister Samantha that she’s a joy to have around, is very dramatic and has a wild personality. When she turned 16, she wanted to learn how to drive like all of her siblings. So that she wasn’t “crushed,” her mom told her that maybe when she’s 30 she can learn how to drive. Samantha responded by going to the store and buying a Hot Wheels, telling everyone, really singing it, “I bought a car!”

Sister Therese says that her sister Celeste is a piece of heaven on earth. Her best quality is that she loves people

just for who they are, she doesn’t see people’s defects and doesn’t judge them the way others might be tempted to. She is also not afraid to express who she is and is not concerned what you think about her, whether you like her or not.

Down Syndrome is not an illness, disease or defect. It’s not something you take medicine for or look to cure. It is just part of who each of these people are. In the book of Jeremiah, the fifth verse of the first chapter says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you.”

Before you were born — before! God knew everything about each of you, your gender, skin color, hair color; eye color; He knew what talents you would have, your likes and dislikes, He even knew your fingerprints. God knew you before you were conceived. And He loved you into existence, forming your very being, “Knitting you together in your mother’s womb.” (Psalm 139:19) It’s the same with Sean, Samantha, Celeste and others like them, God saw everything about them, that they would have Down Syndrome and formed each of them in their mother’s womb — loving each of them into existence.

Mother Seraphina Quinlan is mother superior for the Franciscan Daughters of Mary, Covington.



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St. Peter’s Basilica becomes a ‘fixable,’ explorable Minecraft world

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service
Imagine being able to explore all of St. Peter’s Basilica, its artistic masterpieces and the saint’s underground tomb as well as interact with its caretakers and archeologists to learn more about the world’s largest church and even have a go at restoring it — virtually, that is, and in the 3-D blocky world of Minecraft.

Students around the world now have a chance to be an explorer-restorer of the 519-year-old basilica thanks to a new online educational opportunity created by Minecraft Education, Microsoft’s game-based learning platform, and with the help of St. Peter’s Basilica and Vatican City State.

“Peter is Here: AI for Cultural Heritage” is a new interactive game released worldwide March 18.

“It invites students and children to explore one of the most compelling stories: the history of the basilica,” and “to try their hand at restoration challenges and discover how cultural heritage and modern innovation intersect,” Franciscan Father Enzo Fortunato, president of the Pontifical Committee for the World Day of Children, told reporters at a news conference at the foreign press club in Rome March 18.

Players use simulated AI-enabled “scanners” — like real preservationists use — to inspect key elements of the basilica and square outside to discover what needs repair and problem-solve with others to decide the best approach to take.

Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, archpriest of St. Peter’s Basilica, said they chose the release date of March 18, the vigil of the feast of St. Joseph, because of the saint’s role as an educator “par excellence of the son of God” and to place the game under his patronage.

The game’s emphasis on learning about the basilica’s past, the significance and meaning of its sacred spaces and collaboration means kids can “experience with others building and winning together in the spirit of fraternity,” he said.

The accuracy and level of detail of the basilica, which covers nearly six acres, was facilitated by the creation of an AI-enhanced, 3-D “digital twin” of the basilica last



CNS photo/courtesy of Microsoft/Mojang Studios

A screengrab shows a player approaching the “Throne of St. Peter” in St. Peter’s Basilica in a new interactive game, “Peter is Here: AI for Cultural Heritage,” released worldwide March 18, 2025, by Microsoft’s Minecraft Education in collaboration with the Vatican and St. Peter’s Basilica.

November. Microsoft’s “AI for Good” lab used AI to stitch together almost half a million high-resolution images of St. Peter’s Basilica, creating a realistic replica people can visit online and helping restorers pinpoint previously unseen problems and places needing repair.

That immersive experience, geared toward adults, aims to allow people worldwide to “visit” and learn about the basilica, its history, beauty and spiritual significance.

So, recreating the basilica in Minecraft as an educational journey “represents a natural and important extension, another big step forward, because this is the way we take this wonderful institution, the culture, the religion, the heritage, and we put it into the hands of children in every country around the world,” Brad Smith, president of Microsoft, said in a recorded video.

Middle school students at Rome’s Jesuit-run Massimiliano Massimo Institute were on hand at the news conference, demonstrating the game which starts off as “mission-based” with several tasks to restore the basilica with the help of the basilica’s “sanpietrini,” as the church’s specialized artisans and workers are known.

Once the tasks are completed, players are free to explore the open world, find and collect items and interact with historic figures, such as Michelangelo, who was appointed to oversee the design and construction of the basilica, and Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who was its official

architect and who designed the immense baldachin over the main altar.

Virginia and Vittoria, both 11, told Catholic News Service they have never visited the basilica “in real life,” even though they live in and grew up in Rome. In a city with countless artistic and historical landmarks to visit, family and school field trips somehow missed that one icon, they said.

They will be visiting as part of the school’s pilgrimage to the Holy Door for the Holy Year and the game was a great way to get an idea what is in store, Vittoria said.

“Now I’m looking forward to seeing (the basilica). Its history is very interesting,” which was fun to learn because they get to go back in time, Virginia said.

Designed for students aged 8-18, the platform includes workbooks and resources for students and teachers in both public and Catholic schools or communities and for parents who homeschool. Every student also receives a certificate in Latin after completing the 45-60-minute game, recognizing them as honorary preservers of this cultural heritage site.

“Peter is Here” is available for all licensed users in the Minecraft Education lesson library and trial versions are free to download by logging in with Office 365 or Microsoft 365 Education accounts.



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Priest influencer on evangelizing through humor, social media pitfalls and advice to Gen Z

Lauretta Brown
OSV News

Hitting 1 million followers on Instagram is an achievement often celebrated in creative ways by social media influencers, but when Father David Michael Moses marked that milestone on Ash Wednesday he used the occasion to remind his many followers that social media and this world are “all ashes” and “passing away,” and the things of Jesus Christ are what lasts.

The milestone video was perfect for Father David Michael, 31, who posts humorous videos about his life as a priest alongside simple explanations of different areas of Catholic teaching. His videos have earned millions of views on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.

Father David Michael told OSV News recently that he started making videos when he was very young and has “always found it interesting as a means of conveying a message,” but “didn’t think too much about doing it as a priest.”

That changed five years ago when he was about six months into his priesthood, and it occurred to him that it would have been helpful in his own discernment to see a video of what priests do all day. “I thought I am a priest, so why not just make a little video about what we do all day?”

The day he chose for the video included joyful moments such as the baptism of quintuplets and a wedding.

“There’s a bunch of beautiful things that were pretty normal as a priest,” he said, “but I thought most people didn’t really get to see the behind the scenes and so I kind of just filmed it, posted it and I was hoping it would be helpful for a few young guys thinking about priesthood.”

“What I found instead was that just in general people found it helpful, even atheists thought it was kind of interesting what priests did all day,” he said of the video which now has over 160,000 views. “So, I started making a video about once a month.” He gradually switched to short form content which better fits his busy schedule as parochial vicar at Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Spring, Texas.

“I’ve just seen so much fruit for evangelization from it that I’ve been very affirmed to keep going in this direction,” he said. “What I think is especially unique about social media is you’re able to reach people who would not otherwise come in contact with the Church.”

His humor often plays off of social media trends and puns. One video he recently posted with over 9 million views on Instagram begins with him complaining about soggy French fries and being told he needs a fryer; he then hands the fries to a bewildered looking Franciscan Friar of the Renewal, Father Mark-Mary Ames. In another video with over 13 million views, Father David Michael quips that “people ask why priests always wear black” and it’s “because every day is a funeral for the haters.”

He has found a lot of success using humor in his videos, he said, because “it’s a universal language” and if a video is funny enough people will show it to their friends “and all of a sudden somebody is watching a video of a Catholic priest.”

“Humor in so many ways in this little culture of social media, is the way to connect so let’s learn the language, let’s learn the culture and let’s bring the Gospel there,” he said, “the Church has an ancient tradition of doing that.”



