On the solemnity of St. Joseph, Bishop Foys encourages all to be ‘doers’ of God’s will

Laura Keene
Editor

This year’s solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19, carried a particularly celebratory tone in the Diocese of Covington as the Year of St. Joseph begins to unfold like an Easter lily — a common symbol for the saint. With his apostolic letter “Patris corde” (“With a Father’s Heart”), Pope Francis declared Dec. 8, 2020 through Dec. 8, 2021 the Year of St. Joseph, in honor of the 150th anniversary of Blessed Pope Pius IX’s declaring St. Joseph patron of the Universal Church.

“St. Joseph is an interesting personage in our salvation history. St. Joseph is mentioned in only two of the four Gospels — Matthew and Luke — and not one word is recorded in all of Scriptures attributed to St. Joseph, Bishop Foys noted. “Where do we find a place for St. Joseph? He wasn’t a prophet or a patriarch or an apostle or the Blessed Mother. Where is his place?” Bishop Foys asked.

To find the answer, Bishop Foys said, one needs to look at what Scripture says St. Joseph does.

“St. Joseph was, we are told, a just man, a humble man, a compassionate man and deeply religious man. He was obedient to God’s will for him,” said Bishop Foys, highlighting the three times that an angel instructed St. Joseph in his dreams to care for the Holy Family.

The first was to assure Joseph of Mary’s chastity, instructing him to take Mary and the baby she was carrying into his home. In a second dream, the angel instructed St. Joseph to take Mary and the baby Jesus and flee to Egypt to avoid the wrath of King Herod. In the third dream, the angel assures Joseph that King Herod has died and it is now safe to return to Nazareth. On all three occasions, Bishop Foys said, one needs to look at what Scripture says St. Joseph does.

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Q&A: Indulgences in the Year of St. Joseph

Father Jordan Hainsey
Messenger Contributor

The “Year of St. Joseph” was proclaimed by Pope Francis on Dec. 8, 2020 and extends to December 8, 2021. It honors the 150th anniversary of Pope Blessed Pius IX’s proclamation of St. Joseph as the “Patron of the Universal Church” (“Quemadmodum Deus”). Special plenary indulgences have been granted “to perpetuate the entrustment of the whole Church to the powerful patronage of the ‘Custodian of Jesus.’”

Q: What is an indulgence?
A: An indulgence is the remission, in whole or in part, of the temporal punishment due to sins already forgiven.

Q: Who can get it and how is it used?
A: A person seeking an indulgence must be baptized, not excommunicated, and in the state of grace when performing the work of the indulgence. A person must formulate a sincere intention of gaining the indulgence before doing the work associated with it.

An indulgence can be applied to oneself or a deceased person (but not another living person). Gaining a plenary indulgence on behalf of a deceased person is a great act of mercy because it makes atonement for the punishment they are experiencing in purgatory, allowing them to be more quickly ushered into heaven. The atonement is only possible because of the merits of Christ’s sacrificial work of the Cross; in an indulgence, we are simply asking that those merits be applied to a loved one in need of them.

If the indulgence is for yourself, you are working toward the remission of the temporal punishment for sins that, if left unremitted in this life, you will have to work toward in purgatory.

Q: What are the conditions required for an indulgence, particularly in the Year of St. Joseph?
A: A plenary indulgence is granted under these usual conditions: 1) sacramental confession; 2) Eucharistic communion; 3) praying for the intentions of the Holy Father.

In the Year of St. Joseph, the Apostolic Penitentiary (the Vatican tribunal responsible for issues relating to the forgiveness of sins in the Church) directs the following to obtain the plenary indulgence:

— Meditate for at least 30 minutes on the Our Father.
— Participate in a spiritual retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on St. Joseph.
— Perform a corporal or spiritual work of mercy.
— Recite the rosary in families (engaged couples can also receive an indulgence from praying the rosary together).
— Enrapt to daily work to the protection of St. Joseph and to all believers who invoke, with their prayers, the intercession of St. Joseph.
— Pray the Litany of St. Joseph or some other prayer to St. Joseph, particularly for the persecuted Church and for the relief of all persecuted Christians.
— Pray any approved prayer or act of piety in honor of St. Joseph especially on:
  – March 19, Solemnity of St. Joseph;
  – May 1, Feast of St. Joseph the Worker;
  – Dec. 8, Feast of the Holy Rosary;
  – The Sunday of St. Joseph (according to the Byzantine tradition);
— The 19th day of every month;
— Every Wednesday (the day dedicated to the memory of St. Joseph in the Latin tradition).

The elderly, the sick and the dying who are unable to leave their homes due to the COVID-19 pandemic also have special permission to receive an indulgence by “offering with trust in God the pains and discomforts” of their lives with a prayer to St. Joseph, hope of the sick and patron of a happy death.

Q: What is the time frame for the indulgence requirements?
A: The three requirements of confession, Eucharist, and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father must be combined all of our individual gifts as one diocesan family of faith, we can accomplish great things in the name of Christ and His Church for the people of our community.”

Any questions or gifts of appreciated securities can be directed to the Stewardship and Mission Services by calling (803) 392-1100.

DPAA is a way to answer the ‘call to live differently’

Laura Keener
Editor

As families and individuals continue to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, Bishop Roger Foys reminds parishioners in this year’s Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal letter and video that, like Pope Francis said a year ago, there is “a deep longing in the heart of God. ‘Instead it is a call to live differently.’”

The 2021 DPAA continues to progress in the Diocese of Covington. During 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. each week, parishioners were able to make their gift or pledge during an in-person process at all weekend Masses at the parish. Also, over the weekend, a letter from Bishop Roger Foys and the pastor arrived at over 30,000 homes asking for support to the DPAA. The appeal, they said, is not just about how money is changed into ministry.

It is also “ways we can witness to a life of charity, compassion and above all love. This is how we ‘live life differently,’” Bishop Foys and pastors said in the letter.

The goal for this year’s DPAA is $2.6 million. Each parish goal is calculated as a percentage of the goal based on a three-year average of income — Sunday and Holy Day collections, plus fundraisers, less net cost of parish school. Any monies collected over a parish’s goal is rebated back to the parish to fund parish projects and ministries.

At the diocesan level, gifts to the DPAA are used to help fund care for priests and diocesan ministries. Ministries receiving partial funding include: campus ministries, Catholic Charities, Cristo Rey Parish, deacon formation, Pro-Life, religious education, St. Anne Retreat Center, Thomas More University and vocations. Additionally 10 percent of the DPAA is used to award service grants to various ministries serving the poor and vulnerable in the local community.

There are multiple ways to make a gift to the DPAA. Parishioners can reply using the envelope provided in the mailing or drop their gift clearly marked DPAA in the parish collection basket or gifts can be made online at www.covdio.org.

“If it is with great respect for the sacrifices you make every day that we humbly ask you to consider making a gift to the 2021 DPAA,” said Bishop Foys and pastors. “By combining all of our individual gifts as one diocesan family of faith, we can accomplish great things in the name of Christ and His Church for the people of our community.”

Any questions or gifts of appreciated securities can be directed to the Stewardship and Mission Services by calling (803) 392-1100.

Holy Hour
Bishop Roger Foys and the priests of the Diocese of Covington gathered, March 18, for the monthly Holy Hour for the victims and survivors of child sexual abuse by priests, the sanctification of priests and for an end to the pandemic.

