February 2021
Praised be Jesus Christ! Now and Forever! Amen!

My dear Friends,

We are about to enter into the penitential season of Lent. This Lent the call of the Lord reverberates urgently: “Be converted! Return to me with all your heart!” (Joel 2:12)

The Lord is calling on us to seize this time as a time of choosing. It is not the time of the Lord’s judgment, but of our judgment. It is a time to choose what matters most and what passes away, a time to separate what is necessary from what is not. It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to the Lord and to others.

The above is paraphrased from An Extraordinary Moment of Prayer presided over by our Holy Father Pope Francis last March, 2020. He stood alone in the great Piazza of St. Peter and spoke these words, invoking upon all his blessing, Urbi et Orbi, to the City and to the World. It was a time of great testing, anxiety and fear.

COVID-19 was raging in Europe and would soon rage on our own shores. Our Holy Father sought to comfort us and to challenge us to “seize this time of trial as a time of choosing.”

While it may seem as though we have been experiencing a yearlong Lent, the Lord calls to us now, in this time and in this day, to once again go into the desert where we can hear His voice, answer His call.

In the desert, where we can indeed choose what really matters most in our lives, what we truly cherish, what is important.

In the silence of the desert, where we listen to His voice.

This year has indeed been one of trial and of testing, of anxiety and fear. It has without a doubt brought out the best and the worst in us. It has been a year of life-changing experiences, a year when we have had to make choices while in uncharted territory.

What a perfect time, this Lent, to review the past year, to examine the choices we've made, the decisions that have shaped our lives. Have we made it a beneficial year? What have we learned from it? Have we put ourselves in God’s hands, confident of His love for us through every trial?

As we enter this Lent 2021 may we all be converted, may we all return to the Lord with all our heart!

Yours devotedly in the Lord,

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

On the many forms of penance in Christian life, the Catechism of the Catholic Church observes, “The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving.” (CCC, n. 1434)

As a reminder, the rules of fasting and abstinence are as follows: Catholics in the United States, ages 18 to the day after their 59th birthday, are obliged to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Only one full meal is allowed on these days, with no eating between meals.

Catholics in the U.S., from the age of 14, are obliged to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday, the Fridays of Lent and Good Friday. Illness or other circumstances might make it necessary for an individual to practice ways of doing penance other than fasting and abstinence.
During times of crisis the mission, ministry and celebration of Catholic Schools is unchanged — they unite

Allegra Thatcher
Assistant Editor

On the feast of St. Blaise, patron of throat illnesses, and in the midst of a week filled with gratitude and fun, Bishop Roger Foys celebrated an all-schools Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington in honor of the 47th annual Catholic Schools Week. Each of the diocesan schools celebrates the week with different festivities, including crazy socks, dressing like teachers and rock-paper-scissors tournaments. They all came together in the middle of the week to recognize the most important aspect of their schools — the Catholic faith.

The theme for Catholic Schools week is “Faith. Excellence. Service.” Bishop Foys, in his homily, emphasized that they get some ideas that will help them to enter more fully into prayer.

Bishop Roger Foys delivers his homily during the Catholic Schools Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington on Feb. 3.

Concelebrants included the dean of the Diocese of Covington (left to right) Father Andrew Young, dean, South East Deanery; Father Thomas Cushing, dean, South West Deanery; Msgr. Gerry Behrensman, deacon, Campbell County Deanery; Father Mark Korne, deacon, Northern Kenton County Deanery; (not pictured) Father Ryan Maher, dean, Covington Deanery; and Father Ross Kelsch, school administrator, St. Thomas School.

Beginning now, and through Lent, work to enter more fully into prayer with Father Comer

Laura Keener
Editor

In May 2020 Pope Francis began a series of general audience talks on prayer. That series is still ongoing with talk number 25 last week. Pope Francis introduced the series focusing on the “mystery of prayer,” saying, “Prayer is the breath of faith, it is its most proper expression. Like a cry that comes from the heart of those who believe and trust in God.”

It isn’t uncommon to turn to God in prayer during the highs and lows in life. But how does a person make prayer “the breath of faith,” something that is an ongoing and life sustaining part of faith?

Father Michael Comer, pastor, Mother of God Parish, Covington, began his own series on prayer, Feb. 3, titled “Beginning to Pray.” The series, however, is not only a tutorial for persons learning to pray for the first time.

“My premise is we are all beginners — everybody is a beginner — in terms of prayer,” said Father Comer, noting that he includes himself in the beginner group. “There are no experts when it comes to prayer. I am just somebody who has tried to learn how to pray over the last 50 years or so and will share some insights and things I have learned.”

The series will last eight weeks with a different prayer focus each week, ending the week before Holy Week. Father Comer will record and live-stream himself on Wednesdays with a recording of each talk available on the Mother of God Parish website and Facebook page on Thursdays.

“This first week I introduced prayer and entering into the presence of God,” said Father Comer. “That’s how we need to begin, by learning how to enter into the presence of God and becoming conscious and aware of the presence of God.”

In part two of the series, Father Comer talks about different types of prayer — prayer of gratitude, prayer of praise, prayer of intercession, prayer of petition and even expressing anger toward God.

“I use a number of the Psalms to illustrate the different ways people have prayed to God,” Father Comer said. “The point of it is we have to pray what is real — whatever we are really feeling and experiencing, that’s what we want to pray. Not just pretty words to God but a real heart-to-heart, letting God know exactly what’s going on with us.”

Upcoming topics include: Lectio Divina (sacred reading), praying the Mass, praying the Liturgy of the Hours, praying the rosary, the Jesus Prayer and, finally praying Holy Week.

“Prayer is about spending time with God every day,” said Father Comer. “I hope that people, if they are truly beginners and never had a prayer life in any kind of ongoing way they will experiment with prayer and begin to have a personal relationship with God.”

And for those who already pray every day, Father Comer said, “I hope that they get some ideas that will help them to enter more fully into prayer.”
The ‘sprinkling of ashes’ on Ash Wednesday begins the lenten season

Father Daniel Schomaker
Messenger Contributor

Lots of things have changed during the pandemic that has struck the world for the last year. We hear people saying, “We need to get back to normal.” In some ways, I agree with this statement, but in others, I do not. While preaching during the pandemic, I heard Bishop Foys once say: “We need to get back to better than normal!” I started thinking about this comment in relationship to the Season of Lent which we will begin on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2021.

This year Ash Wednesday will “look different” than it did last year — at least in the United States. On the most simple level, our churches won’t be as crowded, because of the necessity of social distancing. But something else is going to “look different” too. This Ash Wednesday, you will not see Catholics with ashes in the form of a cross on their foreheads. This is because the Holy See has directed (as a means of protecting the faithful — clergy and laity alike), that ashes be “sprinkled” on the crown of the head of the faithful.

The practice of “sprinkling” the ashes is a rather familiar practice in many parts of the world — just not in the U.S. It is very common in Catholic countries like Italy and Poland. In fact, it is the more “biblical” way of distributing ashes. Let’s look at some quotes:

From the Book of Nehemiah 9:1: “On the twenty-fourth day of this month, the Israelites gathered together while fasting and wearing sackcloth, their heads covered with dust.”

From the First Book of Maccabees 3:47: “That day they fasted and wore sackcloth; they sprinkled ashes on their heads and tore their garments.”

From Daniel 9:3: “I turned to the Lord God, to seek help, in prayer and petition, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.”

Job 42:6: “Therefore I disown what I have said, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Matthew 6:6: “But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”

And then there is of course the most famous Scripture quote that we all hear on Ash Wednesday as we receive ashes: “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (cf. Genesis 3:19)

Ashes are used as sacramentals in the Church to remind us of who we are, especially in relationship to the One we are not — God. They call us to repentance and sorrow and humility when we have placed ourselves above (Continued on page 11)

COVID-19 reaches religious communities, sisters grateful for support and prayers from neighbors

Laura Keener
Editor

Three communities of women religious are grateful for the prayers and support received while recovering from an outbreak of COVID-19.

“Our hearts are really overflowing with gratitude for the prayers and support received while recovering from an outbreak of COVID-19,” said Benedictine Sister Aileen Bankemper, prioress, St. Walburg Monastery.

