VATICAN CITY — Although the Vatican knows Christmas may be very different this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it already has chosen its stamps and the Nativity scene and tree that will stand in St. Peter’s Square.

The larger-than-life-sized ceramic figures in the Nativity scene will come from a high school in Castelli, a town in the ceramic-producing region of Teramo, northeast of Rome, the Vatican announced Oct. 30.

The F.A. Grue Institute, a high school focused on art, will send only a handful of the 54 sculptures that students and teachers crafted for the scene between 1969 and 1970, the Vatican said. In addition to the Holy Family, an angel and the three kings, there will be a bagpipe player, a pipe player, a shepherdess and a little girl carrying a doll.

The scene will be displayed next to a towering spruce tree from Slovenia.

The tree, which is almost 90 feet tall, will come from an area outside the town of Kocevje, the Vatican said.

“This year, more than ever, the staging of the traditional space dedicated to Christmas in St. Peter’s Square is meant to be a sign of hope and trust for the whole world,” the Vatican statement said. “It expresses the certainty that Jesus comes among his people to save and console them.”

The Nativity scene will be unveiled, and the tree will be lighted Dec. 11, the Vatican said.

The Vatican also revealed the design for its 2020 Christmas stamps, which celebrate the birth of Jesus as a light of peace for the world.

The 1.15-euro stamp features the Baby Jesus with the Church of the Christ Child in Steyr, Austria, in the background and a 1.10-euro stamp shows Pope Francis holding a lantern. The theme of this year’s Christmas stamps is “the light of the peace of Bethlehem.” This page was jointly issued with Austria.

Vatican Christmas stamps for 2020 show the baby Jesus and Pope Francis holding a lantern. The theme of this year’s Christmas stamps is “the light of the peace of Bethlehem.” This page was jointly issued with Austria.

an Austrian scout is chosen to go to Bethlehem and light a lantern from the oil lamp hanging over the 14-point star that marks the spot where Jesus is believed to have been born.

The lantern is brought back to Austria where the flame is used to light other lamps and candles that families and parishes place next to their Nativity scenes. It also is shared with officials at the European Union offices in Belgium and, from there, taken throughout Europe.

The initiative, begun in 1986 by the Austrian broadcasting company ORF, also raises money for children with disabilities or other special needs.

Traditions honor namesake at St. Elizabeth Healthcare

A portrait of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, which formerly hung in the chapel at St. Elizabeth Hospital, Covington, has been reclaimed and hung at St. Anne Retreat Center, Melbourne. Though a bit worn, the portrait portrays St. Elizabeth giving help to the poor and needy.

The community is encouraged to pray for local health-care workers and volunteers and to “draw from her example of  extraordinary compassion and kindness and to honor their work by making the necessary sacrifices to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. Especially during this year, health-care workers have proven their dedication to their work in the face of the global pandemic and the many challenges our community faces.”

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Safety measures urged as more diocesan counties enter Ky. ‘red zone’

Messenger Staff Report

With 10 weeks of in-person instruction completed in the Diocese of Covington, one of its schools has had to transition to at-home instruction due to COVID-19 cases.

Holy Trinity School, Bellevue, reported a positive case of COVID-19 Oct. 27. That class began at home instruction on Wednesday and by Friday, two more positive cases were reported in that class.

On Tuesday, Marie Jacobs, principal and hall of her elementary teachers be tested for COVID-19 and three more positive cases were reported over the Halloween weekend. By Sunday night, Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Schools, and Mrs. Jacobs made the decision to transition the entire school to at-home instruction, Monday Nov. 16.

Mrs. Jacobs said that Wednesday would be a calaminity day for students while she and teachers gather Chromebooks and other material to be distributed to parents. Calamity days are days already built in the school calendar for unexpected school closings, typically for snow and other weather-related events.

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“The challenge is interfaith collaboration. The real common good can only be found in religion, he said, and collaboration between religions who agree that the common good is beyond the physical — it transcends.

“Collaboration begins with what we have in common,” he said. Buchaman spoke to the power of collaboration with people of various beliefs in order to re-establish genuine community in society today. Interfaith dialogue began on a more serious note after the Second Vatican Council ended in 1965, he said. Dialogue was set into motion and further compounded with Pope Paul VI’s “Nistra asteta,” the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions in October of that year. But “divinity and tolerance are not enough,” said Dr. Buchaman. “The challenge is interfaith collaboration.”

He suggested a form of “new social capital,” which he defined as “work done together,” or an investment in community with a common good in mind.

General demeure of community, said Dr. Buchaman, has risen from the root of individualism and the rise of tribalism. Rather than protecting individual rights by means of a community, society has lost a sense that the common good should be elevated over the market.

“What happens over time is that markets and technology become leaders in our society, he said. “Rather than protecting individual rights, our society has lost a sense that the common good should be elevated over the market.”

“Ifmidst of having a vision of the common good, and constructing our economies and technologies to support that vision, we allow our economies and technologies to be unregulated, and any sense of a common good would be lost in the end,” he said.

The real common good can only be found in religion, he said, and collaboration between religions who agree that the common good is beyond the physical — it transcends.

“Collaboration begins with what we have in common,” he said. “Initially, it must focus on group projects, grow problem solving, in order to bring people of different faiths together. Only then will real community return, he said.

Dr. Buchman was asked by Andrew Bledsoe, CEO of Fern Expo in Cincinnati and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and Dr. Gary Zola, executive director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. Both agreed that it’s time to move beyond theological work into action.

“It’s time for interfaith alliance, not just dialogue,” said Dr. Zola. “In working together to help others, to better our community, suddenly it doesn’t matter our numbers or our differences.”

The dialogue concluded with a Question and Answer session with interaction from the virtual audience.

Virtual discussion challenges Christians to interfaith collaboration

Allegrea Thatcher

Thomas More University hosted its Institute for Religious Liberty lecture and discussion Oct. 28 at 7 p.m. on the virtual platform Zoom. The title for the discussion was “Beyond Dialogue — The Power of Interfaith Collaboration.”

The primary speaker, Dr. James Buchanan, was introduced by Michael Oce, moderator, and was preceded by remarks from President Joe Chillo and a prayer from Msgr. Gerald Twaddell, university chaplain. Dr. Buchanan is the primary speaker Dr. Buchanan, was introduced by Michael Oce, moderator, and was preceded by remarks from President Joe Chillo and a prayer from Msgr. Gerald Twaddell, university chaplain. Dr. Buchanan is the

director of the Brueggeman Center for Dialogue at Xavier University, Cincinnati.

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The 411 on the high school placement test

**Messenger staff report**

It’s placement test season again, for students interested in or planning to enroll in a high school in the Diocese of Covington. On Dec. 12 from 9 a.m. to noon, eight of the nine high schools in the diocese (all except St. Patrick High School in Maysville) welcome incoming freshmen for a placement test. High School Placement Test Scholarships will be awarded to students only from the high school where the student took the test.

The registration deadline is Dec. 4, and test takers are required to bring and wear a face mask and follow CDC-recommended guidelines for social distancing. For further information, contact any secondary school listed or the Department of Catholic Schools at 392-1500.

(Note: Villa Madonna Academy utilizes a cut-off percentage for entrance, and Covington Latin School, whose students ordinarily enroll after the fifth or sixth grade, offers an entrance exam to determine which students are suited to their curriculum. Their tests are also scheduled for Dec. 12; contact Covington Latin School for additional dates.)