This was the first Holy Hour with the newly erected St. Joseph altar and relic present in recognition of the Year of St. Joseph. The next Holy Hour will be April 15.
Protocols for Holy Week 2021 in all parishes in the Diocese of Covington

These requirements are based on the directives from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments of the Holy See, the Committee on Divine Worship of the USCCB, and the protocols relating to COVID-19 from the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

For the faithful still unable to attend Mass, parishes that are able should live-stream; parishes that are not able to livestream should direct the faithful to the Cathodilical website—www.covcathedral.com.

Aids for family and personal prayer will be prepared by the Office of Worship. They will be able to be customized for each parish.

Music continues to be limited to one soloist and one organist/pianist. No choral or congregational singing. This applies to the entirety of Holy Week and Easter Sunday.

Palm Sunday
— Palms may be blessed and distributed.
— Parishes are required to follow “Form 3” of the Entrance.
— The Passion may be read in parts. Worship Programs for the congregation will be prepared by the Office of Worship.

Chriasm (7 p.m. at the cathedral)
— Representation of priests, ministers and faithful.
— All the priests will attend and sit in the transepts and the presbytery.
— Two people from each parish will be invited.
— Two sisters from each religious house.
— Seven deacons, cf. Acts 6:3
— The deus will distribute the palms before Holy Saturday

Holy Thursday
— Mandatum is OMITTED.
— Procession with the Blessed Sacrament is OMITTED and the Blessed Sacrament is to be reposed in the main tabernacle.
— There will not be an Altar of Repose.
— Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (reposed in the tabernacle) may occur for up to two hours following the conclusion of Mass.

Good Friday
— The Passion may be read in parts. Worship Programs for the congregation will be prepared by the Office of Worship.
— An additional Intercession is to be prepared for those in distress, the sick and the dead. This is provided at the end of this document.
— The Intercessions may be chanted, with the response being made by a cantor/soloist (if sung).
— The Exsultet follows. Note: Chanting is permitted, with the response being made by a cantor/soloist (if sung).
— The process of blessing the Cross.
— There will be no procession through the church with the cross.

Easter Vigil (may not begin until 8:30 p.m.)
— The preparation and lighting of the fire may occur only if the fire can be accommodated in or near the sanctuary.
— The Pascal Candle is then prepared and lit in the sanctuary.
— The procession is OMITTED.
— There are to be no community candles.
— The minister then sings or says. “Christ our Light,” with the response being made by a cantor/soloist (if sung).
— The Exsultet follows. Note: Chanting is permitted, with the response being made by a cantor/soloist (if sung).
— Baptism may take place in the usual fashion.
— If Confirmations are to occur, the celebrant is to anoint the forehead with his thumb but use a Clone or Lysol wipe or similar after each anointing.

Easter Sunday
— Follow the usual Mass protocols.
— The renewal of Baptismal promises and the sprinkling of palms will occur. Mass continues in the usual way.
— No choir or congregational singing. An organist and soloist are allowed.

Note: The celebrant must wear a mask except when preaching or at the Altar.

Confirmants must wear a mask.

Deacons must wear a mask unless at the Ambo.

COVID-19 Protocols for the congregation, including the wearing of masks and social distancing, remain in force.

** Note: To create a substantial smokeless fire, you might utilize sand and rubbing alcohol. Light immediately before beginning the ritual. The fire will last for 15–20 minutes before putting itself out. It is recommended that if you have not done this before that you do “a dry run.” All safety protocols should be followed in a fire extinguisher should be on hand.

Solemn Intinction
— For an end to the pandemic: Let us pray, dearly beloved, for a swift end to the coronovirus pandemic that affects our world, that our God and Father will heal the sick, strengthen those who care for them, and help us all to persevere in faith.

Period of silent prayer

Almighty and merciful God, source of all life, health and healing, look with compassion on our world, bring low by disease; protect us in the midst of the grave challenges that assail us and in your fatherly providence grant recovery to the stricken, strength to those who care for them, and success to those working to eradicate this scourge. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Coronavirus Report
(as of Monday, March 22)
The information below includes reported cases from the Curia, schools, parishes, organizations and religious houses in the Diocese of Covington. There are over 8,000 students in archdiocesan schools, not including administrators, faculty and staff and hundreds of priests, employees and volunteers at the Curia and in parishes, organizations and religious houses.

Positive Cases
Active positive cases: 4
Recovered positive cases: 847
Total ever positive cases: 851
Currently Self-quarantined
Close Contacts: 4
Close Contacts with COVID case in household: 17

Transitional deacon plans to demonstrate gratitude by service to people of the diocese

Monica Yoamas
Editorial assistant

Alexander Gedney
son of John and Taryn Gedney, parishioners at St. Paul Parish, Florence, is getting excited about his diaconate ordination Saturday, March 27, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

“My greatest joy as I approach ordination is taking this opportunity to be dedicated to Christ in a new way,” said Mr. Gedney.

For Mr. Gedney, this ordination to the diaconate is a transitional step on his journey to the priesthood. After witnessing other deacons assist at Mass at the seminary the past five years, Mr. Gedney is looking forward to ministering at the altar himself. Currently assigned to St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, for the summer months, Mr. Gedney will be assisting at Masses. This will include proclaiming the Gospel and preaching the homily.

“I believe my greatest challenge will be in the delivery of my homilies,” said Mr. Gedney. “Through my homiletics courses in seminary, I have been able to practice preparing them. So far, the only audience to which I have preached is that of my classmates. Preaching in front of a congregation is a skill that I will need to develop.”

Soon-to-be Deacon Gedney attended St. Paul School, Florence and St. Henry District High School, Erlanger, before attending the University of Cincinnati, graduating in 2010 with a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering.

He was working in an engineering position in Indianapolis when he answered God’s call to the priesthood. He has been studying for the priesthood at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, PA.

As Mr. Gedney prepares for his formation to the priesthood, he said he is inspired by John’s Gospel account of Jesus asking three times a profession of faith from St. Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, ‘Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Tend my sheep.’” (John 21:15)

“While I was discerning my call to enter seminary, a priest told me that the primary goal of the priest is intimacy with Christ. All other goals come after this one,” Mr. Gedney said. “Initially, I found this because I thought the priest’s first goal should be the care of his parishioners. This passage cleared everything up for me. The care of souls flows directly from a priest’s love for Christ. Our Lord first asks Peter if he loves him to care for his flock.”

When asked about his hobbies Mr. Gedney said that he plays several musical instruments. He began playing the piano before adding electric and acoustic guitar (bass and electric), and other wind instruments— trombone, tuba, baritone horn.

“I spend a large amount of my recreational time playing the piano,” he said. “My greatest joys in this realm include playing music with other people and writing music.”

Bishop’s Schedule

March 26
Transitional diaconate ordination, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4 p.m.

March 27
Transitional diaconate ordination, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.

Vigil Mass for Palm Sunday, blessing and distribution of palms, Cathedral Basilica, 4:30 p.m.

March 28
Mass for Palm Sunday, blessing and distribution of palms, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.

March 30
Chriasm Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 7 p.m.

April 1
Mass of the Lord’s Supper, Cathedral Basilica, 6 p.m.

Mr. Gedney thanks his family friends and the parishioners of the Diocese of Covington for all their prayers and support and intends to show his gratitude not only by words but also in service. “I hope that my life of service to the Church here in the Diocese of Covington can be a proper ‘thank you.’”

April 2
Good Friday liturgical service, Cathedral Basilica, 3 p.m.