Twenty-five of the 28 Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery who had tested positive for COVID-19 ended their quarantine Tuesday, Feb. 9. Two of the sisters did not recover. Both had been in fragile health prior to contract COVID-19.

“The outbreak started Jan. 27 — the day after the sisters had received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine — when one of the sisters tested positive for COVID-19. “Clearly the virus had entered the community before (Continued on page 11)

Candidates for permanent diaconate installed as acolytes at cathedral

Allegra Thatcher
Assistant Editor

Bishop Roger Foys installed 16 candidates for the permanent diaconate to the ministry of acolyte Feb 7 at the 10 a.m. Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. Three candidates were from parishes in the Diocese of Covington and the remaining 13 from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The candidates for the permanent diaconate (left) Adam Feinauer is presented to Bishop Foys. (middle) Eric Ritchie prepares to kneel before Bishop Foys. (right) Kevin Cranley places his hand on the ciborium as Bishop Foys commissions him to “Make your life worthy of your service at the table of the Lord and of his Church.”

for the Diocese of Covington are Kevin Cranley, St. Timothy Parish, Union; Adam Feinauer, St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright; Eric Ritchie, Holy Cross Parish, Latonia; and Tom Murrin, St. Philip Parish, Melbourne, who was unable to attend.

During Mass, the candidates were presented to Bishop Foys. He urged them to be faithful to the call they have (Continued on page 11)

Correction
In the obituary for Deacon Carl Ledbetter published on page 3 in the Feb. 5 edition, Elaine Schultz was incorrectly named Elaine Schultz. The Messenger apologizes for the error.
The encyclical letter is divided into two major sections: 1) "The Unity of Love in Creation and Salvation History" and 2) "The Practice of Love by the Church as a 'Communion of Love'". Part I, a profound theological reflection on the unity of love in creation and salvation history takes its starting point from the prophetic vision found in 1 John 4:8—"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." This text forms the "heart of the Christian faith."

Part II treats the theme of ecclesial charity as "a manifestation of Trinitarian love." This section focuses on the Church’s responsibility for charitable activity and expounds on the theme of the Church’s "charitable activity as a manifestation of Trinitarian love."

By way of introduction, "Deus Caritas Est" carefully distinguished between the Church’s commitment to justice and the ecclesial commandment of charity (DCE, nn. 26-29)

After reviewing the biblical grounds for the ecclesial ministry of service along with the testimony of early Christian writers, "Deus Caritas Est" draws several conclusions. First, the exercise of charity (diakonia) is a duty inseparable from other essential functions of the Church, namely, the proclamation of the word of God (kerygma); the formation of the people of God (dipoiótes); and the celebration of the sacraments (katazhēma). Second, since Christ’s love extends beyond the boundaries of the Church, no member of God’s family “ought to go without the necessities of life.” (DCE, n. 25)

Even the hypothesis of a just society in the political sphere cannot eliminate the need for love or caritas as an indispensable responsibility of the Church. (DCE, n. 28) "Deus Caritas Est" states further that “[t]he Church cannot be exempted from practicing charity as an organized activity of believers” because the formation of charitable organizations stems from the Church’s responsibility, one that “corresponds to her nature.” Moreover, over and above the practice of organized charity, there will never arise “a situation where the charity of each individual Christian is unnecessary, because in addition to justice man needs, and always will need,” love. (DCE, n. 29)

In his “An American Strategic Theology” (1988), Father John A. Coleman summed up “a rich theological and ethical literature on the relation between love and justice.” The noted professor of religion and society noted that “while love can transform justice, it never does less than justice requires.”

Father Coleman stated without qualification: "Justice is an absolute prerequisite for love.

In addition, the international context of the social question teaching expands the horizon of the pursuit of justice: “Indeed, in our own time the commandment of love has pushed the Church, more insistently, into the arena of worldwide concern for justice and toward a new stress on structures of injustice.”

A brief survey of Church documents indicates the recognition of the distinction between charity and the broader responsibility of charity incorporated into earlier social teaching.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1889

For example, there are more than a dozen references to the teaching of the public ministry of Jesus as a manifestation of the reign of God in the works of the actions of Jesus. The exorcisms and miracles performed by Jesus reverse the evil and death that ensue to the human condition. They are signs of God’s saving love breaking into a world of darkness and sin. At a theological level, the exorcisms and miracles become signs of salvation.

The Gospel reading for the fifth Sunday of the year (B) narrates Jesus’ healing of Peter’s mother-in-law who was stricken with fever. (Mark 1:28-34) The story reads that Jesus “came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her; and she served them.”

Several exegetes draw a theological/symbolic meaning from the original Greek wording—“he lifted her up” (v.31a) and “she served them” (v.31b) “He lifted her up” (egeine) alludes to resurrection accounts that signal the triumph over the power of death. The connotation of “she served them” (diakoióte) very likely refers to a “ministry of service.”

In commenting on these verses, Mariamman F. George Montagne probes the theological depth that lies below the surface meaning of the text. On the supposition that Mark the Evangelist intends to depict the woman as a typical disciple, then the message of this episode would hint “that the Christian is one who has been healed by Jesus and empowered by that healing to serve the community of Jesus’ disciples.”

That theme will surface later in the ninth chapter of Mark where Jesus instructs the disciples that service will be the criterion for greatness in the reign of God. (Mark 9:33-35) Thus, the overall context of the Gospel bears a theological depth of meaning for understanding healing, specifically “its fruit in spontaneous service.”

As the Gospel of Mark unfolds, the disciples of Jesus, in turn, will gradually be healed of their spiritual blind- ness and will finally see that “the greatest in the kingdom of God is the servant of all.” (Mark 10:35-45)

Within this framework of interpretation, the healing of the woman by Jesus would stand with other more explicit New Testament passages that witness to the ministry of charitable service as integral to the mission of the apostolic Christian community.

"Deus Caritas Est" (“God is Love,” 2006), the inaugural encyclical of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI treats the theological depth of charitable service as a constituent element of the nature of the Church. The encyclical letter is divided into two major sections: 1) "The Unity of Love in Creation and Salvation History" and 2) "The Practice of Love by the Church as a 'Communion of Love.'"

Part I, a profound theological reflection on the unity of love in creation and salvation history takes its starting point from the prophetic vision found in 1 John 4:8—"God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” This text forms the “heart of the Christian faith.

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The compassionate Christ

The readings for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle B are: Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46; 1 Corinthians 16:31—11; and Mark 1:40-45.

Author Larry Davies, in his book, “Sowing Seeds of Faith in a World Gone Bonkers,” tells a story with which many of us can identify. He says the check out line at his local grocery store was long and he was in a hurry. Seeing another line nearby nearly empty, he walked over and stood behind the only customer still to make a purchase. A young twenty something woman was holding a small basket with 15 to 20 jars of baby food. There was nothing else in the basket: just baby food. “This is great,” he thought. “She’ll only be a minute and I can be on my way.”

The clerk took the woman’s check for seven dollars and forty three cents and efficiently typed in the numbers and slid it in the proper slot on the register. At this point the cash drawer was supposed to open and a receipt printed, but not this time. A light flashed: “See Manager.”

“Oh no!” thought Davies. “Not another delay. I’m in a hurry and don’t need the cash register to break down.”

When the manager arrived, however, he didn’t even look at the cash register, but instead picked up the check and began to talk to the customer. Davies could feel the muscles in his stomach tighten as the reality of what was happening struck him. The check for seven dollars and forty three cents was no good and the manager was quietly saying she could not buy her baby food here. The clerk quickly set the groceries aside, closed her account and began to ring up Davies’ purchase.

“She should manage her money better!” Davies tried to convince himself while looking over his probably alcoholic or a drug addict. But his flimsy excuses would not erase the picture in his mind of a grocery basket with jars of baby food.

Davies writes, “At this point, I want to finish the story by writing how I approached the manager and offered to fill the void, to make me clean.”

Gospel for this Sunday a man with leprosy came to Jesus and stood behind the only customer still to make a purchase. A young twenty something woman was holding a small basket with 15 to 20 jars of baby food. There was nothing else in the basket: just baby food. “This is great,” he thought. “She’ll only be a minute and I can be on my way.”