**Q: Who publishes the test?**

A: The test — the High School Placement Test (HSPT) — is published by Scholastic Testing Service. It is a comprehensive placement test for eighth graders for placement in the ninth grade and it assists with admissions, scholarship selection and curriculum options. Its various editions have been used by the high schools for at least the past 30 years.

**Q: What's the difference between a placement test and an entrance exam?**

A: School administrators and counselors use the result of the placement test to recommend what seem to be appropriate class choices for each incoming freshman in the core courses of math, English and possibly science. On the other hand, an entrance exam is one of the criteria used to determine if the school’s academic program is suitable for an incoming student, and admission to the school depends on a certain score.

**Q: How many questions? How long does it take? What does it cost? Do I have to bring a #2 pencil?**

A: There are five sections on the HSPT, containing a total of 288 questions (Verbal-48, Quantitative-52, Reading-22, Math-52, and Language-60). The total time allowed for testing is 2 hours and 23 minutes. With scheduled breaks between select tests and the pre-administration portion to complete at the beginning of the test, a student can expect to spend approximately three total hours testing. The cost is $80. No need to bring a pencil. Calculators, cell phones and other electronic devices are not permitted in the testing room.

**Q: Can I study? Should I study?**

A: Here’s some advice parents might offer: “do your best,” “take your time,” and “take your best guess when you don’t know.” The more adults encourage children to perform to the best of their ability, the more relaxed and confident the students will become when it comes to taking tests of all kinds. Some high schools offer a HSPT prep course. While there are test prep books and programs available the Scholastic Testing Service advises parents and teachers to “avoid expensive preparation materials and to trust that a well-rounded education” is preparation enough.

**Q: When will I find out how I did?**

A: Expect to see your HSPT results in mid-to-late January via a communication from the school where you tested.

**Q: What if I’m in quarantine, or ill, and miss the test?**

A: If you cannot attend the scheduled testing period for the HSPT, most often the school’s guidance counselor administers the “Open Edition” of the test or schedules a make-up test at a separate time for the individual student. A student must take the HSPT on Dec. 12 to be eligible for a merit-based scholarship.

Q: I know we’re supposed to take the test at our district high school. But what if my district high school is, say, Covington Catholic, but I plan to attend St. Henry? Where should I take the test? A: Please note that the high schools award merit scholarships based upon the test results, and a student is eligible for the scholarship only where he/she took the test. Students should therefore take the test where they plan to attend school; a parent has the final choice of testing location.

Q: Who can I talk to if I or my parents have more questions? A: You or your parents should call or speak with a high school representative. You can also contact the Department of Catholic Schools (866) 992-1500.

**Ministry of Acolyte**

Michael Elmlinger, a seminarian of the Diocese of Covington, was recently instituted to the Ministry of Acolyte at St. Vincent Seminary, Latrobe, Penn.

He is the son of Steven and Polly Ann Elmlinger of Union, Ky. Mr. Elmlinger is a 2016 graduate of Covington Latin School, and earned a bachelor of arts degree in philosophy from the Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus, in 2019. Pictured are, from left, Michael Elmlinger; Bishop David Zubik, Diocese of Pittsburgh, who presided and Benefice Father Edward Mach, seminary rector.

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**Flemingsburg St. Charles’ pastor blesses harvest of parishioners**

Carolyn Schwartz

Two area parishes greeted the fall season with services, Oct. 10, for a day of blessing and thanksgiving for the harvest.

Father Phillip DeVoues, pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish, May’s Lick, traveled to the farms of five parishioners. There, with farmland surrounding him, he offered prayers for the crops, the harvesters, the neighborhood and the world.

Stop were made at the farm of Bill, Joan, Matt and Eleanor Comer and at Cropper’s Greenhouse, all of whom are members of St. Rose of Lima. In Flemingsburg, harvest blessings were offered at the farms of David and Molly Appleman, Lisa Vace, and Sue and Sandy Wood.

The day ended with adoration and benediction at St. Charles Church, followed by Mass.

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**High School Open Houses**

- *Covington Catholic High School — Nov. 8*
  *Register at covcath.org/future-colonel.*

- *Notre Dame Academy — Nov. 8*
  *Information for virtual and in-person events found at nda-pandas.org.*

- *St. Henry District High School — Nov. 8, 1-5 p.m.*
  *Register at SHDS.org.*

- *Holy Cross District High School — Nov. 15, 1 p.m.*
  *Register at hchscov.com.*

- *Covington Latin School — Dec. 6*
  *Registration by appointment at covlingtonlatin.org.*

- *Villa Madonna Academy — Nov. 7, 1-3 p.m.*
  *Register at villamadonna.org.*

- *Bishop Brossart High School — Nov. 8, 2-4 p.m.*
  *Register at bishopbrossart.org/page/events.*

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**Bishop’s Schedule**

- **Nov. 6**
  *COVID-19 briefing, 9:30 a.m.*
  *Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, Confirmation, 7 p.m.*

- **Nov. 7**
  *Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m.*
  *Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.*
  *COVID-19 briefing, 9:30 a.m.*
  *Confirmation, St. Therese Parish, Southgate, 7 p.m.*

- **Nov. 10**
  *COVID-19 briefing, 9:30 a.m.*
  *Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.*
  *COVID-19 briefing, 9:30 a.m.*
  *Confirmation, St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright, 7 p.m.*
  *Deans meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
  *Confirmation, St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright, 7 p.m.*
VATICAN CITY — By asking to be baptized with other penitents in the Jordan River, Jesus placed himself among those who recognized themselves as sinners, Pope Francis said.

Despite the protests of John the Baptist, Jesus insisted on being baptized as “an act of obedience to the will of the Father, an act of solidarity with our human condition,” the pope said Oct. 28 during his weekly general audience.

“We must remember this: Jesus is the just one; he is not a sinner. But he wanted to descend to us sinners and he prays with us,” the pope said, departing from his prepared remarks.

“Jesus always prays with his people; he always prays with us,” he said.

Although Pope Francis made a point, again, of apologizing for having to keep his distance from visitors and pilgrims because of the COVID-19 pandemic, he did not wear a mask during the audience.

Continuing his series of audience talks on prayer, the pope reflected on Jesus’ choice to begin his public ministry with his baptism, which “had a clearly penitential nature.”

Jesus, he said, “does not stay on the opposite side of the river, saying, ‘I am the just one and you are the sinner,’ to mark his difference and distance from the disobedient people, but rather he immerses his feet in the same purifying waters.”

As Jesus came out of the water, the heavens opened and the voice of God proclaimed, “This is my beloved son.”

Pope Francis said that Christians should remember that moment when they are feeling “sluggish and empty” during prayer, and they should “beg that Jesus’ prayer also becomes our own.”

“When one says, ‘I cannot pray today. I don’t know what to do. I don’t feel like it. I am unworthy,’ at that moment, you must ask: ‘May your prayer, Jesus, be mine,’” the pope said.

“And trust that he prays for us. He, at that moment, is before the father praying for us,” the pope said. “He is the intercessor; he shows his father his wounds for us. Let us trust this. It is great.”

At the end of the audience, the pope condemned the murder of six schoolchildren killed when separatist insurgents attacked the Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy in Kumba, Cameroon Oct. 24.

Government officials blamed Anglophone separatists from northeast Cameroon who have been carrying out attacks since 2016 to gain independence.

“I am shocked by such a cruel and senseless act that has taken the lives of innocent little ones while they were attending classes in school,” the pope said.

Pope Francis prayed for an end to conflict and that “the safety of everyone and the right to education and a future for every young person is guaranteed.”

