My dear friends,

“Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen, as he said.” (Matt 28:5-6)

These words were spoken to the holy women who came to the tomb on that first Easter morning looking to prepare the body of Jesus for burial. Moments later, as they ran to tell the Apostles of their remarkable encounter, they met Jesus himself. Jesus said: “Do not be afraid.” (Matt 28:10)

Do not be afraid. Those words or some form of those words, we are told, appear in the Old and New Testaments over 300 times.

Do not be afraid. We have nothing to fear because the Lord is indeed risen from the dead! He has conquered sin, death and the grave and he is always with us, always in our midst. Perhaps this Easter we need to hear those words more than ever before.

Do not be afraid!

My friends, we find ourselves in uncharted territory. There is anxiety, stress, fear. Yet, we hold on to the words of Jesus, “Do not be afraid!” Jesus told the women to tell his disciples what they beheld, that he had indeed risen from the dead. (Matt 28:10) They were to share this good news. They were to share this joy!

We are called upon to do no less in the situation in which we find ourselves. Amidst the difficulties we are experiencing during the pandemic the Lord stands in our midst. He is our hope.

Be assured that each of you is in my prayers every day as we walk together. Please pray for me.

The darkness will give way to life. Fear will give way to hope. And through it all, the Lord is at our side to guide us, to strengthen us, to sustain us.

Blessed Easter! The Lord is risen! Alleluia!

Yours devotedly in the Lord,

+ Roger Foy
Most Rev. Roger J. Foy, D.D.
Bishop of Covington
Bishop Foys ordains seminarian to the Order of Deacon

Joseph Rielage ordained a deacon, answers challenging call from God

Laura Keener

A quiet joy and resoluteness permeated the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, April 8, as Deacon Joseph Rielage stood in the empty cathedral, presenting himself for ordination to the transitional diaconate. For an ordination, the cathedral would ordinarily be filled with priests, deacons, parishioners, family and friends, but this was not an ordinary ordination.

This ordination was being held during the COVID-19 pandemic, an illness that has affected nearly every country on every continent in the world and at a time when Americans are under restrictions that have encroached on many of the freedoms they cherish — including the right to gather for worship. The pandemic challenges everyone to consider what is truly essential to protect life.

Lakewise, the restrictions placed on the general population in response to the pandemic challenged Mr. Rielage to consider what was truly essential for his ordination. For him, a large celebration was not essential. What was essential, he had said, is “that the work of the Church continues.”

The ordination was originally scheduled for April 4 but Bishop Roger Foys had become ill the day before and was in the hospital recovering from surgery. So the ordination was postponed. Praise be to God, Bishop Foys recovered enough so that the ordination did not experience a long delay.

The ordination was simple. Melissa Ruhmke, Mr. Rielage’s sister, was the sole congregant. Participating in the ceremony were the diocese’s two vicars, Father Ryan Maher and Father Daniel Schomaker; Deacon Jordan Hainsey, a seminarian chosen by Mr. Rielage to vest him during the ordination rite; Father Joseph Shelton, the master of ceremonies; Devin Heffernan, a seminarian and server and Bishop Roger Foys, the celebrant.

Despite the fact that we sit in an empty church, the Church continues its ministry not only here today but among God’s people. That fits very well with the ministry of a deacon.” Bishop Foys said as he began his homily—“The first office holders in the Church, as we hear from the Acts of the Apostles, were the offices of service — service to God’s people.

Bishop Foys said that people working in the service industry offer a good instruction on the ministry of the deacon. “Being in the service industry is not always easy. You are subject often to the whim and caprice of those you serve. And those who are served oftentimes do not fully understand or appreciate the service that is given them,” he said.

This ministry of service to God’s people is a part of the ministry of every priest and bishop. “We do not cease being deacons once we are ordained priests or bishops — that whole (Continued on page 16)

DIACONATE ORDINATION

Joseph Rielage ordains a deacon

(above) Melissa Ruhmke, Mr. Rielage’s sister, was the sole congregant, due to the crowding restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(above) The Church calls candidate Joseph Rielage and requests that Bishop Foys ordain him to the Order of Deacon.

(left) Through the laying on of hands and prayer of ordination, the gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred on the candidate.

(below right) The candidate lies prostrate before the altar as the hymn of application is sung pleading for God’s grace for the candidate.

(below) First time as a deacon, Deacon Rielage serves at the altar.

(left) Bishop Roger Foys reminds us that the ministry of service to God’s people is a part of the ministry of every priest and bishop.
Father Gerretty ‘inspired others by being happy in his vocation and went out of his way to serve them with integrity’

Allegry Thatcher
Asst. Diocesan Editor

Father James “Jim” Gerretty, beloved pastor, educator and vocation director, centered his ministry around bringing others together and giving himself to those communities he encountered.

Born August 6, 1931 in LaFollette, Ky., to Joseph and Corinne Gegner Gerretty, Father Gerretty was the second of four brothers and the last surviving. He never forget his German and Irish roots and always kept his connections to Ludlow, eventually even moving back to his family home upon retirement. Until the end, he stayed very involved in his home parish, St. John the Baptist.

According to his nephew Dan Gerretty, Father Gerretty wanted to be a priest from a young age. He was educated by the Sisters of Divine Providence, whom he remembered fondly as influencing his decision to pursue the priestly vocation.

At the age of 16, he attended Our Lady of the Lake Seminary in Lake Wawasee, Indiana. St. John’s Seminary, Little Rock, Arkansas, and St. Patrick College, Maywood, Illinois before being ordained a priest for the Diocese of Covington June 29, 1967 by the Most Rev. William T. Mulloy, D.D., Bishop of Covington. Father Gerretty was one of four priests ordained that year who found their roots at St. Boniface Parish.

After nine years as a parish priest, Father Gerretty was appointed Director of Vocations for the diocese and also served as director of the Serra Club of Northern Kentucky.

He returned to a parochial vicar in following years, as well as serving as a professor at Newport Central Catholic High School and Lexington Catholic High School and chaplain at St. Walburg Monastery.

Throughout his many assignments, Father Gerretty always returned to visit each place he had been assigned or made friends. Dan Gerretty remembers his uncle visited Ireland for his 50th birthday, and spent his retirement traveling to see the places he loved. Not only did he visit many of his former assigned parishes, but he built a cabin at Lake Carnico in Nichols County and shared it with his brothers in the summer. He also cultivated heart, and ty at Precious Blood Parish on Pawleys Island, South Carolina, where he often spent his winters.

A lover of classical music and all things Irish, Father Gerretty shared these gifts with the men he counseled as vocations director from 1966 to 1972. Father Daniel Vogelbacher, pastor, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, remembers Father Gerretty who recruited him in 1968, to be a very gracious man. He says Father Gerretty inspired others by being happy in his vocation and went out of his way to serve them with integrity.

“He treated everybody with great kindness, strangers as well as friends,” said Father Vogelbacher. “He gave himself to others and enjoyed being present to his people.”

“Father Jim was a man of integrity,” said his priest of his priesthood in seminary ministry as well as serving as the vocation director of the Diocese, “said Bishop Roger Foys. “These are trusted positions and it is obvious that the bishop put a great deal of trust in Father Jim’s abilities as well as his example of what a priest to be. Father Gerretty was known to be a real gentleman who responded to any need and any assignment he was asked to undertake.”