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The challenge of Eucharistic coherence

In his encyclical, “Ecclesia de Eucharistia,” Pope St. John Paul II invited Catholics to “rekindle” our sense of “Eucharistic amazement,” for “the Church draws her life from the Eucharist,” which “reconfigures the heart of the mystery of the Church” — Christ’s glorified, abiding presence with us, in and through his people, fulfilling his promise to remain with us “to the close of the age” (Matt 28:20. In the Eucharist, the Church meets her Lord “with unique intensity” Thus the celebration of the Eucharist is not just something the Church does; the celebration of the Eucharist singularly embodies what the Church is. That profound sense of Eucharistic amazement is why the Latin American bishops, in their 2007 Aparecida Document, insist on “Eucharistic coherence” in their Catholic communities. And according to those bishops (whose number included the many sons and daughters of bishops and their bishops’ sons and daughters in Christ) is at stake. And while the Catholic incoherence of Catholic public officials is not unique, it has distinctive consequences that undermine the Eucharistic coherence of the Church. The consequence by speaking in charity. Yet it must be spoken, and the consequences of obstinate, willful Catholic incoherence must be made clear. This is not politics. This is Christian solidarity and discipleship.

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

Is it time for the ‘Benedict Option’?

St. Benedict of Nursia was born around 480 A.D.; and just four years before Benedict was born the last Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed. The whole center of gravity shifted from Rome to Constantinople and Italy was abandoned to the barbarians. In the midst of this collapse came a man who didn’t, as some believe, leave the world behind, but realized that in the midst of all this chaos he must find a way to stay focused on what truly matters. That was Benedict. Out of that humble beginning formed a community of people living together seeking God and helping anyone that needed them. That community was a social experiment that welcomed barbarians, soldiers and sons of senators all in the same place, and it changed the course of Western civilization.

I think it’s fair to say that we also live in a time of turmoil. But as Catholics, as Christians, this is nothing new. We’ve lived for centuries dealing with hostility and persecution, our list of reasons, or excuses, to not be optimistic about the way things are going we have to examine that list and remove anything that puts us in a frame of mind that drags us down into the muck of the world instead of pushing us to live the way God intended us to live.

I don’t always practice what I preach. Sometimes, just to name a few, that I let get me down and discounted are the condition of our culture, too much technology and the hostile political climate. I often feel that we rely too much on the powers-that-be to fix issues that aren’t world instead of pushing us to live the way God intended us to live.

One of the blessings in my life is that I always seem to find the right book to read at the right time. As 2020 turned to 2021, I found myself reading a book called “The Benedict Option” by Rod Dreher. The subtitle is “A strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation.”

In the book, Mr. Dreher laments that the Church ought (Continued on page 13)
Bill would block taxpayer funding of abortion, make Hyde Amendment permanent

Catholic News Service
WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Chris Smith, R-New Jersey, has introduced a bill to prohibit use of federal taxpayer dollars to fund abortions.

H.R. 18 — the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion and Abortion Insurance Full Disclosure Act of 2021 — would make the long-standing Hyde Amendment permanent and keep in place similar provisions to ensure no federal dollars are used to pay for abortion and health plans that include abortion.

“Whenever federal taxpayer dollars are not available to help effectuate the demise of unborn babies, lives are saved,” said Smith, a Catholic, who is co-chair of the Congressional Pro-life Caucus. “Abortion violence must be replaced with compassion and empathy for women and for defenseless unborn baby boys and girls.”

Smith’s bill, which was introduced Feb. 5 and has over 130 co-sponsors, also would permanently prevent the federal government from funding abortions; codify the Smith Amendment, which prohibits federal-employee health care plans from funding abortion; prohibit federal funding of abortion in several other federal programs throughout government agencies; and ensure that the Affordable Care Act conforms with the Hyde Amendment.

The Hyde Amendment, first enacted nearly 45 years ago, outlaws federal tax dollars from directly funding abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the woman would be endangered.

Congress must reauthorize the Hyde Amendment annually as an attachment to the appropriations bill for the Department of Health and Human Services. It also restricts abortion funding under the Indian Health Service, Medicare and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

President Joe Biden, also a Catholic, has said he wants to see an end to Hyde. He was restricted abortion funding under the Indian Health Service, Medicare and the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

President Joe Biden, also a Catholic, has said he wants to see an end to Hyde. He was a longtime supporter of the amendment, but in June 2019 during a Democratic campaign fundraiser in Atlanta, he said he now is against it in light of Republican-led efforts in some states to see laws passed to restrict abortion.

Among the executive orders he has signed since his Jan. 20 inauguration was one rescinding the so-called “Mexico City policy” that blocked U.S. funding for non-governmental organizations that perform or actively promote abortion as a form of family planning in other nations.

During his first days in office as president, Biden also signed an executive order lifting the Trump administration’s enforcement of a rule in the Title X Family Planning Program that banned taxpayer funds from being used to promote or provide abortion as family planning.

In introducing the No Taxpayer Funding for Abortion measure, Smith cited polling that "consistently shows a majority of Americans oppose taxpayer funding of abortion — nearly six in 10.”

He cited key findings of a new Knights of Columbus/Marist Poll released Jan. 27: A majority of Americans (58 percent) oppose using taxpayer money to fund abortions within the United States. The breakdown among respondents’ party affiliation shows 61 percent of Democrats oppose this use of taxpayer money, as do 81 percent of Republicans and 65 percent of independents.

— More than three quarters of Americans (79 percent), including a majority who identify as “pro-choice,” want significant restrictions on abortion.

— 77 percent of those polled either "oppose" or "strongly oppose" using tax dollars to support international abortion (This was up from 75 percent who answered similarly each of the past two years.) The breakdown among respondents’ party affiliation shows 55 percent of Democrats feel this way, as do 85 percent of Republicans and 65 percent of independents.

Christianity without liturgy is absent of Christ, pope says

Juno Arocho Esteves
Catholic News Service
VATICAN CITY — The liturgy is not a spectacle to be observed but a prayerful event where Christians encounter Christ’s presence in their lives, Pope Francis said.

Throughout the Catholic Church’s long history, people have been tempted to practice a private or “intimist Christianity” that failed to recognize the importance of the liturgy in spiritual life, the pope said Feb. 3 during his weekly general audience.

However, “I would dare say that Christianity without liturgy is a Christianity without Christ,” he said.

Continuing his series of talks on prayer, the pope reflected on the significance of the liturgy in Christian life.

While there are certain forms of spirituality in the Catholic Church “that have failed to adequately integrate” the liturgy, the pope noted that “much has been achieved in recent decades,” particularly thanks to the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, “Sacrosanctum Concilium.”

The document, he said, “comprehensively and organically reaffirms the importance of the divine liturgy for the life of Christians because in the liturgy men and women can truly encounter Christ who is ‘not an idea or sentiment, but a living person.’

Along with sacred Scripture and the sacraments, the liturgy ‘may not be dispensed with because in Jesus Christ, it became a way of salvation.’

‘Therefore, there is no Christian spirituality that is not rooted in the celebration of the holy mysteries,’” the pope said.

The Mass or Divine Liturgy, he continued, is the spiritual act at the heart of “the whole Christian experience” because Jesus makes himself present and “gives himself to his faithful.”

‘Every time we celebrate a baptism, or consecrate the bread and wine in the Eucharist, or anoint the body of a sick person with holy oil, Christ is here,'” the pope said.

‘He is present just as he was when he healed the weak limbs of a sick person or when, at the Last Supper, he delivered his testament for the salvation of the world.’

Christians who go to Mass, he added, are not “spectators of something that slips away without our involvement” but instead are active participants who celebrate it “through the diversity of gifts and ministries.”

Christians are called to transform their lives into an act of worshipping God, Pope Francis said, “but this cannot happen without prayer, especially liturgical prayer.”

‘This thought can help all of us: When I go to Sunday Mass, I go to pray in community, I go to pray with Christ who is present,’ he added, departing from his prepared remarks. ‘When we go to a baptism, Christ is there present. (You may say), ‘But Father, this is an idea, a figure of speech.’ No, Christ is present! In the liturgy you pray with Christ who is next to you.”

St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky has witnessed God’s glory through the good works of the Northern Kentucky community.