“May God enlighten hearts so that similar acts are never repeated and that the martyred northeast and southeast region of the country can finally find peace,” he said.
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
The Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, KY (www.covdio.org) is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Assistant Superintendent of Catholic Schools. The Assistant Superintendent is responsible for collecting and aggregating statistical data for each school i.e. test scores, student information, faculty and staff information, tuition and fees, attendance, calendar, etc. The Assistant Superintendent helps with the educational administration of the Alliance for Catholic Urban Education (ACUE) schools, and facilitates government programs/funding, curriculum and assessment, professional development, and school communication. Overall, the position encounters a wide diversity of work situations and involves a high degree of complexity with responsibility for advising and decision making in many areas. Candidates must be practicing Roman Catholics in good standing, able and willing to give witness to the Catholic faith at all times, with a Master's degree in Education/Administration and previous experience in school administrative leadership. Interested individuals should submit a letter of interest along with a comprehensive resume or C-V, recent Baptismal certificate indicating sacramental preparation, and a list of at least five professional references to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR: skoplyay@covdio.org. FAX 859/392-1589, or mail to 1125 Madison Avenue, Covington, KY 41011-3115. EOE

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• Part-time Store Associates at our Florence and Erlanger locations. Our store employees work many roles - from cashier to merchandiser to stocker - while providing excellent customer service.
• Part-time Donation Center Associate at our Erlanger location. Our donation center associates greet our material donors, sort and organize donations to prepare for the retail environment.
• Full-time truck driver. Our truck drivers provide donation pick-ups for our donors and deliveries to our customers, all while representing the mission of St. Vincent de Paul. Previous, verifiable driving experience is required for this position. Applicant must have a valid Kentucky driver’s license (CDL not required). This position is also eligible for our comprehensive benefits package.

Interested candidates can apply online at https://www.svdpknky.org/employment-opportunities/.

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. J.B.
The Magnificat—Mary’s “Song of the Poor” . . . Luke 1:46-55

In her Magnificat she (Mary) proclaims the advent of the Mystery of Salvation, the coming of the “Messiah of the poor” (Isa 11:6; 61:1). “The God of the Covenant, whom the Virgin of Nazareth praises in song as her spirit rejoices, is the One who casts down the mighty from their thrones and raises up the lowly, fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty, scatters the proud and shows mercy to those who fear him” (Lk 1:51-53).

A careful exegesis of the Magnificat discovers profound echoes of the Canticle of Hannah, the mother of Samuel the prophet. The opening line of Mary’s canticle resembles that of the prayer of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1: “My heart exults in the LORD; my spirit is buoyant for joy within Elizabeth’s womb. (Lk 1:44) Many biblical scholars see a parallel of that scene with David’s dancing before the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sm 6) as well as with the joy of the “poor of God” in the hope of the promise of salvation. (Isa 35:6; Ps 114:6)

“Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith,” the 1973 pastoral letter issued by the Catholic Church in the United States, envisions Mary as “the new and perfect Ark of the Covenant, the living tabernacle of the divine presence.” (RM, n. 27) The pastoral letter adds “the sacred ark that disappeared six centuries before has now returned in a more perfect way Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant carrying Jesus. Salvation comes through Mary’s flesh, through Mary’s faith.”

In response to the Elizabeth’s blessing of Mary for her motherhood and faith, Mary responds with the Magnificat, her canticle of joy, thanksgiving and praise for the great works of God in her life. (Lk 1:46-55)

In addition to joy Mary’s song of salvation encapsulates the Second Vatican Council’s “Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity” (Ad Gentes,17) that love which, celebrated in the Magnificat, “raises the needy from the dust, lifts the poor from the ash heap …” Reiterates several other key themes that suffuse the Gospel of Mark: “The Church, which Jesus has established on Earth, which draws its life and mission from the Life of the Lord …” (RM, n. 27)

In her Magnificat Mary “truly proclaims the coming of the ‘Messiah of the Poor’” (Isa 11:4-6). In the spirit of Mary’s Magnificat St. John Paul II pledged the Church to renewal: “The Church2 needs ever more effectively in herself the awareness that the truth about God who is the source of every good gift, cannot be separated from the manifestation of his love for the poor and humble, that love which, celebrated in the Magnificat, is later expressed in the words and works of Jesus.” (RM, n. 35)

“Mary’s song of praise” in Luke’s infancy narrative points to the inaugural scene of Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth where he proclaimed, “(God) has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor.” (Lk 4:18)

On the eve of the Third Millennium Redemptoris Mater summons the Church to renew and continue that message of “preferential love for the poor” in her earthly pilgrimage.

For that reason, St. John Paul II linked the Magnificat with the Church’s “preferential love for the poor” “The Church’s love of preference for the poor” is “wonderfully materialized in Mary’s Magnificat.” The God of the Covenant, celebrated in the exultation of her spirit by the Virgin of Nazareth, is also he who “has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly … filled the hungry with good things, sent the rich away empty … scattered the proud hearted … and his mercy is from age to age on those who fear him.” (Ps 114)

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GO AND GLORY

Father Gregory Bach

It’s not just what we, as Catholics, build that matters, of course, but what we do with what we build. That’s where things get really interesting. In this issue, George Weigel explores the second way we come to the Eucharist, and how it can attract people. He also reflects on the life of the late Father Paul V. Mankowski, SJ, who was a brilliant scholar and a man of God. This was a man, whose courageous manliness reflected his godliness.

BELIEVE, TEACH, PRACTICE

Deacon Timothy Britt

The movie “Field of Dreams” tells the story of an Iowa farmer who hears a voice in his cornfield telling him, “If you build it, he will come.” The voice is resilient. But can a voice in our church, an instruction to build things, inspire us to make a difference? If we confect it… If you come, Jesus will do the rest. This is a message for us in the world today.

IF YOU CONFECT IT…

If you confect it…

Father Paul Mankowski, SJ, came to the Father’s House on September 9. I hope the seraphic choirmaster chose music appropriate to the occasion. Had I been asked, I would have suggested the Latin antiphon Ecce sacerdos magnus as arranged by Anton Bruckner. The all-stops-pulled moments in Bruckner’s composition, deploying organ, brass and full voice, would have been a perfect match for Father Mankowski’s rock-solid Catholic faith, his robust liturgical and cultural styles, and his gift for engaging the spiritual needs of his people, who sought him as the “man of grace” at his hands, was just as notable a feature of his personality.

St. John Vianney knew the beauty of true friendship and he was a frank delineation of their position. This struck him as a Francis of Assisi, who dedicated himself to the salvation of souls, whether in the Confessional or in his pastoral ministry, as a man of God. This was a man, whose courageous manliness reflected his godliness.

The Catholic Difference

George Weigel

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Newsworthy

Happy Birthday to Father Shannon Collins, pastor, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Park Hills, Nov. 16; Father Michael Hennigen, pastor, Holy Cross Parish, Latonia, Nov. 17; Deacon Richard Mals, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, Nov. 19; Father Daniel Schomaker, vicar general, assistant director of seminarians, vicar for episcopal ceremonies and pastor, St. Augustine Parish, Covington, Nov. 21; Father Gregory Osburg, defender of the bond, Tribunal and pastor, St. John the Baptist Parish, Wilder, Nov. 21; Deacon Joseph McGrav, St. Therese Parish, Southgate; Nov. 25, Father Clarence Heitzman, retired, Nov. 27; Deacon Phil Racine, St. Benedict Parish, Covington, Nov. 27; and Father Matthew Summe, L.C., Nov. 27.

