Eucharist books coming to parishioners’ mailboxes for Advent

Allegra Thatcher
Assistant Editor

Parishioners of the Diocese of Covington can expect an Advent gift from Bishop Foys — and it might look a little familiar. In conjunction with the Messenger and the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, Bishop Roger Foys is sending families in the diocese each a bound copy of the previous run series, “The Eucharist: The Source and Summit.”

The series of 16 articles has recently been published during fall 2020 in a five-part series. Its origins, however, date back several more years. According to Dave Cooley, co-director, Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, the Eucharist series began with a request from the Office of Worship around 2015 or 2016. “It was an initiative of the office to increase Eucharistic amazement in the Diocese,” he said, especially regarding Eucharistic adoration. What resulted was 13 articles, published in the Messenger once a month, spread out over a year.

This year, since the COVID-19 pandemic has limited Mass attendance and public gatherings since March, Bishop Foys became concerned that the people of the Diocese of Covington needed more support in their homes. “The Eucharist is, as Vatican II makes clear, ‘the source and summit of our lives as Christians,’” said Bishop Foys. “There is nothing that can replace the Eucharist. And there’s nothing that can genuinely replace God’s people coming together in community to celebrate the Eucharist. But during these days when so many people are still not able to come to Mass because of their age or existing health conditions, we wanted to provide them with something that they could use during this time, although this is something that can be used at any time, and will serve its purpose for decades to come.”

Bishop Foys decided to re-publish the series in the Messenger, in a five-part series, in hopes of kindling that Eucharistic love once again. Then, he decided to publish the book for every family in the diocese as an Advent gift at the Christmas season.

“It became clear to me that we already had a wealth of meditations on the Eucharist that had been written over the years, some in our Messenger, some in parishes, and it seemed to me, rather than writing one pastoral letter, to gather all of these meditations together and to present them to our people for their own reflection, especially during Advent,” Bishop Foys said.

What’s wonderful about the book, said Bishop Foys, is that it touches on so many aspects of the Eucharist. “No pastoral letter that I could have written would have covered as much ground as these individual meditations. I also wanted to send it to God’s people, to every household in the diocese, to them a broader view of the Eucharist and what it means to us. Different meditations will appeal to different people — some will find one or another more beneficial — that’s the beauty of having a compilation of meditations instead of just one pastoral letter from one person’s point of view.”

“I think this book we’ve put together is so cool because of all these different aspects of the Eucharist that it looks at, and it’s just scratching the surface of each of these focuses,” said Mr. Cooley. “This kind of whets your appetite, then you can go and look more into that — it’s a great introduction to all these ways of thinking about the Eucharist.”

Bishop Foys also hopes to combat a growing trend of many professing Catholics who don’t believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. “This is a way of helping them to come once again to embrace the Real Presence: that the Body and Blood of Christ is really and truly present in the Eucharist,” he said. “Christ is also present within the community because Christ lives within each of us, and when Jesus gave us the sacrament of the Eucharist, he gave us that in the context of a community of believers, with his disciples. And he said if you do this, do this in memory of me, so every time the community gathers for the Eucharist, it is gathering as and with the body of Christ.”

The book features the 16 articles, illustrations from artist Matthew Alderman, study questions and thoughts from the faithful around the diocese about the significance of the Eucharist in their lives.

“It’s a gift from all of those who wrote these meditations and it’s a gift from me, to put this together so that it’s a great introduction, available,” said Bishop Foys. “It’s something that is not meant to be read and then tossed aside — it serves as an ongoing meditation on every aspect of the Eucharist that these articles cover. It’s something I can see parents using with their children; parents and children are spending a lot more time at home, with this pandemic, and so families can use it together.”

“The point of it is to realize what a blessing and a gift the Eucharist is,” said Mr. Cooley. “No matter what happens in the world and what’s taken from us. At the very least, we have our faith and we have the Eucharist.”

Second Sunday of Advent

“Peace or violence spring up in the human heart over which God alone has power. Convinced of this, believers have always used, against the most serious dangers, the weapons of fasting and prayer, along with concrete works of charity.

Fasting expresses sorrow for a serious misfortune, but also the intention of taking a certain responsibility by confessing our sins and being resolved to turn our hearts and actions to greater justice toward God and neighbor. By fasting, we acknowledge with confident humility that true personal and social renewal can only come from God, on whom we are all totally dependent. Beyond false forms of piety or manipulative assistance, fasting makes it possible to share our daily bread with those who are without.

This initiative has special meaning for us Christians, because we are in the season of Advent, a season of hope in which we are called to devote ourselves to preparing the way of the Lord, who has come into history as our Savior and will return at the end of time as our merciful Judge.”

—Pope St. John Paul II, Angelus Address, December 9, 2001
Dec. 4 COVID-19 briefing, 9:30 a.m.
Dec. 5  Second Sunday of Advent, Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m.
Dec. 6  Second Sunday of Advent, Mass followed by Baptism, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.
Annual Seminary Ball (virtual), 6 p.m.
Dec. 7  COVID-19 briefing, 9:30 a.m.
Vigil Mass for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.
Dec. 8  Mass for the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.
Dec. 9 COVID-19 briefing, 9:30 a.m.
Dec. 10 Diocesan staff directors meeting, 9:30 a.m.
Diocesan Finance Council virtual meeting, 1:30 p.m.
Dec. 11 COVID-19 briefing, 9:30 a.m.
Dec. 12  Third Sunday of Advent, Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 4:30 p.m.
Dec. 13 Fourth Sunday of Advent, Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.

