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Dear Friends in Christ,

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the season of Lent — forty days of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. It is a good time to remind ourselves what the season is about. The Lenten Prefaces to the Eucharistic Prayer help to guide our reflection.

The very first thing I notice is that Lent is meant to be joyful! “For by your gracious gift each year your faithful await the sacred paschal feasts with the joy of minds made pure...” (Preface of Lent I). Think of the joy of holding a sleepy baby after they’ve worn themselves out in a bath, or the contented joy that can come from a good shower after a long and wearying day. Visualize yourself accomplishing a Spring-cleaning project you’ve been meaning to take on. Imagine how great it will feel to accomplish that goal, especially if you have good help and company along the way. The joy of the season is not in spite of Lenten practices, but flows directly from our devotions, disciplines and asceticism.

The reference to the paschal feast is a reminder that Lent is directed toward the special joy of Easter and baptism. We accompany those who are preparing to be reborn and to enter the Church. We get ready to renew our own commitment to Christ. It is a labor of love. Lenten joy flows from our anticipation for the annual remembrance of Christ’s resurrection.

The season of Lent is holy and is about our journey into holiness. It is time set aside for our most essential purpose. “For you have given your children a sacred time for the renewing and purifying of their hearts” (Preface of Lent II). Our acts of penance and sacrifice “give you thanks” (Preface of Lent II). They “restrain our faults, raise up our minds, and bestow both virtue and its rewards” (Preface of Lent IV).

So this season of Lent that begins with ashes, is about joy, baptismal life, growth in holiness, thanksgiving, new beginnings, and a rekindling of our love and devotion for God. I love the focus this lends to our understanding of Lent. This focus on joy, holiness, becoming, virtue, and relationship in Christ can protect us from some possible misunderstandings of Lent.

One of those misunderstandings is that Lent is meant to be onerous — a spiritual obstacle course, or somber exercise in self-diminishment. How much lighter the work of Lent is when it is associated with the joyful anticipation of a renewed encounter with our greatest good.

Another temptation is to be minimalistic about Lent. Some folks even seem to consider Lenten fasting “outdated” or irrelevant to their life. Just like doing nothing can leave its imprint on our body, doing nothing to mark this holy season also marks our spirit and establishes the tone for a half-hearted renewal of Christian promises on Easter Sunday.

Another faulty path is to see Lent as just another aspect of our culture’s obsession with improvement and self-help. This focus transforms Lenten asceticism into an opportunity to renew a New Year’s resolution. Lenten discipline is something different. These little sacrifices — prayer, fasting, and almsgiving —are acts of love, designed to remind us of our complete dependence on God and to open our hearts to one another.

As you choose how to joyfully enter Lent 2022, please keep these traditional practices — prayer, fasting, and almsgiving — in mind. And remember the goals the Church’s prayer reveal to us — joyful sacrifice in preparation for Easter celebration and a more complete giving over of our lives to the power of the Resurrection. May God bless us all and give us growth in the coming weeks of Lent. Let us pray for one another.

With you on this Lenten journey,

+ Bishop John Iffert

Lent at the Cathedral
Ash Wednesday
Wednesday, March 2, Mass and distribution of ashes, 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.; no 8:15 a.m. Mass
Stations of the Cross
Fridays, March 4–April 8, 7 p.m.; no Stations March 25.
Rite of Election
Sunday, March 6, 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.; no 5:30 p.m. Mass

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 14 to 50, are obliged to abstain from meat 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.
‘Pondering Patriotism’ — TMU’s inaugural Wilbert L. and Ellen Hackman Ziegler Endowed Chair in Philosophy lecture

Laura Keener

Presidents’ Day made a compelling backdrop for Msgr. Gerald Twaddell’s “Pondering Patriotism,” the inaugural lecture by the Wilbert L. and Ellen Hackman Ziegler Endowed Chair in Philosophy at Thomas More University. The setting quickly changed when in his introductory remarks Msgr. Twaddell said, “To … offer a clue to where we are heading, I want to suggest that patriotism begins at home.”

About 100 people, including senior Philosophy students at TMU, gathered for the lecture of TMU’s first and only endowed chair. Mr. and Mrs. Ziegler were both present for the landmark occasion.