Senior Emily Richardson of Florence, who attends Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills, has scored a perfect 36 on the ACT. She joins senior Jackson Bond of Hebron as the second Villa student this year to earn a 36 on the college entrance exam.

Jack Cain, a junior at Covington Catholic High School, Covington, began in early October collecting individually wrapped Halloween candy from his classmates. His goal was to distribute 200 treat bags of candy to disadvantaged children. As of today, the Covington Catholic students donated over 400 pounds of candy, which was used to make over 850 treat bags, far exceeding the goal. Jack and his friend Ryan, a senior, brought the candy home in weekly hauls, where they and friends assembled treat bags over the past couple of weeks. Treats were delivered to these agencies: Children’s Home of NKY; Survive & Thrive Foundation, Inc.; Parish Kitchen; Hosea House; Madison Avenue Christian Church; Welcome House; Mary Rose Mission; Diocesan Catholic Children’s Home; St Elizabeth Emergency Department and Master Provisions.

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**Candy catapults**
STREAM class at Holy Trinity School, Bellevue, has been extra busy this past week. The 5th graders designed and tested catapults for delivering candy.

**That’s batty**
Second grade students at St. Edward School, Cynthiana, recently learned quite a few bat facts during their bat study.
“The discernment of a vocation is above all the fruit of an intimate dialogue between the Lord and his disciples. Young people, if they know how to pray, can be trusted to know what to do with God’s call.”

— Pope Benedict XVI
My dear Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ! We celebrate National Vocation Awareness Week the first week of November 2020. Since 1976 we have set aside one week of the year to focus on vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated religious life. During this time, we are asked to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated religious life as well as to pray for those who are already discerning such a vocation. It is also a time to encourage someone we know who we believe might be called to such a vocation.

The Lord has certainly blessed our Diocese with vocations to the priesthood and the diaconate. In the last 18 years I have ordained 41 priests and 32 permanent deacons for ministry in the Diocese of Covington. The Lord is still calling, to be sure. He promised that He would always provide us with shepherds (cf. Jer 3:15) but He also directs us to pray for such vocations (cf. Matt 9:38). I believe the response has been the result of your prayers and of the example and witness given to those who are called by priests, deacons and consecrated religious. But we must never become complacent. We must continue to pray and to encourage vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated religious life.

I take this opportunity to thank all those currently ministering in our Diocese as priests, deacons and consecrated religious. I want to thank especially those priests from other countries and religious orders who are ministering in our Diocese. If it were not for their sacrifice, some of our parishes would be without fulltime resident priests. I also want to thank those currently in formation for the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated religious life. Thank you for answering the call and for remaining steadfast in your discernment. And I am grateful to all the faithful for your continued prayers for vocations and for those who have answered the call and are ministering to you.

Be assured of my prayers. Please, pray for me and for our beloved Diocese of Covington.

Most Reverend Roger J. Foys, D.D.
Bishop of Covington

Prayer for Priestly Vocations

God our Father,

You made each of us to use our gifts in the Body of Christ. We ask that you inspire those in our diocese whom you are calling to the priesthood to courageously follow your will. Send laborers into your great harvest so that the Gospel is preached, the poor are served with love, the suffering are comforted, and your people are strengthened by the sacraments.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States

snd-vocations.org
call or text 859.750.8190
sistersofnotredamevocations

November 2020

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ARE YOU LOOKING FOR SOMETHING MORE?

Turn your passion into your purpose.
“MAY GOD WHO HAS BEGUN THIS GOOD WORK IN YOU BRING IT TO COMPLETION.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Diocese of Covington 2020-2021 Seminarians

Dacon Joseph Riedl
6th Year Theology
St. Vincent Seminary

John Baumann
3rd Year Theology
St. Vincent Seminary

A.J. Godney
3rd Year Theology
St. Vincent Seminary

Michael Elmlinger
2nd Year Theology
St. Vincent Seminary

Zacharias Schoon
1st Year Theology
Pontifical College Josephinum

Justin Schwerz
2nd Year Pre-Theology
St. Vincent Seminary

Henry Bischoff
1st Year Pre-Theology
St. Vincent Seminary

Joshua Heskamp
1st Year Pre-Theology
St. Vincent Seminary

Michael Schulte
1st Year Pre-Theology
St. Vincent Seminary

Bradley Whittle
1st Year Pre-Theology
St. Vincent Seminary

John Tarvin
3rd Year College
Pontifical College Josephinum

*The Church needs pastoral, compassionate and well-educated priests today more than ever. Your prayers and financial support will help make possible the education and formation these seminarians need to shepherd parishes, celebrate the Sacraments, and teach the faith.

~ Most Reverend Roger J. Vann, O.D.C., Bishop of Covington.

Please Pray for Vocations
For more information on priestly vocations
Father Michael Norton
859-392-1500
The joys of the priesthood

Father Michael Norton
Messenger Contributor

The ministerial priesthood is a mysterious experience wherein a man’s life is wrapped up into the life of Christ. The great joy of the priesthood is in loving Christ with one’s entire being. We can easily look at the day-to-day life of a priest and think he is an ordinary man with good days and bad days, frustrations and joys, and likes and dislikes; however, he is far more than just these things. Every priest, imperfect as he may be, has united himself to Christ in a way that involves sacrifice, communal living and fraternity. These realities are what make the priestly life so joyful.

First, the life of sacrifice is made in his commitment to prayer, obedience to his bishop, simplicity of life and celibacy. One might look at these promises a priest makes and see them as a loss or a bad thing, and they would be right if we are looking at this from a purely worldly perspective. However, someone who loves would do anything for his beloved. Priests firstly love Christ, who is the head of the body; and secondly, they love the body, which is the Church. A priest’s promises are an assurance that he remains committed to this life of loving Christ and his Church. In these promises the priest is filled with the joy of the Lord.

The communal life of the priest is one in which he builds up the body of the Church. He supports and sustains this community through his call to teach, govern and sanctify. When the priest teaches, he provides the community with a unity of belief uniting the local church with the Church, and the Church with the universal Church. He also governs in order to make sure right order is maintained, and the community is a just place. Sanctity is brought about through the action of the priest in the sacraments. He delivers grace to the people of God when he acts in persona Christi capitis (in the person of Christ the head). When Christ the head is present to his body through the priest, the Church as a whole is enabled to become holy. The community of the Church is the place where the priest and the people flourish and find joy.

One could easily stop there; however, they would miss a part of the priesthood that is so essential—a priest as a brother among other priests. The fraternal nature of the priesthood is not always seen among the laity, but that brotherhood is important because the priests sustain each other and assist each other in the ministry of the priesthood. These are men who understand together the challenges and joys, and thus they can support one another. The joy of serving side by side with others was something that Christ knew when he sent the disciples two by two. Thus, we see that fraternity is so important in finding joy in the priesthood. The Diocese of Covington is seeking men called by the Lord to be joy-filled priests, capable of sacrifice, building up community and sharing fraternal love. Will you answer that call?

Father Norton is vocations promoter for the Diocese of Covington.