Virtual Seminary Ball
The 2020 Seminary Ball will premiere Sunday, Dec. 6 at 7 p.m.

This virtual event serves a critical role in funding the education of the seminarians of the Diocese of Covington. Registrants will also receive a special gift box to enjoy during the premiere. Registration is available until the start of the event and can be found at covdio.org/seminaryball, with more scholarship opportunities.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul urges us to remain steadfast in helping others: “Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up.” (Gal 6:9) During these unprecedented times, many are hurting and need our assistance, including our elderly religious. As we approach the annual Retirement Fund for Religious Collection, I encourage your continued support.

The 2020 Retirement Fund for Religious Collection will be held throughout our Diocese on the weekend of December 12-13, 2020. As you may know, senior religious were instrumental in establishing Catholic schools, hospitals, and charitable agencies throughout our country and in our Diocese. Often this progress came at great sacrifice, and many older sisters, brothers, and religious order priests served for little to no pay.

Today, hundreds of religious communities do not have enough retirement savings and struggle to provide for a growing number of elder members. Covid-19 has only increased the challenge to provide adequate care.

Your gift to the 2020 Retirement Fund for Religious Collection will provide vital funding for medications, nursing care, and more. If you are unable to give during Mass, please mail your offertory envelope to your parish or donate through your parish’s online giving platform, if available.

In these difficult days, you may feel as though your generosity has been exhausted. I ask just two things. First, please join me in praying for God’s protection for all our elderly religious. Second, please support the 2020 Retirement Fund for Religious Collection as you are able. And as we offer these prayers for our elderly religious, please know that women and men religious across the country hold you and your loved ones in grateful prayer.

Yours devotedly in Christ,

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

An angel from the Immaculate Conception window above the northern entrance to the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, raises an open book above his head in which is written in Latin, “Macula originalis non est in te” (“The original stain is not in you”). The feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is celebrated Dec. 8, 2020.

The feast day, see pages 6, 8-9.

`Food for Friends’ adds Grant County to its tour schedule

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington “Food for Friends” mobile food pantry program will be serving the residents of Grant County with food from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). The pantry will be hosted at St. William Parish, Williamstown, Dec. 7, 1–3 p.m.

Recipients must bring photo ID as proof of residency and must meet current The Emergency Food Assistance Program income guidelines. Proxy forms are available for those who cannot leave their home.

The pantry will be available for Grant County on the second Monday of every month moving forward. “Food for Friends” previously opened in Bracken County serving at St. James Parish, Brooksville, on the fourth Friday of each month. Catholic Charities is working on ways to serve Mason, Pendleton, Owen and Gallatin counties as well.

For questions about the program or if you are interested in volunteering, contact John Hehman at 581-8874 ext. 124 or e-mail jhehman@covingtoncharities.org.

December 4, 2020


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For more information about the feast day, see pages 6, 8-9.
Father Raymond Hartman ministered with respect and compassion, fostered community through celebrations

Laura Keener
Editor

Father Raymond Hartman, a priest for the Diocese of Covington for 52 years, died Saturday Nov. 7. He was 77 years old.

Father Hartman was the youngest of seven children of Charles and Clara (Larbiq) Hartman. The family moved to Dayton, KY, from Pittsburgh, Penn., before Father Hartman’s birth. He was the only one of the seven born in Kentucky.

“It was a difficult time,” said Susan Hartman, Father Hartman’s niece. Ms. Hartman is the daughter of Fred Hartman. Fred and his twin Charlie share the honor of being the eldest of the siblings. Ms. Hartman said that the large family was new to the siblings. Ms. Hartman said the honor of being the oldest of Fred and his twin Charlie share Susan Hartman, Father Raymond S. Hartman

Father Hartman was born Jan. 23, 1943, in Dayton, KY, and attended elementary school at St. Bernard School. He went on to Covington Latin School where he exercised his musical interest and talent by singing in the Covington Latin School Choir. After graduating from Covington Latin School in 1960, Father Hartman entered seminary at the age of 16. In a Messenger interview on the celebration of his 40th jubilee, Father Hartman said that he knew at an early age that he wanted to go to seminary, crediting his parents’ strong faith and the examples of his brothers and sisters.

Father Hartman began seminary stud-
ies at St. Pius X Seminary, Erlanger, finish-
ing at Catholic University in Washington. Bishop Richard Ackerman ordained him to the priesthood on June 1, 1968, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

His first assignment was associate pas-

In 1980 he was appointed assistant chancellor and secretary to Bishop William Hughes, the ninth bishop of Covington, a position he held for six years, when he was appointed rector of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption (1986–1994). During these years, Father Hartman was able to draw on his love of the arts and dedication to the liturgy as master of ceremonies for the many pontifical events held during those 14 years. As assistant chancellor he oversaw the arrangements of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta’s visit to Covington Catholic High School and her order’s new mission in Jenkins, Ky. While rector at the Cathedral, Father Hartman led the community in the development of the Cathedral Garden, the Cathedral Foundation and two then-popular lecture series, the Lenten speaker series and the Stohlberg lectures.

