Diocesan schools look forward to welcoming students back to campus in August

Laura Keener  
Editor

The news teachers, parents and students have been waiting for has been announced. The second week of August is the week when Catholic schools in the Diocese of Covington will begin in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year.

Since mid-May, Michael Clines, superintendent of Schools, and Kendra McGuire, associate superintendent, have been meeting weekly with elementary and high school principals to discuss the opening of the school year and the return to in-classroom instruction.

“It has been clear from our discussions that what we all want — teachers, parents and administrators — is a safe way to bring our students back into the Catholic classroom, and we are excited about getting them back on our campuses,” said McGuire.

Due to construction, two schools — St. Thomas School, St. Thomas and St. Joseph Academy, Walton — will delay the start of the school year until the end of August. All other 26-elementary and nine high schools will begin August 10-14.

“We are looking into how things may be scheduled, but our students will be back in school,” said Mrs. McGuire.

Principals from all of the schools together with Mr. Clines and Mrs. McGuire make up the diocesan schools task force. They meet weekly to discuss the Northern Kentucky Health Department and KCDC guidelines on remaining Healthy at School during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We started with two questions. Can you logistically have in-person instruction while meeting health department guidelines? And if there are interruptions with busing, will parents be able to provide private transportation,” said Mr. Clines. “Having answered those questions, we are now ready to move on to alternate learning design strategies and other topics. That’s where we are now.”

Since each school has similar but unique needs and resources, each school has its own task force that is working on how best to implement the guidelines — social distancing, scheduling, lunching, and the myriad of other details that will need to be managed.

“Our schools and their task force are working on measuring rooms and looking at how to fit students in and various schedules. Once they’ve collected all the information, they’ll begin with problem solving and decision making. Many are in the very early stages, just meeting for the first time last week,” said Mrs. McGuire.

Schools are also working on ways to provide synchronous alternative instruction for parents who feel their child should remain Healthy at Home.

“We are working to make that a possibility for them,” said Mrs. McGuire. “There will probably be some parents who might need that option.”

Parents will begin to receive information from their school about the 2020-2021 school year and are encouraged to register early as accommodations are being developed.

Pope Francis leads his weekly general audience from the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican June 10, 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the audience is being livestreamed without the presence of pilgrims and tourists.

Prayer is a ‘fight’ with God, pope says at audience

Junnio Arocho Esteves  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — True prayer is a “fight” with God in which those who think the pope is strong are humbled and faced with the reality of their own mortal condition, Pope Francis said.

The story of Jacob wrestling with God throughout the night is a reminder that although prayer reveals “that we are only poor men and women,” God also has a “blessing reserved for those who have let themselves be changed by him,” the pope said June 10 during his weekly general audience.

“Whoever is the master of the situation is the master of that situation, but God is the master of the entire universe,” the pope said. “This is a beautiful invitation to let ourselves be changed by God. He knows how to fit students in and various schedules. Once they’ve collected all the information, they’ll begin with problem solving and decision making. Many are in the very early stages, just meeting for the first time last week,” said Mrs. McGuire.

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Post retirement, Father Vogelpohl plans an active ministry

Laurie Keener
Editor

During a drive-in celebration, June 7, parishes in Blessed Sacrament Parish bid their pastor, Father Daniel Vogelpohl, a well-earned retirement.

Addressing attendees from the rectory balcony, Father Vogelpohl said, “In about one month, I will have been here at Blessed Sacrament and Ft. Mitchell for 21 years. There is nowhere else that I have lived that long, not even my childhood home. What this means to me is that you have truly become my family.”

After 46 years of dedicated ministry Father Daniel Vogelpohl is going to lay down the burden of administration and enter into a well-deserved retirement from administrative duties,” said Bishop Roger Foys.


Deacon Fortner said that Father Vogelpohl is an “excellent” teacher and that he is always willing to share his knowledge — from how to pronounce a word in the best place to position a microphone.

“He’s really humble about it,” said Deacon Fortner. “He will share his wisdom but you have to ask. He has made me more confident in my ministry.”

Bishop Foys also praised Father Vogelpohl as a gifted liturgist.

“I know firsthand how competent and meticulous he is regarding the liturgy,” said Bishop Foys. “Father Vogelpohl directed my consecration and installation as the 16th Bishop of Covington 18 years ago. It is a ceremony with a hundred moving parts and Father Vogelpohl had them all running like clockwork. I have always been grateful to him for that.

Father Vogelpohl has also taught at Covington Latin School (1975–1980 and 1984–1985) and, as pastor of a feeder-school, a sacramental minister at Covington Catholic High School. At the parish, Deacon Fortner said that Father Vogelpohl is an “empowering administrator. He creates a real positive work environment for his staff.

As a priest I have served four bishops and all of those bishops, Father Vogelpohl told the Messenger, “As a priest I have served four bishops and all of those bishops, Bishop Foys, have been extremely supportive. That’s always a blessing.”

About his vocation Father Vogelpohl said, “I have been blessed. I have always loved my life as a priest, and I am so grateful to Almighty God for calling me to this wonderful life and for walking with me every step of the way. Yes, there were difficult days from time to time. But never once have I ever regretted my calling. I cannot imagine myself having lived any other life.”

Molly Smith, Ph.D.

TMU president announces appointment of first provost

Molly Smith, Ph.D.

On Oct. 1, 2018, Thomas More College transitioned to Thomas More University, necessitating a new organizational structure by creating three distinct colleges — Arts and Sciences, Business, and Education and Health Sciences — and the Institute for Ethical Leadership and Interdisciplinary Studies. With this transition, the role of provost was established to serve as chief academic and student life officer of the University, overseeing the three colleges and institutes and reporting to the president. Dr. Smith will be responsible for the development of the University’s Catholic identity, partnership, and integration, coordination, integrity, and quality of all academic programs, as well as the integration of student life programs into the full student experience.

Inspiried by Thomas More University’s Catholic identity, the new academic leadership provides an opportunity to shape the future of the University, said President Chilla. “I look forward to working alongside Dr. Smith to create and sustain an even higher level of academic reputation and success. His deep understanding of student-focused, supports strong and diverse mission-driven faculty and emphasizes new and innovative academic practices and programs.”

Father Vogelpohl’s pastorate did not end in the way he or his parishioners would have expected or been planning. “I was grateful to have a chance to connect with the Heifers...for the public celebration of the Mass before I retired,” Father Vogelpohl said. And, he found a silver lining. “I was in a panic as to when I might have time to pack up all of the things I had accumulated over 21 years. I needed to do some purging and donating and I wondered when would I have the time? All of a sudden I had all the time I wanted. And when asked who has encouraged him throughout his priesthood, Father Vogelpohl unhesitatingly said the late Archbishop Harry Flynn of Minneapolis, St. Paul.

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June 23, 2020 Primary Election Day

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky reminds voters that, in 2020 Kentuckians will cast votes for every seat in the state House of Representatives and several seats in the Senate. Primary elections will be held on June 23, and the process of voting will be different due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Most counties will only have one polling place, so be sure to check with your county clerk. Making a voting priority is a priority so that your voice is heard when it comes to important issues such as education, life issues, healthcare, tax policy and criminal justice reform.