Dave Schroeder, a parishioner at Sts. Boniface and James, remembers Father Gerretty as a friend and classmate of his late father:

“He was a quiet guy, very down-to-earth, very simple, never one to draw attention to himself,” he said. “He was the kind of person that just wanted to do good in the world and didn’t really look for approval. He was a very pastoral, kind man. He was someone that really looked out for people and cared about people’s lives and what they were going through.”

Mr. Schroeder especially remembered how Father Gerretty held onto old friendships and remained loyal to the Ludlow community. He was frequently at social functions at the parish, and brought food that he made himself. He invested in each of the seven parishes where he served as pastor, seeing it as a family.

“He was very welcoming to anyone he didn’t know. You became his friend pretty quick, and he always made you feel comfortable,” said Mr. Schroeder. “He was there to celebrate with people.”

Father Gerretty died March 29, 2020 and is survived by five nieces and nephews, nine great-nieces and nephews and five great-great nieces and nephews. His funeral was held in a private ceremony due to the COVID-19 pandemic, April 2, 2020 at Sts. Boniface and James Parish, Ludlow. He was interred at St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell. Dan Gerretty said a small, local funeral was just the way he humbly uncle would have liked it.

“Although his death will diminish us and leave a void in our lives, we trust that this year he celebrated Easter with the Risen Lord,” said Bishop Foys. “We thank God for giving us Father Jim for almost 90 years and now commend him to the Lord’s loving care.”

‘The Lord blesses the Diocese of Covington’ on Divine Mercy Sunday

Laura Keener
Cathedral Correspondent

Bishop Roger Foys will celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday, April 19, at 3 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

Bishop Roger Foys will celebrate a Holy Hour beginning at 2 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

Divine Mercy Sunday at the Cathedral
Sunday April 19, 2-3 p.m.

During the Holy Hour vesper, the rosary and the Divine Mercy chaplet will be prayed. The observance will end at 3 p.m. with an Eucharistic procession to St. Mary Park, where Bishop Foys, in the presence of the monstrance, will bless the city and the Diocese of Covington. Benediction will follow the blessing. The blessing is being offered for the end of the pandemic in the diocese, the country and the world.

Due to the restrictions on public gatherings, the public is not encouraged to physically attend the celebration. The faithful are encouraged to join spiritually in the celebration and to participate via live stream on the Cathedral’s website www.covcathedral.com.

In the Catholic Church, the hour of 3 o’clock is the Hour of Great Mercy. At this hour on Good Friday, Jesus died on the cross for the salvation of souls and the whole world. As he hung on the cross, a Roman soldier spoke Jesus’ heart. “Jesus’ heart swelled with blood and water that flowed out from the Lord to the world,” said Father Schomaker.

In the Jubilee Year 2000, Pope St. John Paul II declared the second Sunday of Easter as Divine Mercy Sunday. The tradition came from the diary of St. Faustina Kowalska, a Polish nun and mystic, who during World War I received revelations from Jesus. Jesus instructed her to keep a diary and to draw an image of his mercy — an image of him with a white and red ray emanating from his heart. Under his image, Jesus instructed the words “Jesus I trust in you” he inscribed.

“The red and white beams coming from Jesus’ heart represent the blood and the water that gushed forth from his heart when the soldier stabbed him with his lance,” said Father Schomaker. “Jesus said, ‘Jesus I trust in you,’ that’s who we are called to do. We have to have faith in what our government leaders are doing to keep us safe and in our scientists but, before any of that, we have to place our trust in the Lord who is the Divine Physician, the King of Kings and Lord of lords, the one who is over every political and government leader — we have to place our trust in him.”

Father Schomaker said that although this is certainly a time of chaos and anxiety and sadness it is also a time of great grace.

“We hear in the Scriptures where sin (chaos) abounds, grace abounds all the more if we open our minds and hearts to it,” said Father Schomaker. “This is a moment for an increase in the faith, an increase in the grace that God is giving us. It is a call to stand up, to participate in beseeching the Lord’s mercy for the diocese, the commonwealth and for the nation, to rid us of this chaos, to rid us of this disorder, to rid us of this virus.”
Huge stones and locked door

Seren Kierkegaard once wrote that the Gospel text he strongly identified with is the account of the disciples, after the death of Jesus, locking themselves in an upper room in fear and then experiencing Jesus coming through the locked doors to bestow peace on them. Kierkegaard wanted Jesus to do that for him, to come through his locked doors, his resistance, and breathe peace inside him.

That image of locked doors is one of two particularly interesting images inside the story of the first Easter. The other is the image of the “large stone” that entombed the buried Jesus. These images remind us of what often separates us from the grace of the Resurrection. Sometimes for that grace to find us, someone must “roll away the stone” that entombs us and sometimes the resurrection must come to us through locked doors.

First, about the stone:

The Gospels tell us that, early on Easter morning, three women went on their way to the tomb of Jesus intending to embalm his body with spices but they were anxious about how they would remove the large stone that sealed the entrance of his tomb. They were asking each other: “Who will roll away the stone?”

Well, as we know, the stone had already been rolled away. But we don’t know who removed it, rolled it away or ended up there. Nobody knows exactly how that stone was rolled away. But what Scripture does make clear is this — Jesus didn’t resurrect himself. God raised him. Jesus didn’t roll away the stone, though that’s what we generally assume. However, and for good reason, both Scripture and Christian tradition strongly affirm that Jesus didn’t raise himself from the dead — his Father raised him. This might seem like an unnecessary point to emphasize; after all, what difference does it make?

It makes a huge difference. Jesus didn’t raise himself from the dead and neither can we. That’s the point. For the power of the Resurrection to enter us something from beyond us has to remove the huge, immovable rock of our resistance. This is not to deny that we, ourselves, have goodwill and personal strength, but these, though important, are mere a preconditions for receiving the grace of the Resurrection than the power of the Resurrection itself, which always comes to us from beyond. We never roll back the stone ourselves!

Who can roll back the stone? Perhaps that isn’t a question they’re particular about; but we should be. Jesus was entombed and helpless to raise himself up, all the more so for us. Like the women at that first Easter, we need to be anxious: “Who will roll back the stone?” We can’t open our own tombs.

Second, our locked doors:

It’s interesting how the believers at that first Easter experienced the resurrection in their own lives. The Gospels tell us that they were huddled in fear and paranoia behind locked doors, wanting only to protect themselves, when Christ came and opened their locked doors, the doors of their fear and self-protection, and breathed peace into them. “The doors were closed in four wasn’t because of ill will or had faith. In their hearts they sincerely wished that they weren’t afraid, but that good will still didn’t unlock their doors. Nothing but the breath of God and breathed peace into them in spite of their resistance, their fear and their locked doors.

Learn what God wants us to learn

God doesn’t like this either. I mean the coronavirus thing. God doesn’t like it either.

And yet there are those who choose to believe that this is something that God has brought upon us as a punishment. It’s in our nature, I guess, to try to find someone other than ourselves to blame for our troubles.

And it’s true that all things are of God’s making.

The first words of sacred Scripture tell us that.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ...” and in the context of that story we hear six times that God saw that the things that He created were good. And then, when He was finished, and all the individual pieces came together, there was light and the earth and the plants and the seas and fishes and birds — God stepped back and looked at everything, the big picture, and “it was very good.”