April 3
Holy Saturday Vigil and Mass of the Lord’s Resurrection, Cathedral Basilica, 8:30 p.m.

April 4
Mass of the Lord’s Resurrection, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.

April 8
Individual meeting, 9 a.m.

April 10
Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 4:30 p.m.

April 11
Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.

April 12
Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.
The Year of Mark — A Lenten reflection on the Cross ‘... life finds its center, its meaning, and its fulfillment when it is given up.’ — St. John Paul II, ‘Evangelium Vitae,’ n. 51

Follow me.” (Mark 8:34)

In Mark 9:33-34, Jesus offers the second instruction on discipleship. After the second prediction of the Passion, the disciples argued over power and status. Ironically the first half of Mark’s Gospel (chapters 1-8) has already presented the ‘power theme’ as a dead-end for understanding Jesus. In the second lesson on discipleship, a child in that ancient culture enjoyed no rights or status before adulthood. Jesus tells Peter Brendan Byrne explains: “For someone out- side the family to ‘welcome’ a child would be to turn pre- vailing values and social mores upside down; it would require putting aside one’s ideas of self-importance and adult status to simply meet a child as an equal, as ‘child’ to ‘child.’”

When Jesus ‘hugs’ the child, his gesture symbolizes ‘the preciousness of each and every human life in the sight of God.’ Father Byrne adds: “We are all — in our littleness — rather than in our achievement —肩负ed by God in this moment.”

After the third prediction of the Passion (Mark 10:33-41), James and John request a privileged position in the kingdom. Just as bickering among the disciples is a form of blindness, now selfish ambition stands as an obstacle to perceiving the meaning of Jesus and discipleship.

Once again, the disciples reflect a vision of a Messiah of their own making, a Messiah who will bring in ‘the son of man’ and ‘his kingdom’ without the Cross. Jesus teaches that the disciple is to be devoted to lov- ing service. To accept the Cross as Jesus marks the role of a suffering disciple; a suffering Messiah.

“The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve — to give his life as the ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

Mark’s Gospel has been called ‘a Passion story with an introduction.’ From this perspective, Chapters 8-10 cannot be understood apart from the entire narrative of Mark’s Gospel and its climax in the Passion narrative. At this point in the story of Mark, the disciples remain blind until the Cross. Even though the disciples will fail at the moment of the Passion, they will be sworn to ‘see’ after the Son of Man suffers, dies and rises. Mark’s image of the disciples’ blindness projects the reader ahead to the key insight that the full identity of Jesus will be seen ‘only’ in the death and Resurrection.

The story of the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-9) inter- vinves in the narrative at the midpoint of chapters 8-10 on the identity of Christ as a suffering Messiah. Father Byrne points out that the destiny of Jesus to suffer, die and rise for the salvation of the world triggers the disci- ples’ struggle to believe: “...how can Jesus be Messiah — and indeed God’s beloved Son — and yet be destined to die on a cross?”

In an article “The Markan Mystery and Mark’s Messianic Identity,” Dr. Weeden, reflected on the question of “how ‘Mark’s interpretation of faith helps us today?’” One way to answer this question is to identify the Cross as “the life we are called by Christ to live.”

In a New Testament scholar, proposed that the ‘suffering-servant messiah’ of Mark envisions a ‘life-fulfilling alternative to our materialistic culture, obsessed with the self-absorbed life and pursuing power, possessions and prestige to exalt the self and control, dominate and exploit others’.

That lived vision of cruciform discipleship becomes the salvific ‘power of the Gospel’ to ‘transform our cul- ture and save our world.’

Msgr. Ronald Ketteler

Commentary

Msgr. Ronald Ketteler

From ancient times to the present, Christians have been perennially tempted to follow a risen Lord of glory without the Cross. In particular, the Christology of the Gospel according to Mark serves as a corrective for such spiritual agnosticism that misconstrues the identity of Jesus the Christ as the triumphant Themos Aeter (“divine man”).

The narrative core in chapters 8-10 of the sec- ond Gospel revolves around two overarching questions — “Who is Jesus?” and “Who is a disciple of Jesus?”

For Christians, Jesus’ radical question to his disciples — “Who do people say that I am?” (Mark 8:27) — is the challenge to conversion faced by disciples of all times. Mark the Evangelist boldly proclaims that Jesus Christ is the crucified and risen Lord. Thus, the Cross as the path to glory is the paradigm of his Gospel message.

Mark’s Gospel does not focus on the conversion attain- ing to the identity of Jesus as well as the identity of the disciple of the Jesus. The literary structure of Mark with the distinctive theological perspective on those questions creates an interpretive key to the unfolding narrative from Mark 8:27 to 10:42.

Since Mark’s Gospel is viewed as a type of conversion story, the contemporary reader is challenged to re-experi- ence his or her own response to Jesus’ initial proclama- tion of the in-breaking of the Kingdom: “Repent, and believe the Good News.” (Mark 1:16)

The exegesis of Mark 8:27 to Mark 10:42 unearths a meaning of discipleship clearly unmask the mistaken notions of the disciples regarding the identity of Jesus. To accept a suffering Messiah entails accepting the role of a suffering disciple.

After the first prophecy of the passion, Peter rebukes Christ (Mark 8:30). This incident seems to unblock Peter’s confession of Mark 8:30. Moreover, in the same verse Jesus enjoins the disciples to be silent about that confession which serves as another indication that they have not perceived the true meaning of his identity Peter here represents all believers in his finiteness.

The confession of Peter. “You are the Christ” (Mark 8:29), and the ensuing confrontation by Jesus seem to serve as a paradigm of the other two sections. In particu- lar, verse 33 of chapter 8 provides a pivotal insight into the non-recognition of Jesus’ role — “Because the way you think is not God’s way but man’s.” Faith requires a reversal of human values.

Dominican Father Wilfrid Harrington cautions: “The confession of Peter is the facile profession of too many of Mark’s contemporaries: ‘You are the Christ’ (Mark 8:27-33). He observes: ‘They cannot have a risen Lord without a suffering Messiah.’

According to Professor Marie Noonan Sabin, the root of such ‘human-minded’ blindness is the misguided relig- ious assumption that “a ‘messiah’, as God’s agent, was always imagined as a conqueror in his work.” A “suffering Messiah” was unimaginable.

In his “Invitation to Mark,” the late Paul J. Altemeyer (2009) detailed out the root of the temptation of Peter’s confession. He wrote: “If nothing succeeds like success, what is left over for failure?” Peter represents all humanity made the answer plain: avoid it (Mark 8:31). Unimaginable! Yet these verses make it equally plain that anyone who would follow Jesus must also be prepared to share his fate.

The first instruction on discipleship (Mark 8:34-38) fol- lows Peter’s denial. If Peter in effect declares ‘avoid the Cross,’ now Christ explains discipleship in terms of embracing the cross. “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Mark 8:34)

The first lesson on discipleship follows. “... life finds its center, its meaning, and its fulfillment when it is given up.” — St. John Paul II, ‘Evangelium Vitae,’ n. 51

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Msgr. Ronald Ketteler is director of ecumenism, episco- pal liaison to the Messenger and professor of theology at Thomas More University.
The ‘in crowd’ is on the Cross

Each year, the liturgy of Palm Sunday is one that I find deeply convicting. It reveals uncomfortable truths about the human condition that require repentance and powerful truths about the nature of God that call for conversion.