OSV News photo/via Father David Michael Moses

Father David Michael Moses, 31, who posts humorous videos about his life as a priest alongside simple explanations of different areas of Catholic teaching, is pictured in an undated photo during the Blessing of the Animals. His videos have earned millions of views on Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.

He often gets feedback from people who have been away from the Church or who are atheists who “thought the videos were kind of funny, so they followed and then next thing they know they’re watching a video about going back to confession or they’re watching a video about the Virgin Mary or about the Rosary and about Catholicism. And that’s really a touch point for them to start to either go back to the Church or to start to rev up their spiritual lives.”

His more serious videos include simple explanations of Catholic observances during Holy week, confession, transubstantiation and addressing questions like “how late can a Catholic be to Mass?”

Father David Michael said that two people in the process of entering the Church at his parish, began attending church events after seeing his videos which gradually led to their decision to convert. He was also told of a young man entering seminary who mentioned his videos as a help in his discernment process.

“Not everybody gets the social media stuff,” he said, “but when you see the concrete fruit like that from it, this is what we’re trying to do as a Church and this is helping us do it.”

He is also very conscious of the pitfalls of social media including how addictive it can become and how much of the

content can pose threats to purity.

He likened social media to “a bad neighborhood,” saying “I think I would tell people to be very cautious in a bad neighborhood, but I do think every bad neighborhood needs the Church and every bad neighborhood should have a priest.”

“We should have certain people who know how to deal with the danger and are properly trained in it and are intentional and are trying to really bring the Gospel there,” he emphasized.

Regarding Catholics who might struggle with balancing social media use in their lives, Father David Michael said he would tell most people that “if they’re not sure, just to get off social media, just delete it, get rid of it.”

“For most Catholics, I’d say especially for parents with children, keep your kids away from social media,” he said, “I use it as a tool for evangelization. Otherwise, I’m not sure necessarily what the value is.”

He called social media “morally neutral” saying “it’s all about how you use it,” but added that “social media has a natural way of kind of tending toward the negative in terms of the effects on people’s lives” and cited studies suggesting social media “makes you less happy when you have it.”

He said if people have “a healthy relationship with it. If it’s helpful for them in terms of business or education or whatever, I think it’s okay for them to use it, but if you’re on the fence, I would say, just get off it.”

In his time as a young priest ministering to young people online, Father David Michael addressed some of the common troubles that he sees youth face in today’s culture.

“I think there’s a misconception among young people that if God loves you then you won’t have to suffer,” he said. “It’s not scriptural, it’s not in the tradition of the Church, but the enemy kind of pushes that, he takes something that’s true which is God loves you and he wants what’s good for you and he has a plan for you. That’s all true. And then he kind of whispers ‘so you won’t have to suffer.’ And then that’s not true, right? That’s the opposite of the whole Gospel. Jesus says take up your cross and follow me.”

“When you suffer for something then that’s how you love,” he emphasized.

He added that young people sometimes are “missing a real desire for greatness,” saying, “one of the gifts that young people actually offer to the world, to the Church, is a zealous — maybe a little over the top sometimes — desire for greatness.”

“A lot of young people have decided they can just kind of settle for less. They don’t need an incredible marriage, they don’t need to live a life of heroic sacrifice,” he said. “They don’t need to be a priest” and they think “I’m just going to coast along and try to feel good’ and I think that’s very dangerous and ultimately then people are missing out on all the good that God wants to do in their lives.”

As someone who was ordained at age 25, Father David Michael believes “it’s all about just saying yes when he (God) calls.” He said that while some people advised him that he didn’t need to enter seminary at such a young age, he recognized his calling.

“I think people can be scared of commitment young sometimes, but, for me, when you go about it in a discerning way and deliberately, intentionally, commitment is actually very freeing,” he said, “to actually focus your entire life on the one thing that you committed to, the thing that you value most. And so, I’m just super grateful to have been called young.”

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Fish Frys	
Fridays, March 7–April 11	St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill
Holy Cross High School, Latonia	St. Paul Parish, Florence
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington	St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood
Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger	St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas
St. Augustine Parish, Covington	St. Timothy Parish, Union
St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger	Fridays, March 7–March 28
St. Benedict Parish, Covington	St. Mary Parish, Alexandria
St. Bernard Parish, Dayton	
St. Francis Xavier, Falmouth	Fridays, March 7–April 4
St. James Parish, Brooksville	St. Edward Parish, Cynthiana
St. Joseph Academy, Walton	
St. Joseph Parish, Camp Springs	Friday, April 11
St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs	Our Savior Parish, Covington, noon–until sold out

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays, 10 —11 a.m. Viewers can tune-in on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517; and DirectTV 25.

Fish frys, festivals, prayer services, etc. Parishes, schools and Catholic organizations of the Diocese of Covington can now have their event featured on the Diocesan online calendar. Submit your event at <https://covdio.org/calendar/>.

As you are starting your spring-cleaning, think of The Sisters of Notre Dame. They are in need of new items for the 103rd Annual 4th of July festival for the Silent Auction. The items they are looking for include Sports Items, Kids items, artwork, antiques and collectibles, jewelry, gift certificates, etc. If you have items that you would like to donate, please call Margie Schnelle at (859) 392-8229 or e-mail mschnelle@sndusa.org. Arrangements can be made for pickup or drop off.

Father Michael Comer takes us deeper into the mystery of Jesus’ death and resurrection by exploring the “Resurrection Narratives,” from the tomb to Jesus’ victory over death and the promise of eternal life. Free and open to all. Come and bring a friend. All talks are held at Mother of God Church, Covington, 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. on the following dates: March 27 and April 3.

Join Benedictine Sister Mary Tewes, Tuesdays during Lent, 7:30 p.m., March 25 and April 1, 8, for a time of Lectio Divina, a contemplative prayer practice where we will slowly read and meditate on a Scripture passage, allowing space to deeply listen to God’s voice speaking to our hearts. The Gospel for the upcoming weekend will be used. Come open your spirit to a meaningful encounter with the divine through the sacred text. Call (859) 331-6324 for information.

Father Timothy Schehr, a retired biblical scholar and former professor at Mount St. Mary’s School of Theology at the Athenaeum of Ohio, will lead the following Bible workshops: Joshua: March 15; Judges: March 22; Ruth: May 17; and 1 & 2 Samuel: May 24. All are held 9–11:30 a.m. at Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Curia Office, Covington. Cost for each workshop is \$35. To register visit covdio.org/bible-workshops.

BBHS Art Gallery presents, “My Very Best,” an exhibit on works by elementary students at Sts. Peter and Paul, St. Mary, St. Joseph, and St. Philip. Show dates: March 23, noon–4 p.m.; March 21 and 22, before, during and after the school play.

The Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg welcome Benedictine Sister Tonette Sperando, March 22, for a presentation on “Hospitality: A Gospel Way of Living.” Sister Tonette’s enthusiasm and southern charm will be sure to inspire. To register, email kybenedictines@gmail.com or call (859) 331-6324. \$25 suggested donation by cash or checks.

DCCH Center, Ft. Mitchell, **Foster Care/Adoption information meeting**, March 26, 6:30–8 p.m. Come learn about the need and process to become a foster or adoptive parent, a mentor or volunteer with DCCH Center for Children and Families. Contact Ron Bertsch with questions — rbertsch@dcch-center.org or (859) 331-2040.

“Weeds and Wheat: A Retreat for Ministry Leaders, Catechists and Parents,” March 27, 6–9 p.m.; optional dinner at 5 p.m., Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Curia, Covington. It’s easy to remember the things that have flopped, the weeds that have been growing amidst the wheat. Let’s take some time to step away and reflect on both the weeds, the wheat, and what we can learn from both to see the fruit of the Lord’s work in our ministry. Join us for this Reflection on Matthew 13:24-30 with presenter, Pete Burds, the National Evangelization Team (NET) Chief Mission Officer. RSVP at covdio.org/youth by March 18.