Jesus ‘still calls men and women to follow Him’

Divine Providence Sister Fran Moore
Messenger Contributor

“As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.’” (Mark 1:16-18)

I believe that each of us longs for the kind of straightforward call these disciples received, whether we seek clarity around a lifestyle, choice of a spouse or a call to consecrated life. These men may have had some reservations about what Jesus’ call might mean, but there was no ambiguity about the call itself. Jesus was clear in his
Community: To be called together

A.J. Gedney

Messenger Contributor

The Greek word for “church” means “to be called together.” Priests belong to a presbyterate, and bishops belong to the college of bishops. Even God Himself is a communion: Father, Son and Spirit.

The community I experienced at seminary was disrupted this year by the pandemic and was unlike any year I have experienced. I am now able to recognize that His call was a kind of persistent gentle heart-tugging, a sort of loving invitation to draw closer to Him, to respond with the same kind of love. I believe Jesus still calls women and men to follow Him as members of a consecrated life, as sisters, brothers, or socially distanced in public, we are all still members of the Body of Christ. This year has allowed me to recognize that building and maintaining community can be difficult at times, but that it also prepares us to become members of the community in the life to come.

The community at seminary is incredibly important to me. St. Vincent is a center of average folks to follow Him and spread His love in our everyday ways. It may be the ministry they do, the joy they evince, the kindness they share, maybe the way they seem peace-filled in spite of the chaos of our world at times. Jesus does not choose perfect or worthy people but rather invites a cross-section of average folks to follow Him and spread His love to others.

What He most asks is that each of us be open to whatever life-path we seem drawn to and respond with courage. He asks only that “If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

Sister Fran Moore, CSP, is vicar for religious for the Diocese of Covington.

Marriage, priesthood, religious life take courage, pope says in message

Cindy Wooden

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Discovering one’s vocation to marriage, priesthood or religious life and making the decision to embrace it takes courage, Pope Francis said.

The Lord knows “the questions, doubts and difficulties that toss the boat of our heart, and so he reassures us, ‘Take heart, it is I, I have no fear!’” the pope wrote in his message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, which will be celebrated May 3 in most dioceses.

Using the story of the Gospel of Matthew of the disciples in the boat on a stormy Sea of Galilee, Pope Francis said Jesus calls people to a specific vocation “because he wants to enable us, like Peter, to ‘walk on water,’ in other words, to take charge of our lives and place them at the service of the Gospel in the concrete and everyday ways that he shows us, and specifically in the different forms of lay, priestly and consecrated vocation.”

For most people, he said, hearing that call and being excited by it almost always is mixed with fear and worries about one’s weaknesses.

“If we let ourselves be damped by the responsibilities that await us — whether in married life or priestly ministry — or by the hardships in store for us, then we will soon turn away from the gaze of Jesus and like Peter, we will begin to sink,” he wrote. But the gift of faith enables people to keep walking toward Jesus.

“Whenever fatigue or fear make us start to sink, Jesus holds out his hand to us,” the pope wrote. “He gives us the enthusiasm we need to live our vocation with joy and fervor.”

Trusting the Lord and following His call is similar to the disciples’ journey in the boat, he said.

“The risk involved is real: the night falls, the headwinds howl, the boat is tossed by the waves, and fear of failure, of not being up to the call, can threaten to overwhelm them,” he wrote.

But the Gospel assures Christians that “in the midst of this challenging journey we are not alone,” the pope said. “Like the first ray of dawn in the heart of the night, the Lord comes walking on the troubled waters to join the dis...
Follow the call

Allegra Thatcher
Assistant Editor

Notre Dame Sister Shauna Bankemper says religious life has been her path to discovering the goodness of God and his plan for life. What she describes as her “God Quest” started at an early age, when she was taught by the Sisters of Notre Dame at school and high school. She was attracted to religious life because she liked the sisters, enjoyed school and appreciated how the sisters taught and how caring they were.

“In those days, there were a lot of sisters at the high school and they made a huge impression on me,” Sister Shauna said. As a junior and senior, she and her classmates were asked to teach religion classes to students at other schools, so she taught third grade religion at St. Paul Parish. Florence every Saturday.

“I liked teaching, and I think that’s the other thing that attracted me, was the ministry of teaching, being able to influence people through education. It was life-giving, I found myself able to do it and energized by it. Teaching was a big part of being called to religious life, both the person of the students I knew and my experience in school.”

In an effort to do something great for God, Sister Shauna envisioned joining the Peace Corps or becoming a great teacher with the Sisters of Notre Dame. She eventually chose the latter, at 18 years old. “People made vocational choices early back then,” she said. “It was appropriate for me — it was good for me.” She said she received a great deal of support from her family, who supported her call and gave a witness to faithful Catholic life. “I thought I was going to do something great for God, and as it turned out, God did something really great for me.”

Sister Shauna taught in various elementary schools across the Diocese of Covington, then became a principal for a short time before being asked to minister in the Diocese of Lexington as superintendent of Catholic Schools. That experience stretched her beyond her comfort zone, as many of the parishes and schools were in unfamiliar mountain and bluegrass territory with diverse groups of people.

After many years down south, she moved back to Covington to be provincial of the Covington sisters, and then eventually provincial to the international group and said she loves her vocation because of the way she’s been able to build her life around prayer. “It’s always been easy with ministry, but prayer is always the focus and that’s something that I was searching for and found it. The joy in my heart, I always have a sense of peace and joy always knowing, after 30 years, that it was the right decision.” She said she still keeps in close contact with family and friends, and yet her life is very focused with prayer and ministry serving people.

The God Quest

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Knights of Columbus

Are you called to
keep alive
the Passion of Christ?
“How Did I Know?” – Lives of Divine Providence Sisters

Kathleen Carroll
Messenger Contributor

A call to religious life can take many forms. The Sisters of Divine Providence, based in Melbourne, Ky., have been describing some of their own calls to religious life in a social media series called “How Did I Know?”

Many of the Sisters of the Congregation of Divine Providence (CDPs) have been fixtures in Northern Kentucky serving as teachers, principals and health care providers as well as devoting themselves to countless roles in parish ministry. When their faces show up on someone’s Facebook feed, they are inevitably met with expressions of fond remembrance and gratitude.

“I remember you from high school!” is a frequent comment, but former students and friends have also offered more heartfelt notes, such as, “Your peace and serenity are second to none” and “One of the kindest, sweetest people ever born.” It’s impossible to quantify the profound effect these sisters have had on the diocese, but these testimonies hint at their lasting legacy. It may seem as though these vocations were written in the stars.

But, as the sisters will often be the first to admit, the call to vocation does not always come as a bolt from the blue. For some, the hints were more subtle, and many had to wrestle with conflicting impulses before arriving at a peace-giving decision. All of them, though, will tell you that their lives as CDPs have been filled with grace and blessings.

Here, in their own words, are the sisters’ answers to the question “How Did I Know?”

“While I was enjoying my life as a teen, I had a constant nagging sense that God was calling me to religious life. To be honest, it was a call I didn’t want. I tried ignoring that nagging sense...”

Sister Margaret Stallmeyer, C.D.P.

“None of this was anything I would have dreamed of, but it was God’s way of stretching me and asking me to see God building the kingdom in such diverse ways...”

Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

“I wanted to be that person who recognized God in all the events of life, who offered thanks and praise, who saw others as God saw them. Daily I try to incarnate God’s loving Providence in my world...”

Sister Emerita McGann, C.D.P.

“As a young girl I often felt drawn to become a sister, as a missionary or a teacher. I recall sitting in our backyard tree swing talking to God about what I should do...”

Sister Juanita Nadicksbernd, C.D.P.

(Continued from page 14)

moved to Rome for a number of years. She’s currently provincial councilor for the new province uniting all four SND units across the country.