Your generosity has provided hope for a promising future for those experiencing crisis during this unprecedented time. Together, we have been able to help thousands in need remain safely in their homes in the past year.

Your support ensures that those suffering are able to make ends meet and care for their families as they work toward a better tomorrow.

Thank you for being a neighbor we can count on.
Education Opportunity Accounts — Fact vs. Myth

Provided by the Catholic Conference of Kentucky

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) follows bills within the Kentucky General Assembly that are of interest to Kentucky’s four Catholic bishops, updating the faithful on each bill’s progress and inviting the faithful to engage with legislators through the legislative session. This session, school choice legislation is up for consideration once again in House Bill 140, filed by Rep. Chad McCoy and Senate Bill 25, filed by Sen. Ralph Alvarado. The bills would create an Education Opportunity Account program, which would provide financial assistance to families for K-12 educational expenses. This includes tuition at Catholic and other non-public schools, but would also provide funds for educational supplies, tutoring, and other non-traditional educational expenses.

Below, provided by the CCK, are myths surrounding Education Opportunity Accounts and responses based in fact as to why they will benefit Kentuckians.

MYTH: Kentucky doesn’t need school choice.
FACT: Legislators are elected by the voters of Kentucky and the voters of Kentucky are clear on this issue — they want school choice. A rural only poll shows 77 percent of likely voters support educational choice and 57 percent of likely rural voters support both public schools and educational choice. A statewide poll shows that 65 percent of likely voters support educational choice: 69 percent Independents, 56 percent Democrats and 67 percent Republicans.

MYTH: Education Opportunity Accounts (EOAs) are a backdoor way to use tax dollars to support nonpublic schools.
FACT: EOAs are designed to let parents choose the support their child needs with the support of private donations. They apply to rural, urban and suburban students and can be customized to fit a student’s needs, including public and nonpublic schools and a variety of other educational support.

MYTH: EOAs will hurt students at public schools.
FACT: Based on evidence from other states, school choice programs will help, not hurt, Kentucky’s most important stakeholders in education — students. Of the 26 studies that examine the competitive effects of school choice programs on public schools, 24 found positive effects, meaning no negative effect and one found some negative effects for some kids.

MYTH: Only non-public school students can benefit from an EOA.
FACT: ALL Kentucky students who demonstrate financial need are eligible for EOAs, that’s more than 425,000 students in public schools, non-public schools, non-traditional schools, etc.

MYTH: Public school teachers oppose EOAs.
FACT: EdChoice Kentucky’s 2020 poll found that 50 percent of public school teachers support EOAs when given an unbiased description of the program, with only 32 percent opposed.

MYTH: EOAs cost billions of dollars over 20 years.
FACT: The return on investment cannot be understated. If more students can receive an education that works for them, the EOA cost will benefit Kentucky for generations to come. Additionally, growth projections that show the program growing to nearly $2 billion over 20 years are completely unrealistic. EOA legislation begins with a $55 million limit. That limit would only grow in future years if there are donors who sustain it. This growth is important because it will help the program keep up with the demand that has been seen in other states.

Even still, in Florida, the tax credit program has grown to just under $800 million in 20 years. Considering that Florida has five times the population of Kentucky it is plausible that Kentucky’s program would more than double the size of Florida’s program during that same period of time.

Between state, local and federal dollars, Kentucky’s public schools receive approximately $8 billion per year. For a fraction of that amount, Kentucky could dramatically improve the lives of students by giving them more educational opportunity.

State audits and independent research has also confirmed that these programs save taxpayer money.

MYTH: EOAs violate Kentucky’s constitution on use of funds for non-public schools.
FACT: EOAs are constitutional in Kentucky as they are funded by private donations from businesses and individuals and only incentivized by the Commonwealth. 19 other states have similar programs and the courts have held that they are constitutional. EOAs are not vouchers which rely on taxpayer dollars.

Born-alive infant protection act passes and becomes Ky. law; faithful asked to contact legislators to support Ky. constitutional right to life

Allegra Thatcher
Assistant Editor

Senate Bill 9, “protection of born-alive infants and declaring an emergency,” passed the Kentucky General Assembly and became state law Jan. 22. The bill, sponsored by Sen. Whitney Westerfield, sped its way through to pass the Senate Jan. 7 and the House Jan. 9. It was filed with the Secretary of State and made law without Governor Andy Beshear’s signature Jan. 22.

The bill clarifies the standard of care for an infant who was born alive as the result of an intended abortion. It ensures that the same standard of care that would be provided under any other circumstances must be provided after a failed abortion as well — and it creates a cause of action, should that not be done, in the form of a punitive measure.

The bill reads: “Without proper legal protection, newly born infants who survive attempted abortions may be denied appropriate medical care and medical care and treatment and may be left to die.”

SB9 passed both the House and the Senate last year, but was vetoed by Governor Andy Beshear on the last day of the session. Because the session was over, there was no opportunity to override the veto and the legislation died.

Jason Hall, executive director, Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK), explained that the bill was vetoed last year mostly because it was combined with what is now House Bill 2 in the current session, which also dealt with giving the Attorney General enforcement authority. This time, chambers moved much more quickly and passed both of those bills separately and Governor Beshear did not veto SB9. He did veto HB2, which was sent back and overridden by the House and Senate.

“Last year, because of the way it was rushed through at the very end, and combined with other things that were controversial, it made it impossible to respond to that veto,” said Mr. Hall. “But we’re very glad that this time those bills were separated, because there are different reasons. The governor’s prerogative to keep as much of his authority as he wants is a different issue than the legal protection for a born-alive infant. So we’re grateful to the legislature for moving quickly and to the governor for seeing the difference and not vetoing SB9.”

Mr. Hall said the CCK is very pleased with the passing of SB9. “The extent of its impact remains to be seen, but I think it’s very important that we have in the law clarity on this — that a child outside the womb is definitely entitled to medical care, regardless of how the child got there,” he said.

SB9 concludes: “Whereas the Commonwealth of Kentucky has a paramount interest in protecting all human life from the moment of conception to natural death, to the extent of its impact remains to be seen, but I think it’s very important that we have in the law clarity on this — that a child outside the womb is definitely entitled to medical care, regardless of how the child got there,” he said.

The bill clarifies that there is no right to an abortion in the state constitution.

“We’ve had so many pro-life victories in terms of pro-life legislation in the last five or six years, that making sure that the state courts do not strike those down is of critical importance,” he said. “Putting that on the ballot in the next election is a top goal of ours right now.”

Voters can participate in this work, said Mr. Hall, by contacting legislators to make them understand the priority of HB9. He believes the votes are there, and it’s simply a question of prioritization within the chambers.

“We need to demonstrate that there’s popular support for it — that if it’s on the ballot, we’ll have the support and the voters will approve it,” he said.
Fostering the faith in and out of the classroom

Alhaja Thutcher

Anasatia Fields

With a simple theme, “Be Concerned” was the focus of the year in the classroom, as schools in the Diocese of Covington have proven their resiliency in making sacramental preparation and faith formation a priority. Their goal is, as always, to bring students to Christ. Unsurprisingly, teachers have found many ways to do so — and they began at home.

“I’ve been more aware of the schools mission this year than ever,” said Meg McGuire, principal at Mary Queen of Heaven School, Erlanger. “In our mission we need to work in close partnership with parents to help teach the faith to our students. I think more than ever, the parents have been directly involved in the curriculum, keeping an eye on what instruction is happening.”

Mr. Patti said especially in preparation for the sacraments, teachers have worked more directly with parents to make sure children are properly educated to receive them.

“Our sacramental preparation, in particular for First Reconciliation, we had to modify due to the first wave of the pandemic last year. We are planning to make this a regular time for the students (during the January event) during the month of December. Our second grade teacher did an excellent job of sharing information with the families, making sure that they could see the instruction at home along with their lessons that were delivered remotely. It actually brought a greater connection to our parents, pulling them into the instruction more than they have done in the past, which was a positive.”

First Communion at Mary Queen of Heaven will take place in May and Confirmation will be in April. Additionally fostering the prayer life of the students has not changed because of COVID-19 restrictions. Students still pray the rosary and when the weather permits, teachers will often take their students on rosary walks during Friday afternoons — a new habit that might be here to stay.