In 1984 he was named pastor of St. Joseph Church, Crescent Springs (1994–2001). His final and longest pas-
torate was at Mother of God’s mission and Father Ray helped to carry on that from the other pastors in leading the parish community,” Ms. Hartman said. “He was a light-hearted person who found the positive view of life and ways to reach out to people to bring people together.”

Ms. Hartman said that her uncle found the best way to bring people together was through celebration and he fos-
tered that both at the parish community and in the family. The Hartman family had quickly grown from 7 to 17 children.

(Continued on page 13)

Christmas Mass

The following is a schedule of Mass times at parishes in the Diocese of Covington for the feast of Christmas, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. Due to spacing concerns surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, parishioners are encouraged to plan ahead to ensure a seat at Christmas Mass. The capacity for each church is listed in parentheses following its first listing. It is important to note that the capacities are reduced due to protocols to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. During this year, parishioners are encouraged to be flexible remembering that, like with so many other things this year, they may not be able to celebrate “like normal.” Parish leaders and staff are working hard to ensure the safety of all parishioners while accommodat-
ing as many in-person worshipers as possible.

The Messenger has learned some tips from pastors that can help parishioners with their planning. For example, pastors tell us that Christmas Eve Masses tend to be more crowded. If you usually attend Christmas Eve Mass, consider a Christmas Day Mass instead this year. If all Christmas Masses at your suburban parish are usually crowded, consider attending Mass at one of the urban parishes, where congregations are smaller and churches are larger.

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Mass is still in force, but the urban parishes, where congregations are smaller and churches are larger.

Parishioners who are at higher risk of having an adverse out-
come if they contract the illness are encouraged to join Mass online or TV.

Bishop Roger Foy will celebrate Mass at midnight and 10 a.m. Christmas Day at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. The midnight Mass will be televised live on FB. Both Masses will be livestreamed from the Cathedral’s website, www.covcathe-

dral.com.

No matter how you choose to celebrate Christmas every-
one is encouraged to continue to make the birth of Christ the center of family celebrations by attending Mass in person or online.

(Continued on page 3)
Mary—‘the first and most perfect disciple’

At the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) the Catholic doctrinal teaching on Mary the Mother of God was incorporated into the final chapter of “Lumen Gentium,” the “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.” (LG, n. 8) Chapter VIII of “Lumen Gentium” was entitled “The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church.” (LG, nn. 52-68)

Expounding on St. Augustine’s thought on the Virgin Mary as “the mother of the members of Christ,” “Lumen Gentium” acknowledges that in the Catholic tradition Mary is “as preeminent and as a wholly unique member of the Church, and as its type and outstanding model in faith and charity” (LG, n. 59).

As a matter of record, Pope Paul VI formally conferred on the Blessed Virgin the title “Mother of the Church” in an allocution at the close of the third session of Vatican II.

The “United States Catholic Catechism for Adults” succinctly encapsulates the Marian teaching in “Lumen Gentium” and states that Mary is “the first and the greatest of all the disciples of Christ.” (USCCA, p. 140)

Thus, in the light of the direction in Marian theology adopted in the conciliar teaching, theologians in the post-conciliar era as well as later Church documents have developed an intensified emphasis on the biblical foundations of Marian theology.

Consequently, current studies in Marian theology which have been undertaken from a New Testament perspective have distilled a seminal insight drawn from the Gospels — Mary, the mother of Jesus, is viewed as “disciple, follower of Christ, receiver of his grace.”

The title of Marianist Father Bertrand Buby’s “Mary, the Faithful Disciple” (1988) sets forth that theme of Mary to encompass “the whole mystery of Mary as a person, as a believer, and as the first faithful disciple of the New Testament.” Moreover, the paradigm of Mary as “the perfect disciple of Jesus” can correlative serve to illumine the meaning of the dispensation of Christians in the world today.

In this regard, in her “The Significance of Mary” (1988) the late Dominican Sister Agnes Cunningham of the Dominican Sisters of St. Augustine unpacked the implications of that mystery: “Mary appears in the radiance of all God’s promises — as the morning star announcing the dawn of a new day.” In spelling out those expectations — especially the hopes of women in the contemporary world — St. Paul VI considered the figure of the Virgin Mary as “the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord.” In contemporary terms, the disciple, who as “a disciple in her journey to the heavenly city,” is called to construct the temporal order, to work for liberating justice and charity, and to witness to “that love which builds up Christ in people’s hearts.” (LG, n. 37)

On March 25, 1987, the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, Pope St. John Paul II issued an encyclical letter “Redemptoris Mater” (“Mother of the Redeemer”). This comprehensive papal teaching on Marian doctrine and theology masterfully blends biblical theology and Church tradition as a historical note, Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. (d. 2008) in “Mary at the Dawn of the New Millennium,” his 1997 McGinley Lecture at Fordham University, stated that at the Council St. John Paul II (then Bishop Karol Wojtyla) “favored the inclusion of Mariology within the ‘Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.’”

According to Cardinal Dulles St. John Paul II identified Mary “as the primary patroness of the advent of the new millennium,” for “as the mother of Christ she is preeminently an advent figure — the morning star announcing the dawn of a new day.”

The Marian theology of St. John Paul II is rooted in a single overarching concept — “that of motherhood.” In his writings, then, Mary is visualized as “mother of the redemptive mother of divine grace, mother of the Church.”