“John Paul the Great: Seven Things Every Catholic Should Know”, presented by the Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III '67 Institute for Religious Liberty, will occur March 31, 7 p.m. at the Wilbert L. Ziegler '53 Auditorium, Thomas More University, 333 Thomas More Parkway Crestview Hills, KY 41017. speaker Paul Kengor, Ph.D. leads this discussion, 20 years after the death of Pope St. John Paul II.

The women religious vocation directors of the Diocese of Covington regularly sponsor **prayers for peace called United in Prayer**. This time of prayer is a sign of hope and unity, and a moment of peace and encouragement for others and us as a praying community. Join in person Goebel Park, Covington, at the bell tower or online April 1, 6 p.m.

The Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery are hosting a Lenten midweek retreat for women and men, April 1-3, at their Guest House. The theme is “Seeking Peace” and will assist the retreatant to: Explore what is or is not working for you to achieve peace; consider how you maintain a peaceful spirit in your family and other relationships; and discern your role in sharing peace as Jesus instructed us to do. The suggested donation for retreat conferences, room (private) and board is \$175; free will offering will be accepted for Spiritual Direction if chosen. Mass and some meals will be at the monastery with the sisters. To register contact Benedictine Sister Dorothy Schuette at dorothysosb@gmail.com or (859) 331-6324.

Holy Cross High School 27th annual Mulch Sale, 2 cubic foot bags of red, brown and black mulch, \$4.95 each; pine straw, \$9.75 per bale, includes sales tax and free delivery anywhere in Kenton, Boone and Campbell Counties. Delivery dates: 4/4-4/6, 4/11-4/13, 4/25-4/27 and 5/2-5/4. To order visit <http://www.hcmulch.com/> or call (859) 392-8999.

“Talking about God with family and friends,” Mother of God Church undercroft, Covington, April 5, 9–11:30 a.m. Have you ever explored your own faith journey, and would like to share this with others but aren’t sure how? Come engage with a like-minded group for a fun and interactive morning of exploring our personal faith journey, and hearing about others. E-mail questions to Mary Ann Kelly at mkelly@mog-cov.org. Free and open to all.

Bishop Brossart High School Girls Softball / Volleyball Euchre Tournament Fundraiser will be held April 5 at BBHS cafeteria. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., and cards fly at 7 p.m. \$25 Pre-Registration due by April 2. \$30 Walk up registration. \$10 Optional Skin game. Contact Kari Bezold at (859) 391-5119 .



5th and 6th Grade students at St. Philip school, Melbourne, made festive St. Patricks Day glasses.

REVIVE for Middle School Youth (grades 6 – 8), sponsored by St. Catherine Parish, Ft. Thomas, April 12, 6:30–9 p.m. Food, games, prayer, Adoration, confession, and music. RSVP www.covdio.org/youth/ April 5.

St. Cecilia parish’s, Independence, Altar Society is having a Craft and Vendor Show on April 6, from 9 a.m.–2 p.m. in the church undercroft. Lunch and baked goods will be available. The Easter Bunny will be present to give small gifts to the children. Vendor spaces are still available for \$35. For information, call Karen Koch at (859) 992–5786.

Taize prayer service, a meditative, candle-lit worship service that combines prayer, song and silence, April 6, 5:30 p.m., St. Thomas Church, Ft. Thomas.

Holy Week Mission of Mercy – High School students are invited to live Holy Week close to Christ and serving others. The Mission can be experienced as a three-day retreat (with non-overnight and day options) which includes service projects, Holy Week liturgies and retreat events. Parents and families are invited to attend the Crosswalk on Good Friday, beginning at Holy Cross Church, Latonia, 9 a.m. and ending at the 3 p.m. Good Friday service at the Cathedral. This is a joint project of the Diocesan Youth Ministry Office and Regnum Christi. Contact Angie Poat at apoat@covdio.org. RSVP at www.covdio.org/youth/. Deadline April 10.

Covington Catholic High School will honor its 9,442 alumni as the 2025 Northern Kentuckians of the Year, April 10, Turfway Park Event Center, Florence. Founded in 1925 by the Brothers of Mary, Covington Catholic proudly wears Mary’s colors, blue and white, as it continues its 100-year anniversary celebration. This prestigious recognition highlights the lasting impact of CovCath alumni on Northern Kentucky and beyond. To purchase tickets visit: www.covcath.org/nkyl.

Covington Lenten Pilgrimage, April 12, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Start and end your personal journey on foot or by car at any of the five historic Covington churches on the 4.3-mile pilgrimage route — Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, St. Benedict Church, St. Augustine Church, St. John Church and Mother of God Church. For information and a route guide visit <http://www.covdio.org/lenten-pilgrimage>.

Service with Sisters of the Covington Diocese, April 12, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Help at various agencies with: gardening, working on a house, sorting clothing, helping in an outreach center and painting. Gathering at Mother of God Church, Covington. Register click <https://tinyurl.com/Serving-Together> or call Sister Ruth Lubbers at (859) 750-8190. Registration deadline: April 4. Sponsored by Benedictine Sisters, Sisters of Divine Providence and Sisters of Notre Dame.

Scouts of the Diocese

(Continued from page 1)

sions parallel one another. The scouts speak of civic virtues, and in their relationship with the churches, especially the Catholic Church, we cap that program with the virtues of faith to help our young people, to give them guidance, to help them resist the temptations that threaten to bring them down in life.”

The deep relationship between the Church and the different scouting organizations has proved fruitful. The award ceremony following Mass in Bishop Howard



A Boy Scout listens intently to Bishop Iffert's homily.



Bishop Iffert presents the Light of Christ award to scout Ellison Elsaesser.

2025 Scouting Awards

Boy Scouts

Light of Christ — Religious activity is for scouts in grades 1-2. The program is designed to encourage Tiger Cub and Wolf Cub Scouts, together with the active participation of their parents, to come to see Jesus as a real person and friend.

Dakota Elsaesser
Ellison Elsaesser

Parvuli Dei — Activity for scouts in grades 3–5. The program is designed to increase the awareness of God’s presence in daily life especially at home and in the community.

James Davis
Sarah Painter

Ad Altare Dei — To help scouts in grades 7–12 prepare to take their place in the world as a maturing Catholic and grow in understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Jason Bish
Aaron Feuser
Jack McClanahan
Lucas Newport
Damien Rapp

Memorial Auditorium, showcased 20 different scouts that earned Catholic scouting awards. These awards are meant to help the scouts grow closer in their own relationship with God and encourage them to spread the good news of the Gospel.

In addition to their scouting patch, each scout in attendance also received a special Catholic scouting badge bearing the crest of Bishop Iffert, signifying the close relationship between these troops and the Diocese of Covington.

Though it was a day honoring the scouts of the Diocese,

Leo Short

Ethan Stricker
Caleb Trenkamp
Colin Trenkamp
Ryan Wolfe

American Heritage Girls

God and My Family — Guides Catholic Tenderhearts (ages 6-9) through an awareness of who they are as children of God in the family of the Catholic Church.

Emma McHenry, segment 1
Riley O’Leary, segment 2

God and My Country — Allows Catholic Explorers (ages 9–12) to learn more about the various saints representing the United States of America.

Veronica Merk, segment 2
Josie King, segment 1

God and My Community — Encourages Catholic Pioneers (ages 12-14) to explore service in their community through sacred Scripture and Catholic Church tradition.

Bishop Iffert reminded those in attendance of the important guidance troop leaders and parents provide.

“Our kids are wonderful and valuable to us, but they are not angels, they suffer from the same temptations that we suffer from. They need guidance, they need to know the teaching of Jesus, they need to know that he is that Lord of light who will see them through difficulty times,” Bishop Iffert said. “Thank you to everyone who has a part in guiding and directing the lives of our young people and remember, we never outgrow the need for guidance ourselves.”

Lucy Juelg, segment 1
Agnes Reynolds, segment 1

Adult Leaders’ Scouting Award

St. George Emblem — A local recognition approved by the Diocesan Catholic Committee on Scouting and given to those who have made significant and outstanding contributions to the spiritual development of Catholic youth in Scouting.