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Father Leo Schmidt, an example of the priesthood and selfless service

Allegria Thatcher
Assistant Editor

Faithful priest, teacher, son and friend Rev. Leo Carl Schmidt was called home June 6, 2020 after 91 years of serving the Lord. Father Schmidt, of Ft. Thomas and formerly of Cold Spring, died at Carmel Manor Nursing Home, Ft. Thomas.

Born to Joseph E. and Elizabeth Bertsch Schmidt on January 30, 1929, Father Schmidt attended St. Joseph School, Cold Spring and Newport Catholic High School before taking his call to the priesthood while attending Villa Madonna College (now Thomas More University). He went on to study at St. Meinrad Seminary; Meinrad, Ind.

Father Schmidt was ordained June 30, 1956 by the Most Rev. William T. Mulloy, D.D., at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. He attained a master’s in theology at the American College in Louvain, Belgium and the Biblical Institute in Rome before returning to be a parish priest and teacher.

His assignments have included, assistant pastor at Corpus Christi Parish, Newport (1956), assistant pastor at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Newport and on the faculty at Newport Catholic High School (1960-66), assistant pastor at St. Francis de Sales Parish, Newport, associate pastor and faculty at St. Henry Parish & School, Elsmere (1968-69), spiritual director at St. Pius X Seminary, Erlanger (1968-82), pastor at St. Stephen Parish, Newport (1982-92), pastor at St. Augustine Parish, Covington (1992-2015) and chaplain of the Covington Police Department (1998).

Father Schmidt, nicknamed “saintly Father Leo,” always went out of his way to be present for others and was known for his reverent celebration of the Mass. His great love was for the priesthood.

“He would give you 100 percent of his attention whenever you needed to talk to him,” said his nephew, Mike Schmidt. “Everything he did revolved around helping others.”

“The priesthood was his life,” said Bishop Roger Foys. “It wasn't a sideline. He lived his priesthood every hour, every minute. It was an examination for every young priest, to every old priest, and every priest in between of what the priesthood is.”

“He respected his profession so much that I think others respected it because of the way he did it,” said Mr. Schmidt.

Father Schmidt’s final assignment as a pastor was St. Augustine Parish, Covington, where he served for 23 years. He was in his 92nd year and was in poor health, but continued to be a source of strength and support for all who knew him. He left behind his beloved partner, Karen Schmidt; his three children, Marianne Hurtt, Nancy (Will) Grant, Lisa (the late Nancy), Arthur (the late Marianne) and Hank Schmidt & Greg (Rebecca) Schmidt; nieces, Karen Schmidt, Marianne Hurtt, Nancy (Will) Grant, Lisa Kavanagh, Barb (Mike) Smith and Aimee (Tom) Donahue. Online condolences can be given at dmefuneral.com.

Memorials are suggested to the St. Augustine Church Endowment fund at 32 E. Second Street, Covington, 41011.

Dobbling, Muehlenkamp-Erschell Funeral Homes are serving the family.

Play Like a Champion offers no-cost, summer virtual sports camp

Messenger staff report

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Play Like a Champion is hosting virtual sports camps instead of in-person sessions this summer. Camp sessions will take place live Monday - Friday beginning at 11 a.m. EDT and last for approximately 90 minutes. The sessions will be available on demand for attendees who cannot attend during the live broadcast or just can’t get enough of the fun. A typical day will include:

- Welcome and Joke of the Day (5 minutes)
- Sport-Specific Training Drills (15 - 20 minutes)
- Cardio and General Movement Activities (20 minutes)
- Character Development (15 minutes)
- Memory Game (15 minutes)
- Closing Gratitude Exercise (5 minutes)

The “sport-specific training” portion of camp will include coaches leading workouts in a variety of sports that both hone technical skills and encourage sports sampling. While designed around a popular sport, these workouts will be adaptable to any child’s setup or equipment and focus on a wide-range of exercises that will benefit children playing any sports. Making new friends is also key to every camp experience. While attending this virtual camp, children will have the opportunity to connect with other children from diverse neighborhoods all across the country.

Play Like a Champion is making this virtual camp available for free because they believe that all children, regardless of their family’s economic circumstances, should be able to play sports and participate in summer camps, whether virtual or in person.

COVID-19 has hit some families much harder than others. Play Like a Champion asks participants to offer a donation so that the organization can continue pursuing its mission of providing a safe and supportive youth sports environment to all children. The recommended donation for this camp is $10 per camper.

For more information and to register for the camp, visit playlikeachampion.org/virtual-summer-camp.
Discipleship in a mass consumer society

The cultural milieu of a “class economy” spoils the burgeoning American “consumerist-commodified” ideology that risks reducing human meaning to a one-dimensional economic function. In effect, such an ideology would place a price tag on everything—“Nothing is holy, sacred, or off-limits in a world in which everything is for sale.”

Needs ought to be contrasted with more wants, which might be characterized as satisfying desires which do not contribute to human well-being... This preoccupation with wants, often called “consumerism,” severs production and consumption from the common good and impedes the development of the person. Goods that are truly good serve the needs of consumers in a hierarchical order; the need for nutritious goods, for example, clearly outweighs the wants of gambling entertainment. This is an objective order, which is why the production of goods and services must abide by the truth instead of mere utility.


Professor Elshabban, however, countered that assumption by asserting: “Adam Smith and the great classical economists never advocated marketing all aspects of human life, even as they insisted that the market itself required moral limits and frameworks. These philosophical questions of ethics and anthropology share an affinity with the theological interpretation of contemporary Church social teaching on morality of markets.

In his centenary social encyclical “Centesimus Annus” (“On the Hundredth Anniversary of ‘Rerum Novarum’,” 1919), St. Pope John Paul II addressed the economic ethical understanding of markets in relation to human needs. Although free market forces are efficient and vital in promoting economic well-being, markets have moral limits. Markets work efficiently only for promotion of ‘needs’ which are ‘sacred’ to the degree that they are ‘marketable’ and ‘endowed with purchasing power’ (CA, n. 34).

But, in principle, markets cannot automatically satisfy certain ‘collective and qualitative needs’ due to men and women in the ‘good society’ (CA, n. 40).

Thus, “Centesimus Annus” explicitly rejects the ‘idolatry of the market’: “There are certain human needs which escape its logic. There are goods which by their very nature cannot or must not be bought or sold. Certainly, the mechanisms of the market offer secure advantages... a market economy or a market society” is an unresolved foundational question.

In a survey article “Consummation and Christian Ethics,” Franciscan Father Kenneth R. Himes sums up Sandel’s earlier description of “a political economy of consumerism.” From the perspective of political philosophy democracy is perceived “not as a means of cultivating civic virtue so as to have self-government, but as a means to attain the greatest measure of material satisfaction” (CA, n. 40).

In this regard, society and the state as a whole have a correlative duty of “defending these collective goods,” which among others, constitute the essential framework for the legitimate pursuit of personal goals on the part of each individual.”

St. John Paul II further addressed the threats to human dignity associated with lifestyles in advanced economies. The state of the question for economically developed societies has moved beyond production of a sufficient quantity of goods to satisfy essential needs. For nowadays, the grandycenters on moral solutions to the demand for the “quality of life” to be produced and consumed, the quality of services to be enjoyed, the quality of the environment in general.”