First and foremost, the encounter with Christ in his entrance into Jerusalem, with the crowds cheering him on as the king and waving palms the possibility that one might “believe” in Jesus because we might get “something” from him. It raises the possibility we might follow him not simply because of his miracles but because of God’s word in him. “And the people pressed around him, and hardened their hearts.” The way we relate to God should be a matter of our heart positioning and not a matter of our condition.

As the historian Christopher Dawkins noted, “there is always a temptation for religion to ally itself with the existing order.” Which means we use religion—intentionally or not—as a means of social promotion and secularbolstering, not the path of conversion to, and communion with, almighty God. Clearly many on that day of Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem thought Jesus was ushering in some new, popular, and powerful worldly way of being.

Our blessed Lord, confronts this temptation and dishonorable misapprehension by the very mode of his entrance into Jerusalem: He enters his kingdom by way of humiliating himself to the very point of death. That ride on the ass’s colt will end into Jerusalem: He enters his kingdom by way of humiliation. How arrogantly we reject the humility of Christ’s Gospel.

The “Nones” who claim no religious affiliation because they think science has rendered religion useless as well as those who know the scientific and religious conversation is one of the most fascinating encoun- ters on offer today. A look at the website of the Society of Catholic Scientists (https://www.catholic-scientists.org).

From a standing start in 2016, the Society has grown to over 1,300 members in 50 countries. As a forum for exchange among scientists, the Society fosters Christian community. As a resource for the Church, the Society offers accessible, credible materials to those charged with transmitting the faith in a culture that often imagines science to be the font of all truth. As an association of leading scientists in their fields, the Society’s very exis- tence demonstrates the compatibility of scientific rigor and religious conviction.

The Society’s website is a treasure trove of fascinating materials, including biographies of prominent scientists who were Catholics, a section on “Common Questions” about science and Catholic faith, and longer articles aimed at a general audience. Every Catholic high school religion or theology teacher in the English-speaking world should be aware of the Society, its website and its invaluable materials.

My friends at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington have made a resounding success of Aquinas 101, a brilliantly conceived and executed series of animat- ed YouTube videos that explain the truths of the Catholic tradition in an engaging way.

When Pope Leo XIII urged a close study of Aquinas as a resource for the Church’s response to the cultural and social acids of secular modernity, he certainly didn’t have YouTube in mind. Still, the Dominicans in charge of Aquinas 101 have given 21st-century form to Leo XIII’s 1879 hope for a Thomistic revival in the Church. And the fact that over 54,300 people have signed up for Aquinas 101 courses, which have garnered well over a million views, suggests that Aquinas is satisfying a thirst for real learning and deep understanding at a historical moment too often dominated by the shrill, least thoughtful vang- deeds. Join the learning and the fun at this intellectual feast by signing up at the Aquinas 101 website: aquinas101.com.

The Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv is a mira- cle. More than 70 years of communist occupation left the Ukrainian society morally and culturally shattered. But the great 20th-century leaders of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church—Metropolitans Andrey Sheptytsky and Josyf Slipyj—had long dreamt of a Catholic center of higher learning in Ukraine. And under the dynamic leadership of a Harvard-educated Ukrainian American, Borys Gutzyak (now the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Archbishop of Philadelphia), that dream has been real- ized in this university with a mission of cultural renewal.

In short, the UCU understands that true education involves human formation, spiritual formation, and service to society as well as intellectual engagement, it has become a model program for Catholic leaders in the 21st century. Everyone who cares about the life of the Catholic mind and the education of Catholic leaders for the future will want to view the university’s story here: https://youtu.be/2tKDh-SwMNE (Be sure to click CC at the bottom of the screen for English subtitles if your Ukrainian isn’t quite up to speed).

Then there is the Person and Identity Project, led by Mary Rice Hasson and a team of brilliant Catholic women (personandidentity.com). As it becomes clear that “gender theory” is the most aggressive force in what only a cultured Catholic mind can resist is a culture war, the project offers a website (personandidentity.com). As it becomes clear that “gender theory” is the most aggressive force in what only a cultured Catholic mind can resist is a culture war, the project offers a website (personandidentity.com).

Last Tuesday was a great day for Kentucky parents and students. The Kentucky General Assembly passed its first ever educational choice law that would include both public and non-public school students.

House Bill 563 includes two provisions that will dramatically shift education policy so that it focuses more on the individual needs of students as well as the goal of education. First of all, the bill allows parents — at the opposition to the school they happen to attend. The first half of HB 563 deals with open enrollment in public schools. In other words, it will give parents far more freedom to switch between different public school districts. (Continued on page 11)
Holy Week and renewal — signs of hope

Karen Kuhman
Messenger Correspondent

Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week, 2021, and one cannot help but reflect on the events of the past year. At Holy Week, 2020, the United States was in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and only beginning to catch a glimpse of all that might be lost. We were dismayed to learn that Holy Week services would be virtual, but the suspension of in-person Easter Sunday Masses really captured our attention. Feelings of loss deepened as the virus spread. Families and friends began to lose loved ones, and there was no relief from the alarming statistics. This spring, many are receiving the promising vaccine, and we see a glimmer of hope, a reason for optimism.

Passionist Sister Mary Catherine Thomas of the Monastery of the Sacred Passion, tells us that we badly need spring at this time. “It never ceases to be a source of wonder and joy that, when everything has been dead, cold and dreary, the small signs of life uplift the spirits ... hearing the Robins start singing in the early morning, sprouts pushing up through the frozen ground. All remind us that our Lord’s love is ever new, ever faithful. It strikes me that our beautiful God has made creation a reflection of his resurrection, bringing life after death. He has created us for joy, and it is reflected all around us — if we are open to seeing it.”

Divine Providence Sister Leslie Keener, director of vocations for the Congregation of Divine Providence and God Space (https://www.godspacecommunity.com) relates that last year, as things began to shut down, were canceled, and then grew even worse, there was an understanding that we were just at the beginning of an unfolding crisis.

“Now, we understand that we have more strength than we thought. I find that people are more deeply compassionate and concerned about others; we see people acting out that compassion to serve people in need. We have learned to respect community, to seek and about others; we see people acting out that compassion to serve people in need. We have learned to respect community, to seek and support it in new ways. Many of us were frenetically busy before, but we have learned that being frenetically busy is not a virtue. Hope is a virtue.”

When this current crisis passes, Sister Leslie hopes to hold on to the time and space for prayer that she did not realize she had before the pandemic.

Benedictine Sister Callen Winston says, “Even in the time of pandemic, Holy Week and Easter are the Church’s annual reminder of God’s endless love for us: as St. Paul says, ‘hot when we were good, but while we were sinners.’”

Holy Week reminds us of the heart of our faith. And while the pandemic has disrupted our sense of community, these challenging times have revealed to us how very much we need each other: grocery clerks, bus drivers, waste collectors — all have sacrificed to help us in our own needs. The example of caring for others that Jesus showed to us on Holy Thursday by the washing of the feet has been repeated by many caregivers during this pandemic.

Sister Callen says, “When Jesus says, ‘Do as I have done,’ he didn’t just mean during a medical or financial crisis. And the gospel of the Suffering Servant tells us that we, too, can bear the infirmities of others as we wear masks and refrain from hugging those we love, or distance ourselves from those we would like to be close to. We can pray that we and others are called to do for others year-round.”

Sister Callen asks us to understand that Christ’s victory 2000 years ago, and celebrated on Easter and throughout the liturgical year, is also now and tomorrow.