“We are so fortunate at Thomas More University to have a thriving philosophy program where students take two philosophy courses to graduate, thereby get time to examine some of the world’s most important ideas,” said Dr. Catherine Sherron, chair, Department of Philosophy, TMU, as she introduced the lecture. “And our fortune does not stop there, as we are tonight realizing the generous gift from the Zieglers, an embodiment of the values of philosophy in the form of the Endowed Chair — Msgr. Twaddell cannot be more deserving of this honor. This Endowed Chair will help support our students’ education in philosophy, which in turn contributes to the flourishing of our communities well into the future.”

… in tonight’s talk pondering patriotism, Msgr. Twaddell is walking us through the components of what patriotism has meant and could mean. Msgr. Twaddell will ask us to think carefully about the words of thinkers who have pondered this family of terms: patriotism, loyalty, piety, love.

Msgr. Twaddell’s lecture was framed heavily on a book published by Yale University Press in 2021, “Reclaiming Patriotism in an Age of Extremes,” by Steven B. Smith, which includes a historical journey on the thoughts and examples of patriotism from some of history’s greatest thinkers: Plato, Cicero, Thomas Aquinas, Montesquieu, Adam Smith, John Locke, James Madison and Abraham Lincoln, to name a few.

The question-and-answer session following the lecture encapsulated many of the theories presented — as well as Msgr. Twaddell’s thoughts — on patriotism. Here, in a question-and-answer format, are the questions posed by the students.

Q: Can it be patriotic to leave an impious state?

Msgr.: Yes, you can be a patriot even if you don’t like something about your country, even something significant? Is it essential to be critical of your country?

Msgr.: Yes, you can be a patriot even if you don’t like something about your country. Again, it comes back to the terms: patriotism, loyalty, piety, love.

Msgr.: If we were to look only at the example of Socrates, we might think that the answer would have to be “no.” My thought is not quite as rigorous as Socrates was. And so I do believe that there can be very good reasons why one would leave an impious state. For example, the state might engage in activities which are so morally objectionable that I cannot live there without being seen as contributing to and approving of those activities. I can, therefore, in order to disengage myself, in order not to be complicit in the evil of others, I can choose to leave the state and still be patriotic, because I can still continue to want all the best for the people of that state. Though they may be sorely oppressed by the state.

Q: Can you be considered a patriot even if you don’t like something about your country, even something significant? Is it essential to be critical of your country?

Msgr.: Yes, you can be a patriot even if you don’t like something about your country. Again, it comes back to the difference between the society and the state, which I do think is a valid distinction. We can love all the members of the society and despise the way the state is structured, the way it operates, the principles on which it makes laws and so that is certainly very possible. But I want to mention here … There’s a famous expression that was very widely heard back during the Vietnam War, “My country, right or wrong.”

(Continued on page 17)
Technology use in schools and homes

The Messenger Staff report

The Messenger is collaborating with the diocesan Schools Department on a matter of increasing importance—the use of technology. Kendra McGuire, superintendent, announced in a letter to parents, Feb. 21, that during the month of March, schools will recognize “Tech Tuesdays,” focusing on the proper use—and even non-use—of the many devices—computers, laptops, smart phones, iPads—and “apps” downloaded to them, that, while essential, are increasingly becoming invasive—threatening relationships and mental health.

“Unfortunately, we are learning more and more about the dangers of these technologies—especially the unregulated internet access that accompanies the devices and apps,” said Mrs. McGuire.

On “Tech Tuesdays” schools will send an informational e-mail or flyer home highlighting the latest technology research and data. Parents are asked to read the material and have conversations with their children.

Additionally, the Messenger will begin a five-week series of articles so that everyone can learn together and have conversations with their children.

The topics are, in the order they will be presented:

— Family Crisis—Too Much Technology;
— Dangerous Content—Pornography, Sexting, Predators;
— Digital Protection—How to improve safety on your child’s devices;
— Tech Free Challenge;
— Technology Use—How to moderate our use of technology.

“As we begin the season of Lent, it is my hope that families will use this series on technology to pray about how technology might be affecting their relationships with each other and with God; to fast from technology to allow more time with loved ones and the Lord; and to allow the Spirit to lead them to a less virtual and more joyful Easter,” said Mrs. McGuire.

The Department of Catholic Schools is beginning a five-week initiative “Tech Tuesdays” to help educate families on how technology is affecting students.

Sacred Heart Discernment Dinner—The way to a man’s heart and vocation

Tom Ziegler
Staff Writer

Have you ever thought about becoming a priest? Do you have a son who is interested in the priesthood? Beginning discernment to a priestly vocation can be a step out of someone’s comfort zone. Especially in a world where religion can take a back seat to a life that becomes focused on family and career.