In the name of justice, the centennial encyclical summons the world for a commitment to seek a common vision of an authentic vision of the human person and of the human good in responding to the problems and responsibilities facing the advanced nations in a global world. A correct concept of human persons as well as their true good ought to illumine the meaning of quality of life. Thus, the phenomenon of consumerism presents itself as a moral problem insofar as an integral conception of the human person requires respect for all dimensions of the human being. In other words, there should be a priority of “the interior and the spiritual” over “the material and the instincual.”

“Centesimus Annus” names the moral shortfalls found in the current phenomenon of consumerism: “The manner in which new needs and new wants are always more or less appropriate concept of man and his true good. A given culture reveals its overall understanding of life through the choices it makes in production and consumption. It is here that the phenomenon of consumerism arises. In singling out new needs and new means to meet them, one must be guided by a comprehensive picture of man which respects all dimensions of his being and which subordinates his material and instinctual dimensions to interior and spiritual ones.” (CA, n. 36)

Such a reductionist, one-dimensional meaning of human life, one limited to economic gains but also diminishes the fully human, “If economic life is absolutized, and its ethical and religious dimensions are ignored, the economic system becomes consumed, and ends by limiting itself to the production and consumption of goods alone.” (CA, n. 39)

In his apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (“The Joy of the Gospel,” 2013), Pope Francis judged that theories of “trickle-down” economics and its offspring of “a globalization of indifference” are immoral. He writes: “The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers something new, something we never had before. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us.” (EG, n. 54).

Pope Francis echoes a prophetic oracle in his criticism of the “idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy.” He asserts: “The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy bares their imbalances and, above all, their real lack of concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone, a consumer.” (CA, n. 55)

Following the social teaching of St. Pope John Paul II, the “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church” (2004) reiterates the need for more formation, educational and cultural. The Compendium quotes section 36 of “Centesimus Annus”: “Thus a great deal of educational and cultural work is needed, including the education of consumers in the responsible use of their power of choice, the formation of a strong sense of responsibility among producers and consumers, and the construction of a new ethic of work, as well as the necessary intervention by public authorities” (CSDC, n. 376).

A correct concept of economic Justice for All, “their 1986 economic pastoral, the Catholic Bishops of the United States again reviewed the nation’s economy and cultural landscape.” Government deficits, corporate speculation and excessive consumerism contribute to an ethic of “buy now—pay later,” which violates principles of stewardship and responsibility.” (Pastoral Message, “A decade after Economic Justice for All” Continuing Principles, Changing Content, New Challenges,” November 1990)

What will be the moral assessment rendered more than three decades later in 2023?

Father Ronald Ketteler is director of ecumenism, episcopal liaison to the Messenger and professor of theology at Thomas More University.
In his “Life of St. Augustine,” the 4th-century bishop Possidius tells us that the great saint went to the Latin Dome of the Church, knowing that his earthly end was near, had four penitential psalms copied and hung on the walls of his room. “From his sickbed,” Possidius writes, Augustine “could see these sheets of paper... and would read them, crying constantly and deeply.” It was an act of deep piety that we all might ponder ways to emulate.

I was doing something similar, however, I might add Psalm 42 (“I have washed my hands in blood”) as a reflection of the glory of God declared in a display of astronomical wonders that vividly illustrate the extravagance of the divine creativity.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus then goes on to encourage us about the problems of terror confronting children today. While many politicians and social workers were crying out for more money, Jesus pointed the finger at the terror of our own souls, our own cities. There we often find that it is not the gun, alcohol, drugs, sex and money that causes the terror that really hits close to home.

In the Gospel, we find Jesus in the middle of his narrative commissioning his disciples to preach the word. He even warns them that their job will not be easy. “Do not fear those who deprive the body of life but cannot destroy the soul. Rather, fear him who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna.” The fact that the disciples will face great difficulty and opposition is the reason that today’s reading from Jeremiah is found in the liturgy. Jeremiah had faced great obstacles. “I have become a laughingstock all day long; everyone mocks me.” In both readings, the lesson is clear. Despite opposition and obstacle, God’s followers must persevere in doing the work.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus then goes on to encourage them in their mission. He tells them that despite the suffering they are to encounter, they must be instruments of mercy by their heavenly Father. “Even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do, so not afraid!”

However, the undeniable fact remains that a life of discipleship is a life that requires sacrifice and some suffering. While the Gospel of St. John reveals that the Lord requires as much sacrifice as being a good parent.

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Athens, available for free at apod.nasa.gov.” NASA offers a brilliantly-hued panorama of the “Cosmic Reef” within the Large Magellanic Cloud, 160,000 light years away. On May 15, APOD featured two dancing galaxies 12 million light years away which, as the brief explanation following the striking image notes, “have been locked in gravitational combat for a billion years” — a dance that “in the few next billions of years” will lead to a cosmic merg-

I thought, as many probably did, that when Joseph learned of Mary’s pregnancy, his intent to end their engagement was out of hurt, thinking Mary cheated. A new perspective was gleaned when again we read in Matthew 1:20, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.”

Joseph was tasked by God to name Jesus. That makes him a saintly figure. He died in peace, with his family, having been given a special role as the Spouse of the Mother of God, Most Chaste. His feast is December 8.

On April 25, APOD and the Hubble Space Telescope offered a brilliantly-hued panorama of the “Cosmic Reef” within the Large Magellanic Cloud, 160,000 light years away. On May 15, APOD featured two dancing galaxies 12 million light years away which, as the brief explanation following the striking image notes, “have been locked in gravitational combat for a billion years” — a dance that “in the few next billions of years” will lead to a cosmic merg-

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Long-time principal of St. Henry District High School retires

Allegra Thatcher
Assistant Editor

Thirty years and many stories later, Dave Otte is ready to bow out gracefully from his leadership at St. Henry District High School, Erlanger.

His long tenure started with a phone call, one Mr. Otte credits as the work of divine providence.

After teaching for 14 years in Erlanger, he worked for a textbook publishing company for two years as a developmental editor of math textbooks. In the summer of 1990 he received a phone call from Father Paul Wolfzorn, who was on the board at the time, and asked if he would be interested in the job as principal at St. Henry. Mr. Otte didn’t know then it would be his last job interview.

Over the last 30 years, the school has undergone many changes with Mr. Otte at the helm. About eight years in, the high school outgrew its location beside St. Henry grade school in Elsmere, and the diocese found a new property on which to expand.

“When I started, it was more of a parish high school,” said Mr. Otte. “Now we draw from all over Northern Kentucky and even Indiana. It’s grown to the point where it’s not just that little school up in Elsmere. It’s a district high school…we draw from a very wide range of areas.”

Mr. Otte has also led the school in opening its sports complex and its 2019 fine arts addition, complete with the largest auditorium in Northern Kentucky.

His biggest success as a principal, however, isn’t any physical project. It has his faculty. “I always say the faculty and staff here are absolutely wonderful and I hope everybody understands how good they really are… I think that’s where it has to start,” he said.