“There is a message of hope buried in each catastrophe — large or small — waiting for someone with faith and resilience to start trying to release it from its shackles. If a vaccination is a step of hope into a better future, Easter is a guarantee that God’s love for us is already around us. It will carry us through any calamity into a more peaceful-filled day and eternal glory.”
Holy Week: A story of hope

This final week of Lent is a time, too, to reflect on those words of St. Paul to the Philippians. Jesus emptied himself for us; how might we empty ourselves for others? Our Lenten prayers, fasting and almsgiving have prepared us to wrestle with this question.

It is Holy Week — the most important week of our faith. Jesus enters Jerusalem and the people receive him triumphantly. But in a matter of days, the crowd that acclaims him as a king demands that he be crucified. When Jesus was apprehended, his disciples fled. After the trial, he was flogged, spat upon and stripped of his clothing. While hanging on the cross, Jesus was thirsty — he was given vinegar to drink.

This story is a reminder to us of attitudes we may still hold today. We are members of the same human family, but we can turn a blind eye to the suffering of our most vulnerable sisters and brothers. But Jesus reminds us that what we do to the little ones, we do to him.

Throughout history, many have understood what it means to be merciful toward people who are suffering. On Jesus’ journey to Calvary, a bold woman moved by love wiped his face. A bystander, forced to help carry the cross, was forever transformed by the experience. At the foot of the cross, the beloved disciple promised to care for Jesus’ mother as his own. After the crucifixion, a wealthy man offered his own new tomb to bury Jesus.

These are unquestionable examples of the works of mercy — of hearts showing compassion to those in need. And that is what Jesus expects of us — that we offer our hands and hearts to others so that with him, we may enter into eternal life.

As we prepare for Easter, we reflect on how our sacrifices and actions might transform another’s life. We pray for the grace to realize that by sharing the cross of others, we become servants of salvation. During this most important week, we strive to make the works of mercy a daily habit — at home and around the world.

This article was originally published at crsricebowl.org. It is printed here with permission.

**Shakshouka Recipe — Gaza**

3 Tbs. fair trade olive oil  
1 onion, chopped  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 7oz can green chilies  
1 28oz can diced tomatoes  
1 Tbs. ketchup  
2 tsps. salt  
4 eggs

Heat oil in a large pan. Sauté onions and garlic. Add chilies including juice and cook until soft. Add tomatoes, ketchup and salt. Cook tomatoes down to a sauce. Make four holes in the sauce with a spoon. Crack the eggs into the holes and cover until the eggs cook. Leave yolks runny.

Makes 4 servings

REFLECT

How has your journey with CRS Rice Bowl this Lent impacted your life?
Sydney archbishop urges ‘deep breath’ after news of artificial embryos

Catholic News Service
SYDNEY — After a prominent Australian university announced it had made artificial human embryos from skin cells, an Australian archbishop with a doctorate in bioethics asked, “Is this really such a good thing?”

Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher said people should “dial down expectations that these artificial embryos will cure disease or alleviate suffering,” noting that the same thing was said about embryonic stem cells and gene therapy.

In a column in the The Catholic Weekly, newspaper of the Sydney Archdiocese, Archbishop Fisher noted that with stem-cell technology “the majority of the licenses granted went not to those institutions researching cures for disease or spinal cord injuries, as promised, but to the IVF (in vitro fertilization) industry that pulls in revenues of half a billion dollars each year in Australia alone.”

An international team of scientists led by Monash University in Melbourne announced in mid-March that it had succeeded in generating the artificial embryos by changing the cellular identity of human skin cells that, when placed in an extracellular matrix, organized into blastocyst-like structures, which were named iBlastoids.

But in his column, a shorter version of which ran March 26 in The Australian, Archbishop Fisher noted the Embryo Research Licensing Committee was calling the iBlastoids embryos.

“As the saying goes: ‘If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, and swims like a duck, it’s probably a duck.’ So, too, with an embryo: If it has human genes, develops as a human being develops, and does the things a human being does, including an embryonic human being,” the archbishop wrote.

“Nature already provides for a significant variance in early human development. Those human embryos that do not develop exactly as expected because of some chromosomal abnormality or other genetic issue are still embryonic human beings, and it would be outrageous for anyone to suggest these were not human, just because their development did not appear ‘normal.’ Until we know for certain, we must give these embryonic human beings the benefit of the doubt.”

“Tissue engineering continues to develop,” he added. “We should all take a deep breath and ask: What’s the moral cost and where is this taking us as a community?”

He noted that if the organisms “do not have such a developmental trajectory, then they might not be bona fide embryos after all. In that case, there might be ethical uses for them, and we would support and encourage such ethical use.”

“We should be suspicious of those who rush to characterize them as no embryo at all, particularly when they stand to benefit from this type of ‘dehumanization,’” said the archbishop, who holds a Ph.D. in bioethics from the University of Oxford, England. “This could just be an Orwellian way of ensuring no one feels too quassy about the laboratory manufacture of human lives for experimen-

Sydney archbishop urges ‘deep breath’ after news of artificial embryos

“Sometimes you need those kinds of things to jump-start your heart to yearn for the Lord again,” Mrs. Josten said about how during the pandemic shutdown last year the Holy Spirit moved her to create this event.

Mrs. Josten felt convinced “that the Lord is calling us to bring his Son’s sacrifice and passion to Ft. Thomas,” said Mrs. Josten about the independently sponsored event. “This is no longer about COVID, it is about evangelizing the community.”

The 14 large-scale Stations of the Cross were created by local artist, Jonathan Willis. It is the same artwork that was used last year. The route, too, is primarily the same, although some adjustments were needed. Last year’s drive-thru stations was well received, with pilgrims from all over the tri-state participating in the six-day event. Details are still being finalized for this year’s event, which may be limited to a single day. To find out more search on Facebook for Drive Through Stations of the Cross – Megan Josten.

“Doing this again is a sign of Jesus’ redemption. It’s not just a knee-jerk response to the pandemic,” Mrs. Josten said. “Now it is a reason to celebrate and to remind our community of God’s passionate, radical love for us.”

One of 14 Drive-thru Stations of the Cross in Ft. Thomas.
CCK says passage of educational choice bill a victory

Ruby Thomas
Messenger contributor

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky, which represents the commonwealth’s bishops in matters of public policy, counts the passage of House Bill 563 as a victory for educational choice.

The bill was passed by the House in a 48-47 vote March 16 and has been sent to the governor.

The bill creates an Education Opportunity Accounts (EOA) program, similar to the scholarship tax credit program, which the CCK has supported in years past. Individuals and businesses would receive a tax credit for donating to certain nonprofits, said Andrew Vandiver, associate director of the CCK. These nonprofits would use the funds to help families pay for education services.

Families state-wide can receive assistance to pay for services, such as therapy for special needs children and technology. The bill also gives families who live in counties with a population larger than 90,000 access to need-based tuition assistance for non-public schools.

“We’re proud of what we were able to accomplish,” said Vandiver. “We fought really hard for a statewide program. … We feel disappointed that we couldn’t get more counties included, but this gives us momentum” going forward.

Vandiver noted there are families in all four Kentucky dioceses who will benefit from tuition assistance for non-public schools under this bill. The bill will allow for tuition assistance to non-public schools in Jefferson, Fayette, Kenton, Boone, Campbell, Hardin, Harrison and Daviess counties.

“It’s a really good first step. We have to walk before we can run,” said Vandiver. He said the bill may face a veto from the governor, who has 10 days to consider it. The Kentucky General Assembly is now on a two-week break, but legislators may be able to override a veto when they return for two days at the end of March, he added.