I marvel at how many marvel and he said, “I know, it’s only rock and roll, but I like it.”

But let’s not forget that God also saw the meter that killed off all the dinosaurs, he saw the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D 79, the Dark Ages, the Black Plague, The Great Depression, World War I and II — even the coronavirus.

God could not make water and not see it in the possibility for floods. He could not make trees and shrubs and not see in them the possibility for forest fires. He could not make human and not see in the possibility that we would sin. God looked in the panorama that was the universe and saw all the ingredients that would millions of years later become the coronavirus, and still, God saw that the world that he created was very good.

We must remember, that, from where God sits, he sees everything and knows how everything is connected. Sure, the meteor killed off all the dinosaurs, but somehow, that event helped to shape the world that we’re living in today which, in a lot of ways, is a pretty great world. God allows bad things like meteors, volcanoes and even so that he can bring forth from those very bad things far greater good things.

So let’s be clear that when God saw all he had made, he saw a world in which the people he loved would turn their backs on him, and where his Son would suffer and die on the cross to redeem them. And still, he declared it all to be very good. Why? Because from where God sits, he has a vantage point that allows Him to see everything and know how everything is connected. He saw that Jesus’ suffering and death would lead to his resurrection and ultimately give birth to Christianity that will restore all of creation to the perfection that it was meant to be.

Not only that, but there’s also the matter of your salvation and mine which could only be had through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.

I think it’s interesting that while we celebrate Jesus’ resurrection, it’s the cross, not the empty tomb, that has become the symbol of our faith. That realization should cause us to take another look at all the things that go on in our lives, when we feel helpless inside our wounds and fears, when we feel spiritually inert, and when we realize things are not what they could be.

The resurrected Christ can come through locked doors and roll back any stone that entombs us — no matter how hopeless the task is for us.

Ohane Father Ron Bohlman, theologian, teacher, and author, is a professor of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas.

Deacon Timothy Britz
It's now the season to 'play ball'

The readings for the Second Sunday of Easter — Cycle "A" are: Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 1:3-9; and John 20:18-31.

Ordinarily this is how we would have witnessed the "Opening Days" of all the major-league baseball teams. Avid fans that had followed their favorite team all through the weeks of spring training hoping that the good things they saw then were glimpses of a future to come and dismissing all the mistakes as learning experiences that would enable their players to avoid the same pitfalls during the season.

In the final weeks of training, the issues of who would still cut from the roster, who would play center key positions, and who would be opening-day pitcher took on added importance. But finally came the moment of truth — Opening Day. And yet, despite all the festivities and celebration of that first day of baseball, we all recognize that spring training was not preparation for Opening Day. It was preparation for an entire season. So it is with Lent and Easter.

For all days are prepared for the great event of our renew- al of baptism at Easter. Like with baseball, we need to remind ourselves that preparation was not to celebrate a day (Easter) but a season (the 50 days of Easter). We celebrate Pentecost on the fifth day of our Easter celebration. (The word “pentecost” means “fiftieth.”) But originally there was no special feast on the fifth day; all 50 days were celebrated as the "Pentecost" by the Spirit first reached in baptism.

While no one should deny the importance of spring train- ing for a baseball team, few would say it was more impor- tant than the whole season that followed. Indeed, no team that quit working at the end of the pre-season, will ever win a pennant. But what about us in the Church? We often exert all our energy on the period of preparation and "shon- donship" when the real time of grace begins.

In the Easter Season, as we attempt to live our renewed baptism, we often lose behind us everything we learned in the 40 days of Lent. We stop praying as we had been. We dis- continuous our Scripture reading, we quit going to the Masses or other liturgical services that had been part of our Lenten routines. That's how we lose our baptism.

This Sunday's liturgy is a strong reminder to us that we are still celebrating the baptism renewal last Sunday. Many of the proper prayers for this Sunday refer directly to bap- tism: “God of everlasting mercy ... increase, we pray, the grace you have bestowed that all may grasp in what font they have been washed, by whose Spirit they have been reborn, by whose blood they have been redeemed.” (Collect)

For centuries the Church had a graphic way of remind- ing its members that this Sunday was a continued celebra- tion of our baptism: "Let us prepare ourselves for the liturgy of the faithful." The front of the assembly was dressed in their baptismal robes. Thus this Sunday was called “Dominica in albis,” the “Shawled Sunday.”

Today’s reading from 1 Peter speaks eloquently of the baptism we commemorate: "Now born to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you." The first reading from Acts explains the practical implications of being baptized into the Church: devotion to the "teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.”

A great baptismal/liturgical lesson is learned in today’s Gospel. Thomas had separated himself from the fellowship of the community. As a result he did not see the Lord and was filled with doubt. He only sees the Lord when he returns to the community of believers. That is why we are baptized into a church community. We see the Lord as we gather with the community when we together celebrate the "communal life, the breaking of the bread and the prayers.”

The literary notes remind us that Easter is not Sunday. It is now for 40 more days to come.

Father Daniel Vogelpohl

God is there for us

Somewhere along the way we alienated all the people in the world on their knees murmuring hoarsely with the same petition, “Dear God, make it go away.” Then I sat and I sat and I sat. Then I walked and I walked and I walked. I felt like the "novel" corona virus — nicknamed COVID 19 — not knowing when and where to start, nor when and where to stop. All along, I was praying for the arrival of the Muse, my “writer’s goddess,” tardy this time, but always faithful.

"Look to your computer angel,” she whispered. I was soon rewarded, after once again obeying all the guidelines ... the unending washing of hands, staying six feet apart, hands off face, no crowds, no hugging, no hand shaking and no kissing, for God’s sake! “Is ‘We Are Family’ to be an impossible mantra forevermore? No, I thought, somehow the love and looking out for each other must go on!" But how can this be? It’s Easter time! You’ve read it before. Without Easter, what else matters? Then, the first "angel" checked in. “The very first Easter was not in a crowded worship space with singing and praising. On the very first Easter the disciples were locked in their house. It was dangerous for them to come out. They were afraid. They wanted to believe the good news they heard from the women, that Jesus had risen. But it seemed too good to be true. They were living in a time of such despair and such fear. If they left their homes their lives and the lives of their loved ones might be at risk. Could a miracle have really hap- pened? Could life really had won out over death? Could this time of terror and fear really be coming to an end?"

Alone in their homes they dared to believe that hope was possible, that the long night was over and morning had bro- ken, that God’s love was the most powerful of all, even though it didn’t seem quite real yet. Eventually, they were able to leave their homes. When the fear and danger had sub- sided, they went around celebrating and spreading the good news that Jesus was risen and love was the most powerful force on the earth.

This year, we may have experienced a taste of what that first Easter was like, still in our homes daring to believe that hope is on the horizon. When is it really “safe” for all people, when it is the most loving choice, we will come out, gathering together, singing and shouting the good news that God brings life even out of death, that love always has the final say!”

Praising here to catch my breath. How are you doing? Shall we keep hope alive together?"