Father Conor Kunath, vocations promoter, Diocese of Covington, is helping to alleviate that stress by offering some comfort and conversations at Sacred Heart Discernment dinners.

“Considering a vocation to the priestly or religious life is something that takes a step out of where you may be comfortable, and I think this dinner is a step out of that comfort zone and potentially into a consideration of serious discernment,” said Father Kunath.

Sacred Heart Discernment dinners are for young men considering a priestly or religious vocation. These dinners are an opportunity for young men considering the priesthood to meet Bishop John Iffert and Father Kunath. The objective of these dinners is to start building bridges with young men interested in the priesthood and help parents become more comfortable with the idea of their son discerning the priesthood. The most recent Sacred Heart Discernment dinner, Feb. 20, had roughly 30 people in attendance and 16 discerners.

As vocations promoter, I want everyone to be better off for having talked to me. One of my biggest things when I talk to young men thinking of a vocation of any sort, especially to the religious life, is that I am not here to pressure you. I am here to help you find out what God’s will is here for you in this life,” Father Kunath said. “If God wants you to be a missionary to Mars, well then praised be Jesus Christ, that’s what I want you to do. There is no pressure or judgement on whatever your vocation is because I want you to find whatever God’s call is for his people.”

Father Kunath’s goal is to host a quarterly dinner and schedule some other discernment activities during the intermediate months—something a little more casual—to build a network and fraternity among young men considering a vocation to the priesthood.

For those on the fence about a vocation, feel free to reach out to Father Kunath. “There is no pressure to do anything,” Father Kunath said. “I am not trying to get you to be a priest, I am trying to get you to do God’s will. So don’t be nervous about reaching out or coming to an event like this, the goal is to build bridges.”

Father Kunath is still determining the date and time for the next Sacred Heart Discernment dinner. It, along with other vocation discernment opportunities and events, will be posted on the Vocations website, www.covdio.org/vocations or call Father Kunath at (859) 392-1566.

Catholics@TheCapitol

Join Bishop John Iffert and Jason Hall, executive director and Andrew Vandiver, associate director, Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCOK), March 10, for a day of advocacy in Frankfort, Ky. Learn more about bills and issues important to Catholics that are currently before the General Assembly and meet with your state representatives to share views.

Buses will leave from the diocesan Curia, 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, at 7 a.m.; returning at about 3 p.m. Participants may also choose to provide their own transportation.

There is no cost to attend. The deadline to register is March 4, online at www.covdio.org.
For months now, the world press has described Russian troop deployments along Ukraine’s borders as spearheads of a possible invasion. The truth, however, is that Russia invaded Ukraine seven years ago, when it annexed Crimea and Russian “little green men” ignited a war in eastern Ukraine that has taken over 14,000 lives and displaced over a million people. Whatever the current military developments, a Russian invasion of Ukraine has not been “imminent,” the invasion never happened.

That fact has been obscured by a massive Russian propaganda and disinformation campaign. So some truth telling is imperative.

The first fact: This is a Russian crisis, not a “Ukraine crisis.” What is typically called the “Ukraine crisis” is entirely of Russian authoritarians’ making. Ukraine did not create this crisis. The United States did not create it, and neither did NATO.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which is, was, and will always be a defensive alliance, is no more a threat to Russian national security than NATO is to Belorussian’s national security. The 2014 U.S.-NATO threats to Russia is a Big Lie that obfuscates the security realities in central and eastern Europe: former Soviet satellites (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria) and the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) joined NATO because they fear Russia, not because they intend to invade Russia. The same rationale explains Ukraine’s NATO application.

The second fact: This artificially created crisis, aimed at Ukraine’s destabilization and subjugation, is one expression of Mr. Putin’s determination to reverse history’s verdict in the Cold War. Putin has been quite clear about this for 20 years, and only fools or those peering through the ideologically befogged lenses of the new “national conservatism” fail to grasp what is afoot here.

Mr. Putin, the old KGB apparatchik, is bent on overseeing the turning of imperial democracies into global autocracies. Putin and Xi want nothing less than a fundamental re-ordering of world affairs in which their oppressive regimes call the tune. In the tyrants’ bid for global hegemony, Ukraine and Taiwan are in the role played by Austria and Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s — if they fail to the tyrant-regimes, others will follow.