Ruby Thomas is the staff writer for The Record, Catholic newspaper for the Archdiocese of Louisville, Ky. This article first appeared online at https://therecordnewspaper.org and has been reprinted with permission. (See related column on page 5.)
Students from Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Burlington, are learning the many devotions to and patronages of St. Joseph by creating St. Joseph altars. Bishop Roger Foys has asked schools to have students create St. Joseph altars for their classrooms during this Year of St. Joseph. (above top) First graders pray at the altar they created using a statue of St. Joseph with the Child Jesus. (above center) Fifth-graders chose a statue of the Holy Family for their St. Joseph altar and (above bottom) the eighth-grade class chose St. Joseph the Worker for the devotional altar.

Happy birthday to Deacon Charles Melville, St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger, April 6; Deacon Scott Folz, St. Paul Parish, Florence, April 8; Father Matthew Cushing, pastor, All Saints Parish, Walton, April 19; Father Ryan Stenger, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Camp Springs, April 21; and Deacon William Theis, St. Therese Parish, Southgate, April 29.

The prayer intention for April as recommended by Pope Francis is for fundamental rights. We pray for those who risk their lives while fighting for fundamental rights under dictatorships, authoritarian regimes and even in democracies in crisis.

After a year, a virtual return to Bible workshops
Father Timothy Schehr, a biblical scholar from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, led, March 16, the second of three virtual workshops on the Book of Job. After over a year off due to COVID-19, this event marked the return of the Diocese of Covington’s ongoing Bible study sponsored by the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization. Father Schehr’s approach to the Scripture study has been and continues to be exploring how throughout history God has worked for the good of his people. The Book of Job is the latest of over a dozen biblical books that have already been explored through these workshops and approximately 30 people from across the diocese joined in from the comfort of their own homes. The third and final night for the Book of Job will be April 6. The Office of Catechesis and Evangelization is hoping to offer more workshops on the books of the Bible in the near future.

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On the Cross

(Continued from page 5)

kingdom — ours and the world’s — not for capitulation to false compassion or sentimentality about sin.

As we contemplate the passion of Christ, we “will have our faith shaken”…but as Jesus says, “after I have been raised up, I shall go before you.”

The passion of Christ reminds us that his truth, love, mercy and grace and every blessing of his kingdom is on universal offer, but must be personally accepted. This acceptance is only possible by following the way of the Cross and the way of conversion, which is always the path of humility, first trod by our Savior.

Borromeo Parish, Flemingsburg and of St. Rose Parish, May’s Lick.

The passion of Christ reminds us that his truth, love, mercy and grace and every blessing of his kingdom is on universal offer, but must be personally accepted. This acceptance is only possible by following the way of the Cross and the way of conversion, which is always the path of humility, first trod by our Savior.

Father Phillip W. DeVous is the pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Flemingsburg and of St. Rose Parish, May’s Lick, Ky.

The passion of Christ reminds us that his truth, love, mercy and grace and every blessing of his kingdom is on universal offer, but must be personally accepted. This acceptance is only possible by following the way of the Cross and the way of conversion, which is always the path of humility, first trod by our Savior.

Gift of the Holy Spirit connects people to Christ, pope says at audience

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Every Christian is unique because the Holy Spirit inspires something new and original in each person, creating “an endless field of holiness,” Pope Francis said.

“The one God, the Trinity of love, allows the variety of witnesses to flourish — all are equal in dignity, but also unique in the beauty that the Spirit has willed to be expressed in each of those whom God’s mercy has made his children,” the pope said. He said March 17 during his weekly general audience.

The Spirit writes the story of the church and of the world, he said, and “we are open pages, available to receive deeply and makes us experience the moving joy of being loved by God as his true children,” the pope said.

The Spirit “dwells in us; it is he who transforms us alone and lost in the world,” Pope Francis said, but with the Father. The Spirit, “the possibility of encountering Christ is open without the Holy Spirit, there is no relationship with Christ and with the Father.”

The Spirit opens the human heart to Christ’s presence — and draws it into that vortex of love that is the very heart of God,” he said.

“The first gift of every Christian existence is the Holy Spirit,” he said. It is the key essential gift because without the Holy Spirit, “there is no relationship with Christ and with the Father.”

Calling on the Spirit for support and inspiration is important, especially when one has not prayed in a long time, has lost the desire to pray or recites prayers “like a parrot,” with no depth of feeling or faith, he said.

“This is the moment to say to the Spirit, ‘Come, Holy Spirit and warm my heart. Come, teach me to pray, teach me to look to the Father, the son, teach me the way the path of faith goes, teach me to love, and above all, teach me to have an attitude of hope.’”

“If Christ were only far away in time, we would be alone and lost in the world,” Pope Francis said, but with the Spirit,” creating a vast and flourishing “field of holiness.”

“We now stock a complete line of home health aides that include elevated toilet seats, grab bars and personal showers.

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Thank you for being a neighbor we can count on.

“From each of us, the Spirit composes original works because there is never one Christian who is completely identical to another,” creating a vast and flourishing “field of holiness.”

The church invites the faithful to call upon the Holy Spirit every day, to make Christ present so he can guide and transform his disciples, he added.

Holy Spirit.

“May's Lick, Ky.”

St. Rose Parish, May’s Lick.

By Father Phillip W. DeVous

The coalition that backed HB 563 is diverse and includes people of many faiths and backgrounds. However, Catholic education played a major role in the debates on the bill and the final vote.

The night started out with a passionate speech by Senator Wil Schroder (R-Wilder) about the many false narratives and myths surrounding HB 563. He emphasized the important role that Catholic schools play in helping low income families in Northern Kentucky. This included sharing family stories from Holy Trinity School in Bellevue, where a majority of the students are from families who qualify for free and reduced lunch.

The most dramatic moment of the night came when the Kentucky House of Representatives voted for final passage of HB 563. The vote was tight and ended at 48-47.

Rep. Al Gentry (D-Louisville) provided the tie-breaking vote to pass HB 563 over the top. Rep. Gentry was the lone Democratic vote for the bill and in explaining his vote he acknowledged that while difficult, he voted “Yes” for the many lower income families in his district who want to provide their children with a Catholic education.

While we have come a long way, this is not the end. Governor Andy Beshear has made comments suggesting that he will likely veto HB 563. If he does, the General Assembly will have an opportunity to override his veto with a majority vote of each chamber on March 29 and 30th. Please take a moment this week to call 1-800-372-7181 and ask your state representative and senator to vote in favor of HB 563 in the event that a veto override is necessary.

Andrew Vandiver is associate director for the Catholic Conference of Kentucky.
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**STAFF WRITER**
The Messenger, the Diocese of Covington’s official weekly newspaper, published 44 times per year, seeks a full-time Staff Writer. Candidates must be practicing Roman Catholics in good standing with the Church. The position requires a broad range of abilities, including excellent writing, proofreading, and organizational skills; basic photography skills; a commitment to confidentiality and teamwork; a passion for completing diverse projects accurately, thoroughly, and reliably; and adaptability to interactions with colleagues, other Diocesan employees, and interviewees. The ideal candidate will be self-motivated, have a readiness to explore multimedia platforms. In addition to regular office hours, evening and weekend assignments occur regularly and are considered part of the job. Anticipated start date: immediate. Interested candidates may submit a resume, references, and writing samples to Stephen Koplyay by e-mail: skoplyay@covdio.org, (859) 392-1500.