Section 2 of Part I of “Redemptoris Mater” concentrates on the biblical theme — “Blessed is the mother of Jesus” (Luke 1:45) (RM, n. 219) These words of blessing were uttered by Elizabeth in her greeting to Mary at the Visitation. Elizabeth’s praise of Mary’s belovedness to understanding the role of Mary in the redemptive plan of God.

St. Paul John Paul II stressed that “(i)n the expression ‘Blessed is the one who believed, we can therefore rightly find a kind of ‘key’ which unlocks for us the innermost reality of Mary, whom the angel hailed as ‘full of grace.’” (RM, n. 19)

Section 3 of Part I of the encyclical centers on another major theme, one taken from the Marian doctrine and theology of the Church — “Behold you mother” (RM, nn. 20-24)

In the context of the Gospel according to Luke, St. John Paul II initiated a theological meditation on the mystery of the mother of Jesus with a reflection on the nature of true kinship in the circle of discipleship. Jesus’ eschatological future of life and the prayer of Mary as an unnamed woman in Luke’s Gospel — “Blessed is the one who bore you … Jesus declared. ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it.” (Luke 1:38)

St. John Paul II crafted a theological exegesis based on Mary’s “fear at the Annunciation — ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word’ (Luke 1:38). He explained that “(t)hrough faith Mary continued to bear and to ponder that word, in which there became ever clearer, in a way ‘which surpasses all knowledge’ (Eph 1:18), the self-revelation of the living God.” (RM, n. 26)

Here St. John Paul II stressed the preeminent disciple of Mary: “Thus in a sense Mary as Mother became the first ‘disciple’ of her Son, the first to whom he seemed to say. ‘Follow me’: even before he addressed this call to the Apostles or to anyone else (cf. John 1:43).”

In her commentary on the divine maternity of Mary as presented in the encyclical “Redemptoris Mater,” Sister Agnes Cunningham unpacked the implications of that mystery: “In her divine maternity, Mary is a figure and permanent model for the Church.” She concluded “Mary is also present in the mystery of the Church as a model of faith, hope and charity.”

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The beginning of the ‘good news’ of Jesus
The readings for the second Sunday of Advent are: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Peter 3:8-14 and Mark 1:1-8.

This weekend we celebrate the second Sunday of Advent, the beginning of the Gospel of St. Mark. I have always been struck by the very first line that St. Mark writes, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” (Mark 1:1)

It is easy to skip over this line, and to view it as unimportant. In fact, I had the unhappy experience (in another diocese of having the deacon at Mass accidentally skip this line when he proclaimed the Gospel. It was very Advent as a priest, and my whole homily was based on the first line.

This first line is simple in its structure, but profound in its meaning. “The beginning...” calls us back to the Book of Genesis, when we hear, “In the beginning...” It is a reminder to the reader of the sacred text, that what is found in its meaning. “The beginning...” calls us back to the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In fact, I had the unhappy experience (in another diocese) of having the deacon at Mass accidentally skip this line when he proclaimed the Gospel. It was very Advent as a priest, and my whole homily was based on the first line.

The phrase “The beginning...” is simple in its structure, but profound in its meaning. “The beginning...” calls us back to the Book of Genesis, when we hear, “In the beginning...” It is a reminder to the reader of the sacred text, that what is found in its meaning. “The beginning...” calls us back to the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God is going to hear is something good. For the word gospel simply means “good news.” We who know the rest of the story realize that this good news is a promise, just like the promises of the Old Testament; note: God never goes back on his promises. It is the promise of redemption and salvation through our free will to sin, but God doesn’t rescind the promise. It is the promise of a new life is achievable, that we can be made free from the evil and darkness of sin.

Paradoxical formulas often illuminate important truths that would otherwise go unremarked. That’s surely the case with the paradox that death is the thing one to which we can really look forward. That wisdom teaches us that we should prepare for death daily, perhaps offering our lives to the Lord as the day’s last act. The old children’s prayer — “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take” — may strike sophisticates as, well, childish. It is not. In simple words it encapsulates the essence of Advent: that death is a blessing, a passover to a purer, glorified form of life.

We’ve all heard the proverb “Every cloud has a silver lining” — meaning that there’s something good to be found in every bad situation. We are currently living with the COVID-19 pandemic, a very bad situation. Can there possibly be something good to come from this pandemic?

We just celebrated Thanksgiving. Many of us did not gather with family to avoid contracting or spreading the virus. We did the same thing at Easter. Fourth of July, probably birthdays, we can’t see our loved ones in the hospitals, nursing home visits are restricted, and on and on. We all miss visiting our families and many of us are very lonely.

Another silver lining is that some of our parishes are livestreaming daily Mass so those of us who are still sheltering in place or are too busy to get to Mass can still participate.

The silver lining is that we now realize how important attending Mass in person is and what it means to be present. It is important it is to worship and praise God as a community.

We are constantly bombarded by reports of how serious and deadly this virus is and how quickly it’s spreading. A silver lining is that we now realize that outside of adhering to the protocols, we can’t control this and that we need to depend on our heavenly Father to protect us and our loved ones and to give us the grace and courage to live with this pandemic, and give us comfort that this pandemic will eventually end.