Creating an atmosphere where students can learn isn’t always easy, but Mr. Otte has consistently achieved it with the staffs he has hired during his time at SHDHS. Teachers want to be on his staff because they know they can come and be treated professionally, running their classrooms with few outside issues to interrupt learning.

“We’ve been very fortunate, we have very few issues during the school day with the kids,” he said. “It makes it a great atmosphere, a great place to teach and to learn.”

He also enjoys seeing the students grow. “To see a student come in as a freshman and then when they graduate, it’s such a defining moment to see them and know that we prepared them for what’s next,” he said. “The faith environment helps. I think the students are very comfortable here, and all of that rolls into the success of the students. They’re teenagers, but they enjoy being here. It’s a safe place where they see their friends, where they have adults they can go to and they are aware of that.”

Mr. Otte is continually grateful for the amount of support he’s had for every project and undertaking. If he’s learned one thing during his time as principal, it’s that “there’s a lot of great kids and people.”

“The support I’ve gotten from the diocese, especially Bishop (Roger) Foys, has just been unbelievable. He’s been very instrumental in what I’ve done during his 18 years. He’s been a tremendous inspiration to me.”

Mr. Otte has known it’s time to move on for a few years now, and waited until after the completion of the fine arts project during the 2019-2020 school year. He decided after the coronavirus COVID-19 shutdown that he wanted more time at home with family.

“After Bishop Foys gave us the go ahead on the fine arts project, I told him I would stay through that project,” he said. “The business of staying home for two months told me that’s probably where I needed to be.” The Ottes will have their eighth grandchild in September, and he wants to be able to spend time with them.

“Being available to them right now has become more of a priority to me. Staying home convinced me that it was time for a change. In my mind, this was the perfect scenario to ease out and be healthy at home,” he said.

Bishop Foys said, “Mr. Otte has given his life to Catholic education. His three decades at St. Henry District High School provide us with proof of that. He has been committed to the Catholic identity of our schools as well as providing each student with an excellent overall education. From the move from the old St. Henry High School site and the building of a new St. Henry High School to the very recent addition to SHDHS he has been on the front lines. His guidance, his wisdom, his knowledge and especially his faith have served not only him well but also every student who walked through the doors of SHDHS.”

Father Gregory Bach, pastoral administrator at SHDHS, said: “Dave Otte has been very dedicated to St. Henry (District) High School in the 30 plus years he has served there. He’s a very faith-filled man. His legacy will live on in the school he has built.”

“I am grateful he worked for all he has done for Catholic education in our diocese,” said Bishop Foys. “I pray that he will enjoy his retirement and look forward to seeing and working with him at his parish — our Cathedral Basilica in Covington. God bless Mr. Dave Otte!”

“There’s so many good stories,” said Mr. Otte. “Everybody’s been so great. The support has been phenomenal. Hopefully it’s because we do things the right way and the right thing.”

“Thirty years went by very quickly” he said. “St. Henry was a great place to be.”

Vatican reopens clinic, offers museums’ visits to health workers

VATICAN CITY — Continuing a phased reopening, the Vatican’s free pediatric and maternal health clinic began during the school day with the kids, “It makes it with few outside issues to interrupt learning. and be treated professionally , running their classrooms the staffs he has hired during his time at SHDHS. Teachers that’s where it has to start,” he said. everybody understands how good they really are — I think faculty and staff here are absolutely wonderful and I hope isn’t any physical project. It’s his faculty. “I always say the um in Northern Kentucky .”

In addition, complete with the largest auditori- um in Northern Kentucky .

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Dave Otte is retiring after 30 years of serving as principal at St. Henry District High School. He says the support and growth over the years have been remarkable.
The world and our Church are in an uncertain time as the coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we practice our faith. Across the country, dioceses and parishes have suspended public Masses, canceled events and postponed activities indefinitely. Impatiently waiting and hoping for a return to normalcy, we all grapple with rising frustration and challenges.

Happily, concern for the needs of others is also rising everywhere. Day after day we see news calls to aid people unable to fend for themselves, such as those facing crisis pregnancies, the elderly, the handicapped and the poor, and we read of the success of these grass-root projects. The widespread urge to provide practical action and spiritual nourishment in the face of fear; uncertainty and economic turmoil is truly heartening. It reminds us that we are most fully human when we are in community with one another.

Whether secular or religious in origin, concern for others is essentially pro-life. When we wear masks in public, we are being protective of vulnerable people, lest we unknowingly spread infection. When we stay at home, sacrificing close contact with loved ones and colleagues, it is for their well-being. When we thank grocery workers and postal carriers, we salute them for risking their health on our behalf. When we celebrate the front-line workers in medical and other essential settings, we admire and are grateful for their heroism in serving others.

Everything done recently to protect communal health and safety is pro-life — acknowledging the inherent human dignity of others.

On the other hand, the culture of death has not succumbed to the coronavirus. Politicians continue to attack the sanctity of life, calling abortion essential healthcare, contemplating euthanasia measures and scoffing at conscience protection for well-intended triage planning to allocate housing, funding and supplies poses risks for highly vulnerable populations.

For the pro-life ministry, the pandemic poses a special challenge. It may be a long while before our usual pro-life programs and practices can resume, so it is crucial to ask what is realistic and possible in the near future. Too many people are suffering and traumatized by this pandemic, and we must be creative in addressing their changed circumstances.

How can we provide effective support to the vulnerable in our parishes and dioceses? How can we minister spiritually and physically to those most in need?

The Pro-Life Office is gathering information and working on a plan to help pastors, parish coordinators and parish committees remain an effective pro-life presence in our diocesan community. While nothing can replace human interaction, even at the level of an old-fashioned telephone call, today we can take advantage of a new way to share important information and maintain ties with one another and the broader community: social media.

Yes, while many have thought of social media and the Internet as a curse, those same people are starting to accept social media venues and online meetings as the “new normal.” Grandparents who are far from computer-savvy delight in virtual family reunions. Schools trying to keep students on track rely heavily on their computers and laptops. We can order groceries on-line, play family games together and even make routine purchases of clothes and goods from home.

It is clear that the Internet will be part of the answer as we seek ways to offer hope, compassion and support in our parishes and broader community.
Cathedral window commemorates visions/devotion to the Sacred Heart

Stephen Enzweiler, KHS
Cathedral Historian

In a quiet corner of the Cathedral Basilica, there is a stained-glass window that tells a story of the origins of the popular devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is not one of the more prominently situated or better-known windows like the great north transept window, considered one of the largest and most beautiful in the world. Instead, this window is tucked away in the north corner of the sanctuary, relatively hidden from view behind the limestone columns and brass, hanging lights. It is known as “The Apparitions of the Sacred Heart” and it has been a source of Sacred Heart devotion for pilgrims and visitors for more than a century.

“The Apparitions of the Sacred Heart” window is the creation of the studio of Mayer & Company of Munich, which produced stained glass for Covington’s cathedral from 1905 to 1922. Mayer’s windows remain among the world’s finest examples of the Munich Style of stained glass to be found anywhere. The basic elements illustrated in this window came from the Bishop of Covington, Camillus Paul Maes, who carefully wrote down the description of what he wanted it to look like and sent it to the Mayer studios in Munich.