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Critics of new HHS head raise concerns over abortion, religious liberty

Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — One he is sworn in, Xavier Becerra, California’s former attorney general and a former member of Congress, becomes the first Latino to be secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In a narrow vote 50-49 vote March 18, the Senate confirmed him for the post, and he is expected to be sworn in sometime during the week of March 22.

His nomination by President Joe Biden brought heavy criticism from national pro-life leaders over his long record of support for legal abortion and for spearheading litigation to invoke the Little Sisters of the Poor’s religious exemption to the Affordable Care Act’s contraceptive mandate in the state of California.

Those who supported his nomination to head HHS said he has spent his career “fighting for underserved communities” and his efforts “to protect the welfare of immigrants and migrants.”

He also has been lauded for his efforts as a member of Congress to get the Obama administration’s ACA legislation through Congress in 2010, leading to its successful passage in 2010. As California’s attorney general, he has defended the ACA in court.

But National Right to Life and other pro-life groups who object to Becerra heading HHS point to the 100 percent rating by Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America’s for his record on abortion during his 25 years in Congress. About 40 pro-life leaders signed a Feb. 20 letter objecting to his nomination and urging the Senate to reject it; that letter followed a similar one they sent in December, shortly after Biden announced his nomination.

“Xavier Becerra is unqualified to lead the Department of Health and Human Services,” said Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life, in a March 19 statement. “HHS is integral to providing Americans access to quality health care and protecting the pro-life community.”

“His confirmation shows just how far the pro-abortion Democrats are willing to go to support abortion on demand and the demands of pro-abortion groups.”

Becerra “has no health care experience but plenty of abortion experience and he is being rewarded by the Biden administration for that extremism,” said Tobias. This lack of experience “disqualifies him from leading the nation’s health care agency,” which “plays a critical role in the distribution of the COVID vaccines and the production of those vaccines.”

Among other actions as a House member, Becerra, a Catholic, voted against the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, the Humane Relations Act, the ACA contraceptive mandate in the Senate and the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute Act and the Price-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, which would prevent doctors performing abortions after 20 weeks of pregnancy when the bill said, “extensive evidence shows an unborn child is capable of feeling great pain.”

He also voted against the Conscience Protection Act of 2018, which would have prevented the federal government from denying federal funds to Catholic hospitals and other facilities that refuse to perform abortions.

The Catholic Medical Association is among those who object to Becerra as the head of HHS because of his record on abortion but the group also said there were “significant validations to religious freedom and conscience protections at stake in this nomination.”

In a March 16 letter sent to every member of the Senate ahead of the confirmation vote, the organization said: “With a Becerra confirmation, we can reasonably anticipate an unprecedented assault on our members’ ability to practice medicine according to sound medical judgment and ethical principles of the Hippocratic Oath; a combination of science and principles that are ultimately in the best interest of each individual patient.”

Based on his record, it said, “there is ample evidence to suggest there will be zero tolerance for exemptions to HHS regulations in this administration, whether based on conscience or religious liberty.”

“We believe that Mr. Becerra will continue to vigorously promote not only elective abortion up to and including at the time of birth, but also the acceptance of infanticide when infants are born alive during failed abortion procedures,” the letter said. It also noted that Becerra as attorney general “fought vigorously” to defend California’s physician-assisted suicide law, the End of Life Option Act.

Joining the Catholic Medical Association in the letter were the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Christian Medical and Dental Association, and the American College of Pediatricians, a separate entity from the larger American Academy of Pediatrics.

Regarding the ACA contraceptive mandate, Becerra sued the Trump administration for expanding the religious exemption to the ACA’s contraceptive mandate in 2017 to fully accommodate the Little Sisters’ refusal on religious grounds to cover contraceptives and abortifacients in their employee health care plan.

He argued the federal government was inserting itself into the state’s “sovereign duty” to protect women’s “reproductive rights.”

The religious order ultimately prevailed July 8, 2020, when the Supreme Court ruled 7-2 in their favor in a similar challenge from Pennsylvania. But California is still working to take away their exemption as upheld by the court.

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Solemnity of St. Joseph

(Continued from page 1)

Joseph does he as is instructed. “Joseph is always in the background but he is there,” Bishop Foys said. “Two thousand years later we celebrate in a solemn way this man who was chosen to be the foster father of Jesus, who was chosen to care for the Holy Family, to look after their needs, to protect them.”

In addition to patron of the Universal Church, St. Joseph is also patron of many circumstances and causes. One of those titles, highlighted in a jeweled glass window in the Cathedral Basilica, is patron of a Happy Death.

“We have a window here with Mary and Jesus standing at his death bed. Joseph is therefore referred to as the patron of a Happy Death — to have died with Jesus and the Mother of God at his side,” Bishop Foys said.

In his apostolic letter, Pope Francis said that his desire to declare a year honoring St. Joseph grew during this time of pandemic. Bishop Foys read an excerpt from “Patris corde”: “My desire to do so increased during these months of pandemic, when we experienced, amid the crisis, how our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people, people often overlooked. People who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines, or on the latest television show, yet in these very days are surely shaping the decisive events of our history. Doctors, nurses, storekeepers and supermarket workers, cleaning personnel, caregivers, transport workers, men and women working to provide essential services and public safety, volunteers, priests, monks and religious men and women, and very many others. They understood that no one is saved alone … How many people, daily, exercise patience and offer hope, taking care to spread not panic, but shared responsibility. How many fathers, mothers, grandparents and teachers are showing our children, in small everyday ways, how to accept and deal with a crisis by adjusting their routines, looking ahead and encouraging the practice of prayer. How many are praying, making sacrifices and proceeding for the good of all. Each of us can discover in Joseph — the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence in our midst — an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. St. Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all.”

“Joseph’s story is our Father introduces this year of St. Joseph, a man who led a hidden life but who was so much a part of the lives of Mary and Jesus and who is so much a part of our lives now, at this time of stay-at-home orders that no one — no one — is insignificant … God gives each of us our own role to play in this world, in this Church, in our community. We don’t have to have our name up in lights, or be on the front cover of a tabloid or the lead story on a news show — not St. Joseph led a hidden life, most of us will lead hidden lives — it is what we are called to do. ‘Do — aaaaah!’ exclaimed Bishop Foys. ‘Joseph — he wasn’t a talker, he was a doer. So we celebrate today the Solemnity of St. Joseph, we thank God for giving us the gift of St. Joseph who highlights the Blessed Mother and the Son of God and who takes care of us.”

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National/World
Vatican releases pope’s Holy Week, Easter schedule
VATICAN CITY — The Vatican published Pope Francis’ calendar for Holy Week and Easter, which due to coronavirus restrictions, will be celebrated primarily in St. Peter’s Basilica with a very small congregation.

While the pope is expected to provide over most of the liturgical celebrations, he is not expected to provide over the Mass of the Lord’s Supper April 1. According to Vatican News, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Becciu, dean of the College of Cardinals, will celebrate the Mass at the Altar of the Chair in St. Peter’s Basilica. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the pope had made it a tradition to celebrate the Mass and foot-washing ritual at a prison or detention center, refugee center or rehabilitation facility. The Vatican did not give a reason for the pope’s absence, which — if he does not celebrate the liturgy elsewhere — would mark the first time he has not done so over the Mass of the Lord’s Supper.

Dallas Catholics, faith-based agencies pitch in to help migrant teens

DALLAS — As federal officials announced that a downtown Dallas facility had been chosen to house up to 3,000 migrant teenagers starting the week of March 15, the Catholic faithful in the Diocese of Dallas sprung into action to help.