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‘Blessed are they who have not lost hope.’
—2025 Jubilee Day of Families, Grandparents and Elderly



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SPECIAL SECTION OF THE MESSENGER
MARCH 15, 2024

Photo credit: Ekaterina Shakharova on Unsplash

Hope chosen as theme to celebrate grandparents and elderly during Jubilee Year of Hope

Justin McLellan
Catholic News Service

“Blessed are those who have not lost hope” is the theme for the fifth World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly which will be observed in the Catholic Church July 27.

The theme, announced by the Vatican Feb. 4, is taken from the Book of Sirach as part of its moral instruction to the Jewish faithful.

The theme expresses “the blessedness of the elderly and points to the hope placed in the Lord as the way to a Christian and reconciled old age,” the Vatican said in its announcement.

Particularly during the Holy Year 2025, the world day “seeks to be an opportunity to reflect on how the presence of grandparents and elderly people can become a sign of hope in every family and ecclesial community,” it continued.

The motto for the current Jubilee, selected by Pope Francis, is “Pilgrims of Hope.”

The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, which organizes the world day, invited every diocese to organize local celebrations for World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly July 27, “promoting visits and occasions for encounter between generations.”

Pope Francis instituted the world day to be celebrated in the church on the fourth Sunday of July, near the feast of Sts. Joachim and Anna — Jesus’ grandparents.

Last year, the Apostolic Penitentiary, the Vatican court charged with granting indulgences, announced that grandparents, the elderly and all the faithful who attend Mass or other prayer services as part of the day’s celebration could receive a plenary indulgence.

Additionally, the indulgence could apply to those



Pope Francis greets residents and staff at St. Joseph's Home in Brussels, a residence operated by the Little Sisters of the Poor for the elderly, Sept. 27, 2024.

who “devote adequate time to actually or virtually visiting their elderly brothers and sisters in need or in difficulty,” such as those who are sick, lonely or disabled, the Vatican said.

Additionally, as part of the celebration of the 2025 Jubilee year, the Jubilee of Families, Children,

Grandparents and the Elderly will be celebrated May 30–June 1. Jubilee days such as this are specifically set aside throughout the year to recognize different groups of people and ministries within the Church.

This article has been edited by Messenger staff.



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St. Charles Community: leaders in senior care and service

St. Charles Resource Center
Contributor

St. Charles Community, sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame, has been a leader in providing services for Northern Kentucky’s seniors and their families for over 60 years. A major focus of St. Charles’ ministry has always been to give back to the greater community and to identify and strive to meet the current and pressing needs of seniors and their families.

In keeping with this focus, two years ago, St. Charles Community expanded beyond its Farrell Drive campus, to establish a Senior Resource Center in Latonia to assist seniors and their families in navigating the maze of senior services and to help them access the services that meet their individual needs. The reality is that this is not something people think about until the need becomes personal and immediate.

Almost daily, Margie Volpenhein, LSW, and Brittney Landers, Senior Resource Liaisons, who staff the Center, have seen an increase in the number of persons seeking assistance. In these past two and a half years, the Senior Resource Center has served over 1,300 seniors and their families.

In addition to providing education and hands on assistance, the Center also supplies, free of charge, needed personal care items and equipment that many cannot afford — the major requests have been for mobility and adaptive devices such as walkers, wheelchairs, shower chairs and safety bars.

Alarminglly, many persons come to us in need of food because they lack the knowledge or ability to access entities that could meet this need. In these cases, the Center helps to supply food while educating the person in need, how to access food banks, Meals on Wheels, etc.

The Center’s staff say that although their role


involves being confronted multiple times a day with the reality of great needs, they consider themselves very blessed to have the opportunity to minister to seniors through patient listening, timely assistance and most of all, through compassionate understanding.



The St. Charles Senior Resource Center’s services are free of charge, and staff can be reached by phone, email or by stopping in at the Center, located at 3705 Winston Ave., Latonia, Ky. The Center is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. through 4:30 p.m. The resource center’s phone number is (859) 261-0746, and their e-mail address is seniorresource@stcharlescommunity.org.

This article was submitted by St. Charles Resource Center.






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Scan the QR code for more information about the Senior Resource Center!



Selling a home to transition into assisted living: A guide for seniors

Marie Wieder
Contributor

As we age, our housing needs change, and for many seniors, moving into an assisted living community becomes the best option for maintaining quality of life, safety and social engagement. However, selling a long-time home can be an emotional challenge.

This guide will help homeowners and their families make informed, confident decisions.

Recognizing the Right Time to Sell
Deciding when to move into assisted living is deeply personal. Some key signs it may be time include:

- Difficulty maintaining the home.
- Increased health concerns or mobility limitations.
- A need for more daily support.
- Family members struggling to provide adequate care.

If any of these apply, it may be time to explore selling your home and starting a new chapter.

Preparing to Sell

Selling a home requires planning, both financially and emotionally. Here are key steps to consider:

1. Choosing the Right Real Estate Agent
A real estate agent with experience in working with elderly clients can provide valuable guidance on pricing, staging and marketing the home to attract the right buyers.
2. Decluttering and Downsizing
Moving into assisted living often means moving into a smaller space. Begin sorting items into categories:
Keep: Essential and sentimental items.



Marie Wieder

- Donate: Items no longer needed but still useful.
- Sell: Valuable but unnecessary belongings.
- Discard: Items that are broken or unusable.
- 3. Making Necessary Home Improvements
Updates such as fresh paint, minor repairs and improved lighting can increase a home's appeal and market value. However, seniors should avoid expensive renovations that may not give a high return on their investment.

Financial Considerations

Selling a home can provide the funds needed for assisted living. Here are some key factors to consider:

- Home Equity: If the home is fully paid off or has significant equity, proceeds from the sale can help cover assisted living costs.

- Capital Gains Taxes: Long-time homeowners may qualify for tax exemptions on home sale profits. Consulting a financial advisor or tax professional is wise.

- Assisted Living and Care Costs: If the sale is funding long-term care, ensure there's a plan for covering future expenses. If a home takes time to sell, bridge loans or other financing options can help cover initial assisted living costs.

Emotional Aspects of Selling a Longtime Home
For many seniors, selling a home is not just a financial decision but an emotional process. Their home represents many years of memories, family gatherings and milestones. Families should offer emotional support, involve seniors in the decisions and focus on the benefits of the move — such as reduced stress, better healthcare and more social opportunities.

Take time to say goodbye to the home and

neighborhood.

Moving Forward

Once the home is sold, transitioning to a new living situation should be as smooth as possible. Whether moving into a retirement community or assisted living, setting up a comfortable and familiar space will help make the transition easier.

Final Thoughts

Selling a home to move into a retirement community or assisted living is a significant life change, but with proper planning, it can be a positive transition. By considering the financial and emotional aspects of the process, seniors can make the transition with confidence and peace of mind.

Marie Wieder, ABR, SFR, e-PRO, is an associate of RE/MAX Victory + Affiliates, Florence, Ky.

Discover Charlie's Club — your solution for senior day care

St. Charles Community
Contributor

Are you or a loved one in need of compassionate care and engaging activities during the day? Look no further than Charlie's Club, the premier adult day health program nestled in Covington, Ky.

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a nurturing environment where individuals can thrive socially, physically, and emotionally.

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their current living situation but require supervision and care during the day. Our program offers a welcoming space where participants can forge new friendships, partake in stimulating activities and receive personalized attention from our dedicated team of trained professionals. Moreover, Charlie's Club offers caregivers respite from the demands of round-the-clock caregiving, allowing them to tend to other responsibilities while their loved ones are in good hands.

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We understand that navigating the costs of senior care can be daunting. That's why Charlie's Club offers financial assistance to eligible individuals, ensuring that our program remains accessible to those who need it most.

If you're feeling overwhelmed balancing caregiving responsibilities with work and family obligations, Charlie's Club is here to lighten your load. We have immediate openings available, so why wait? Take the first step toward peace of mind and companionship by contacting us today.