As I see it and hear it, millions are hurting and many are dying — fellow human beings of all the world and all occupa- tions with all sorts of aspirations and pass successes or fail- ures and shattered hopes that life has brought them. In my heart, I believe that God is love and God is always there for us even in the darkest times — no matter what. Now allow me three words for our military’s law enforcement personnel and all medical professionals who are bravely answering our country’s call — God bless them! As I have seen and experienced throughout these horren- dous, unbelievable weeks of ‘WWIII’, people in general are more helpful, more courtesty, more considerate, more out- going and polite — even from six feet away — somehow, eas- ing social isolation and making our circumstances more in favor of mutual caring. Imagine such a continuing atmos- phere among God’s creation! Who is not ready for it?" Craving it? Needing it? Am I a dreamer? You bet!

I believe in the warmth of a smile and the joy of a friend- ly gesture and the hope I see in children’s eyes. And I love hearing him when one of my “angels” finds and sends a timely, earth-moving poem like this one by John O'Donohue:

This is the time to be slow, "Lie close to the wall Until the bitter weather passes. Trust that the flowers will bloom." The bare brush of dollar Scrape from your heart All sense of ‘yours’ And your hesitant light, Time will come good, And you will find your feet Again on fresh pictures of grace. Where the air will be kind And the earth soft and springing.

May God bless and keep all the angels in our lives. Ray Smith is a commissioned Lay Pastoral Minister for the Diocese of Covington.

COVID-19 and the Paschal Mystery

I can endure when I know positively that I am held in love by my creator. Paschal faith means that death is the funeral of the fulfillment of all within the knot of my needs. (Not just the “bad stuff,” but potentially every- thing that seems to define who I am on the chopping block. Think tornado.)

"We might find ourselves crying out with the Israelites of old, “Is the Lord in our midst or not?” During Holy Week, we walked with Jesus as he dealt with this in his own life. ‘Why?’ he might have asked the Father, "didn’t you make them listen to me? How could those who claim to be your ministers of the faith reject me so completely?” Why did you hide your heart and close their minds? Where were you when I brought you my message of love? When I showed them the beauty, joy and holiness in life?"

Did Jesus’ questions on his lips as he hung on the cross? Or, shall we find in Scripture, that ray of hope and trust expressed in his "Seven Last Words? Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46)

Our Easter Vigil breaks open the meaning of death. Or put more emotionally, breaks out of the tomb of death. Life emerges from what has seemed irrevocable death. But this is now the same life as before. It is a totally new reality. The resurrected Jesus is the same yet vastly different.

How my death/comb experience of COVID-19 quar- antine changed me? What is this best self? that I hope will emerge? How can I use my time and energy new to grow into my truth, post resurrection self? What grace shall I pray for?"

Benedictine Sister Dorothy Schuette is a professed member of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery, Vilis Hills, Ky.
Pope calls for a ‘contagion’ of Easter hope, peace, care for poor

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — In an Easter celebration like no other, Pope Francis prayed that Christ, “who has already defeated death and opened for us the way to eternal salvation,” would “dispel the darkness of our suffering humanity and lead us into the light of his glorious day: a day that knows no end.”

The pope’s traditional Easter message before his blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) still mentioned countries yearning for peace, migrants and refugees in need of a welcoming home and the poor deserving of assistance.

But his Easter prayers April 12 were mostly in the context of the suffering and death caused by the coronavirus and the economic difficulties the pandemic already has triggered.

The pope’s Easter morning Mass was unique: welcoming home and the poor deserving of assistance.

“Let us turn our gaze to him that may he heal the wounds of an afflicted humanity.”

Pope Francis prayed first of all for those directly affected by the coronavirus, especially the sick, those who have died and those mourning loved ones after not being able to say goodbye.

“May the Lord of life welcome the departed into his kingdom and grant comfort and hope to those still suffering, especially the elderly and those who are alone,” he said.

“May he never withdraw his consolation and help from those who are especially vulnerable, such as persons who work in nursing homes or live in barracks and prisons.”

Pope Francis also prayed for those suffering from solitude because of the pandemic, for those who have lost their jobs, for doctors and nurses treating the sick and for members of law enforcement, who are helping keep people safe.

“In these weeks, the lives of millions of people have suddenly changed,” he said. Some people have found it an opportunity to slow down, reflect and spend time with their families.

But, he said, for many others “this is also a time of worry about an uncertain future, about jobs that are at risk and about other consequences of the current crisis.”

The pope asked political leaders “to work actively for the common good, to provide the means and resources needed to enable everyone to lead a dignified life, and to ensure that the various stances allow; to assist them in resuming their normal daily activities.”

When the whole world is suffering, he said, people must pay special attention to the poor, the homeless and refugees.

Pope Francis also called for the lifting of international sanctions imposed on certain countries to put pressure on them, but which now make the suffering of their people unbearable, and for a forgiveness, or at least reduction, of the foreign debt of the world’s poorest nations.

“May Christ our peace enlighten all who have responsibility in conflicts, that they may have the courage to support the appeal for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world,” he prayed. The pope specifically mentioned Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Israel and the Palestinian territories and Ukraine.

“Indifference, self-centredness, division and forgetfulness are not words we want to hear at this time,” he said. Yet, “they seem to prevail when fear and death overweigh us, that is, when we do not let the Lord Jesus triumph in our hearts and lives.”

“We want to ban these words forever,” he said, and Easter is the time to start.
Parishioners support local healthcare workers

Allegro Thatcher
Assistant Editor

While most of the public stays home, healthcare workers labor on — and St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas, wanted to show its concern for essential employees.

In a new program called St. Elizabeth Outreach, Father Ross Kelch, parish vicar, and his parishioners have created a system to make sure every employee at St. Elizabeth Healthcare, Ft. Thomas, receives tokens of appreciation.

In a video posted to Facebook, April 2, Father Kelch requested that the parish reach out to their local neighbors at the hospital. Through online donations to St. Thomas, they’re paying for meals and gift cards to the employees at St. Elizabeth.

For example, parishioners are buying dinner for the night shift in the Emergency Room, gift cards to the janitorial staff, and even gift cards for medical staff.

“The idea behind it is helping those who are helping others,” said Father Kelch. “We felt like St. Thomas should do something because St. Elizabeth is in our parish.”

St. Elizabeth, Ft. Thomas is the hub for the coronavirus in Northern Kentucky so the hospital has converted itself to take care of those who are most in need of ventilators. Normally Father Kelch said he’d organize a movement to have people go to Kroger and buy gift cards or donate baked goods, but with social distancing rules in place, he’s having everyone give to an online platform which he then sends directly to the hospital.

Father Kelch went directly to Mary Lynn Bruunemann, assistant vice president, Foundation at St. Elizabeth Healthcare, who put him in touch with the Ft. Thomas branch administrator, John Mitchell.

“We’ve had a phenomenal response to that,” he said. “Last Saturday night we provided gift cards for the entire night shift, that was 110 gift cards for everyone from the doctors to the janitorial staff to the food service people.”

When he communicates with the hospital, Father Kelch is careful to ensure that everyone gets something, so it’s not just particular departments. “Our goal is to support those on the front lines,” he said.

Father Kelch said the parish currently has collected over $7,000 in donations, simply by reaching out via Facebook and e-mail.

St. Thomas has also reached out to the local fire and police departments, purchasing dinner for them or sending cards to show their support. It’s all in an effort to “be a good neighbor.”

“We all play special roles and some roles are more critical right now,” said Father Kelch. “The $15 gift card isn’t going to make that much difference in your life, but to know there are people out there supporting you and praying for you and caring for you was the goal.”