“It’s a culture of continuous adjustment and change, and not allowing stress to be born on our mission and the work of the Church,” said Bob Wiesenfeld, principal at Covington Catholic High School. “That’s why our mission is to maintain the sacramental process in the school environment as well.

“More than ever, our country and the entire world needs that faith formation,” he said. “We’re encouraging that our students and our parents to get back to Mass (when it’s safe), we’d love to see that… I think it’s very important… any time they have the opportunity to receive the Eucharist… it’s very good for their spiritual well-being, not just on that particular day but the week and the weeks to come. It’s part of their Catholic faith foundation. It’s the primary purpose of our school.”

At Covington Catholic, all-school masses are split up between upper and lowerclassmen, spread out in the gymnasium. First Friday masses are held at the class level, with no students or parent permitted. Father Michael Babich, pastor at Covington Catholic, explained that the principle of a “Blessed Sacrament in the hands of Christ” is the foundation for the instruction. He shared that students will receive a blessed rosary beads twice a week during lunch periods, and adoration services are held on the chapel. Students also pray in the rosary on Tuesday and Friday mornings.

“We’re continuing to provide sacraments as best we can,” said Father Babich, “ministering to the students, faculty and staff… I find this longer for the Lord, even before the pandemic… and I’m inspired by their trust and faith in the Lord.”

Kendra McGuire, superintendent, Catholic Schools, said there’s always a positive side to find during the challenging time for faith formation. “One of the things that has happened is that we’ve forced to do things differently but that some of the things we’ve done differently we liked,” she said. “So yes there, we could do that in future years.”

Mr. McGuire has confidence that the schools will continue to find creative ways to spread the faith. Even when in-person instruction ceased for the month of December, she said teachers made the most of the time, and she looks forward to the new changes that will continue to do so. “They’ve been very creative this year.”

“There’s been a lot of talk about what we’re doing to engage the students this year… trying to keep them connected while coming in and out of quarantine,” Ms. McGuire said. “During class changes, one of the schools is even playing music. So it’s just doing little things. It’s been neat to see what they do to keep the kids excited even though it’s not a completely normal year.”

Eucharist source and summit of Catholic school education

Through the lens of newly beatified Blessed Carlo Acutis, parishioners and students at St. Henry Parish and School, Erlanger, will have the opportunity to delve deeper into the mysteries of the Eucharist. Blessed Carlo Acutis was an Italian teenager who died of leukemia in 2006 at the age of 15. Moved by his great love for the Eucharist, Carlo researched many of the Eucharistic miracles in the world, and embraced the website to print large posters for individual Eucharistic miracles and have placed them in pews for prayer and meditation. The display went up just in time for Catholic Schools Week in the Diocese of Covington.

Above, students from St. Henry School, Erlanger, took time to read and pray with the Eucharistic Miracle posters during their prayer time in the school day. Parishioners can pray with the poster before or after Mass, or any time the church is open.

Foster in person, foster at heart

Students learn to be hands of Christ, foster in person, foster at heart. The core of Catholic school education is diocesan Catholic schools. During Catholic Schools Week, students from St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs, put their service into action by collecting gloves and pin packaged desserts for the guests at Parish Kitchen.

“Be Concerned” about food collection

One of the highlights of Catholic schools is service. In preparation for Catholic Schools Week, St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs, hosted a food collection to end hunger by collecting canned food for the annual “Be Concerned” food drive. The school has “Be Concerned” food collection bins in their main lobby and small boxes in the classrooms.

“I think it’s very important to teach the students to help others,” said Meg McGuire, principal at Mary Queen of Heaven School, Erlanger. “In our mission we speak to our students that they could aid in the instruction at home.”

Students learn to be hands of Christ

St. Pius X School, Erlanger, celebrated the foundational pillar of Catholic school education. During Catholic Schools Week, students from St. Pius X School, Erlanger, celebrated Catholic Schools Week with hat and noodle day. Teachers and students keep spirits high to further excellence by embracing fun costumes.

“There are alternatives to Catholic Schools but there are no substitutes.” — Bishop Poya

Transmitting the faith through a Eucharistic procession

St. Pius X School, Erlanger, celebrated the foundational pillar of Catholic school education, “Faith,” with a Eucharistic procession. Students built in prayer before the presence of Jesus in their classroom at Father Billy Klisnak, pastor, brought the Blessed Sacrament to each classroom, and blessed the students. It reminded the students of the reason for their studies — the transmitting of faith to them and through them out into the world.

“Learning gratitude

One of the hallmarks of Catholic schools is service. In preparation for Catholic Schools Week, St. Anthony School, Taylors Mill, founded a Service Club that will help students learn how to be of service to others. Students still pray the rosary and when the rosary on Tuesday and Friday mornings. Additionally, fostering the prayer life of the students has not changed because of COVID-19 restrictions. Students still pray the rosary and when the weather permits, teachers will often take their students on rosary walks during Friday afternoons — a new habit that might be here to stay.
Newsworthy

Thomas More University student Grace Brogan, a junior political science and law major from Cincinnati, has been awarded the English-Speaking Union (ESU) Scholarship presented by the English-Speaking Union Kentucky Branch. Ms. Brogan is set to study history, politics, and society at the University of Oxford in England this upcoming summer.

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption will be broadcast on Sunday, 5:45 p.m. on station Mt TV WLWT, on channels: over air 5-2, Spectrum 188 in Kentucky and Cincinnati Bell 23 or 281.

St. Henry District High School’s “Virtual Cru BID & Bash,” Feb. 13, 7 p.m. A fun filled evening full of auction items and prizes including a group tour of Maker’s Mark Distillery; a PlayStation 5, the popular lottery ticket basket, various travel packages and more. Registration and early bidding open Feb. 8. For more information, visit shdhs.org or contact the Advancement Office at 859-625-0255.

Marriage Encounter Experience, Feb. 19-21, on Zoom. Apply online or contact Andy and Joanna Pilas at (857) 986-6196 or ehsaring.org for more information.

Bible study: The Book of Job with Father Timothy Schehr, March 9, 16 and April 6. Virtual stream from Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium through Google Meet. Cost for the study is $35. Register at covdio.org/catechesis-and-evangelization/. Sponsored by the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization.

Catechist certification and Adult Faith Formation courses, Short instruction time online and independent study assignment. Cost is $35 per course. Open to teachers, parish catechists, deaconate aspirants and any adult who would like to expand their knowledge of the Catholic faith. Course details and online registration available at covdio.org/catechesis-and-evangelization/.

Holy Cross District High School Mulch and Pine Straw Sale. Three kinds of mulch in 2 cubic foot bags for $4.25 per bag and pine straw for $8 per bale. All prices include free delivery and sales tax. HCHS students will deliver mulch to local businesses or rental properties anywhere in Kenton, Boone and Campbell Counties starting April 15 and continuing for $4.25 per bag and pine straw for $8 per bale. All Straw Sale.

Holy Cross Parish, Ft. Thomas, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-7 p.m. Drive-thru and walk-up only.

St. Augustine Parish, Augusta, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 5-7 p.m. Carry-out only.

St. Bernard Parish, Dayton, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 5-7 p.m. Drive-thru only.

St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-7 p.m. Drive-thru and walk-up only.

St. Cecilia Parish, Independence, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 5, 5-8 p.m. Drive-thru only.

St. Henry Parish, Erlanger, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-7 p.m. Drive-thru only.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-7 p.m. Drive-thru only.

St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton, March 19, 4:30 p.m. Carry-out and drive-thru only.

St. Joseph Academy, Walton, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-8 p.m. Drive-thru only.

St. Augustine Parish, Erlanger, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4-8 p.m. Drive-thru and online ordering with curbside pickup.

St. Mary Parish, Alexandria, Feb. 19, 26 and March 5, 4-7:30 p.m. Online orders and carryout only.

Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4-8 p.m. Drive-thru only.

St. Paul Parish, Florence, Feb. 12, 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Carry-out only: drive thru, order online or call ahead.

St. Timothy Parish, Union, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-8 p.m. Drive-thru only.