“All of these experiences of administration, of ministry both locally and internationally, helped me to really see God building the kingdom in such diverse ways,” she said. “I learned that I could do anything I would have dreamed of, but it was God’s way of stretching me and asking me to use my gifts to share with the men and women around me, and the many people who witnessed their goodness to me and supported me in my ministry.”

52 years after her profession, Sister Shauna said the one thing she always comes back to is teaching. She currently lives at St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, and is involved in teaching as part of the RCIA team and part of the adult education. She said it keeps her grounded, because she lives being involved in education.

The other aspect of professed life that Sister Shauna praised is her community. “The Sisters of Notre Dame have been so good to me...”

Sister Margaret Stallmeyer, C.D.P.

“I did, and to this day I thank God for my religious vocation.”

Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

“Whenever I think of community, I think of...”

Sister Emerita McGann, C.D.P.

“Community has been a really important part of my life: living with other sisters, working in ministry with them, and helping the people of God on their God Quest. And I’m still on it. God is continually helping me to see the goodness within me and the goodness of God at work through me and me...”

Sister Margaret Stallmeyer, C.D.P.

“I’m still on it...”

Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

“I’m still on it...”

Sister Emerita McGann, C.D.P.

“I’m still on it...”

Sister Juanita Nadicksbernd, C.D.P.
The Serra Club: Supporting vocations and leading since 1935

Michael Murray
Contributor

Twice a month, a group of men and women with a commitment to fostering vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life, come together in our diocesan faith community to pray and to learn and support. These are the Serrans. There are Lay Catholics who are found both in Northern Kentucky and around the world. They are men and women of all ages and from all walks of life. Members range from lawyers, doctors and business people, to nurses, clerks, stay at home workers and retirees. All are dedicated to promoting, fostering, and supporting religious vocations.

The Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky, is named after the Franciscan Missionary, St. Junipero Serra, the founder of many of the California missions. The first Serra Club was founded in 1935 in Seattle by a small group of Catholic laymen who saw the need to foster vocations to religious life, both by recruiting vocations and by supporting those religious in their active careers.

At the time of Serra’s formation in 1935, there were two great needs for the Church—first, to support dedicated priests and the religious; second, to bring together informed Catholic lay people who understood and lived their own Christian vocations to service. This continues to be the mission of the Serra Club today.

The local club in Northern Kentucky meets twice a month, on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. In addition, the club schedules vocation awareness and affirmation activities throughout the year. They recognize 7th grade Mass servers every spring at the Servers’ Awards Ceremony, where the servers are recognized for their service to their parish and are awarded a crucifix to be worn at the altar while serving.

Serrans, both locally and nationally, acknowledge that the celebration of vocations is an important part of community life in our Church. One way in which the Serra Club helps the Church to promote vocations is through its SPARK initiative. SPARK, which stands for “Serra Promotions And Resource Kit,” is a free online collection of best practice tools in religious vocations ministry, and were gathered from parishes, dioceses and religious orders around North America. Designed with vocations directors in mind, users will find that the Serra SPARK website, found at serraspark.org, will be able to enhance their own Church ministry as well.

SPARK covers everything from discernment retreat agendas to vocation talks to using social media in vocations promotion. Whether you’re recruiting potential priests, sisters, deacons, nuns or brothers, SPARK can help. The kits are specially prepared and can be downloaded in a downloadable format as ready-to-print PDFs. These kits were created to allow the Serra Club to assist the Church in promoting vocation initiatives such as the World Day of Prayer for Vocations in the spring, the National Vocation Awareness Week in the fall, and the World Day for Consecrated Life in late winter.

As Club members can attest, the spirit of Serra stems from Christian charity and love, following God’s admonitions, “Go teach all nations” and “Pray therefore, to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His vineyard.” The spirit also enhances their own Church ministry, as well.

The Serra Club helps the Church to promote vocations by recognizing the youths’ service to their parishes and awarding crucifixes to be worn at the altar while serving.

If you are interested in supporting the seminarians, consider becoming a prayer partner or making a financial contribution to the diocesan Seminarian Education Fund. Contact Father Michael Norton at (859) 392-1500 or e-mail mnorton@covdio.org to become a partner, and visit covdio.org to make a donation.

Michael Murray is club president for the Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky.

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Supporting our priests: A mission of the Knights of Columbus since 1882

David White
Messenger Contributor

If it were not for the idea, the will and the drive of a parish priest, the Knights of Columbus would not be here today.

Blessed Father Michael J. McGivney, the parish priest of St. Mary’s Parish in New Haven, Connecticut, through his own family experience and witness to the hardships of parish families, created in 1882 what is now the largest Catholic fraternal benefit society in the world to help the families of those whose sole provider had died unexpectedly, leaving families with no means to sustain their livelihoods.

Father McGivney himself experienced this tragedy firsthand, when his father passed away while he was in seminary. As the oldest child, he was obligated to return home to help support his family. Placing his dream of becoming a priest in doubt. However, was able to return to the seminary to complete his studies and was ordained in Baltimore in 1877.

The Irish and Catholic immigrants arriving in America during the mid-19th century faced discrimination for their ethnicity and their faith. They were left with jobs that were low paying and often hazardous, in some cases resulting in death of the head of the household.

This tragedy was an unexpected, leaving families with no means to sustain their livelihoods. In the beginning, the hat was passed among the members for donations to give to the families in need. Soon after, the idea of offering life insurance to its members, instead of passing the hat, took root and flourished.

And it all began with a parish priest and his idea.

Today, the Knights of Columbus continues to support its parish priests through the charitable works each council performs in its parish. But it doesn’t start there. For the Knights of Columbus, support begins in the seminary.

The RSVP program created by the Knights of Columbus is a program that supports seminarians in every diocese, providing each seminarian monetary donations to help offset their educational and living expenses, as well as spiritual and prayerful support as he advances through seminary. We also keep in touch with each seminarian that we sponsor. Through birthday cards, letters, prayers and e-mails, our support is more than just money.

This year, the Knights of Columbus councils in Northern Kentucky have provided nearly $45,000 in support to all seminarians in the Covington, Lexington and Owensboro dioceses as well as the Archdiocese of Louisville.

The Kentucky Council of the Knights of Columbus also provides support for seminarians through the Heavenly Pennies program that is implemented by each council. Heavenly Pennies jars can be found at fish fries, pancake breakfasts, spaghetti dinners and any other events where loose change is collected, and the proceeds are donated to each diocese to provide additional monetary support.

For seminarians not sponsored by a council, the Raffo Fund was established by the Kentucky State Charities of the Knights of Columbus to provide monetary support — to ensure all seminarians are covered. The fund is named in honor of Father Charles Raffo, who was the first state chaplain of the Kentucky Knights of Columbus from 1903 to 1904.

Once a seminarian is ordained to the priesthood, our commitment to our priests continues. Every August, the councils in Northern Kentucky along with our 4th Degree Assembly, host an outing to support our priests, deacons and seminarians at Father Keogh Council in Latrobe with a dinner to show our appreciation for their commitment to their continued vocations.

Some local councils partner with their parishes with a Vocations Cross program. Each week, a family will take home a cross and pray for vocations and return the cross the following week for another family to continue prayers.

The Knights of Columbus has grown from several members in one council to over 17,000 councils and 2 million members throughout the United States, Canada, the Philippines, Mexico, Poland, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, Cuba, Guatemala, Guam, Saipan, Lithuania, Ukraine and South Korea.