For more information or to schedule a visit, please call Misty Marcum at (859) 331-3224.

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This article was submitted by St. Charles Community



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As Lent invites us to reflect on sacrifice, service and



Chadwick Seiter, in partnership with Matthew L. Darpel, serves Northern Kentucky at Darpel Elder Law in Crestview Hills. Chad is a St. Henry District High School graduate with degrees from the University of Kentucky and the Chase College of Law.

Charlie's Club Adult Day Health Program

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Sts. Joachim and Anne: Saints for grandparents and infertile couples

Michael R. Heinlein
OSV News

Christian tradition enlightens the faithful about the parentage of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The identity of Sts. Joachim and Anne are known to us from the extra-biblical Protoevangelium of St. James. They are not mentioned in the Bible at all. The church celebrates their feast day July 26.

Given the preeminent holiness of the Virgin Mother of God, it follows that her parents are apportioned a special role in salvation history. It is said that St. Joachim was just as generous as he was wealthy — well known for his charity and love of God. St. Anne’s name reflects the role she and her husband played in salvation history in a connection to their most blessed daughter; upon whom was bestowed the dignity of being chosen to bear God into the world. Anne’s name comes from the Hebrew “Hannah,” which means “favor” or “grace.” This speaks to the dignity of her blessed daughter, who is later addressed by the Archangel Gabriel as “full of grace” (Lk 1:28).

Both saintly grandparents of Jesus are believed to have descended from King David. Tradition says that the temple priest in Jerusalem — where Mary’s family is said to have resettled in her childhood — rejected the pious St. Joachim’s sacrifice because he and St. Anne were barren, which was thought to be a sign of God’s displeasure with them. For 40 days and nights, St. Joachim retreated to the desert where he lamented by atoning through fasting and prayer. An angel ended the experience by bringing news that the holy couple would conceive a child. St. Anne also had received this word from an angel. At once they each set out to find each other and share the joy of their heavenly news. St. Joachim met his saintly wife at Jerusalem’s city gate upon his return, a scene often depicted in art with a kiss.

There is the biblical tradition that the children born of elderly women who had given up the hope of offspring are

destined for greatness. In conceiving the Virgin Mary, Sts. Joachim and Anne joined the likes of Abraham and Sarah.

Sts. Joachim and Anne’s great faith was especially evident when, in gratitude for God’s goodness in giving them a daughter, and in recognition of their daughter’s destiny for greatness, they brought the Blessed Virgin Mary to the Temple in Jerusalem to consecrate her to God.

The awesome call that their daughter, Mary, would receive at the Annunciation set her on the path of motherhood — to God himself. It was from her holy parents that the young Mary learned to be a model mother and wife.

The saintly couple’s most defining role is being the grandparents of Jesus. It is not known, however, if they were present at his birth in Bethlehem. It is presumed that they were not, given the text of the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke.

Tradition also holds that the relics of St. Anne were packed up and carried off by boat to Gaul (modern-day France) by the saintly siblings Martha, Mary and Lazarus, who went there to spread the Gospel. And so, when the relics were discovered centuries later, one of the earliest centers of devotion to St. Anne was set up in France, at Douai. This patronage was kept by the French who settled our continent and dedicated the Canadian shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupré, near Quebec City.

The very flesh that the son of God took on at his Incarnation came from his Blessed Mother; of course, which means it comes from her parents, too. Their obedience to the will of God is a precursor of the obedience of Mary and Jesus, which obtained mankind’s redemption and salvation.

OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

(right) A statue of Mary and her parents, Sts. Joachim and Anne, is seen at the Basilica of Ste.-Anne-de-Beaupre in Ste.-Anne-de-Beaupre, Quebec, in 2017.





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Grandparents and faith: A direct legacy that transcends generations

Silvio Cuéllar
OSV News

During my high school years, I lived with my grandmother Matilde. Sunday night was a sacred time when she would always take me to church. Back then, I lived in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, and we had two options to go to Mass: Our Lady of the Rosary Church, three blocks away, or the Salesians' Maria Auxiliadora parish, a little further, five blocks away. During those years, it was my grandmother — who I'd see praying every night before going to sleep — who planted the seed of faith in my heart.

In his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis reminds us of the importance of grandparents in family life and how their role can be fundamental in transmitting the Catholic faith to future generations. The Holy Father invites us to reflect on the importance of this intergenerational connection and its impact on the spiritual growth of our families.

"Very often it is grandparents who ensure that the most important values are passed down to their grandchildren, and 'many people can testify that they owe their initiation into the Christian life to their grandparents,'" noted the pope.

That was my experience, not only with my own abuelitas but also with my children's grandparents.

My wife Becky and I were blessed to have my in-laws, Paul and Barbara, just 10 minutes from home. They were a great help to us, supporting us during the extracurricular activities of our seven children. They were always present at soccer tournaments, musical performances, plays and they are the ones who taught my children about the lives of the saints.

When involved in the lives of their grandchildren, grandparents can become the family's treasure — their experience, wisdom and unconditional love can become an invaluable legacy that nurtures and strengthens family life.

Through their words, prayers and actions, grandparents can be beacons of spiritual light, guiding their grandchildren toward a deeper relationship with God and teaching them the value of prayer, mercy, forgiveness and Christian love.

The pope also wrote: "A family that fails to respect and

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The *Messenger* visited St. Patrick School, Taylor Mill, to ask students why they love their grandparents. As the students quietly thought about and wrote their answers laughter sprouted up across the room. Recalling fond memories of shopping trips, a lake house and feeding squirrels. Grandparents are grand, it was decided by the students, whether it is because their faith influence helps form young minds or simply because of love they share. Here are a few of the reasons second, third, fourth and fifth graders love their grandparents.

"I love my grandparents because they love me. I love my Grandpa John because he is the reason why I believe in God; he pays my tuition for my education. The reason I love grandmas is because she spoils me with love, I can call her and every time, she answers. That's why I love them; they're the reason why I am here. Thank you, grandparents."

-M. Miller, Fourth Grade

"I love my grandparent! They are so cool because they let me eat candy play video games and watch movies all day! Sometimes my cousin comes over

cherish its grandparents, who are its living memory, is already in decline, whereas a family that remembers has a future." In our modern society, where the elderly often end up alone and isolated, this is a great challenge.

Grandparents can also be key pillars in the formation of a strong faith community, encouraging the passing on of family traditions and stories. In this regard, Pope Francis affirmed: "Listening to the elderly tell their stories is good for children and young people; it makes them feel connected to the living history of their families, their neighborhoods and their country."

Grandparents have an essential role as transmitters of the faith. Their love, wisdom and testimo-

ny are invaluable gifts that can strengthen family ties and nurture the spirituality of future generations. Let us take advantage of the treasure of our grandparents, their stories and their support, to build strong Catholic families and communities where elders are respected, and the faith is lived and transmitted with joy and love.

Why I love my grandparents with St. Patrick School, Taylor Mill

and we get crazy! I love you grandparents!"

-S. Ising, Fifth Grade

"They take care of me, and they love me with all of their heart. After school my grandparents bring me to Dairy Queen."

-D. Gillespie, Fourth Grade

"I love my grandparents my grandparents because my Paw Paw saved my life because I jumped in the pool twice! And he helped me think of 1,000,000,000,000,000 pounds of jokes and he served in Vietnam."

-A. Schultz, Third Grade

"I love my grandparents because they spoil me by taking me shopping for Monster High dolls! It is so much fun! My Grandma makes me pancakes, my grandpa helps my dad build the new house."

-Cilla, Second Grade

"My grandparents are Catholic. They always give me presents that are Catholic, I enjoy the presents that they give me. They always give me holy stuff and rosaries."

-Cilla, Second Grade

"I love my grandparents because they feed squirrels, and it is really funny when the squirrels fight. Another reason I love my grandparents is because

they give me the best Christmas gifts. More reasons I love my grandparents is because they have a big bucket of candy. I love my grandparents because they watch the Bigfoot channel with me. A reason I love my grandparents is because they love me."