In Munich, scale drawings were made and sent back to Bishop Maes, who refined it and made changes, then sent it back to Munich. This back-and-forth design process went on for nearly a year before the Bishop would approve the final drawing. According to the book, Franz Mayer of Munich, Mayer & Company stained glass artists, as many as a dozen artisans worked on the window, which even included the owner, Franz Mayer, who took personal pride in painting the face of Jesus. The result is a masterpiece of color, design and style that is the hallmark of Mayer & Co stained glass.

Bishop Maes wanted the story of this window to tell the faithful of all generations about one of the most important revelations in Church history, a devotion to which he was especially dedicated. The window is dominated by two figures, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1567-1670), a Sister of the Order of the Visitation, and the figure of Jesus. St. Margaret Mary claimed to have received apparitions of Jesus in her convent in the Burgundian French village of Paray-le-Monial beginning on December 27, 1673, the feast of Saint John the Evangelist.

The window shows her on her knees in humble reverence as Our Lord, still bearing the marks ofifixion, reveals to her that his heart is on fire for love of us. He reinforces this revelation by pointing to his enflamed heart with the three fingers of his right hand.

The angels we see in the scene also have something to say about the revelation. The angel in the right panel gazes upward toward Heaven in praise, his arms open and rapt expression communicating a consuming wonder at the heart of Jesus. The angel in the left panel, the angel in the background, gazes slightly downward toward the visionary and shrinks before the mystery of why the Lord loves man so deeply as to suffer and die for him. The other angel gestures at the visionary and looks directly at Jesus in confident reaffirmation of the revelation.

But this is not the only message that a Christian has always had the tradition of using symbols and hidden meanings in religious art. In medieval Christian symbolism, the red rose stood for the blood shed by Jesus on the Cross (the rose was believed to be made red by the blood of Christ in his passion). Thus, a red rose symbolizes God’s love for man. Roses abound throughout the Church, revealing to her that his heart is on fire for love of us. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, the Visitation nun wasn’t the first visionary to comprehend the mysteries of Christ’s wounded heart and his fiery love for souls. Five hundred years earlier, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and Saint Francis of Assisi in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, together with the enthusiasm of the Crusaders returning from the Holy Land, gave rise to devotions of the passion of Christ, particularly to pious practices in honor of his sacred wounds.

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St. Gertrude the Great (1256-1302) was another one of the early devotees of the Sacred Heart. Perhaps because Bishop Maes, in formulating his ideas for this window, chose to tell us of the inseparable interconnectedness of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

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The feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrated on the First Friday of each month after the Feast of Corpus Christi. This feast provides an opportunity for reparation and veneration of the heart of Jesus Christ. It is a time to remember the sacrifice of Christ and to honor his love for humanity. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is especially significant because it is the seat of divinity and piety in heaven. 

The Sacred Heart is celebrated as a means of making reparation for sins committed against the heart of Jesus, through acts of devotion such as going to confession and receiving Holy Communion, displaying an image of the Sacred Heart in our homes, and praying the Sacred Heart Chaplet. 

The background of the feast of the Sacred Heart is rooted in the history of the Church and the life of Jesus Christ. It is said that Jesus asked St. Margaret Mary Alacoque to honor his Sacred Heart in reparation for the ingratitude of men for the sacrifice that Christ had made for them. At that time, the Feast of the Sacred Heart was celebrated on the Friday after Pentecost, so this puts the Feast of the Sacred Heart in relation to other significant Christian feasts such as Corpus Christi. 

The Feast of the Sacred Heart is also related to the Divine Mercy, another important feast in the Church calendar. Both feasts expound on the same mystery of the love of Christ for humanity. The Feast of Divine Mercy is celebrated on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, the Novena to Sacred Heart, and, of course, to attend Mass on the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart. 

How does this feast connect to Divine Mercy? These two feasts expound on the same mystery of God’s ineffable love and divine mercy flowing to us from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In both revelations, Jesus revealed himself to a humble and holy religious sister and desired to change the world through her. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the inexhaustible fountain of Divine Mercy. Jesus told St. Faustina: “Speak to the world about My mercy. It is a sign for the end times. After it will come the Day of Justice. While there is still time, let them have recourse to the fountain of My mercy.” (Diary 848) 

What is the Sacred Heart chaplet and how does it differ from the Divine Mercy chaplet? Whereas the Divine Mercy Chaplet can be said on a normal rosary, the Sacred Heart Chaplet is said using 33 beads—one for each year of the Lord’s life. The Divine Mercy Chaplet focuses mostly on asking for Christ’s Mercy whereas the Sacred Heart Chaplet, which includes the Animas Christi prayer, asks God to give us a heart more like Christ’s. Both chaplets, however, call us to meditate on the passion and suffering of Jesus.

How is this feast relevant for Catholics today? Now more than ever, we need the graces flowing from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The love of Christ for humanity is always relevant. It is the most relevant thing to any person of any age. It is the reason we exist. However, it may be harder today, 2000 years after Christ’s passion and with so many distractions, for us to feel poignantly the love Jesus has for each of us. This feast helps us to never forget.
Cause for celebration

Karen Kuhlman
Messenger Correspondent

To the Religious, jubilarians are the joyful celebrators of the anniversaries of the profession of vows of the members of their communities. And though those anniversaries may not be marked with public celebrations this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they will be joyful nonetheless.

In 2020, the Sisters of Notre Dame, Covington Province, celebrate 11 jubilarians whose anniversaries of living the vowed life in community range from 50 to 70 years. They are part of the rich tapestry of service to the Diocese of Covington that the sisters have been weaving since their arrival from Coesfeld, Germany in 1874. Teachers, nurses and administrators — they have joyfully done God’s work, enriching the lives of his people with their efforts. Two of those sisters shared their reflections on their lives and vocations.

Sister Michyl said: “God has been with me every day for his goodness. I truly loved them and loved taking care of them. I worked there for 14 years, and still hear from some of them today.”

Most recently, she has served her community in Lourdes Hall Care Center and as director of provincial transportation, making certain that transportation is available to slow down a little but is still able to get around and provide assistance to her community. Sister Mary Michyl said: “God has been very good to me in all that I have done. I thank him every day for his goodness.”

2020 Jubilarians
Sisters of Notre Dame, Covington Province
Jubilee of Grace — 70 years
Sister Mary Ruth (Rose Emma) Riehle
Iron Jubilee — 65 Years
Sister Mary Ruth Agnes (Mary Angela) Delaney
Sister Mary Magdelyn Strithold
Sister Mary Paulla Hanneken
Diamond Jubilee — 60 Years
Sister Mary Carol (formerly Karyn) Baglan
Sister Mary Michyl (Phyllis) Habermehl
Sister Mary Reineke Kroeger
Sister Ann Marie (Dorthea) Pfum
Sister Mary Juanelle Thiel
Golden Jubilee — 50 Years
Sister Mary Jana Foltz
Sister Marla Monahan

“I truly loved them and loved taking care of them.”
— Notre Dame Sister Mary Michyl

For more information about consecrated life in the Diocese of Covington, contact Sister Fran Moore at (859) 392-1500.