Our founder, Father McGivney, was declared blessed in 2020 by Pope Francis as he continues his path to sainthood. Through our programs, we honor the legacy of Father McGivney and all who answer the call to vocations.

David White is a former district deputy for the Kentucky State Council in Northern Kentucky and past Grand Knight of Bishop Ackerman Council 5453 in Burlington.
After 40 years the call to the priesthood continues

Father Michael Comer
Messenger Contributor

When I was a boy the priests in my home parish — St. Rose of Lima in Mason, and my secondary parish, St. Patrick in Maysville, where my grandparents, and aunts and uncles and cousins belonged — the priests were always heroes to me. They were also somewhat mysterious and different than anyone else I knew. I have a strong memory of being at St. Patrick with my Grandmother O’Neill, when Father Leo Casey was saying Mass. This was before I had made my first Holy Communion, and I asked her, “What is Father Casey doing?” She said, “He is changing the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus.”

“I wish I could do that!” I believe that this was the first whisper of my call to the priesthood. Many more would follow, although it was not a straight path to ordination, by any means.

In the seminary there were other priests whom I met whom I looked up to and admired. From my college days at St. Pius X Seminary here in the Diocese of Covington, who is still a priest who I look up to from my college days at St. Pius X Seminary here in the priests whom I met whom I looked up to and admired. One, Father Bill Fay, who was my spiritual director, and my Scripture teacher, and Father Harry Flynn (later Archbishop Harry Flynn), who was my rector. Their example, and support and guidance, made them instruments of God to continue to call and shape me as a priest.

Once ordained, in 1980, I began serving in a number of parishes and high schools, as an associate pastor and religion teacher. In 1982, I became a pastor for the first time, at St. Bernard Parish in Dayton, Kentucky, where I served for 12 years. I have incredibly warm memories of my time there, although, as a poor, inner city parish, we faced real financial struggles. In some ways, because we struggled together; those efforts are among my greatest memories there. In 2001, while still pastor at St. Bernard, I became pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Bellevue, as well. Two years later, we merged Sacred Heart with St. Anthony in Bellevue, into Divine Mercy Parish. I then spent eight years at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Burlington. That was an exciting and wonderful time. In 2012, I requested to be assigned to St. Patrick Church in Maysville, to be closer to my parents, who were in their senior years. Returning home to Mason County and to Maysville was a great blessing.

Each of the parishes and school assignments that I have had have been filled with blessings and graces, as well as struggles and difficulties. Merging parishes, and merging schools, going through times of growth and times of decline, worrying about how to pay bills, and dealing with the joys and sorrows of the individuals and families of the parishes, has been a great journey. Each situation has been unique, and there have been various lessons that I have had to learn. Some of those I did not learn easily.

One constant in the 40 years since I have been ordained, and 47 years since I entered the seminary, has been the Eucharist — the Mass. That first tug of the string by God, to lead me to the priesthood — that moment when I looked at Father Casey changing the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ — has been the anchor in whatever I experienced. I still want to do that.

I believe that I did not receive a call to the priesthood, but have received many. In fact, I believe that I am still being called to the priesthood. That call began when I was a boy of about six years old, and continues to this day.

Father Michael Comer is pastor at Mother of God Church in Burlington.

Adaptations: Year one of priesthood, during COVID-19

Father Jordan Hainsey
Messenger Contributor

For nearly nine months now, we have been thrust into the uncharted territory of the coronavirus. With no road map to look to, we are experiencing and doing everything anew. Adaptations to the life of the Church are not new though. Beginning with the persecutions of the early Church when liturgies were forced underground and up through the days of World War II when priests, like Pope St. John Paul II, carried out seminary studies in secret, the Church has always learned how to adapt her prayer and liturgical life to face the challenges of the day head on.

When I was ordained a priest on May 16 of this year, it was to an empty church with only my parents. While there was a pang that the Church couldn’t be filled with friends and loved ones, I remembered Christ’s promise he made at his great Ascension: “I will be with you always, even until the end of the world.” (Matt 28:20)

These were not empty words from the Lord to his apostles. Rather, it was a promise to them and everyone after them. A promise that he would sustain us and guide us through the instrument of the Church until his return again — no matter what happens along the way. God’s fidelity certainly helps us put what really matters into perspective in these days.

As I continue on in my first year of priesthood, I give thanksgiving to God for calling me to the priesthood and ministering particularly in these days. To celebrate and confect the Eucharist makes, in the most real way, Jesus present among us. This nourishment is all we need and what we need now more than ever. All of our lives have been disrupted with the coronavirus, but Jesus’ presence in the Eucharist should be the most tangible reminder to us that even when all seems lost, he remains.

God’s first attribute is love — that which is eternal and that which is made incarnate in his son. That should quell every fear we have. Blessed Carlo Acutis, once said, “Jerusalem is right on our doorstep.” It is my hope that I, and all the faithful of the Diocese of Covington, will take up new reverence for the Eucharist, which is heaven’s doorstep, and that many young men will respond to God’s call to the priesthood.

Father Hainsey is administrative assistant to the bishop, master of ceremonies and rector of the St. Paul Oratory.
Three models of priestly goodness

George Weigel

Vocations

The Pandemic of 2020 has been hard on every Catholic. Eucharistic fasting for this length of time may remind us what 20th century heroes of the faith in underground Churches endured, and what 21st century confessors in China and elsewhere endure today — and that is no bad thing. Still, it is very very hard to be the Catholic Church without being a vibrantly eucharistic Church. That’s true for everyone. The people of the Church should realize that it’s especially true for priests.

Priests who live out their priesthood as the Catholic Church understands that unique vocation — as an icon of the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ, the Church’s spouse — miss their eucharistic congregations terribly. They have dedicated their lives to nourishing the flock, and to be unable to do so as they did eight months ago is a constant sorrow. Pastors are also bearing heavier financial burdens these days as donations shrink. Then there are the serious challenges involved in keeping parochial schools afloat under today’s public health circumstances. No man entering the seminary after the Long Lent of the 2020 and the sexual abuse crisis could imagine he was embracing an easy life; but no one expected this.

All the more reason, then, to celebrate the October 31 beatification of an exceptional parish priest, Father Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus, who died during the pandemic of 1890. He was born in 1852 to immigrant parents and his brief life coincided with the greatest period of expansion in U.S. Catholic history. That expansion also helped define his heroic ministry — and his genius. America in the late 19th century had nothing remotely resembling the social safety net created since the New Deal. Immigrant and first-generation families who lost their sole wage-earner could find themselves in desperate straits. In collaboration with Catholic lay leaders in New Haven, Connecticut, Father McGivney founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882 and created a new model of Catholic pastoral action: a fraternal organization that would provide for the spiritual and material needs of its members while serving the bereft, the indigent, and those founders in their new homeland.

Catholicism has been one of the great integrators of immigrants in American history and no small credit for that is due to the Knights. McGivney’s Knights also anticipated the Second Vatican Council in its teaching that the lay vocation in the world is just that: a vocation, a divine calling to live out the Great Commission given every Catholic in baptism: “Go and make disciples…” (Matthew 28:19). Following Father McGivney’s lead, the Knights have been a force for evangelization as well as charity; even as they have provided major philanthropic support to many Catholic initiatives, including Vatican communications. In the public arena, the Knights’ recent robust defense of religious freedom follows the example of their work for racial justice. Knights of Columbus chapters on nominally Catholic campuses today provide young men serious about their Catholicism with a means of evangelizing their peers while nurturing their own faith.