-E. Rider, Fifth Grade

"My dad's dad is super funny. My mom's mom is a teacher. My dad's mom has a lake house, so she takes us to the lake and sometimes lets us spend \$20. My mom's dad goes to UDF to get us snacks when he picks us up from school."

-Finn, Second Grade

"My grandparents spoil me, and I love it! They let me eat as much candy as I want! They take me on shopping sprees every month."

-Lilly, Second Grade

"My grandparents are super nice, and they give us candy, but just a little bit. I love them super much. The make very good food. They buy toys for me."

-Jameson, Third Grade

"My grandparents are super nice and make really good food. We go to lots of fun places."

-Jonah, Second Grade



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Elderly or homebound can still participate in parish life

Melissa Lesieur
OSV News

At one time in my life, I volunteered to bring the Eucharist to homebound parishioners directly from Sunday Mass. I would arrive at the person’s house with the consecrated hosts cradled in my pyx. We would read the Gospel of the day and pray the Our Father together before the person received Communion. Afterward, we might visit for a few minutes before I moved on to the next place. It was a ministry that I enjoyed because, over time, I got to know some of the elderly parishioners very well — people I probably never would have met otherwise. I would hear about their younger days in parish life, and they would eagerly look to me for current information from the outside world. It was a privilege to bring Christ into their homes in that way, and to in return recognize Christ in them. The church’s concern for our elderly and infirm is a blessing that has continued through the millennia since Jesus and the apostles.

However, being homebound also has its dark side. The people I visited were usually very lonely. They often felt alienated from family, friends, daily activities and parish life. Sometimes, even God could feel far away. Receiving the Eucharist weekly can help strengthen faith in God’s presence, but it’s easy for the homebound to still feel separated from the church or from purposeful living. The pandemic shutdown gave the world insight into what homebound parishioners experience every day. Livestreamed Masses



Homebound elderly woman sits with cane.

OSV News photo/Sabine van Erp, Pixabay

and Zoom spiritual direction help, but technology cannot replace the tangible reality of living our faith, gathering in community or serving others. Elderly and homebound parishioners miss this part of life and need ways to remain connected with the church, despite age or health issues.

Due to an illness, I was once homebound for almost a year. It was difficult. I appreciated the televised Masses and reception of the Eucharist from family members on holy

days. Once, my pastor even visited so I could have confession and be anointed.

Of course, I could pray on my own and stay in contact with friends through emails and text messages, but it wasn’t the same. Like the homebound I used to visit, I still felt alienated from the rest of the world. I’d always been involved with my parish and it was hard to be separated so physically from church life. On one hand, I understood that I was being humbled and purified while on the receiving end of ministry; on the other hand, I longed to participate.

An opportunity arose when our pastor needed a parishioner to act as contact person for the children whose schooling is sponsored by the parish. The contact person would need to send out the birthday and holiday greetings on behalf of the parish, and share the children’s correspondence through the parish bulletin. This

was something that I could certainly do! While homebound, I eagerly took on this role that connected me to parish ministry.

There are myriad ways our homebound parishioners can still participate in parish life. Depending on a person’s capabilities and talents, they can participate — at their own pace — from their home. Does the Society of St. Vincent de Paul need more mittens or blankets, or “prayer shawls” for the ill? Homebound parishioners could knit or crochet those. Do the altar linens need to be washed and ironed? Someone could drop it off at a homebound parishioner’s residence. Does the parish website need to be updated? A homebound parishioner could do that.

Through such activities, small jobs needed by the parish community can get done, and the homebound can still feel like they are a part of parish life.

Most importantly, homebound parishioners can be powerhouses of prayer. Often, they might not be strong enough to do anything physical for the church. However, they can always pray. I appreciate my pastor asking me for specific intentions to pray for in the parish. In prayer, we are all together in Christ as his body. He is the one really ministering through us. Homebound or not, that is the greatest privilege of all.

Confession of our lowliness

(Continued from page 5)

“bless the Lord, O my soul; and all my being, bless his holy name.” These are not mere pious words, but words which indicate something fundamental about us has changed.

Or, at least, something about us should change if we are regularly in the presence of the living God. The fact that we are in the presence of the all-holy, infinite God when we celebrate and adore the Holy Eucharist, and too often live as if the God-Man, Jesus Christ had never come or had been given to us, helps us grasp the urgency of Jesus’ words, “but I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

The Lord has shared the fullness of his being with us, that we may live and be like Him. “Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the Lord who made us” so that we might be raised up “through Him, and with Him, and in Him.”

Father Phillip W. DeVous is pastor of St. Charles Borromeo, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima, May’s Lick.

Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the Messenger are available online at covdio.org/messenger.

Protecting God’s Children for Adults Safe Environment Trainings

For all employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Covington who in any way provide a safe environment for children.

Step 1: Contact parish/school institution leader to review the Policies and Procedures and fill out the Application and Acceptance Forms.

Step 2: Go to www.virtus.org and click on Registration. Follow the prompts to create an account and to request a background check. Selection.com is a secure site; the background check is posted on your account and you receive a copy if you request it during the registration process. You will sign up for a VIRTUS training class during theregistration.

Step 3: Your account becomes active when your background check, VIRTUS session and Acceptance Form are posted on your account. You will receive 12 bulletins per year. You will receive e-mail notices at system@pub.virtus.org unless your computer program blocks them.

Bulletins:

- February bulletin: posted Sunday, Feb. 2; due Tuesday, March 4.

The monthly e-mail reminder of a new bulletin posted will come from system@pub.virtus.org.

www.virtusonline.org, enter your user id and password. If your account is suspended contact your primary location where you volunteer or are employed. Your primary location contact information is

found under your Contact Tab.

VIRTUS Training:

- Wednesday, March 26, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, March 26, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Thursday, April 10, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Thursday, April 10, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Tuesday, April 29, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

- Tuesday, April 29, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, May 7, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, May 7, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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St. Joseph prayer intentions hit record with collaboration of French shrine, internet app

Caroline de Sury
OSV News

PARIS — France has a special place to celebrate the March 19 feast of St. Joseph — the Shrine of Our Lady of Graces in Cotignac, in the picturesque region of Provence.

Every year, during a novena in preparation for the feast, it invites people to submit prayer intentions on its website.

The sanctuary, which receives some 140,000 pilgrims every year, kicked it up a notch in the Jubilee Year and joined forces with the Catholic smartphone application Hozana ahead of the feast day.

During the novena that preceded the March 19 feast, 110,000 people submitted prayer intentions to St. Joseph just in a few days over the Hozana app. On the feast day, the intentions were brought to Cotignac.

“St. Joseph is an incredibly powerful intercessor,” Cassandre Verhelst, who supervises the English-language edition of Hozana as well as the St. Joseph novena, told OSV News. “We wanted to encourage as many people as possible to entrust their needs to him,” she said. “His prayers have changed lives.”

Founded in 2014 and available in four languages — French, English, Spanish and Portuguese — Hozana now has 2 million active users. It offers a platform to Catholic groups or communities that want to suggest prayers, temporary or permanent.

Throughout the year, Hozana indicates prayer routes, some of which are initiated by its team in collaboration with partners, priests, religious communities, Christian authors or shrines.

Thanks to Hozana, rather discreet local shrines suddenly take on a new dimension. The sanctuary in Cotignac was originally a modest regional place of pilgrimage that was built after an apparition of the Blessed Mother holding the Child Jesus, in 1519.