The Key Bailey Hutchison Convention Center opened to house unaccompanied migrant teens in U.S. custody, with the first few hundred arriving March 17. The convention center will be used for up to 75 days, according to a memo obtained by The Associated Press that was sent March 15 to members of the Dallas City Council. Federal agencies will use the facility to house boys ages 13 to 17, according to the memo. As the unaccompanied migrant teens begin to arrive, Catholic Charities Dallas answered the call to assist with the process. “For Catholic Charities, we are here to help all in need and there is no question that these kids are in need — and we’re here to help,” said Dave Woodyard, president and CEO of Catholic Charities Dallas. He said Catholic Charities’ efforts will focus on finding 300 to 300 Spanish-speaking volunteers and screening them to assist at the convention center.

New documentary recounts story of Scheidler’s nearly 30-year court battle
CHICAGO — The Chicago-based Thomas More Society is releasing a new documentary about activist Joe Scheidler and attorney Tom Brejcha’s nearly 30-year court fight against the National Organization for Women over the pro-life movement’s right “to witness for life” and protest outside of abortion clinics. “Fighting for Life: The Story of NOW v. Scheidler,” debuting on the Eternal Word Television Network March 22 at 4:30 p.m. (EDT), will be available online at https://thomasmore.org/after March 24 Scheidler, who died Jan. 18 at age 81, began his 30-year court battle challenging the National Organization for Women’s (NOW) attempt to declare the pro-life movement a “nuisance” and have its protests restricted. Scheidler, who died Jan. 18 at age 81, began his 30-year court battle challenging the National Organization for Women’s (NOW) attempt to declare the pro-life movement a “nuisance” and have its protests restricted.
life’s weak fighting abortion in 1973, shortly after the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision legalized it nationwide. He founded the Pro-Life Action League in Chicago in 1980 to recruit and equip pro-life Americans to be a voice for unborn children in their own communities. In 1986, NOW and two abortion clinics filed suit against Scheidler, the Pro-Life Action League, and several other defendants claiming they had violated the Richard Lamm Act and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO, “through a conspiracy to prevent women from accessing abortion services through the threat of violence or the implied threat of violence.”

Pope denounces Mafia’s exploitation of pandemic

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis condemned the way the Mafia is exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic by taking advantage of those in dire economic circumstances. Marking Italy’s national day of remembrance for victims of the Mafia March 21, the pope accused members of organized crime groups of “enriching themselves through corruption,” and he urged Christians to know their commitment against the Mafia and related groups. “St. John Paul II denounced their ‘culture of death’ and Pope Benedict XVI condemned them as ‘ways of death.’ These structures of sin, Mafia structures, contrary to Christ’s Gospel, exchange faith with delirium,” he said. According to a Feb. 24 report by the Financial Times, the Italian interior ministry’s study on organized crime said that in the first months of the pandemic, the Mafia used the country’s economic crisis to take over many small businesses. Italy’s Anti-mafia agency known by the Italian acronym DIA, said mafia organizations gave “companies in difficulty a form of social welfare as an alternative to illegal and private sector institutions,” and then adopt the traditional antidissident conduct aimed at acquiring control of their economic activities,” the Financial Times reported.

Some nations reduced religious freedom during pandemic

OSWEGO, England — A commission of Catholic bishops warned religious freedom is threatened in the European Union, as restrictive laws are imposed in the wake of COVID-19. Some governments in Europe have “unacceptably reduced and diminished” religious freedom during the pandemic in disproportionate ways, the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union, or COMECE, said March 22. “It is important not to send out a message that Christians, or more generally believers, are being persecuted inside the EU. However, not over dramatizing does not mean ignoring these disturbing trends. There is a lack of understanding and, in some cases, a lack of interest as to what religion is, and what it means for millions of people in the EU,” COMECE said in a statement to Catholic News Service. The COMECE media office replied to questions from CNS following a March 17-18 online bishops’ plenary, which included talks with Margaritis Schinas, Greek vice president of the EU’s governing commission.

Pope elevates Ireland’s national Knock Shrine to international status

DUBLIN — Pope Francis has elevated the National Sanctuary of Our Lady of Knock to the status of an International Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes and Marian Devotion. In a message delivered via the Vatican’s virtual video link March 19, the start of St. Joseph, Pope Francis described it as an “important moment in the life of the shrine” and “a great responsibility” with all churches in Ireland closed to public worship under Level 3 COVID restrictions, the pope’s message was relayed to an empty Apparition Chapel at Knock Shrine, where Mass was concelebrated by Archbishop Michael Neary of Tuam and Knock’s rector, Father Richard Gibbons. The Mass was livestreamed. Speaking in Italian, Pope Francis said the designation would mean always having “your arms wide open as a sign of welcome to every pilgrim who may arrive from any part of the world, asking nothing in return but only recognizing him as a brother or a sister who desires to share the same experience of pastoral prayer.” Paying tribute to the Irish faithful he said: “You have been a missionary people. We cannot forget how many priests left their homeland in order to become missionaries of the Gospel. Nor can we forget the many lay people who immigrated to faraway lands but still kept their devotion to Our Lady.”

Cardinal, imam hold dialogue as follow-up to pope’s meeting with ayatollah

WASHINGTON — With personal warmth paired with the careful phrasing of diplomacy, Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory and Imam Sayyid M. B. Kashmiri, a representative of Shiite Muslims in North America, held a dialogue on Christian-Muslim relations March 17. It was a follow-up to Pope Francis’ historic meeting in Iraq March 15 with Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, one of Shiite Islam’s most authoritative leaders. Imam Kashmiri, a writer, author and former executive vice chairman and religious affairs director for the Imam Mahdi Association of Marjaeya, the Shiite office in North America for Ayatollah al-Sistani. In the brief dialogue held online and available to be viewed over YouTube, Cardinal Gregory and the imam said the pope’s meeting with the ayatollah has dramatic implications: “This meeting between great spiritual leaders affects all of us,” said Imam Kashmiri, noting that Christianity and Islam are the biggest religions in the world, and that Catholicism and Shiite Islam in particular share many things in common. Those commonalities can show a way forward to other faiths for working together for the betterment of humanity he said. Cardinal Gregory repeated Imam Kashmiri’s observation online in their dialogue that “Pope Francis and Ayatollah al-Sistani have raised the bar considerably for both of our religious faiths and traditions.”

House passes two immigration bills with citizenship provisions

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House of Representatives approved two separate immigration bills March 18, clearing an initial hurdle for two groups seeking a path toward citizenship: younger unauthorized immigrants called “Dreamers” and migrant farmworkers. Both measures passed in the House along party lines, for the most part, with but will face greater opposition in the U.S. Senate. The U.S. bishops were among those from various faith-based organizations, including Catholic groups such as the Franciscan Action Network and the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach, voicing support for the bills. The American Dream and Promise Act for unauthorized immigrants has enjoyed strong backing in the past as it seeks to provide young adults brought to the country illegally as children a path toward citizenship. All House Democrats voted for it, and nine Republicans voted with them. It passed 228-197. The bill would similarly benefit immigrants in the country under the Temporary Protected Status. The Farm Modernization Workforce Act passed 247-174. Sixty Republicans voted for it and two Democrats opposed it. It would allow farmworkers to earn legal status and later they also can apply for permanent residency by showing prior employment and continued work in agriculture.
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