Father Michael McGivney’s beatification is a blessing for the organization he founded and inspired; it also a compliment paid by the universal Church to the parish priests of the United States. Two of the finest were called home to the Lord in recent months, and while there is no way of knowing whether they will eventually follow Blessed Michael McGivney into the Church’s liturgical calendar, their memory is already firmly lodged in the hearts of the people they served, and they stand as further models of priestly goodness.

One of his admirers told me that, were it not for the pandemic, the entire city of Grand Rapids, Michigan, might have turned out in May for the funeral of Father Dennis Morrow, so beloved was this pastor, police and fire department chaplain. I knew Den Morrow in college and he remained a rock of Catholic faith for the next 50 years. Father Philip Tighe came to the seminary after a business career, and it was clear from the deacon year he served in my Maryland parish that he would be a superb priest, eager to lead others in the adventure of orthodoxy — which I happily observed him doing when he became my daughter’s family’s pastor in North Carolina. His August 31 death deprived the Diocese of Raleigh of an exceptional spiritual leader.

There being neither rivalry nor jealousy in the heavenly Jerusalem, it is easy to imagine Fathers Morrow and Tighe celebrating Father McGivney’s beatification with him. May these three great American priests intercede for us all.

George Weigel is a senior fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.
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Whom to call

For in-depth information about religious life, permanent diaconate, lay pastoral ministry or priesthood, please contact the following individuals.

- Father Michael Norton
  Vocation Office, 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, KY 41011-3115
  (859) 392-1564  E-mail: mnorton@covdio.org

- Msgr. William Neuhaus
  Pastoral Ministry Formation Office, 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, KY 41011-3115
  (859) 392-1568  E-mail: pmneuhaus@covdio.org

- Religious Communities of Women
  Benedictine Sisters of Covington, www.sndkentucky.org
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  St. Joseph the Worker Sisters, www.ssjw.org
  Sister Patricia Jean Cushing, S.J.W.
  St. Joseph Convent
  143 South Main St., Walton, KY 41094
  (859) 885-4570  E-mail: njanes@gmail.com

- Congregation of Divine Providence of Kentucky
  www.cdphelloworld.org
  Sister Leslie Keener, C.D.P.
  (859) 441-0700, ext. 22
  E-mail: vocations@cdphelloworld.org

- Our Lady of the Angels Sisters
  455 Lookout Ct., Pt. Wright, KY 41011  (859) 750-8190
  E-mail: vocations@sndky.org

- Franciscan Daughters of Mary
  www.fdofmary.org
  Sister Clare Marie Berchard, F.D.M.
  356 East 16th St., Covington, KY 41014-1303
  PO Box 122070, Covington, KY 41012-2070
  (859) 512-5575
  E-mail: filmstersisters@gmail.com

- Public Association of the Faithful
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  E-mail: srmichelle@ssjw.org

- Ways to support vocations
  Become a prayer partner. Prayer partners are individuals and families who agree to pray for a specific seminarian as he discerns his call. Call Father Michael Norton at (859) 392-1564 or e-mail mnorton@covdio.org.
  Send cards and notes either directly to our seminarians or through Father Daniel Schomaker, assistant director of seminarians, 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, KY 41011-3115.
  Join a group that supports vocations. Many parishes have vocation committees. If your parish doesn't, consider starting one.
  The Serra Club of Northern Kentucky is part of an international organization dedicated to supporting vocations. Contact Michael Murray at (859) 382-1000 or e-mail mmur- ray@covdio.org.
  Our diocesan Knights of Columbus send each seminarian a financial contribution for personal expenses. Call Dustin Reel at (859) 896-2122 or visit kofc.org/joinus.
  Make a financial contribution to the diocesan Seminarian Education Fund, 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, KY 41011-3115 or online at www.covdio.org.
Hope is gift to seek from God, pope says on All Souls’ feast

VATICAN CITY — When life is difficult and when one is mourning the passing of a loved one, it is time to pray for the gift of hope and the ability to say with the prophet Job, “I know that my redeemer lives,” Pope Francis said. Celebrating Mass on the feast of All Souls, Nov. 2, the pope said that remembering loved ones who have died is a particularly important time to “hold tightly to the rope” of the anchor of hope, which is Christ. The COVID-19 pandemic forced Pope Francis to forego his usual practice of celebrating Mass on the feast of All Souls in a cemetery — in Rome or nearby — with people who were visiting the graves of their loved ones. Instead, he presided over a private Mass inside the Vatican, in the chapel of the Pontifical Teutonic College, then visited and blessed graves in the Teutonic Cemetery, which has existed since the Middle Ages and now is reserved mainly for the burial of German-speaking priests and members of religious orders. Later, he went into the grotto of St. Peter’s Basilica to pray at the tombs of deceased popes.

General audience closes to public after positive case of COVID-19

VATICAN CITY — After someone attending Pope Francis’ weekly general tested positive for COVID-19, the Vatican announced the audiences would return to being livestreamed without the presence of pilgrims and visitors. In a statement published Oct. 29, the Vatican said that beginning Nov. 4, the general audiences will be “broadcast from the library of the Apostolic Palace” to prevent “any possible future risks to the health of the participants.” The person who tested positive attended the audience Oct. 21 in the Vatican’s Paul VI Hall. The announcement comes nearly two months after the weekly audience was reopened to the public; because of the pandemic and lockdowns meant to prevent its spread, the pope had moved the audience to an online-only event from the library. Once the audiences resumed, the pope did not wear a mask, even when personally greeting visiting clerics, which drew concerns and criticism that he was not observing safety protocols.

(Continued on page 22)
French bishops order ‘death knell’ after three killed in Nice basilica

MANCHESTER, England—French bishops ordered a “death knell” to ring from every church of their country Oct. 29 after three people were hacked to death in a basilica in the southern Mediterranean city of Nice. Churches were asked to chime their bells at 3 p.m. in an act of mourning for three people who were killed in Nice’s Notre Dame Basilica while preparing for morning Mass. Pope Francis sent a tweet expressing closeness to the people of Nice. “I pray for the victims, for their families and for the beloved French people, that they may respond to evil with good,” it said. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, sent a similar message from Pope Francis in a telegram to Bishop André Marceau of Nice. “Enentrusting France to the protection of Our Lady,” Pope Francis “wholeheartedly gives his apostolic blessing to all those affected by this tragedy,” the telegram added. The French Council of Muslim Worship condemned the killings and asked Muslims to express their “mourning and solidarity with the victims and their relatives” by canceling all celebrations of the birthday of Muhammad, which this year is marked by Sunni Muslims Oct. 29.

Pope appoints new special delegate to Order of Malta

VATICAN CITY—After the surprise resignation of Cardinal Angelo Becciu in October, Pope Francis named Cardinal-designate Silvano Tomasi as his special delegate to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. In a letter dated Nov. 1, the pope said the cardinal-designate “will possess all the necessary powers to decide the eventual questions that should arise for the implementation of the mandate entrusted to you,” and said Cardinal-designate Tomasi would “receive the oath of the next grand master.” The order is set to elect a new grand master Nov. 8 to succeed Fra’ Giacomo Dalla Torre, who died in April. The special delegate, the pope said, also will work closely with Fra’ Ray Gonzalez do Valle, the chivalric order’s temporary head, and the next elected grand master to carry out the renewal of the order’s constitution. Pope Francis also said Cardinal-designate Tomasi will serve as “my exclusive spokesperson in all matters relating to relations between the Apostolic See and the order.”
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