The third fact: The ongoing Russian aggression in Ukraine is underwritten by a false rendition of history, including Christian history. Mr. Putin’s claim that Ukraine is not a real country is buttressed by another Big Lie: that Russia is the sole heir of the baptism of the east — an assertion that has never been substantiated. Indeed, what Putin’s ideologues and apologists call the Russian “world” — that Russia invaded, its Orthodox communities and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church have at least as strong a claim to that historical patrimony as Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church.

On Ukraine

Lent begins next week. Many will participate in the stations of the cross to remember Jesus’ sacrifice by an angel for holy persons and by her son. What did the words from an angel mean? What did the words of Simeon mean? How will the fate of this child who shall be called “holy” and “son of God” manifest itself (Luke 1:35)? How will her heart pierced (Luke 2:44) — What did Jesus demand about needing to be in his father’s house (Luke 2:49)?

Today, as she is swept along, there is no psalm of praise. It is accompanied by the word: Profound anguish, pleasurable musings, mark the journey. She moves with the undulating mob. Some of them gawk at the suffering man. Anonymous, the murderous mob, as a nameless mob, their moral responsibility for the loved one who is condemned. Anonymous cells in a nameless mob, their moral responsibility recedes and the basest of buried inclinations come to the fore.

Individual moral compasses muted, some hunger for the grotesque scene of death.

So many times he needed her — to soothe feelings hurt by playmates, to tend a scraped knee. A mother responds to the needs of her child. Despite her child’s need, he need propels her through the street. She would kiss the scraped knees after each fall if she can reach him.

An unstarred heart, begging, filled not satisfied. Elbows bruise and jabs pushing, shove entangled Bloodied body writhed back, torn flesh. Her pierced heart refuses to believe it can be son and demands a confirmation with seeing by her own eyes. Yet, her body pulls away in dread of witnessing this spectacle. It is her child, her beloved. She has seen them pass by before, beaten, with hardly a human visage left, struggling, falling, rising. Continuing when there was no continuing left in them. Now it is her son.

The Fourth Station — Jesus meets his mother

Finally wedging through the tangled limbs and shuffling feet stands near him. He sees the remembrance in her eyes, the aloofness, Isaac with the wood on his back, the wood that will be the kindling for the sacrifice. She hears the question of Isaac to his father Abraham, “My father, here are the wood and the fire but where is the lamb meant for the offering?” (Gen 22:7–8)

“God will provide.” Frantically she eyes the byways, the growth between the pavements, the brambles.

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The bare life versus the victorious life


I was recently reading Nicholas Diat’s marvelous book, A Time to Die: Monks on the Threshold of Eternal Life, and I was deeply struck by this thought: “Today, the monks are perhaps the only remaining people who can understand the words of St. Francis of Assisi’s Canticle of Brother Sun: “Praise you for your sister corporal death, from whom no living man can escape. Sorrows are they who die in mortal sin; happy are they whom she finds living according to your will, for the second death for them does no harm.”

The second death referred to by St. Francis is the second death described in Revelation 21:8, which refers to an eternal separation from God. “I thought profoundly: I’m resonating with me as I contemplated those words of St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians given to us at Mass this weekend: “Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your sting? Where, O grave, is your victory?” Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

This, of course, is the most profound conviction of our holy religion, that our biological death will not be victorious because Jesus Christ has conquered death precisely so we can have, “through him, and with him, and in him” the abundant and victorious life in the Kingdom of Heaven, which is our true homeland.

It occurs to me — as I interrogate my heart and examine the events of the last few years through the lens of the Word of God and the Paschal Mystery — that something less than a profound faith in Christ’s victory over death has gripped the life of many Christians. It is what the Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, has described as the “bare life mentality.”

This mentality, as the preservation of biological life as not only the highest good, but as the only good worth considering or preserving. People, cultures, and nations possessed of this mentality become ready to sacrifice everything that makes a life meaningful, such as friendships, family life, concern and participation in community work, and worship in order to preserve this bare, earthly life.

The narcissism and misanthropy embedded in this outlook ought to be obvious. Of course, it includes within it a deeply bourgeois materialistic conviction that life is about the accumulation of quality stuff, hedonic satisfac- tion, coupled to an all-consuming obsession about feeling safe in our possession. In essence, the bare life mentality understands the human person as nothing more than a bundle of appetites.

Further, the bare life mentality is inherently atheistic as it does not consider God as the ultimate destiny of man and our deliverance through the Paschal Mystery of Jesus to the eternal life of the Kingdom of Heaven. The capability of monks to comprehend the life beyond corporeal death, to live for the Kingdom of Heaven, to properly enjoy one’s allotted time on earth, and to approach death fearlessly is not a charism unique to monks. It is a revelation and a charism given to all of us as human beings.