All About Penguins

Kindergarten students at Mary, Queen of Heaven School, Erlanger, recently learned all about penguins. They learned about various species, their habitats, their diets and their behavior. To sum up their learning, each student created a penguin book.

Fish fries in the Diocese of Covington

Like everything else this year, fish fries are going to be different. In order to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, all parish fish fries must be drive-thru or carryout only. There will be NO dine-in fish fries. Workers and guests will need to follow the safety protocols of wearing a mask and practicing safe social distancing of at least six feet apart. For the health and safety of all, everyone is encouraged to make patience and charity a part of their Lenten practices while waiting for your order.

St. Augustine Parish, Augusta, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 5-7 p.m. Carry-out only.

St. Bernard Parish, Dayton, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 5-7 p.m. Drive-thru only.

St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-7 p.m. Drive-thru and walk-up only.

St. Cecilia Parish, Independence, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, April 5, 5-8 p.m. Drive-thru only.

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St. Timothy Parish, Union, Feb. 19, 26, March 5, 12, 19, 26, 4:30-8 p.m. Drive-thru only.

After 11 months of ‘giving up,’ what is there left to give up this Lent?

WASHINGTON — Since childhood, the typical U.S. Catholic’s response to Lent is giving up, as in “What are you giving up for Lent?” If you haven’t been keeping track, Catholics in the United States and worldwide — just about everyone, really — have been giving up a lot since the coronavirus pandemic struck 11 months ago, with no clearly defined end in sight. You would need the fingers on both hands to name some of the things that have been lost, not to mention nearly a half-million lives lost in the U.S. alone. So, given all that, how should a Catholic approach Lent this year? “Maybe this Lent isn’t the year to give up something, because we’re already doing it involuntarily,” said Marie Dennis,esan advisor to the secretary general of Pax Christi International. “It’s time, Dennis said, to dig deeper and to think more deeply.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is offering online resources for Lent 2021 with the theme “Lent 2021: Beginning to Pray,” online at http://mother-of-god.org/churchcount/. Cost $0.

New St. Vincent de Paul facility in Campbell County

Allegre Thatcher
Assistant Editor

Residents of Campbell County are set to have even greater resources available soon. The St. Vincent de Paul Society of Northern Kentucky is opening a new facility at 3970-3972 Alexandria Pike in Cold Spring, featuring a food pantry and thrift store.

The new location will make resources for neighbors in need, and anyone looking for a great deal or environmentally-friendly way to purchase goods, more easily accessible. Centrally located in the county the store will offer gently used clothing, household goods and furniture. The store will also accept donations. All purchases at the store help support St. Vincent de Paul programs.

According to Karen Zengel, executive director, the facility is part of a larger plan for their services Northern Kentucky “Our whole objective is to be more accessible for those we serve in Campbell County,” she said. “People don’t have to travel far to be able to receive the support that we provide for them.”

The idea of opening a Campbell County location has been in the strategic plan for the last two years, but it took time to get in a position to do so, then actually look for the ideal location. This specific location has been in the works since spring 2020.

“This location is unique in that it is centrally located in Campbell County said Ms. Zengel. “Our previous location was in Newport, and that space was not quite as large as the space we have the opportunity to occupy now, so it wasn’t able to have as much inventory with this space, it’s right on the bus line and it’s 10,000 square feet — to offer a large inventory of choice and variety for anyone who would like to shop with us.”

Ms. Zengel will be hiring a new team to run the stores, with a new food pantry coordinator specific to the location and a retail team for the thrift store.

The food pantry will open March 1 and will be open Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. and Wednesday evenings 4-6 p.m. The thrift store is set to open mid-April.

“The key for us is accessibility, and we are so excited and so grateful to the city of Cold Spring so that we can continue to serve in the most convenient way possible for those who are in need,” said Ms. Zengel.

The new St. Vincent de Paul facility, located in Campbell County on Alexandria Pike, will open its food pantry March 1 to the public. The thrift store is set to open mid-April. It will help meet the goal of accessibility to basic necessities for the residents of Campbell County.
Sisters grateful for support (Continued from page 3)

we were vaccinated,” Sister Aileen said, although she is puzzled as to how. The monastery has not been receiving visitors, but for now, the sisters are praying for everyone.

“We’re doing great,” she said, “We can’t wait to see people and the sisters have not been making visits since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.

Healthcare workers with St. Elizabeth Healthcare’s Senior Services worked with the community and to have all of the sisters tested for the virus. All but seven sisters tested positive. Those seven sisters remain symptom and virus free.

The response to help from St. Elizabeth Healthcare, friends and neighboring religious communities has been “heartwarming.”

“They have just been really coming out the woodwork being very helpful,” Sister Aileen said, noting that at this time they have a good supply of food — prayers are always welcome and appreciated.

Divine Providence Sister Kay Kramer, a nurse practitioner, and Notre Dame Sister Shauna Bankemper have visited the monastery, helping with the sisters care.

“It’s been lovely,” said Sister Aileen. “There’s definitely been intercommunity bonding and love sharing.”

At St. Joseph Heights, Park Hills, the Sisters of Notre Dame have not had a widespread outbreak of COVID-19 but they have had two incidents of isolated cases, which has required the entire community to quarantine.

Last August, an employee had a case of COVID-19 in the household. As a precaution, the entire community was tested and four of the Notre Dame were positive for the virus. Two of these four sisters, who were in declining health before contracting the virus, died. A third sister recovered but days later suffered a heart attack and died at the hospital.

“If any day that was an after effect of the COVID,” said Notre Dame Sister Dennise Wagenlander.

Then, in mid-January, a sister began feeling ill. Again, all of the sisters were tested and two additional sisters were positive. The entire community began a 14-day quarantine, which recently ended. All sisters have recovered and no additional positive cases have emerged.

“We have an excellent nursing staff — an excellent director of nursing and assistant director of nursing — they exercise excellent care of us,” said Sister Dennise, also noting that the sisters follow the protocols of wearing a mask and keeping distanced.

Sister Dennise said they are looking forward to the day when they can receive visitors, but for now, the sisters are praying for everyone.

“We’re doing great,” she said, “We can’t wait to see people but you know that’s not going to happen just like that — we’re going to take it gradually. As much as we would love to see everyone, we’re going to be very cautious.”

In Covington, the Franciscan Daughters of Mary had their first positive case of COVID-19 within the community on January 7. Eventually all six of the sisters tested positive for COVID-19. The Rose Garden Home Mission, which the sisters operate, suspended operations until Jan. 26 — which all of the sisters had recovered and could safely resume ministry.

“We have a great medical family here and they really helped,” Mother Seraphina said with gratitude, noting that none of the sisters developed any serious symptoms that required hospitalization. Not being able to minister to the people at the mission was most distressing, Mother Seraphina Quinlan said.

“Our guests depend on us,” she said.

Most of the guests have very limited income, many below the poverty level, and rely on the Mission to supplement government assistance. At the Mission guests receive food, clothing, diapers, paper products and other household items.

“When we started up again, one lady said that she had just run out of all of her food — she had nothing, absolutely nothing. I don’t know if many of us know what it’s like to have to ration what you eat everyday just to make sure that it’ll stretch,” she said.

In hindsight, Mother Seraphina can see God’s hand in the timing of everything.

“In God’s Providence he allowed us to get sick right after everybody got their stimulus checks, so people had more money to work,” she said. “I didn’t see this at first, but he took care of everyone.”

Candiates for permanent diaconate (Continued from page 3)

received: “In performing your ministry, bear in mind that as you share the one bread with your brothers and sisters, so you form one body with them, show a sincere love for Christ’s Mystical Body; God’s holy people, especially the weak and the sick. Be obedient to the commandment which the Lord gave to his apostles at the Last Supper: Love one another as I have loved you.”

Bishop Foys presented each candidate with a chalice containing bread. As each candidate knelt, clasping the chalice Bishop Foys said, “Take this vessel with bread for the celebration of the Eucharist. Make your life worthy of your service at the table of the Lord and of his Church.”

The ministry of acolyte, Bishop Foys shared, was decreed by Pope St. Paul VI in 1973 for lay ministers such as those preparing for the permanent diaconate as well as its traditional office as a step toward ordination to the priesthood. The acolyte assists bishops, priests and deacons at the altar, performing the ministry of deacon when the deacon isn’t present. He also serves as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion.