Be Witnesses

“Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of acting. Of living!”
— Pope Francis

Religious Communities of Women

Benedictine Sisters of Covington
www.stvalburg.org
St. Joseph the Worker Sisters
www.ssjw.org
Congregation of Divine Providence of Kentucky
www.cdppkentucky.org
Notre Dame Sisters of Covington
www.sndky.org
Passionist Nuns
www.erlangerpassionists.com
Carmelites Sisters for the Aged and Infirm
www.carmelitesisters.com

Public Association of the Faithful
Franciscan Daughters of Mary
www.fdofmary.org

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Public Association of the Faithful
Franciscan Daughters of Mary
www.fdofmary.org
June 22 — Freedom to serve in healthcare
Reflect: For centuries, the Church has carried on the healing ministry of Christ by building institutions dedicated to medicine and accompanying of the dying. Indeed, the Church invented the hospital as we know it today. Orders like the Little Sisters of the Poor serve elderly low-income Americans of all backgrounds. But the Little Sisters’ work is at risk because of lawsuits brought by the states of California and Pennsylvania against the expanded religious and moral exemption to the HHS mandate, and Catholic hospitals are constantly defending themselves against lawsuits and government orders that try to force them to participate in harmful procedures, such as sterilization, gender reassignment surgery, and even abortion. It is unthinkable that we would undermine our mission to heal by destroying innocent life and harming the persons for whom we are called to care.

June 23 — Respect for houses of worship
Reflect: Houses of worship provide spaces for people to step back, often with fellow believers, and pray. The disturbing rise in attacks on these places is an attack on religious freedom. Gaunt in churches, synagogues, and mosques terrorize faith communities. In Europe and North America, churches have been desecrated. Priests are often killed, while celebrating liturgies. The problem is not limited to attacks on Christians. Over 30 people were murdered in two mosques in New Zealand, while there have been several attacks on synagogues here in the U.S. in recent years. Mosques and synagogues have been vandalized, while there has been a rise in attacks on Jews and Muslims who are simply going about their daily life. These kinds of attacks are assaults on the image of God and cannot be tolerated.

June 24 — Religious minorities in China
Reflect: Under the Chinese Communist Party, Chinese citizens have limited religious freedom. Since 2013, religious persecution has intensified under a government campaign for the “sinicization” of religion—an effort to have religious and moral exemption to the HHS mandate, and Catholics need the space to operate in accordance with peace. They championed the preservation of their country’s diverse social fabric. Religious leaders continue to. In these cases, it is vulnerable children who have suffered.

June 26 — Border wall dispute in the Diocese of Brownsville
Reflect: Efforts to construct a barrier on the southern border have met resistance from the Catholic Church in Brownsville. The proposed barrier would run through land owned by the Diocese, and so the federal government would have to take the land in order to build the wall or fence. Freedom of the Church means that the Church cannot be impeded by the civil authorities from engaging in her mission. That mission includes ministry to those fleeing violence and poverty. As Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville told the Wall Street Journal, “I don’t want to use church property against the will of how you think life is, you cannot be received here. The government is going to have to take the land. The Church is not going to give it.”

June 27 — Catholic schools
Reflect: Education is central to the Church’s mission. In fact, one of the Spiritual Works of Mercy is to teach. In the U.S., the Catholic school system grew out of necessity, due to the wave of 19th Century Catholic immigrants who felt unwelcome in the “public” school system. Since then, Catholic schools have been significant anchor institutions in many neighborhoods, benefitting even those who are not their students. Catholic leaders have played a leading role in ensuring that all children have access to quality education. Education is what Catholics do, and an America without Catholic schools is unimaginable. Catholic schools need the space to operate in accordance with their religious convictions if they are to continue to be a source of vitality for our society.

June 28 — Central African Republic
Reflect: The Central African Republic (CAR) is one of the poorest countries in the world. A total of 2.5 million people, out of a population of 4.9 million, depend on humanitarian assistance. In 2012 a coalition of rebel groups, called the Seleka, from the predominantly Muslim North launched a rebellion that displaced then-president Francois Bozize in 2013. To counter the Seleka armed groups, non-Muslim rural communities strengthened traditional self-defense militias, called anti-balaka. Even though the conflict started primarily over political power and access to natural resources, the Seleka and anti-balaka forces resorted to banditry and attacks on unarmed Muslim and Christian civilians, making religious identity a driving force. During this civil war, Evangelical Pastor Nicolas Guerekoya, Catholic Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, and Imam Omar Kobine Layama led an interreligious movement to counter rising hatred with reconciliation, and violence with peace. They championed the preservation of their country’s diverse social fabric. Religious leaders continue the hard work of healing the trauma of war and rebuilding a new society.

June 29 — Civilize it
Reflect: As Catholics, our strong tradition of social teaching compels us to be actively engaged in the building up of our communities. This is achieved by being involved in the political process—and yet today, many shy away from such involvement because our national and local conversations are filled with vitriol and harsh language, often directed at people themselves. When personal attacks replace honest debate, no one wins. This kind of attack, no matter the reason, only serves to further divide our communities. What is needed is good, honest, civil dialogue. This means that we must treat everyone as worthy of being at the table, worthy of our respect, and worthy of being heard. In short, it means treating everyone as our neighbors.

The USCCB website also offers ways to pray and act during Religious Freedom Week, visit www.usccb.org.
SECRETARY
The Department of Catholic Schools of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, KY seeks to identify secretarial candidates with a history of increasingly responsible experience who possess sound administrative and reporting skills, along with the demeanor and organizational skills to professionally and effectively interact with all levels of Diocesan Curia staff and other Diocesan constituencies. This position requires confidentiality, initiative, attention to detail, and a strong orientation to customer service. Duties utilize MS Office software and include a wide variety of written communications, scheduling of appointments and meetings, planning and oversight of Departmental programs and liturgies, and primary telephone responsibility. Candidates must be faithful and actively practicing Roman Catholics. Please send resume, cover letter, and at least five references with contact e-mail addresses to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR at skoplyay@covdio.org, or fax to 859/392-1589.

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SACRED HEART PRAYER. Dear Heart of Jesus — in the past I have 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.C.T.

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MUSIC DIRECTOR
St. Therese Parish, Southgate, KY seeks a part-time musician to provide music for weekend Masses & Holy Days of Obligation. Preferred candidate would possess organ & improvisation skills; have vocal experience, including ability to sing with accurate pitch and rhythm; have ability to direct both adult and children; be available for funerals and weddings; and be knowledgeable about Catholic liturgy (or willing to be educated). Virtus training is required.
Qualified candidates should send a letter of interest, simple resume including references and comprehension history to lauerd@sainttherese.ws or fax to 859.441.2395. www.sainttherese.ws

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GOES TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. Holy Spirit you who solve all problems. Who light all roads so that I can attain my goals. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and to forget all evil against me and that in all instances of my life you are with me. I want in this short prayer to thank you for all things and to confirm once again that I never want to be separated from you even in spite of all material illusions. I wish to be with you in eternal glory. Thank you for your mercy toward me and mine. Amen. B.W.
ACCOUNTING CLERK/BOOKKEEPER

This Full time position for a locally owned independent restaurant requires an individual with experience in the areas of: Profit & Loss Statements, Taxes, Sage/Peachtree Accounting, Excel, General Ledgers, Accounts Payable, Bank reconciliations, Health insurance and 401k plans, and payroll. The individual will possess good time management skills and be a self-starter, able to meet deadlines. 32-36 hours a week.