To help us, Bishop Roger Foy encourages us to pray for the intercession of St. Rocco, patron of those — like us — who are living in a pandemic. “O blessed St. Rocco, have pity on those who lie upon a bed of suffering and help deliver us from contagious disease. Through your intercession, preserve our bodies from illness, and our souls from the contagion of sin. Obtain for us salutary aids and all purity of heart. Assist us to make good use of our health and to bear suffering with patience. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Father Daniel Schomaker is pastor, St. Augustine Parish, Covington and vicar general for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

Father Daniel Schomaker

George Weigel

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

The beginning of the ‘good news’ of Jesus

Thanksgiving and the paradox of death

Silver lining

Believe, Teach, Practice

Deacon Michael Keller

Deacon Michael Keller

Deacon Michael Keller
This Advent, wait with Mary for the coming of Christ

David Cooley
Messenger Contributor

The Immaculate Conception is a beautiful solemnity that the Church celebrates each year on December 8. On this day we commemorate the fact that Mary was graccd with sinless perfection from the first instant of her existence, in view of the merits of her son Jesus Christ, in light of her predestination to be his Mother. It’s rather fitting that this feast day takes place in the season of Advent, because during that season the mind and heart of the Church are drawing us in to ponder the Blessed Mother.

We first meet Mary not as the Queen of Heaven that she was destined to become, but as a young, meek virgin in the early chapters of the Gospel of Luke. While Scripture doesn’t say it explicitly, it’s fair to assume that she was a very young girl with hopes and dreams of her own. But, one thing we do know for sure is that she was completely devoted to God and her faith was her most prized possession. When it was made clear to her that God’s will was different from her own plans, she doesn’t hesitate. Mary has nothing to offer the Lord but herself; he asks for nothing else, and she holds nothing back.

This year we can all relate to having to let go of our plans. I remember at this time last year, and even earlier, I was making lots of grand plans for 2020. It seemed like a reasonable thing to do at the time. But, of course, looking back now, it’s hard not to laugh at that. Now, right before the big holiday season, things are getting grim again and even more plans will be falling through. Perhaps we are on the verge of a long, dark winter. In some ways the early sunsets and the frigid air seem more painful this year than ever before.

Yet, this can be a moment of grace for us, too. We must realize that we are not in control and that we are anxiously waiting. We are waiting for this pandemic to be over. We are waiting to hug our family and friends again. We are waiting. We are waiting for this pandemic to be over. We realize that we are not in control and that we are anxiously waiting.

Mary was waiting for the Messiah long before the annunciation. It is not hard to imagine. Ask any first-time mother what those nine months are like and they’ll tell you it’s nerve-racking. Yes, there is excitement, but it’s hindered by anxieties and an almost unbearable anticipation of an uncertain future. You wait and you wait for someone you can’t see but you know is there. And yet this waiting is not idle; there is a lot to imagine. To see any first-time mother what those nine months are like and they’ll tell you it’s nerve-racking. Yes, there is excitement, but it’s hindered by anxieties and an almost unbearable anticipation of an uncertain future. You wait and you wait for someone you can’t see but you know is there. And yet this waiting is not idle; there is a lot to imagine. To see anything in the way that was shown to us by Our Lady, our experience will be like hers. If Christ is growing in us and we pray without ceasing, we will be at peace because we know that however insignificant our life seems to be, from it Jesus is forming himself. We must align our will with his and go “in haste” to wherever our circumstances compel us. Why? Because that’s where he wants us to be; more to the point, that’s where he wants to be.

The ancient Israelites were God’s people, called to be intimate with God and obedient to his law. Mary, the daughter of Zion — the Immaculate Conception — is the fullest expression of intimacy with the Lord. When we prepare ourselves properly and unite our will with God’s will, we, too, share an intimate union with the Lord — even as we await his coming. Advent is our graced time of preparation. This year, no matter how dark things get or how alone we feel, let the love of Christ grow within us so much so that when we go out into the world others will be stirred by his presence.

David Cooley is the co-director and office manager of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization.

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After reversed ruling, schools to continue remote learning due to executive order

Allegra Thatcher
Assistant Editor

Schools in the Diocese of Covington are continuing with Non-Traditional Instruction (NTI) after a Thanksgiving weekend surrounded with changes in COVID-19 school policies. Despite an injunction giving private Christian schools an exception from Governor Andy Beshear’s executive order, the Sixth Circuit Court prevented the Diocese of Covington from returning students to in-person instruction any earlier than Dec. 7.

After the executive order from Governor Beshear Nov. 18, ordering the cessation of in-person instruction beginning Nov. 23, diocesan schools spent the weekend preparing for a complete transition to NTI. According to the order, elementary schools may return to in-person instruction Dec. 7, provided their schools are not in Red Zone counties, while middle and high schools may resume in-person instruction Jan. 4, 2021. The only county not currently identified as red in the diocese is Owen County. The schools received hope of returning to the classroom sooner when U.S. District Judge Gregory Van Tatenhove filed a 22-page order granting a preliminary injunction to 17 private Christian schools that filed a lawsuit against the emergency restriction. Attorney General Beshear’s executive order, the Sixth Circuit Court prevented the Governor from enforcing the order against any private, religious school in the Commonwealth. Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Covington, sent a letter to parents Nov. 25, saying schools would resume in-person Dec. 2, with after-school extracurricular activities and winter sports suspended until the week of Dec. 14 in an exercise of caution. She clarified that as of Nov. 19, 24 out of 37 schools had zero COVID-19 cases. Overall, our data over the last 14 weeks has shown that COVID cases are not originating in our schools and it is not spreading in the school setting when the protocols are followed,” she wrote. “We also found that the quarantine periods for cases and close contacts were effective at mitigate spread. Therefore, despite the rising cases in our counties, we had decided our Catholic schools would remain open and we would continue monitoring each case and school community individually.”