Bishop Foys praised the great service permanent deacons perform for the Diocese of Covington, calling them “indispensable.” He asked the faithful, as beneficiaries of their ministry, to pray for them, “that the Lord will reward them for responding to his call.”

In his homily, he reflected on the story of Job and his inexhaustible faith, suggesting that everyone look to Job during times of suffering as an example of faith and love of God.

“Job loves everything,” he said. “He’s brought down as low as anyone could possibly be brought down. (And yet) He refuses to curse God.”

He reflected on how many people have suffered in the last 11 months due to the pandemic “turning life upside down,” but suggested that it has been an opportunity for growth in faith. “So we can say with Job. I have been assigned months of misery and troubled night have been allotted to me. ... My days come to an end without hope. I shall never see happiness again. We can feel that way. Job felt that way. But what saved him? His faith. His faith in God, even though his friends and his wife pushed him to strike out at God.”

It was Job’s love of God and his relationship with God that enabled him to suffer without turning on God, said Bishop Foys. That should also be our response when faced with difficulties. He alluded to the Sunday Gospel, in which Jesus goes alone to pray in the early morning after a long and hard day.

“Jesus can only face our own solve every problem. We need the Lord,” he said. “So in stressful times, in difficult times when we can’t find the answers, we do what we should be doing every day anyway: we seek out the Lord. Jesus teaches us how to live. If it was good enough for him, to go and seek the Father in prayer, how important is that for us? When we take things to the Lord, and when we listen, we will be amazed what the Lord will speak to us in our hearts.”

Staying connected to the Lord is crucial, Bishop Foys said. “Take a lesson from Job and from Jesus to never let our faith in God waver; no matter what. Pray, spend time with him. And listen.”

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ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, KY is seeking qualified candidates for the position of Assistant Superintendent of Catholic Schools. The Assistant Superintendent assists the Superintendent in carrying out the primary Diocesan educational mission of transmitting the Catholic faith through quality Catholic education. The Assistant Superintendent's role is broad, multi-dimensional, and multi-layered, including such responsibilities as acting as a representative of the Bishop of Covington and being an advocate for Catholic schools in the Diocese; monitoring the quality of the academic programs in schools; maintaining frequent and positive communications with Pastors, principals, and boards (where appropriate) collecting and aggregating specific statistical data for each school; managing Diocese-wide testing at the elementary school level, overseeing, monitoring, and supporting Diocesan professional development activities; and coordinating the Diocesan response to data requests by state and federal agencies. The Assistant Superintendent also assists with the educational administration of the Alliance for Catholic Urban Education (ACUE) schools. 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 school administrative leadership. Interested individuals should submit a letter of interest along with a comprehensive resume or C-V, recent Baptismal certificate and grades pre-K through 8. Candidates should submit a letter of interest along with a comprehensive resume or C-V, recent Baptismal certificate and a list of at least five professional references to Stephen Koplyay at skoplyay@covdio.org, 859/392-1589, or least five professional references to indicating sacramental preparation, and a list of at least five professional references to

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NOVENA TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN

O, most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel, Fruit of the Vine, splendid of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this my necessity. O, Star of the Sea, help me and show herein you are my mother. O, Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succor me in my necessity (make your request). There are none that can withstand your power. O, Mary pray for us who have recourse to Thee (three times). Holy Mary, I place this cause in your hands (three times). Amen. M J B.

NOVENA TO SAINT ANTHONY FOR A SICK CHILD

St. Anthony, your-lose for the Infant Jesus in-spired Him to reward you by seeing and holding Him in your arms. Help us to see and love Jesus in all the poor and suffering children in the world, particularly (name child) whom is afflicted with (name condition). Intercede for (name the child) asking our compassionate Lord Jesus to heal him/her so that he/she may grow to love the Lord and His servant, St. Anthony. Guard this life that God has created. Let your gentle hand, like that of a skilled physician, rest lovingly upon this afflicted child that he/she may be immediately restored to health. Amen. R V B.

NOVENA TO THE SACRED HEART

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus pray for us. St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us. St. Jude, help of the hope less, pray for us. Say this prayer 9 times a day. By the 8th day your prayers will be answered. Say it for 9 days. Thank you St. Jude. Amen. B W.

NOVENA TO THE SACRED HEART

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Catholic Schools Week Mass (Continued from page 2)

sized faith as the primary foundation for education. “This week was established as a time to promote Catholic schools, but also, and maybe more importantly, to celebrate Catholic schools and what Catholic schools mean to us — to us as the Church, but also to the wider community,” he said.

“Catholic schools were founded in this country for the basic purpose of transmitting the faith; that’s something that we can never lose sight of. Number one, always number one, is faith.”

He addressed the students watching from their classrooms with a call for open hearts so that the faith can take root. “Faith is the primary purpose for our schools. All those watching who are sitting in a classroom now, that is what the primary purpose of your being there is, to transmit the faith to you, so that you will transmit that faith to your family and their family and their family”.

The Gospel reading, Bishop Foys said, focused on the importance of faith and its transformative effect. Jesus, he said, had been to many cities, performing many miracles and attracting many followers. When he came back to his hometown, he was amazed by the lack of faith the people there had.

“He went home and they had no faith in him. Their faith was so weak, or nonexistent, that Jesus could not even work any miracles there. Faith is so important. Parents, administrators, faculty staff and students need to be open to the faith so that it can take root and produce excellence — which leads to service.”


To the students, Bishop Foys said, “Your parents, because they love you, want to impart the faith to you. You are the future; you are also the present. Your role in the present is to be open to the faith, the faith that you heard about first of all by the example of others. … You will be able to be the example, to be that witness to others by sharing what you learn, by sharing your faith, by your excellence and your service.”

The pandemic, Bishop Foys said, has required many changes this school year. Teachers and students have had to teach and learn not only in the classroom but also remotely via live stream. Parents have had to make the additional sacrifice of assisting their child during times of remote learning, while monitoring their health and many endure quarantines to keep the school community and each other safe and healthy. But, through it all, the mission and ministry of Catholic schools has not changed.

“Our Catholic schools have not changed because the faith has not changed,” Bishop Foys said. “If we are rooted in the faith, the crisis such as this will make us even stronger in the faith because they will bring us together. It is only our family, what can sustain us in any crisis. It is in looking to the Lord and holding onto our faith that we can make a difference; that we can accept whatever comes.”

“The faith,” Bishop Foys said, “is what sustains us. The faith is what keeps us safe. The faith is what gives us hope.”

Bishop Foys ended his homily in gratitude for all those whose sacrifices have allowed Catholic education a reality for families — benefactors, teachers, staff and administrators — offering a special word of thanks to Kendra McGuire, superintendnet, Catholic Schools, for her leadership during this unprecedented time.

“Your leadership, especially during this pandemic, has been more than exemplary. It has been remarkable,” he said.

To the parents, he offered profound gratitude and admiration for providing their children “the great gift” of a Catholic school education and encouraged students to appreciate that gift.

“Thank you for loving your sons and daughters enough to provide them with a Catholic school education. Thank you for sharing your faith, for passing it on to the next generation.”

“Honestly, through it all, the faith is what will sustain us as a school, and use this time profitably … because what you learn now will sustain you the rest of your life. Hold on especially to the faith — trust in the Lord.”

The Benedict Option (Continued from page 5)

The Benedict Option to be a powerful counterforce to the radical individualism and secularism of modernity and yet it is often finds itself ineffective in combating the forces of cultural decline. The main argument of the book is that serious Christians need to do the same thing that St. Benedict did in the sixth century. No, not to go live in a monastery — at least not exactly.

“Think about it this way: Benedict lived in unprecedented dark times but he was focused, organized and creative. He wasn’t scared to live out the passion of the Church, without compromise, no matter what it cost. He read the signs of the times, stayed focused on the Lord and converted people by the way he lived. Everything came down to prayer, work and community.”

Mr. Dreher writes, “We have to develop creative, communal solutions to help us hold onto our faith and our values in a world growing ever more hostile to them. We have to choose to make a decisive leap into a truly countercultural faith — which leads to a decadence that opens the path to new, barbaric civilizations.”