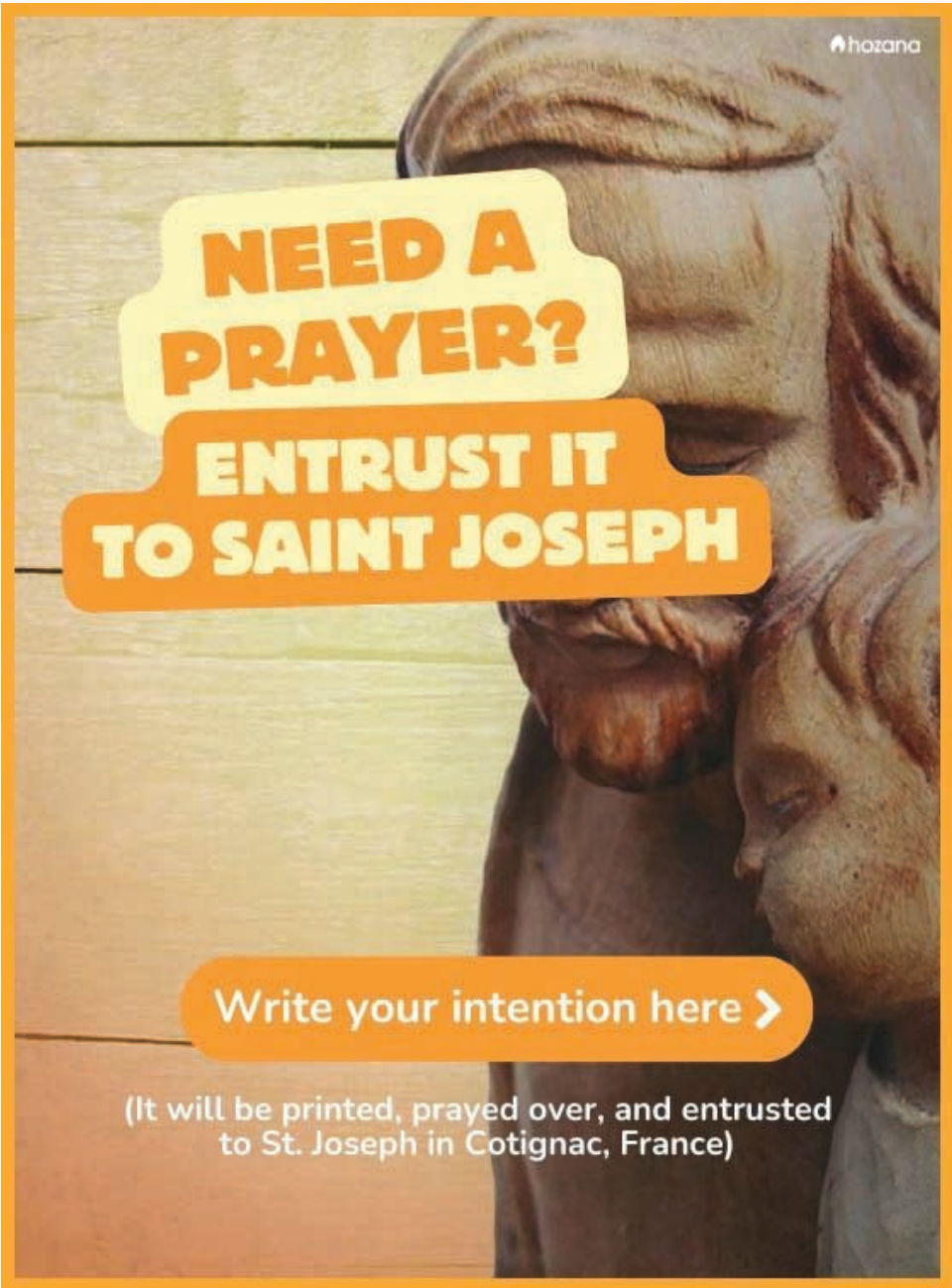
By 1637, it had already gained notoriety when a French cleric was officially sent from Paris by Queen Anne of Austria, wife of King Louis XIII, to pray there. The royals had no children, and the monk had come to ask for an heir for the royal family. Nine months later, in 1638, the future “Roi Soleil,” Louis XIV, was born. He personally visited the sanctuary in 1660 to give thanks for his birth.

But Our Lady was not the only one bringing miracles to Cotignac. On Feb. 21, 1660, Gaspard Ricard, a 22-year-old shepherd, likely witnessed the arrival of King Louis XIV in his town. Just four months later, on June 7, while tending his flock near Mount Bessillon, he was overcome by the heat and thirst. At that moment, a venerable old man, identifying himself as Joseph, appeared and instructed Ricard in Provençal to lift a heavy stone, revealing a spring where he was able to drink. The young man was saved, and devotion to St. Joseph started to spread in Cotignac as he told the story of his survival.

Since then, the sanctuary has welcomed families, especially women who are praying for a child. Today, with the Hozana network, its reach has extended well beyond France.

“Those prayer intentions were not just being brought to St. Joseph,” Verhelst told OSV News. “They were prayed over by more than 2 million Hozana users” before being entrusted to St. Joseph in Cotignac on March 19.

In addition to Hozana, there are many Catholic prayer apps that are expanding in France and enjoying growing success. Among them are GoConfess, the app that connects the faithful who want to confess to priests who can make themselves available to them; CredoFunding, which allows online donations to religious associations or institutions; and Ephatta, a homestay app for travelers and pilgrims.



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St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Parish in Ft. Thomas, KY is seeking to fill the position of Business Manager due to an upcoming retirement. The current incumbent will continue in the role until a replacement is on board. This part-time position (approximately 20 hours) reports to the pastor regarding all financial and other business-related activities of the parish. Candidates will have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, have previous accounting/bookkeeping/business experience, preferably in a Catholic parish or school. Must be skilled in current software and online applications, be organized, and able to work without direct supervision. Must pass a background check. Candidates need not be Roman Catholic but must be living a life consistent with Catholic values and be supportive of the Catholic mission.

Interested candidates should send a resume to Fr. Stef Bankemper at sbankemper@stcky.org.

Catholic migrant advocates ‘deeply alarmed’ by Trump use of Alien Enemies Act

Kate Scanlon
OSV News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on March 15 invoked the Alien Enemies Act for the first time since World War II, granting himself broad authority under a wartime law to deport people allegedly associated with a Venezuelan gang, sparking a legal battle and prompting concern from Catholic immigration advocates.

Anna Gallagher, executive director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, also known as CLINIC, said in a March 17 statement the group “is deeply alarmed by the misuse of this obscure law to strip immigrants suspected of gang activity of due process.”

The legislation was first enacted in 1798 amid fears immigrants — particularly Irish Catholics — would side with France in a potential conflict with the U.S., a majority Protestant nation. It gave the president authority to imprison and deport non-citizens during conflict bypassing typical hearings.

The legislation has been invoked just three times since: during the War of 1812, World War I, and most recently World War II, when it was used in the infamous mass internment of people of German, Italian and especially Japanese heritage.

Gallagher pointed out that the law has historically “led to serious rights abuses,” pointing to the Japanese American experience during World War II. Two-thirds of the 120,000 people of Japanese descent rounded up into camps by the U.S. government under the law were native-born U.S. citizens, among them Los Angeles-born and future Star Trek actor George Takei, whose family emerged from internment financially ruined.

In a March 16 statement, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Trump used “his core powers as President and Commander-in-Chief to defend the American People from an urgent threat.”

Leavitt called the Venezuelan gang, Tren De Aragua, “one of the most violent and ruthless terrorist gangs on planet earth.”

“TDA is a direct threat to the national security of the United States,” she argued, describing the transnational gang as a “foreign terrorist organization.”

The Trump administration used the president’s invocation of the 1798 law to deport a group of noncitizens it alleged were members of Tren de Aragua. But some of those individuals sued to prevent their imminent deportations to El Salvador for confinement in the country’s brutal mega-prison known as CECOT, or the Center for the Confinement of Terrorism.

Chief Judge James Boasberg of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., ordered the Trump administration March 15 to redirect two flights carrying the alleged gang members back to the U.S. while they were midair. However, the Trump administration did not reroute the planes, prompting what could be a significant legal battle. CLINIC’s Gallagher pointed out that immigrants accused of cooperation with Tren de Aragua need to have their due process rights respected in order to uphold the fair and correct application of law.

“We all want safe communities, but this is an unjust and unnecessary abuse of power,” she said.