Walking With Purpose equips women to use virtual world well during pandemic

Allegro Thatcher
Assistant Editor

In the midst of a time where technology is more central than ever, one woman’s ministry outreach is stepping it up to prepare women for the virtual world they’re currently required to navigate.

Walking With Purpose, a Catholic women’s Bible study ministry, brings women to an encounter with Jesus Christ through parish programs that offer Bible studies. They meet once a week, in small groups to study Scripture and discuss a weekly lesson that the women have studied on their own during the week.

Recently leaders of Walking With Purpose made the shift to virtual experiences through the platform Zoom.

“We go until the end of April so we were discontinued in meeting,” said Laurie Baschitz, director. Participant Experience. “We’re teaching them how to have small groups online to complete the season.”

Once a year, the organization hosts an opportunity for women to come and see how it works in the parish, called an Ambassador Event. It’s essentially an open house experience, which relies heavily on the in-person encounters that help potential new members feel welcome.

St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas, acted quickly when the coronavirus COVID-19, discontinued in-person meetings. St. Thomas ministry volunteers are hosting a virtual Walking With Purpose event — inviting all parishes in the Diocese of Covington. The event will be held on Tuesday, May 5 from 7:00 p.m.

In the meantime, Walking With Purpose has begun a program called Defining Moments, which includes a free downloadable pdf of a Bible study for each Sunday’s lessons. Defining Moments began March 17 and is — in a new move — available to both men and women.

“We wanted to encourage the idea of your family being the domestic Church,” said Ms. Baschitz. “We’re doing what we can to offer men and women in the family (a chance) to prepare themselves for Sunday Mass that they’re watching on television.”

While the organization might lack the personal touch it’s accustomed to bringing local women, Ms. Baschitz emphasized that she’s aiming to help women use this time to become more comfortable with social media and virtual connection.

“Women are getting more comfortable with using social media in a positive way to share messages about formation, Scripture and different opportunities to learn more about our faith because they really are another option,” she said.

They’re offering guidance for women on how to make virtual meetings and social connection work, tips for Zoom calls, how to load meetings and more.

“Going forward we’re using this as a learning tool to see how we can effectively use what we’re learning now to supplement when we’re able to meet in person again,” she said.

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Palm Sunday with congregation live streaming

Laura Kerner
Editor

Father Ryan Maher, rector, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, celebrated Palm Sunday Mass, April 5, beginning the Mother Church’s Holy Week celebrations. This year, due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, all of the Holy Week liturgies and services were celebrated without a congregation. All of the Holy Week celebrations were, instead, live streamed on the Cathedral’s website for the faithful to participate. This, coupled with the overarching anxiety and fear from the silent and deadly disease, cast a pall over the Church’s holiest week.

In his homily Father Maher acknowledged and offered a response to the chaos and fear of the pandemic. Focusing on the great prayer of the Church — the Divine Mercy chaplet — “Have mercy on us and on the whole world,” which was revealed by Jesus through St. Faustina Kowalska and to the world through her diary.

“...This great Divine Mercy prayer is at its core a prayer to the Father,” said Father Maher. “With the Divine Mercy prayer we ask the Father to pour out his mercy upon us as individuals, as members of his body, the Church, and indeed the whole world. To flood our hearts with mercy through the passion and death of his Son.”

St. Faustina lived while the world was enduring a very difficult and stressful time — World War I. During that time, she was receiving revelations from Jesus. He instructed her to draw and image of himself with two rays — one white and one red — radiating from his heart. Under the image Jesus wrote the words, “Jesus I Trust in You.”

“The red and white rays symbolize the mercy that flows from the Father; from the very heart of Jesus through the sacrament of baptism and the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist,” Father Maher said.

Reflecting on the crucifixion narrative from Matthew’s Gospel, Father Maher focused on one passage, “Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, and gave up his spirit.”

“The cry from our Lord on the cross was a cry too deep to be even described by St. Matthew,” said Father Maher.

It was, Father Maher said, certainly the loud cry of bearing the weight of the sins of the world. “Perhaps, at its depths, it is a cry of love, a loud cry of love for his Father, a loud cry of love for each one of us and for the world.”

“The father hears the cry of his son and hears the cry of all those who unite their cry with the loud cry of Jesus. Whether we can participate fully at Mass physically or participate at home through the media the Lord hears our cry.

“We cry out to the Father during this time of our own pain and anxiety brought about by the pandemic. The Lord... pours out his love and mercy during our time of need.

“We cry out to the Father for all those who are sick and all those who need healing; for all those in healthcare who are risking their life ministering to those who are sick and dying. We cry out to the Lord in sorrow for our own sins.

“But, perhaps most of all, our loud cry is a loud cry of thanksgiving for His love that knows no bounds. His love that is manifested by Jesus on the cross for our sins.”

Palm Sunday Procession, without the congregation, due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. (above) Father Ryan Maher celebrates the Mass and delivers the homily to the faithful via live streaming. (right) Father Michael Norton narrates the reading of the Passion, far right Father Maher reads the part of Jesus, during the commemoration of the Passion.

Update
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At this celebration Bishop Roger Foye consecrated the Chrism and blessed the other oils, which will be given to the parishes for use in anointing the Oil of the Sick, the Oil of Catechumens and holy Chrism.

(above) Bishop Foye prepares the Chrism for consecration. Chrism is the most sacred of the oils and an emblem of the Holy Spirit. It is used at baptism, confirmation, the ordination of bishops and priests, and for the consecration of altars and churches.

(below) Father Daniel Schenker, Father Gerald Reiterman and Father Mark Keene bless the oils.

(above right) Deacon Jordan Haney, a seminarian from the Diocese of Covington, who will be ordained a priest May 14, 2020, prepares to proclaim the Gospel.

(batch) Deacon Haney delivers the Gospel.

(Left) The Chrism Mass is a celebration of duty and service, where the priests of the diocese renew the commitment they embraced at their ordination. Bishop: “May the Lord keep us all in his charity and lead all of us, shepherds and flock, to eternal life. Amen” — Renewal of Priestly Promises.

Laura Keener
Editor

The annual celebration of the Chrism Mass is the Church’s most solemn and significant liturgical celebration. It is the night in which the Church blesses and distributes the sacred oils that are used during the sacraments. The Chrism is used to anoint God’s people during the most vital times of their lives — at baptism, confirmation and ordination.

Also during the Chrism Mass, the Church celebrates the institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood. Every priest of the diocese gathers with the Bishop to renew his ordination promises. The congregation includes every deacon and representatives from every parish, every house of religious, every school and every Catholic organization.

“On the night when we celebrate the Chrism Mass we exemplify to the whole world and to ourselves that we are one, Catholic and apostolic,” said Bishop Foye in his homily.

Chrism Mass 2020, April 9, was devoid of much of what would be considered usual. Due to the restrictions on public gatherings necessitated to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption was empty except for the celebrants. This year the priests and the parishioners were represented in the person of our dean — Father Ryan Maher, Covington Deanery; Father Mark Keene, Northern Kenton County Deanery; Msgr. Dominic Foua, South East Deanery; Father Matthew Cushing, South West Deanery and Father Gerald Reiterman, Campbell County Deanery. The remaining priests and the lay faithful joined the celebration via live stream from the Cathedral’s website.