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Perhaps the West is doomed to fall again, but we know that God is always in charge and that we are never completely helpless. If you feel overly concerned, I recommend reading “The Benedict Option.” The book offers a critique of modern culture but also tells stories of Christians today who are pioneering creative ways to live out the faith joyfully and counter-culturally. It is both important to stop and really think about this gift of Catholic education. It is such a special gift to each and every one of us.”

Bishop Foys concluded Mass with the blessing of St. Blaise and a blessing with a relic of St. Rocco, protector against pandemics.

Mrs. McGuire addressed those gathered and those watching on the live stream after Mass. She said: “It is so important to stop and really think about this gift of Catholic education. Giving thanks is often one of the first things we do during this week. We are so appreciative of all those who support our schools, as they are truly a blessing and we need them in order to thrive.”

She encouraged everyone listening to think of why Catholic schools exist. “It is because of Jesus,” she said. “Jesus is the first teacher of the faith and through faithful service to him, we as his disciples carry on this ministry of educating others.”

To the students, Mrs. McGuire said, “You are learning to be Jesus’ disciples, who will one day graduate and hopefully continue spreading this message to the world in your adult lives. This is the mission of Catholic education. It is such a special gift to each and every one of us.”

To the parents, she added, “Thank you for loving your sons and daughters enough to provide them with a Catholic school education. Thank you for sharing your faith, for passing it on to the next generation.”

“Honestly, through it all, the faith is what will sustain us as a school, and use this time profitably … because what you learn now will sustain you the rest of your life. Hold on especially to the faith — trust in the Lord.”

St. Benedict responded to the collapse of Roman civilization by founding a monastic order. The question before us now is: how will we face the vast and unique challenges of our times?”
The ‘Little Things’ (Warner Bros.) Reckoning crime drama, set in 1990 Los Angeles, in which a former LAPD officer who burned out over a murder case and now works for a small sheriff’s department makes a brief return visit to the city and is recruited by a homicide sergeant to help solve a string of similar killings. But proving the guilt of the suspect on whom the duo eventually focuses remains an elusive goal. Some scattered references to religious faith are worked into writer-director John Lee Hancock’s script as he seeks to explore moral ambiguity in the context of police work, though his treatment of this theme ultimately feels more muddled than finely balanced. Gruesome post-mortem images, while justified by the context, satisfy the viewer’s need to bear on it. Skewed values, unscreened and implied violence, sexual situations and bans on crude language. CNS: L; MP AA: R.

The White Tiger’ (Netflix) Based on the novel by Aravind Adiga, this gritty and ethically unmoored study of ambition and deceit, set in modern-day India, exposes the seamy underbelly of the world’s largest democracy, where corruption is rife, and an antiquated caste system offers little hope for advancement to the poor underclass. A determined young man is hired by a wealthy landlord as a chauffeur for his party-hearty son and American daughter-in-law. As the lad observes the couple’s decadent lifestyle, he also studies the family’s underhanded ways. Soon, he holds all the cards to his employer’s future. Since the tone of writer-director Ramin Bahrani’s narrative is one of amoral detachment, mature viewers need to bring careful discernment to bear on it. Skewed values, unscreened and implied violence, sexual situations and banter, pervasive crude language. CNS: L; MPAA: R.

“Our Friend” (Gravitas Ventures) Screen version of a 2015 Esquire magazine article by Matthew Teague recounting the true story of the Almquist family’s underhanded ways. Soon, he holds all the cards to his employer’s future. Since the tone of writer-director Ramin Bahrani’s narrative is one of amoral detachment, mature viewers need to bring careful discernment to bear on it. Skewed values, unscreened and implied violence, sexual situations and banter, pervasive crude language. CNS: L; MPAA: R.

The ‘sprinkling of ashes’ (Continued from page 3) the Almighty through our sinfulness. And because ashes are created through destruction — the burning of palm branches — they remind us of both our mortality and the eternal life to which we are called. For we must die before we can enter heaven.

On Ash Wednesday in the year 2000, Pope St. John Paul II preached: “Today too, the believer who feels threatened by evil and death calls on God in this way knowing that he has reserved for him a destiny of eternal life. He knows that he is not only a body condemned to death because of sin, but that he also has an immortal soul. Therefore he turns to God the Father, who has the power to create out of nothing; to God the Only-begotten Son, who became man for our salvation, died for us and now, risen, lives in glory; to God the immortal Spirit, who calls us to life and restores life.”

What we learn from sacred Scripture and the sacred tradition of the Church is that throughout the centuries, it is not so important as to how the ashes are used (by the way, parents would often add ashes to their food), but what their use signifies. Outward appearances assist us in transforming our interior life, but they can also lead one into hypocrisy.

Let Ash Wednesday in the year 2021 allow us to focus more on the interior meaning of Ash Wednesday and the holy season of Lent — the effects of which can last forever — than on the external sign, which is washed away quite easily. In this way, we will be back to “better than normal.”

Father Daniel Schomaker is vicar general for the Diocese of Covington and pastor, St. Augustine Parish, Covington, Ky.
Pope: Markets need regulation to promote justice, not special interests

VATICAN CITY — For economic policies and systems to promote peace and social justice, they must care about people, their dignity and working conditions, and they must be regulated in ways that promote social justice, not special interests, Pope Francis said. An economy without human trafficking will require “the change of pallid construction, of planning that does not look always and only at the very short-term gains, but at the medium- and long-term fruits and, above all, at people,” he said in a video message marking the International Day of Prayer and Awareness against Human Trafficking. The international day, established by Pope Francis, is celebrated annually Feb. 8, the feast day of St. Josephine Bakhita, who had been sold into slavery as a child. The pope’s message in Italian was broadcast during a cross-continental “prayer marathon” online to pray for an economy free of exploited, trafficked persons. This year’s day of prayer sought to raise awareness about the economic systems and pressures leading to and fostering human trafficking. In his message, Pope Francis said the day was an important way to remember this ongoing global tragedy and to inspire concrete action leading to people’s actual liberation and reintegration into society as active builders of the common good.

California bishops welcome court’s ruling easing worship restrictions

WASHINGTON — Two California Catholic bishops applauded the Supreme Court’s Feb. 1 ruling easing the state’s restrictions on indoor worship put in place with the COVID-19 pandemic. “This is a very significant step forward for basic rights,” said Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez. “We also have that unique mission and a lot of that comes into this advocacy priority.”

Meet elected officials as ‘missionary disciples,’ Archbishop Gomez says

WASHINGTON — “When we speak to our elected officials, we speak as citizens of faith,” Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los Angeles in a Feb. 9 timing message to the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering. “We also have that unique mission and identify and a lot of that comes into this advocacy priority,” O’Dell said.

Catholic Health Association outlines broad policy goals for new Congress

WASHINGTON — The Catholic Health Association outlined broad policy goals it will bring to the new Congress Feb. 8 at the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering. The “high-level principles,” as explained by Clay O’Dell, CHA’s director of advocacy, include ensuring that each person has health benefits covering essential services through each stage of life; achieving health equity by delivering the same level and quality of care to “everyone in our nation without exception;” and addressing the additional access and affordability needs of low-income families and individuals. O’Dell also listed issues that dovetail with these priorities: ensuring access, coverage and affordability for all, ensuring a strong safety net; strengthening aging and chronic care services; protecting life and ensuring conscience protection; and improving the health and well-being of communities. He spoke at length about eliminating disparities in health care access and services during the session, titled “Responding to the Call.” “We also have that unique mission and identify and a lot of that comes into this advocacy priority,” O’Dell said.

World Marriage Day to be celebrated this year on Feb. 14, Valentine’s Day

WASHINGTON — This year, World Marriage Day observed annually on the second Sunday of February; will be celebrated Feb. 14, which also is the feast of St. Valentine and which since the eighth century has been a celebration of love and affection. In the United States, National Marriage Week runs Feb. 7 through World Marriage Day and this year’s theme for the weeklong observance, which began Feb. 7, is “To Have, To Hold, To Honor:” “The theme was chosen to highlight how married couples live and renew their wedding promises daily in the building up of the domestic church in their homes, particularly as many couples and families have spent more time at home together this year,” said a news release from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

National/World

NEWS BRIEFS

February 12, 2021
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