2 year Associate Degree in Accounting or equivalent experience preferred.

About the company. Barleycorn’s is a strong, independently owned restaurant in business for 45 years, with offices in Cold Spring, Ky. We offer paid holidays, paid vacations, 401k profit sharing plan, medical, dental and life insurance. Very clean and comfortable work environment.

Reply to: joe@barleycorns.com

Consecration to St. Joseph
(Continued from page 5)

last spiritual father of Jesus. Mary is our spiritual mother, and as the mystical body endures forever, so does Joseph’s spiritual fatherhood last for us.

St. Joseph’s Ministry, a new branch of the Pro-Life Movement, is being started here in our diocese. It is being created to raise awareness of the many ways Catholics can support children in Kentucky’s public child protection system. As St. Joseph accepted the task of fostering Jesus, we as Catholics are called to also care for the orphaned — it is a fundamental teaching of the Church. This role can come in many forms, perhaps full-time fostering of a child for a season?

As of May 3, a new statewide record of 10,047 children are in the foster care system, 1,395 in Northern Kentucky. This is higher than at the peak of the heroin epidemic — maybe a surge from the COVID-19 pandemic and the stress it has brought to families?

Adopting a child or sibling group and making a lifetime commitment is also a need. Nearly one fourth of the children in foster care will need an adoptive family. In God’s divine plan, some people are called to the task of fostering and adopting, while others are called for other things. However, we are all called to care for each other, so one role might be to support that child and parents who were destined to foster or adopt.

St. Joseph Ministry not only aims to help educate the community about foster care, it also calls the Church to wrap a loving embrace around the family who is taking on this difficult job. We can do this easily through prayers and by offering goods and services. A foster or adoptive family from your church may need help with a meal during a busy time, help getting a child to or from school or an activity, maybe a piece of furniture or new car seat, or some hand-me-down clothes. Maybe an evening off or some tutoring will make the job more manageable.

I hope to establish this type of support in each parish. Please allow DCCH Center for Children and Families to help serve and bring together the family and child God has planned for one another. Let the rest of the parish family support this special plan. Contact www.dcchcenter.org or call (859) 331-2040 to learn more about fostering and adopting, and how we, as a Church, can offer help to those who do.

Ronald M. Bertsch is director of Therapeutic Foster Care/Adoption for the DCCH Center for Children and Families, Ft. Mitchell.

For over 100 years, St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky has been providing emergency assistance to Northern Kentucky neighbors in need.

St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky is committed to helping neighbors in need during this critical time.

Thank you for your help in providing hope for those who are struggling to make ends meet.

If you would like to support SVdP’s outreach, donate online at svdpnk.org. Your gift shares HOPE with those in need.
NKU Newman Center virtual Bible study keeps community engaged

Allegria Thatcher
Assistant Editor

At Northern Kentucky University, weekly Bible studies through the Newman Center are normal. What isn’t normal is a virtual format, a result of the COVID-19, which has allowed them to continue into the summer.

Janey Vandegrift, the Newman Center vice president and Bible study leader, described the group as “a group of friends intentionally sharing the Word together.” They formerly met every Tuesday night on campus — now they meet every Tuesday night online.

“I had been leading in-person study and I was honestly skeptical of making it virtual,” but it ended up being a really fruitful thing to continue it, she said. It has helped keep their Catholic community connected while being physically apart.

Donna Heim, campus minister, has also been on the virtual calls to help facilitate, and she has been impressed at the depths the students have been able to reach while remaining skeptical (of making it virtual), but it ended up being a really fruitful thing to continue it,” she said. It has helped keep their Catholic community connected while being physically apart.

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Final HHS rule helps ‘restore rights of health care providers,’ say bishops

WASHINGTON — The chairmen of three U.S. bishops’ commit- tces welcomed a final rule implemented by the Trump administra- tion June 12 to restore “the longstanding position of the federal government that discrimination on the basis of ‘sex’ means just that and does not refer to ‘termination of pregnancy’ nor ‘gender identity’” This final rule replaces the Obama administration’s Health and Human Services rule issued in 2016 — and vacated by a court last October — that revised the definition of “sex” in the civil rights provision of the Affordable Care Act known as Section 1557. This section provides that individuals cannot be subject to discrimination based on their race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. Under the Obama administration’s rule, it included “gender identity” and “termination of pregnancy”; and HHS regu- lations governing its implementation had no exemption for reli- gious organizations. The Trump administration’s new regulation “will help restore the rights of health care providers — as well as insurers and employers — who decline to perform or cover abor- tions or ‘gender transition’ procedures due to ethical or profes- sional objections,” the bishops said in a statement released late June 12.

USCCB, other Catholic groups urge court to protect faith-based foster care

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference and a few Catholic Charities agencies have joined more than 30 other religious groups, states and a group of Congress members urging the Supreme Court to protect Philadelphia’s faith-based foster care. The groups filed friend-of-the-court briefs in early June in Fulton v. Philadelphia, which the court will hear next term to determine if Philadelphia can exclude a Catholic social services agency from the city’s foster care program because the agency does not accept some same-sex cou- ples as foster parents. The briefs argued that the court should allow the city’s Catholic social service agency to continue its foster care role and protect faith-based ministries nationwide to ensure they maintain their First Amendment religious exercises rights. In 2018, Philadelphia stopped using the foster program of Catholic Social Services of the Philadelphia Archdiocese because of the agency’s policy of not placing children with same-sex cou- ples stressing that these unions go against Church teaching on traditional marriage. A year later, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit sided with the city, calling the agency’s policies dis- crimination. In its brief in support of the Philadelphia Catholic agency, the USCCB, joined by the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, said Catholics have been involved in caring for the orphaned since the early Church and in the beginnings of the Church in America. “This history and the theological basis that animates it, together with the role foster care repre- sents a core religious exercise for Catholics,” it said.

Black Catholics at march say Church’s support needed more than ever

LOUISVILLE, Ky — After Tyanna Barnes-Palmer watched local protests and marches for social justice unfold on social media, she helped organize the “Black Catholics United: Stand for Justice March” in downtown Louisville. On June 6, with counts calling for racial justice, close to 200 people marched from an intersection near St. Augustine Church to the federal courthouse. Members of the clergy and individuals of different racial groups came out to support the young adults in the Black Catholic community who organized the grass-roots initiative. “I heard young people asking where the Catholic presence was,” said Barnes-Palmer during an interview before marching downtown. “We wanted to show that black Catholics are engaged. That we care and we’re ready to stand for the injustices black people are experiencing in America.” Father John Judie, a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville, addressed the gathering, noting that racial justice wasn’t only the dream of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. It also is “God’s dream,” he said. “Racism is a deeply rooted systemic problem and it is as dangerous and destructive as cancer in the blood. It works constantly to eat away and destroy the very spirit and soul of our human community,” said Father Judie.