Bishop Roger Foye blessed and consecrated the sacred oils. Instead of being distributed that day, the deacons will make arrangements for each parish, school and institution to receive its sacred oils.

“Most peoples’ lives have been turned upside down by the coronavirus,” said Bishop Foye as he began his homily “We sit here — our vicares, our deacons, a deacon and assistants — in an empty church. I speak to you, our viewers, on this live stream. Our lives have been turned upside down. Is it a punishment from God? Is it his judgment? Our Holy Father tells us it is not God’s judgment, but it is a call to live differently.”

Bishop Foye detailed how, in the early weeks of the pandemic, he was receiving letters, texts, e-mails and phone calls giving advice on how he should respond to the pandemic and the governor’s instruction to suspend the public celebration of the Mass. Some people were nasty “You don’t care about God’s people. If you did you would close the church and cancel Masses across the diocese. You don’t care about

(Continued on page 15)

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Amid the chaos and uncertainty of the time ‘Easter is still Easter’ Bishop Poyts says

Linda Reeder

Editor

This year’s usual Tribunal services necessitated several liturgical adjustments so this year’s celebration will be unaffected in any way. The usual three-hour service has been simplified to one hour, which is streamed on the Cathedral website but not recorded for future viewing. All Masses are celebrated online.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its subsequent restrictions and regulations were a common theme throughout the celebrations as Christ’s passion, death and resurrection seemed to take on an even more personal reality.

“Sometimes in life we have things happen that at the moment we don’t quite understand and we don’t quite comprehend its full meaning,” Former Bishop Bishop Roger Poyts said as he began his homily. “I think this is one of those times.”

This was true of the apostles as Jesus washed their feet in the Last Supper, a task usually reserved for a servant, not the master Peter revealed, explaining that Jesus wasn’t worth it.

“The best way to understand this is that Jesus loves us,” Bishop Poyts said. “In the Gospel reading of the Last Supper, Jesus instructs the disciples, ‘What I have done for you, you must do for others.’ Those words ring true in our very day.” Bishop Poyts said.

Bishop Poyts went on to say that through our service, we are gifted with the love and love freely and unconditionally. He spoke of the gift of love and how it is essential to our lives. Bishop Poyts acknowledged that what is happening in our lives now is the pandemic, we don’t understand. “We are called to use this time and reflect on this time as a means for us to understand what is really important in our lives, who is really important in our lives. In the end, as unbelievable as it may sound now, one thing in our life will be achieved.”

While the Mass was celebrated online, Bishop Poyts reflects on how the Church for the congregation, certainly we are all sad, we trust in God. “We can see, in our lives today, to God’s love, a gift that is freely given. All of this is that we have a love that is never fails. In all, is that we follow him example of love, one another as he has loved us.”

Good Friday, the day of Jesus’ passion and death, is a very solemn day in the life of the Church. It is the only day where ashes are not to be celebrated. At the Cathedral, Good Friday services began in silence. When the procession reached the altar, Bishop Poyts, Father Ryan Marshall, Father Daniel Schrader, Deacon Jordan Harney, Deacon Gerald Framen and Father Joseph Sheehan processed themselves before the altar—signifying the grief and sorrow of the Church.

In his homily Bishop Poyts said, “This Good Friday in the year 2020 is especially solemn for us. We find ourselves in the midst of tremendous anxiety and fear. But this is what we have observed today, although it might seem not terribly and at first glance, a loss—Jesus’ death—actually in the given spiritual life.

Even in our current situation, something good, something positive will rise. Perhaps a change of heart, perhaps a recognition of faith, perhaps a recognition of trust, perhaps a recognition of love through sacrifice and providing the example of love. You are the Church of the Faithful.

Three avowed to rise in our love that we must see in our lives. Through the Church or through the Church, the Church of the Faithful.

Bishop Poyts went on to say that through our service, we are gifted with the love and love freely and unconditionally. He spoke of the gift of love and how it is essential to our lives. Bishop Poyts acknowledged that what is happening in our lives now is the pandemic, we don’t understand. “We are called to use this time and reflect on this time as a means for us to understand what is really important in our lives, who is really important in our lives. In the end, as unbelievable as it may sound now, one thing in our life will be achieved.”

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Three avowed to rise in our love that we must see in our lives. Through the Church or through the Church, the Church of the Faithful.
As the response to the COVID-19 virus evolves, events have been cancelled.

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption will be broadcast on Sunday, 5-6 p.m. on station Me-TV WLWT on channel; over the air 5-2 Spectrum 18B in Kentucky and Cincinnati Bell 21 or 28.

Ready for the teacher parade
St. Henry School, Elsmere, teachers had a parade through some of the neighborhoods the school serves, on April 5. The children of the neighborhood were prepared for them.

A message for students Students from St. Pius X School, Edgewood, rode their bikes past school and were surprised with a message from teachers and school staff.

Live Meet class experiment St. Henry School, Elsmere, teachers continue to instruct students at home. With the use of technology, the fifth-grade students did a digestive system science experiment during their live Meet session.

A learning search St. Timothy School, Union, preschool students went on a scavenger hunt to continue learning from home, during NTI.
Drive-thru stations draw local community and more to prayer

Allegra Thatcher  
Assistant Editor

Pt. Thomas resident Megan Josten knew she wanted to do something for her parish community at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Pt. Thomas, for Holy Week. With the lack of access to sacraments and group prayer, she thought of designated Stations of the Cross. With more days before Good Friday, Mrs. Josten contacted her brother-in-law, Jonathan Willis, a local artist, and they brainstormed together. By Friday morning, 13 houses and St. Catherine Church each had an easel with an image of a station. Cars began driving by in a constant stream.

Mrs. Josten found support in the parish community as well as other locals, who sponsored each station. She said she wasn’t sure if other people would go for the idea, but she felt very humbled by how the project took off.

“The craziest part is that the Holy Spirit totally took over; I was in awe of the whole thing. You could tell he wanted his son’s passionate love to come to the streets — he wanted our community to see that,” she said.

Terry Babey, parishioner, had a station in her yard. She said that she witnessed at least 100 cars daily driving past from early morning until after dark. Starting Friday morning until Sunday night. That doesn’t include the many who biked the 8-mile route, ran part of the route as their workout, or even walked. At least 200 people responded on Facebook that they were planning to go.

“It was the happiest my heart has ever felt on Good Friday, so full of pride that Jesus’ sacrifice got out there and was celebrated. We weren’t allowed to be together; He triumphed,” said Mrs. Babey. “When God gives you something to do, there’s help along the way.”

News stations 5, 9 and 12 shared the story, and this brought more visitors from as far as Ohio — all in the social distance of their cars.

“How often do you have an opportunity to bring the Catholic Church outside the church in a way like this?” said Mrs. Josten. “I know multiple families that enjoyed the stations who aren’t Catholic. Any time during a crisis like this when you have a light, you just want to share that and show it to the world that the cross is bigger than all of it.”

A photographer by trade, Mr. Willis had been creating large-scale wheat pasting projects for about two years now. It’s a way of gluing paper to walls, similar to decopage, by developing a mixture that’s strong and somewhat sustainable outdoors.