However, over the weekend, Governor Beshear appealed to the Sixth Circuit Court with a request to stay his executive order, making it applicable to all despite the injunction. The Sixth Circuit Court granted Governor Beshear’s request Nov. 28.

Mrs. McGuire followed up with a second letter to parents Nov. 30, explaining that NTI will continue as previously planned. Expressing her sorrow over what the students will miss during the Advent season, she encouraged families to lead their children in the Advent traditions that their schools would have used to help them prepare for Christmas.

“We have just started the Advent season,” Mrs. McGuire said. “During this time our children would have attended Mass, spent time in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and had the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Penance. We would have prayed and taught the lessons of Advent as a faith community to help prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christmas. While I know firsthand that NTI adds stress to families, I do hope you will be able to help your children(ren) participate in these Advent traditions.”

Meanwhile, in-person “targeted services,” including school counseling and academic support, may continue. December 7 remains the target date for reopening elementary schools, but only if counties are no longer in the Red Zone. Middle and high schools will continue using NTI until at least Jan. 4.
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A generous gift of thanks
As in years past, the people of the Diocese of Covington through its parishes, schools and organizations made Thanksgiving special for those who were unable to provide holiday meals for themselves. Mary Rose Mission, Florence; Parish Kitchen, Covington and Rose Garden Mission, Covington were among those who extended their generosity to provide their neighbors with all the trimmings for a Thanksgiving meal.

(top left) Father Michael Grady, parochial vicar, St. Augustine Parish, Covington, blessed the food and supplies at Parish Kitchen prior to distribution to families. (top right) The Parish Kitchen in Covington, sponsored by Catholic Charities, distributed Thanksgiving groceries, Nov. 23, to those in need of supplies to furnish their Thanksgiving table.

(above left and right) The Franciscan Daughters of Mary and supporters provided a Thanksgiving feast and more to distributed Thanksgiving groceries, Nov. 23, to those in need of supplies to furnish their Thanksgiving table.

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Catholic leaders decry additional federal execution measures
Carol Zimmermann
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A move by the Department of Justice to expand how it carries out death sentences — to include electrocution, gas or firing squads along with lethal injections — was sharply criticized by Catholic anti-death penalty activists.

“The administration’s eleventh-hour push to bring back firing squads and institute additional methods of execution flies in the face of a country that is turning away from the practice of capital punishment,” said Kristan Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, who called the move “yet another blatant affront to the dignity of life.”

On Nov. 27, the Justice Department published a final rule change, effective Dec. 24, to add to the execution methods it uses for federal death sentences, permitting it to use “any other manner prescribed by the law of the state in which the sentence was imposed.”

The proposed amendment was announced in August and posted on the Federal Register for comments. It calls for alternative means for federal executions if the lethal injection drug is not available in the state where the defendant is given the death sentence.

It also suggests that if the state where the crime occurred does not permit death sentences, a judge can designate another state with those laws and utilize their facilities to carry out the execution.

Among the 30 states that still use the death penalty, lethal injection is the primary execution method, but some states also use nitrogen gas, electrocution or a firing squad, if a lethal injection is unavailable.

Sister Helen Prejean, a Sister of St. Joseph of Medaille, who is a longtime activist against the death penalty, said the Justice Department’s plan to use other means of federal executions shows “the callous brute force of the mentality of the Trump administration.”

She added the president “believes that he can use force and kill people. He can use violence and force to make his point. There is no need for that. There is no need to happen.”

The Death Penalty Information Center, which lists the primary means of execution used by each state, notes states’ backup-execution methods, such as firing squads in Mississippi, Oklahoma and Utah, the electric chair in nine states and nitrogen gas in seven states.

Most states use a drug combination for executions, but a handful of states, and the federal government, just use one drug, pentobarbital.

This year, the Justice Department reinstated federal executions for the first time since 2003 and executed eight prisoners from July to November. Five inmates are scheduled to be executed prior to the swearing-in of Joe Biden as president Jan. 20.

The Death Penalty Information Center said this is the first time since 1889 that the federal government has carried out an execution in the time between a presidential election and the inauguration of a new president.

President-elect Biden has said he will end federal executions if he enters office Jan. 20. The proposed amendment was announced in August and published in the Federal Register for comments. It calls for alternative means for federal executions if the lethal injection drug is not available in the state where the defendant is given the death sentence.

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Newsworthy


Fourth grade students at St. Edward School, Cincinnati, have been involved in a fundraising activity for their community called “Harvest of Hope.” The students read about children who raised money for various causes, and they wanted to become involved in a project for Harrison County. They raised nearly $400. The students voted on how to share their proceeds, and chose Grand Haven Nursing Home and the Cynthiana Food Pantry.

Finding ways to serve

Students of St. Joseph School, Cold Spring, recently worked with the Catholic Order of Foresters and brought in socks to be donated to Parish Kitchen. Members of the second grade class place their donations on the pile.

Jolly old St. Nicholas

Many Catholics know that Santa Claus is an evolution of St. Nicholas, an early Church bishop whose feast day we celebrate Dec. 6. Who was St. Nicholas and why is he depicted as a jolly old man in a red suit who delivers presents?