June 19, 2020

Religious freedom commission: U.S. cannot ignore northeast Syria

WASHINGTON — The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom has urged Washington to take concrete actions to safeguard religious freedoms established in northeast Syria, an area occupied by Turkish troops and allied militants. The independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission said it aims to afford the universal right to freedom of religion and belief and makes policy recommendations to the U.S. administration. USCIRF said towns and villages in northeast Syria — including some that are traditionally home to Christians, Kurds, Yazidis and Arabs — have experienced terrible violence and ethnic cleansing. It said badly needed humanitarian aid has also been cut off, especially in this time of the coronavirus pandemic. Turkey is also severely limiting the areas with Syrian refugees and those displaced from other parts of the country to change the region’s demographics, it says. The rights group Genocide Watch labeled such actions as “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity.” “The United States can- not look the other way as this disaster unfolds,” Nadine Maenza, USCIRF’s vice chair, said during a commission roundtable in Washington with experts on northeast Syria June 16. Maenza vis- ited northeast Syria in late 2019. It was able to see for myself the devastation brought upon Christian villages near the area Turkey had invaded. I met with religious and community leaders and heard about the remarkable religious freedom conditions under the autonomous administration and how that is now nonexistent in the area that Turkey occupies,” Maenza said.

Congo’s new Ebola outbreak adds strain as agencies respond to COVID-19

NAIROBI, Kenya — As Congo battles the COVID-19 pandemic, a new Ebola outbreak has resurfaced in the northwest, just as authorities were prepared to declare the end of Ebola in three eastern provinces. The cases were confirmed in Mbandaka, a port city on River Congo May 31. By June 6, there were 12 cases, nine of which had been confirmed and those considered probable. Eight people have since died, including a 15-year-old girl. In the region where another outbreak ended about two years ago, Congo “is cur- rently facing a COVID-19 epidemic affecting 11 provinces, working hard to end one long-burning (Ebola) epidemic affecting three provinces and confronting a new (Ebola) epidemic affecting one province,” said Ghislain Mukuna, the integrated health program manager of the U.S.-based Catholic Relief Services in the country. “It is also acting to end a measles epidemic affecting all 26 provinces and a cholera epidemic affecting ten provinces.” He said in the east and in northwest Congo, the existing coordination structures and response teams fighting Ebola were also the same leading the fight against COVID-19. “The number of outbreaks and health emergencies faced by those structures poses a great challenge,” said Mukuna.

Detroit Archdiocese to shift to ‘family of parishes’ over next two years

DETROIT — Over the next two years, the Archdiocese of Detroit will transition to a new pastoral and governance model for its 26 parishes called “families of parishes.” Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron announced May 31, the Feast of Pentecost. Calling it a “very important step in the life and mission of our local Church,” he said the move will allow parishes to more robustly serve their mission while proactively responding to historic challenges that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. “Even before the pandemic, we know God wanted to renew our parishes. The structures we inherited served our mission well in the past, but they need to be renewed and aligned for mission,” Archbishop Vigneron said. “And so, in prayer and in consultation with others, I’ve discerned that this is the time to respond in faith to our new reality and to better equip our parish communities for mission.” While the health and economic crises have contributed to a reduc- tion in material resources, the archdiocese also faces a looming priest shortage, the archbishop noted, with almost two-thirds of priests stressing that these unions go against Church teaching on traditional marriage. A year later, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit sided with the city, calling the agency’s policies dis- crimination. In its brief in support of the Philadelphia Catholic agency, the USCCB, joined by the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, said Catholics have been involved in caring for the orphaned since the early Church and in the beginnings of the Church in America. “This history and the theological basis that animates it, together with the role foster care repre- sents a core religious exercise for Catholics,” it said.

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Pope calls USCCB president to express solidarity, support amid turmoil in U.S.

Greg Erlandson
Catholic News Service
WASHINGTON — Pope Francis used his June 3 audience and a phone call with the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to express his solidarity and support following days of demonstrations protesting the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

In a June 3 letter to his fellow bishops, Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles told them Pope Francis had called him “to express his prayers and closeness to the church and people of the United States in this moment of unrest in our country.”

Archbishop Gomez wrote that the pope “thanked the bishops for the pastoral tone of the Church’s response to the demonstrations across the country in our statements and actions since the death” of Floyd. The pope also said he was praying for Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda and the church of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Archbishop Gomez wrote.

Archbishop Gomez thanked the pope “for his prayers and strong words of support at the conclusion” of his Wednesday general audience.

In his livestreamed June 3 general audience, the pope said, “Today I join the Church in St. Paul and Minneapolis, and in the entire United States, in praying for the repose of the soul of George Floyd and of all those others who have lost their lives as a result of the sin of racism.”

The pope asked for prayers “for the consolation of their grieving families and friends and let us implore the nation— and in the entire United States, in praying for the repose of all these past days, following the tragic death of an African American man whose last moments of life were recorded on a widely disseminated video showing a police officer in Minneapolis pushing down on his neck with his knee May 25.

All four officers involved in the incident were fired and now all face charges. Derek Chauvin, who kneeled on Floyd, was the first charged, with third-degree murder and manslaughter, but midday June 1 the charge was upgraded to second-degree murder. The other three former officers have been charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

“We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life. At the same time, we have to recognize that ‘the violence of recent nights is self-destructive and self-defeating. Nothing is gained by violence and so much is lost,’ “ the pope said, quoting Archbishop Gomez.

In a June 3 letter to U.S. bishops, Archbishop Gomez concluded that “in this challenging moment for our ministries and our country, I hope we can all take comfort and gain strength from our Holy Father’s prayers and encouragement.”

Young Italian tech whiz to be beatified

Junno Arocho Esteves
Catholic News Service
VATICAN CITY — Carlo Acutis, a 15-year-old Italian teenager who used his computer programming skills to spread devotion to the Eucharist, will be beatified in an ordinary papal audience at the Basilica of St. Francis “is a ray of light during this period awaiting for a long time,” said Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi.

The announcement of Acutis’ beatification at the Vatican City — Carlo Acutis, an Italian teenager who used his computer programming skills to spread devotion to the Eucharist, will be beatified in an ordinary papal audience at the Basilica of St. Francis “is a ray of light during this period awaiting for a long time,” said Archbishop Domenico Sorrentino of Assisi.

Before his death from leukemia in 2006, Acutis was an average teen with an above-average knack for computers. He put that knowledge to use by creating an online database of Eucharistic miracles around the world.

In his exhortation on young people, “Christus Vivit” (“Christ Lives”), Pope Francis said Acutis was a role model for young people today who are often tempted by the traps of “self-absorption, isolation and empty pleasure.”

“Carlo was well-aware that the whole apparatus of communications, advertising and social networking can be used to pull us, to make us addicted to consumerism and buying the latest thing on the market, obsessed with our free time, caught up in negativity,” the pope said.

In his letter to U.S. bishops, Archbishop Gomez concluded that “in this challenging moment for our ministries and our country, I hope we can all take comfort and gain strength from our Holy Father’s prayers and encouragement.”

Pope Francis greets Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, during his “ad limina” visit to the Vatican Jan. 27, 2020.

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In the Diocese of Covington, Bishop Beger Fouys and Divine Providence Sister Janet Bucher, pastoral administrator for Our Savior Parish, Our Savior Parish, recorded a message “A Call for Justice and Peace” which can be viewed on the diocese website, www.covdio.org.