“I don’t love Photoshop but I love getting my hands dirty and ripping and tearing and manipulating photos and imagery that way,” he said.

Local artist Jon Willis created 14 images for a drive-through Stations of the Cross in Pt. Thomas over Easter weekend. (above right) The third station “Jesus Falls the First Time” is displayed at the end of a driveway; April 10-12 during the Pt. Thomas drive-through Stations of the Cross.

“I would love to have embellished them further but it was kind of a reactionary process,” he said.

Mr. Willis had a little spray paint hanging around, and that helped tell the story. “With more time, with more thinking on the story line, I would have done more, but given how fast we had to do it I think it turned out pretty well.”

He did take opportunities to add red paint for blood to Jesus’ hands, gold around Mary’s head and purple to Jesus’ clothing before the crucifixion. This lends to the abstract look, since the colors were few and they were stripped away as the story progressed.

Mr. Willis’ family were among those who biked the route.

“It was really fun to hike them because you were able to process them as you were riding around,” he said. “For instance, the second station where Jesus bares the cross is at the bottom of this hill, so we had to ride up this long, hard hill and it was, in a subtle way, a way to immerse yourself in the story through your own personal suffering.”

He was also amazed at the public response to his work. “I couldn’t believe the string of cars — this idea happened as a conversation and an opportunity to fill this week with something, and we were blown away with how much this meant to people. We touched on something here that was special to a lot of people. It’s really cool that it’s something way bigger than Megan and I thought it was going to be.”

The stations truly went beyond the parish community, a fact that pleased St. Catherine of Siena pastor Father Stef Bankemper.

“I love it when my parishioners come up with their ideas,” he said, explaining how he was hardly involved. “They’re creative and this meant something to them.”

The Pt. Thomas community came together to pray, and Father Bankemper said he couldn’t be more pleased at the response. “I was thrilled that it garnered so much attention among non-Catholics.”

Mrs. Josten said overall she was convinced it was a vision that the Holy Spirit planted and it was his work. “I might have been a servant but it was the Holy Spirit speaking through us,” she said.

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Chiasm Mass  
(Continued from page 8)
the health of your people,” he said.
Others were passionate. “I received beautiful letters from people pleading, almost begging. ‘Please, don’t take the Kucharist from us — it is our food, it is our life, it is our sustenance.’”
All of the requests were sincere. “Those who wanted to close the churches were genuinely concerned about the health and welfare of, most often, their family and friends,” he said. “There is nothing wrong with that. The others, who pleaded not to take the Kucharist from them, speak from a deep-seated love and reverence for what is the source and summit of the life every Christian Catholic — the Eucharist.”

“People have said it was a choice between two gods. ‘We celebrate today the institution of the Holy Eucharist, this food the Lord gives us for our journey on earth. We celebrate the gift of the institution of the priesthood, the means for which the Eucharist is provided for God’s people. And yet God’s people are excluded from this day,’” he said. “I still don’t know if it was the right decision (to suspend the public celebration of the Mass). I still have pangs of doubt. I still question myself. These weeks have been a time for me to assess my own priorities and what is truly essential in my life. Where are my priorities? What really matters? Who really matters? We are being told what is essential and what is not essential. What businesses stay open, what businesses must close. What services are available. What services are not. It is a strange world for me. My dear friends, when authorities view abortion clinics as essential but the celebration of the Eucharist is not. We cannot avoid looking at the situation in that way. It speaks volumes about who we are as a people, as a nation, as a Church,” Bishop Poyss said.

He ended his homily with words of hope and encouragement. “I pray with all my heart and soul that when this pandemic ends that we will have learned form these days of confinement and of these restrictions and order our lives in a way that generously and truly embraces those things that are essential, those things and people who really matter. This is not a hopeless situation, because we know the Lord God will not abandon us. We trust in God. We trust he will lift us out of the present moment.”

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SACRED HEART PRAYER
Dear Heart of Jesus — In the past I asked for favors. This time I ask you for this very special one (mention favor). Take it, dear Jesus, and place it within your own heart where your Father sees it, then in your merciful eyes it will become your favor, not mine. Amen. M.A.I.

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SACRED HEART PRAYER
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Benedictine Sister Joan Gripshover was born June 9, 1940 to Alekseas and Anna Gripshover and named Patricia Gertrade. She was the second of eight children — two sisters and five brothers. Patricia was a graduate of St. Henry Elementary and Hah schools and was a 12-year student there. She entered St. Walburg Monastery in 1961. She became a novice in 1962 and received the name Joan. First profession followed in 1963 and perpetual profession in 1966. Sister Joan celebrated her silver jubilee in 1986 and her golden in 2005.

Sister Joan completed her RN studies from Good Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing in 1969 and her BSN in Nursing Education from Thomas More College in 1978. She advanced through the Frontier School of Family Nursing and Midwifery in 1980 to become a family nurse practitioner. Sister Joan continued her education through courses and workshops her entire life. She was a member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and of the Kentucky Coalition of Nurse Practitioners and Nurse Midwives.

Sister Joan served as a nurse at Estill County Hospital, Madonna Manor and St. Walburg Infirmary. After certification as a nurse practitioner she devoted herself to meeting the healthcare needs of the people of Leslie County in eastern Kentucky, who were very fond of her. At the same time she served on boards of directors, as a parish planner, and on several citizen groups.

Sister Joan welcomed her Benedictine sisters to her home in eastern Kentucky, taking them on tours of her workplaces in Leslie County. She was a fan of the Kentucky parks and loved to visit Breaks Interstate Park. She enjoyed bluegrass music and the Kentucky Wildcats.

St. Walburg Monastery was Joan’s home after her retirement in 2015, where she assisted however she was able, until her health declined and she moved to the infirmary in November 2019. Sister Joan died peacefully the evening of March 30, 2020.

Sister Joan is survived by her daughters Al (Carol), Ron (Sharon) and Curt (Jean), her sister Mary Lou Hancock (Wayne), her sister-in-law Roxanne Gripshover; many nieces, nephews and friends, and her Benedictine community. A private service was celebrated on April 3 at St. Walburg Monastery. A Vigil Service and Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at a later date.

Memorials may be made to St. Walburg Monastery, 2500 Amsterdam Rd, Villa Hills, KY 41017.

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**Sister Joan Gripshover, O.S.B.**
Pope creates coronavirus commission to respond to pandemic

Juno Arocio Estes
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis created a new commission that will confront the challenges the world is facing in battling the coronavirus pandemic and what it will inevitably face in its aftermath, the Vatican announced.

In a statement published April 15, the Vatican said the goal of the commission, which will be led by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, is “to express the Church’s concern and love for the entire human family in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The dicastery will work with other Vatican offices to coordinate the work, which includes “an analysis and a reflection on the socioeconomic and culture challenges of the future and proposed guidelines to address them,” the Vatican said.

The commission is divided into five working groups focused on a specific aspect of the pandemic and has met twice with the pope to discuss ways it can help local churches, especially in poor areas. Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the dicastery, said in an interview with Vatican News published shortly after the announcement.

“The pope is convinced that we are living through an epochal change and he is reflecting on what will follow the crisis, on the economic and social consequences of the pandemic, on what we will have to face and, above all, on how the Church can offer itself as a safe point of reference to the world lost in the face of an unexpected event.”