Gallagher also quoted Pope Francis’ recent letter to the U.S. bishops regarding the mass deportation efforts underway the pope described as a “major crisis.” She referenced the pope’s statement that the development of an “orderly and legal migration” policy “cannot come about through the privilege of some and the sacrifice of others. What is built on the basis of force, and not on the truth about the equal dignity of every human being, begins badly and will end badly.”

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Kidnappers kill young Nigerian seminarian

AUCHI, Nigeria — A young seminarian, Andrew Peter, is the latest victim of violence in Nigeria, where attacks on Catholic clergy and religious are escalating. On March 3, Andrew Peter, a 21-year-old seminarian, was kidnapped alongside Father Philip Ekweli from the rectory of St. Peter Catholic Church in Iviukhua-Agenebode, Edo state. While Father Ekweli was released on March 13, the gunmen tragically killed the seminarian. This marks another case in the rising wave of kidnappings in Nigeria, which has seen a threefold increase in attacks on clergy in the first quarter of 2025 compared to last year. The Diocese of Auchi expressed deep condolences to the family of the seminarian, urging the government to enhance security in the region, which has become a hotspot for kidnappings. Over the past decade, more than 145 priests and seminarians have been kidnapped in Nigeria, with 11 fatalities, amid growing insecurity fueled by gangs and extremist groups. Father Okechukwu, a priest of the Diocese of Kafanchan, was kidnapped on the morning of March 4 and found dead the following day, on Ash Wednesday. He was the seventh priest to be kidnapped in Nigeria since January.

Heightened threat environment for judiciary raises concerns

WASHINGTON — The sister of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett was recently targeted with a bomb threat, law enforcement officials said, shedding light on growing concern about threats to members of the judiciary and their families. Mary Graw Leary, a professor at The Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law and a former federal prosecutor, told OSV News “the judiciary is specifically designed not to be political and specifically designed to be independent, and is often the last check on the other two branches of government.” A heightened threat environment for Supreme Court justices comes amid a series of high-profile and controversial rulings by the nation’s highest court. Reuters reported earlier in March that U.S. Marshals have warned federal judges of unusually high threat levels amid criticism of the judiciary by individuals including tech billionaire and Trump ally Elon Musk.

Gudziak: America ‘silencing its own voice’ with VOA shutdown

WASHINGTON — Journalists dismissed by the Trump administration’s gutting of the federally funded Voice of America broadcaster “will not be silenced,” said Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia. “We are ashamed that America is silencing its

own voice,” he added. The archbishop posted a March 16 statement to his Facebook page, after the administration placed almost all 1,300 of VOA’s staffers on leave that same day — part of a wider move to slash the funding and functions of federally operated, pro-democracy media outlets. The White House said the move would “ensure that taxpayers are no longer on the hook for radical propaganda.” Launched in 1942 to combat Nazi propaganda, Voice of America eventually expanded to provide service in close to 50 languages and a weekly global audience of more than 354 million. “What the Soviet Union could not achieve, what the Russian, Iranian, Chinese, and other authoritarian regimes could only dream about has been accomplished by the American presidential administration: the silencing of America’s 83-year-old service of media support for democracy, international law and justice and the defense of human rights,” said Archbishop Gudziak. At the same time, he said, “Such setbacks will not be permanent. ... Do not lose faith. ... God’s truth will prevail!”

Roberts issues rare statement rebuking Trump’s call to impeach a federal judge

WASHINGTON — Chief Justice John Roberts issued a rare public statement March 18 rebuking President Donald Trump’s call to impeach a federal judge who ruled against his administration in a case concerning deportations. “For more than two centuries, it has been established that impeachment is not an appropriate response to disagreement concerning a judicial decision. The normal appellate review process exists for that purpose,” Roberts said in a statement. Bradley Joondeph, a professor at Jesuit-run Santa Clara University School of Law whose areas of study include federalism and judicial behavior, told OSV News, “It is very unusual for a chief justice of the United States to push back publicly against another branch of government,” outside of their judicial role, such as written opinions in cases. “So it’s a remarkable moment, I think, in our constitutional history, that the chief justice feels the need to do so,” he said.

Wichita Catholic church vandalized in what bishops call ‘hate crime’

WICHITA, Kan. — St. Patrick Church in Wichita has been targeted in what that state’s bishops are calling a “hate crime.” The church announced March 15 it had been vandalized, although its priests were safe. Images later posted online by the Kansas Catholic Conference showed a destroyed statue, candles strewn about, and shattered glass. The conference said “a Satanic website was scrawled on the wall” and described the attack as “a hate crime scene.” Police have arrested 28-year-old Michael Angel Gonzalez of Wichita, who was booked March 16 on charges of burglary, criminal desecration and criminal damage to property. The desecration took place just days ahead

of a planned March 28 “black mass” at the Kansas Statehouse in Topeka by the group Satanic Grotto. The Kansas Catholic Conference said in a March 6 Facebook post such “a sacrilegious event” would be an “explicit demonstration of anti-Catholic bigotry” that would be “an insult to not only Catholics but all people of good will.”

Pope appeals to communicators to assist peacemakers, words

ROME — People in the world of news and communications need to understand the full importance of words, Pope Francis wrote. While war offers no solutions to today’s conflicts, peacemakers need new vitality and credibility, and they should be assisted by people in communications, he said in a letter to Luciano Fontana, editor-in-chief of Corriere della Sera, an Italian daily. “There is a great need for reflection, calmness and an awareness of complexity” when it comes to working for peace, fraternity and justice, which requires “commitment, work, silence and words,” he wrote. The newspaper published the type-written letter March 18; it was signed by the pope and dated March 14 from Rome’s Gemelli hospital, where the pope has been recovering from respiratory difficulty and infections since Feb. 14. Vatican News also published the text the same day. He encouraged the newspaper and “all those who dedicate their work and intelligence to informing through communication tools that now connect our world in real time to feel the full importance of words.” “They are never just words: they are facts that shape human environments. They can connect or divide, serve the truth or use it for other ends,” he wrote. “We must disarm words to disarm minds and disarm the Earth” and facilitate reflection, calm and deeper awareness of how complex reality is.

4 pro-life activists found guilty, spared jail time for clinic ‘rescue’

MADISON, N.J. — Four pro-life activists, including two pardoned by President Donald Trump in January for earlier convictions under the FACE Act, were found guilty of trespassing March 14 for their 2019 “rescue” at a New Jersey abortion clinic. But they will not face jail time. Instead, they received 18 months of probation, although they won’t have to report to a probation officer. Their 30-day jail sentences were suspended. Father David Nix, a Denver-based diocesan hermit; Father Fidelis Moscinski, a Franciscan Friar of the Renewal from the Bronx borough of New York; William Goodman, a Wisconsin native and longtime activist who has experienced homelessness since 2017; and another activist, Sally Hernandez, were convicted March 14. They had entered Garden State Gynecology in Morristown. Their attorney, Vincent Sanzone, called the four “pro-life saints” and credited the Holy Spirit for the result. “The 30 day suspended jail time was the best thing we can do,” he said. “The judge gave us some leeway in presenting our arguments for life.”

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- The Trinity
- Christ: His Person & Works
- The Sacramental Economy
- Praying Scripture: Lectio Divina
- Evangelizacion en la Parroquia
- Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism
- The Catechumenal Process: A Modern Restoration
- Entrance into Christ & Participation in God's Life
- Family Systems in a Catholic School
- The Evangelizing Classroom
- Dilexit Nos: Formation of Heart as Link Between Evangelization & Catechesis
- Child Catechetical Methodologies & Learning Styles
- Adult Catechetical Methodologies & Learning Styles
- Pedagogy of Revelation & the Response of Faith
- Prayer: Introduction to the Spiritual Life of the Catechist
- A Foundational Vision: Theology of the Body
- A Vision for Effective Youth Ministry
- Methods & Practical Skills for Youth Ministry
- How to Develop & Sustain Youth Ministry Teams
- Youth Ministry Safe Environment Workshop