Nicholas was born during the third century in what is now southern Turkey to wealthy parents who raised him to be a Christian. At the time, Roman Emperor Diocletian was systematically persecuting the Christian people — and it was dangerous to identify as one.

When his parents died of an epidemic when he was young, he decided, in the spirit of Christ, to give away what he had and donate the wealth to the poor and needy. However, this would have made him stand out as a Christian, because only the Christians gave to the poor in this way. He decided to donate his wealth in more subtle ways.

One story tells of a family who was very poor — so poor that the daughters had no dowries and no hope of marrying well. The father, in desperation, was preparing to sell them into slavery to pay his debts. Nicholas, hearing of the situation, came by and dropped gold coins through the window that landed in the family’s shoes and stockings, which were warming by the fire. He had to find small and anonymous ways to give away his inheritance, and he would continue on to do this for other families. People would hope to receive gifts of gold from Nicholas when he passed by their house — some stories call them gold balls, which led to the tradition of giving oranges in stockings.

The tradition arose from here of giving gifts to others in an anonymous way that shows them care, while maintaining secrecy. The person of St. Nicholas, eventually Saint Claus, morphed over time through an increasingly secular culture into a man in a red suit who sneaks down chimneys to give his presents, but the idea remains the same. Some families also celebrate St. Nicholas’ feast day on Dec. 6 by leaving their shoes out to be filled with coins and treats during the night. St. Nicholas’ story continues when he was made Bishop of Myra at a young age. Soon after his Christian identity caused him to be arrested, exiled and imprisoned for a time with other priests and bishops. Eventually he was released, and attended one of the first Church councils at Nicea in 325.

He remains an example of charity, faith and perseverance for generosity in spite of opposition.

People and Events

The evangelization prayer intention for December, as recommended by Pope Francis, is for a life of prayer. We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

The Parish Kitchen is in need of new sleeping bags and blankets for its guests. Donations can be dropped off Monday-Friday at either Parish Kitchen, 1561 Madison Avenue, Covington, 8-11 a.m. or Catholic Charities, 3629 Church Street, Latonia, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport, has rescheduled its open house to Monday, Dec. 7, starting at 5 p.m. Tours will be conducted at staggered times. Registration at nochs.com.

Crack the code

Fourth graders from Mary Queen of Heaven School, Erlanger, recently became secret agents! They discovered their secret agent names, solved division problems that were in a secret code, and used invisible ink decoders to determine the location of prize briefcases located in the room. Once they solved the problems, they typed their answers into a Google Form to crack the case.

Divine Providence Sister Leslie Keener is sponsoring Advent evening prayer via Zoom on the four Mondays of Advent. Come and take a little time for stillness, contemplation and community. Sign up at https://forms.gle/5hKUzLzJxtSR7SasP9 and she will send you the Zoom link.
Call Kim at the Messenger for information on placing your ad in the Classified Advertisements. (859) 392-1500
“The Last Vermeer” (TriStar) After the defeat of Germany in World War II, a flamboyant Dutch artist is accused of profiting from the sale of a rare masterwork by the titular 17th-century painter to number two Nazi Hermann Goering. But the soldier charged with investigating the case on behalf of the Allies eventually discovers that all is not as it initially appears. Director Dan Friedkin’s polished fact-based drama, adapted from Jonathan Lopez’s 2008 book “The Man Who Made Vermeers,” features outstanding performances from its two leads and offers grown viewers a satisfying exploration of creativity, the ambiguous business of assessing artistic worth and the drive for justice in the face of public opinion. A gory execution, a brief, non-graphic scene of aberrant behavior, adulterous sensuality, partial nudity, mature references, a couple of profanities, a milder oath, a few of uses each of rough and crude language. CNS: A-III, MPAA: R.

Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the Messenger are available online at covdio.org/messenger.
Communities that take their own ‘path’ lack Holy Spirit, pope says

Junno Arocho Esteves
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis said he was dismayed by Catholic communities and groups that claim to be working to improve church life, but attempt to do so without prayer, the Eucharist and unity with the rest of the church.

“At times, I feel a great sadness when I see a community that, with goodwill, takes a wrong path because it thinks it is making the Church through gatherings, as if it were a political party; the majority, the minority, what this one thinks of this or that or the other, (saying), ‘This is like a synod, a synodal path that we must take,’” the pope said Nov. 25 during his weekly general audience.

While the pope did not mention a specific country or situation, already in June 2019, he had written a letter to Catholics in Germany urging them to ensure that their “synodal path” was guided by the Holy Spirit with patience and was not simply a “search for immediate results that generate quick and immediate consequences but are ephemeral due to the lack of maturity or because they do not respond to the vocation to which we are called.”

The Catholic Church in Germany launched the Synodal Path in 2019. Scheduled to run for two years, it is debating the issues of power, sexual morality, priestly life and the role of women in the church.

The aim is to restore trust lost in the clergy abuse scandal after the German bishops’ conference released a study that revealed an estimated 3,700 cases of sexual abuse reported in the German church from 1946 to 2014. The statistics prompted outrage in the general public, and the German bishops held several meetings to discuss reforms; some of the suggestions included reviewing the church’s discipline on priestly celibacy, reviewing church law promoting more women in church administration and reviewing Catholic teaching on sexual morality.

But some German bishops are concerned about the process. In an interview published Sept. 17 by Germany’s Catholic news agency, KNA, Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki of Cologne warned that the Synodal Path reform project could lead to a “German national church.”