Cardinal Turkson said the commission’s first working group, which is dedicated to “listening and supporting local churches,” will work in cooperation with Caritas Internationals, as well as the office of the papal almoner, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Vatican pharmacy.

Cardinal Turkson told Vatican News that the first group already has “set up mechanisms to listen to the local churches to identify real needs and assist in the development of effective and adequate responses,” including coordinating with apostolic nuncios and bishops’ conferences.

“A broad outlook is needed. Nobody must be forgotten — prisoners, vulnerable groups. We need to share good practices,” the cardinal said.

The second group will deliberate itself to research and the study of the pandemic and to reflecting on society and the world post-coronavirus in coordination with the Pontifical Academy for Life, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences.

This group, Cardinal Turkson said, “has the task of night watch, like the sentry, to perceive the dawn. To do this it is necessary to connect the best minds in the areas of ecology, economic, health and public security. We need the concreteness of science, and we need prophecy and creativity.”

Other working groups will focus on communication, relations with other countries to assist and share valuable research information and financing the commission’s relief efforts.

Cardinal Turkson highlighted the need for the commission and the importance of looking to the future “so as not to be unprepared.”

“The health crisis has already triggered an economic one,” he said. “The risk is that a social crisis will be provoked if this economic crisis is not dealt with immediately. One crisis risks being followed by others, in a cycle in which we will be forced to learn slowly and painfully to take care of our common home.”

Unity, he added, is essential in confronting the pandemic, “so the current crisis is not the time for indifference, selfishness or division.”

He also called for the loosening of international sanctions, the reduction or forgiveness of the foreign debts of poor countries, and the end of conflict and arms trafficing. Instead, countries should use their wealth “to heal people and save lives.”

“We are rediscovering how much the destiny of each of us is linked to that of others,” Cardinal Turkson said. “We are rediscovering the value of the things that matter and the worthlessness of so many things that we once considered important.”
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Paris archbishop welcomes Macron’s renewed pledge to rebuild Notre Dame cathedral

PARIS — Archbishop Michel Aupetit of Paris welcomed a renewed pledge by French President Emmanuel Macron to rebuild Notre Dame cathedral. “I can’t speak for all humanity, but this is certainly a moment of global emotion and witness,” Archbishop Aupetit told Radio Notre Dame April 13, one year after a fire destroyed part of the historic structure. “Both the city and state, which own the cathedral, are agreed on the plan of reconstruction, and it was important to show from our Holy Week ceremonies that this is now on track. In this sense, it’s more important to show the cathedral is alive than to celebrate such a sad anniversary.” The 14-ton Emmanuel bell in the cathedral’s southern tower rolled off at 4 p.m. April 13 to mark the fire anniversary. The same day, Macron described Notre Dame as a “sym- bol of society’s resilience” and pledging all efforts to ensure its full reconstruction by 2024. He noted that construction was on hold because of the COVID-19 crisis, but said it would “start up again as soon as possible.” Up to 600 firefighters battled to save the 850-year-old cathedral after the April 15 fire brought down its 386-foot spire and two-thirds of its 13th-century oak roof and destroyed much of its wooden interior and masonry. Bureaucrats evacuated many of the cathedral’s artworks and sacred objects, including what some Catholics believe is the Crown of Thorns, used at Christ’s Crucifixion, and a gold tuna given by the medieval king, St. Louis IX.

Cardinal Pell released from prison after court overturns conviction

VALLA BEACH, Australia — Cardinal George Pell has been released from prison after 46 days behind bars after the seven judges of the High Court of Australia unanimously overruled the original December 2018 jury verdict that found him guilty on five counts of molesting two 13-year-old choirboys in 1996. The court’s decision, read April 7, concluded there was “a significant possibility that an inno- cent person has been convicted because the evidence did not establish guilt to the requisite standard of proof.” A few hours later, the 78-year-old Cardinal Pell was driven from Barwon prison to a Carmelite monastery in Melbourne. “I have consistently maintained my inno- cence while suffering from a serious injustice,” Cardinal Pell said in a statement, adding that he holds “no ill will toward my accuser. I do not want any acquittal to add to the hurt and bitterness. If you speak to any young man and ask, ‘is there is certainly hurt and bitterness enough,’ he said. The Vatican said in a statement that it “welcomes the High Court’s unanimous decision concerning Cardinal George Pell, acquitting him of the accu- sations of abuse of minors and overturning his sentence.” The state- ment said the Holy See “has always expressed confidence in the Australian judicial authority,” and noted that “Cardinal Pell has always maintained his innocence and has waited for the truth to be ascertained. At the same time, the Holy See reaffirms its commitment to preventing and pursuing all cases of abuse against minors.”

Bishops criticize governor for signing abortion measure on Good Friday

RICHMOND, Va. — Expressing sadness that Virginia Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam signed the Reproductive Health Protection Act, which was passed by the state’s Senate and House of Delegates, Bishops Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington and Barry C. Knestout of Richmond criticized him for the day he chose to sign it into law. “That he would take this action on Good Friday, one of the most solemn days for Christians, is a particular affront to all those professing the Gospel of life,” the bishop said in a statement released April 7. The legislation repeals health and safety protections at abortion facilities, allows non- physicians to perform first-trimester abortions and removes essential informed consent requirements, including the opportunity to view an ultrasound. “Over the past eight years, abortions have decreased by 4% in Virginia,” the bishops said. “Tragically but undoubtedly these changes to our state law will reverse that life-saving progress and increase the number of abortions.” Throughout the legislative ses- sion, the Virginia Catholic Conference had lobbied representatives to defeat the legislation.

Appeals court lifts lower court ruling blocking federal executions

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court decision April 1 lifted a lower court ruling that had prevented the execution of federal death- row inmates. And although the decision sided with the Trump admin- istration’s attempt to resume federal executions after a 14-year break, it does not allow these executions to resume immediately because it sent a legal challenge against the means of execution, filed by a group of inmates, back to a lower court for further review. The 14 decision was handed down by a panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Each judge on the panel also issued sep- arate opinions about the legal guidelines for federal executions that U.S. Attorney General William Barr had announced would resume last summer. In November, just weeks before the first scheduled execu- tion, Judge Tammy Behrens of the U.S. District Court for D.C. issued an injunction blocking four scheduled executions. A fifth scheduled execution was separately stayed by a different court. The federal judge said the lethal injections be administered to federal death row inmates in December and January went against the Federal Death Penalty Act.

USCB Administrative Committee cancels U.S. bishops’ June assembly

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has canceled the U.S. bishops’ spring general assembly that was planned for June 10-12 in Detroit. “Given the current situation with the coron- avirus that has been classified by the World Health Organization as a pandemic, the Administrative Committee of the USCB voted earlier this week to cancel the June assembly,” said a USCB news release issued the afternoon of April 8. This marks the first cancellation of a plenary assembly in the conference’s history. “The Administrative Committee made this very difficult decision with consideration of multiple factors, but most importantly the health, well-being and safety of the hundreds of bishops, staff, observers, guests, affiliates, vol- unters, contractors and media involved with the general meetings,” Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the USCB, said in announcing the decision. “Additionally, even if the numerous temporary restrictions on public gatherings resulting from conditions associated with COVID-19 are loosened by June,” he said, “the priority for the physical and pastoral presence of the bishop in hisSee page 18 for more.

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