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Pope creates 13 new cardinals, including Washington archbishop

VATICAN CITY — One by one 11 senior churchmen, including two U.S. citizens — Cardinals Wilton D. Gregory of Washington and Silvano M. Tomasi, a former Vatican diplomat — knelt before Pope Francis to receive their red hats, a cardinal’s ring and a scroll formally declaring their new status and assigning them a “titular” church in Rome. But with the consistory Nov. 28 occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis actually created 13 new cardinals. Cardinals Jose F. Advincula of Capiz, Philippines, and Cornelius Sim, apostolic vicar of Brunei, did not attend the consistory because of COVID-19 travel restrictions; however, they are officially cardinals and will receive their birettas and rings at a later date, the Vatican said. According to canon law, cardinals are created when their names are made public “in the presence of the College of Cardinals.” While many Rome-based cardinals attended the consistory, more members of the college were “present” online. The pandemic also meant the gathering was unusually small; each cardinal was accompanied by a priest-secretary and could invite a handful of guests, so there were only about 100 people in the congregation at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter’s Basilica. The new cardinals came from eight countries: Italy, Malta, the United States, Brunei, the Philippines, Mexico, Romania and Chile.

Use of Pfizer, Moderna COVID-19 vaccines is morally acceptable

WASHINGTON — While confusion has arisen in recent days over “the moral permissibility” of using the COVID-19 vaccines just announced by Pfizer Inc. and Moderna, it is not “immoral to be vaccinated with them,” said Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, secretary and could invite a handful of guests, so there were unusually small; each cardinal was accompanied by a priest-secretary and could invite a handful of guests, so there were only about 100 people in the congregation at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter’s Basilica. The new cardinals came from eight countries: Italy, Malta, the United States, Brunei, the Philippines, Mexico, Romania and Chile.

New patriarch of Jerusalem says he must listen a lot, pray a lot

JERUSALEM — When Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa makes his first entrance into the Church of the Holy Sepulcher as patriarch, he will continue the balancing act of representing everyone in the Holy Land. “I can’t become Palestinian and I can’t become Israeli; it doesn’t make sense, but trying to understand the perspective is essential,” the Italian-born archbishop told Catholic News Service days before his Dec. 4 solemn entrance. He will celebrate his first official Mass Dec. 5. “I can’t become the voice of Palestinians or Israelis, but I have to be the voice of the Church, including everyone from his own perspective. It is quite difficult, because here everyone wants you to be (either) here or there.” Appointed in October as the first non-Arab Latin patriarch of Jerusalem since 1987, Archbishop Pizzaballa said it is “essential” for anyone in his new position to try to understand the different perspectives of all the residents of the Holy Land — not an easy undertaking in a land fraught with political and religious conflicts. Maintaining a balance is not always easy and requires being clear about your roots and who you are, Archbishop Pizzaballa said. “First of all, you need internal personal stability. You need to listen a lot, and to pray a lot,” he said. “I see a strong attitude of prayer helps you also to keep the emotional distances.”

Social justice must be founded on care for others, pope tells judges

VATICAN CITY — Guaranteeing justice for all men and women is not possible while a few people control most of the world’s wealth and everyone else’s right to a dignified life is disregarded, Pope Francis said. In a Nov. 30 video message, the pope encouraged judges from North and South America and Africa not to lose sight of “the distressing situation in which a small part of humanity lives in opulence, while an increasing number of people are denied dignity and their most elementary rights are ignored or violated.” “We cannot be disconnected from reality,” he said. “This is a reality you must keep in mind.” The judges were taking part in a virtual meeting Nov. 30-Dec. 1 on “Building the New Social Justice.” The meeting was sponsored by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Committee of Pan-American Judges for Social Rights and Franciscan Doctrine. At “such a critical time for all humanity” the pope said, the virtual meeting to discuss the work of building “a new social justice is impossible, without doubt, excellent news.”

Pope marks anniversary of U.S. churchwomen’s murder in El Salvador

VATICAN CITY — Remembering the three U.S. religious women and a laywoman brutally murdered during El Salvador’s civil war, Pope Francis hailed them as examples of faith and missionary discipleship. Before concluding his weekly general audience Dec. 2, the pope commemorated the 40th anniversary of the death of the four American missionaries: Maryknoll Sisters Maureen Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay missionary Joan Borysenko. “With evangelical commitment and taking great risks, they brought food and medicine to displaced people and helped the poorest families,” he said. “These women lived their faith with great generosity. They are an example for all to become faithful missionary disciples.” The December 1980 murder of the four mission- aries capped a deadly year for the Catholic Church in El Salvador. In March of that same year, St. Oscar Romero, then-archbishop of San Salvador and a critic of the right-wing government’s use of violence and torture in the country, was mur- dered while celebrating Mass.
“We don’t know what the future holds, but it’s all God’s work,” says Sister Theresa McGrath (center), 86, a member of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, for nearly 70 years.

Retirement Fund for Religious

Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

In good times and bad, Sister Theresa and the senior religious shown here have devoted themselves to God’s work. Together with nearly 30,000 elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests, they educated the young, tended the sick, and ministered to the needy. Today, they pray for a hurting world. Yet many US religious communities do not have enough retirement savings and struggle to provide for aging members. Covid-19 has only increased these challenges. Your gift to the Retirement Fund for Religious helps furnish medications, nursing care, and more. Please be generous.

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retiredreligious.org

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