Yet, to live the victorious life of Christ requires conversion away from the comfort seeking, fear misanthropy and narcissism of the bare life mentality and its bourgeois materialism and practical atheism, and attention to, as St. Francis notes, living accord to Christ’s will.

The Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ is the substance of our faith in confronting the reality of our mortality. How easy it is to forget that our life here on earth is a short pilgrimage that began with God’s creative power of

It’s time for educational choice for all Ky. families

In 2021, Kentucky passed its first school choice program, the Education Opportunity Account Act (“EOA Act”). This program will incentivize private donations to non-profit organizations that provide financial assistance to families. Funding can be tailored to a student’s specific needs and used for tuition and fees for attendance at a non-public school (including Catholic schools), tutoring services, therapy programs, educational technology and more. This was a major win for thousands of Kentucky families who would be eligible for the program.

While this program was a significant step forward for Kentucky, several compromises were made prior to its final passage. When it comes to tuition for private schools, the program is limited to families living in Kentucky’s 8 largest counties (Jefferson, Fayette, Boone, Kenton, Campbell, Harrison, Hardin and Warren). Further, the overall size of the program was capped at $25 million. This is a great start, but demand is likely to exceed available funding within a short amount of time.

Fortunately, State Senator Joseph Crowl and State Senator Ralph Alvarado have filed legislation that would build on the promise of the EOA Act. House Bill 305 and Senate Bill 50 make the following changes to the EOA Act:

1) expands tuition assistance so that it is available to eligible families statewide;
2) allows the size of the program to increase so that funding better meets family demand over the long term; and
3) increases income eligibility so that more families can apply.

Sen. Crowl and Sen. Alvarado are not alone in championing this legislation. As of last week, over 20 legislators from all across the Commonwealth have joined as co-sponsors supporting EOA expansion, including House Speaker David Osborne and Majority Whip Chad McCoy.

The General Assembly needs to take action on one or both of these bills before the end of session in April if they are to become law in 2022. The time for action on this legislation could not be better. Support for school choice has never been higher.

Nevertheless, opponents persist in arguing that Kentucky parents should not be allowed to benefit from the EOA Act. They often claim that school choice harms public schools, but this could not be further from the truth. In fact, the states with the oldest and largest school choice programs have seen public school student outcomes improve and public school funding increase over the years after they passed their programs.

Contrary to the position of opponents, lawmakers can support public school students and increase school choice for families that need another option. In 2021, the Kentucky General Assembly provided an additional $840 million for public schools at the same time that it passed the $25 million EOA Act. The Kentucky General Assembly is poised to increase public school funding by hundreds of millions in 2022. There is no reason that they cannot also invest in students who need a different educational option.

Access to the right classroom is out of reach for too many students. Our current model has historically been able to afford the cost of private school tuition, but only after making significant sacrifices. Parents should not have to work two or even three jobs just so their children can have access to a classroom where they will succeed.

Fortunately, expanding the EOA Act would provide needed assistance to thousands of students in the near term and represent a major step towards leveling the playing field for all Kentucky students.

If you agree that more families need this type of opportunity, please take time to contact both your state representatives and senators. You can call 1-800-372-7181 and ask the operator to connect you to your legislators based on your home address. Tell them that you support school choice and specifically ask for them to make passing HB 305 and SB 50 a top priority for 2022. It only takes a couple of minutes of your time to make a big difference for Kentucky students.

Andrew Vander Veen is associate director for the Catholic Conference of Kentucky.

The project located onto the National Shrine

It was an appalling sight. As the annual National Prayer Vigil for Life was taking place on the inside of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington the evening of Jan. 20, a pro-abortion group that for some reason calls itself “Catholics for Choice” in a cruciform shape. Through the darkness, pro-abortion organizers projected the following phrases on the shrine’s usually stunning 329-foot bell tower: “1 in 4 abortion patients is a woman less than a profound faith in Christ’s victory over the Word of God and the Paschal Mystery — that some-
Pro-Life Lent “Little Ways” for Life

Deacon Greg Meier  
Messenger Contributor

Lenten  Pro-life Prayer

We thank you for this season of grace and light.
We know that sin has blinded us.
Draw us ever closer to you, in prayer and penance.

Since you, O God, are light itself,
Give all you people a clearer understanding
Of what is sin, and what is virtue.

Grant in particular that we may see,
as never before,
The profound dignity of every human life,
Including the vulnerable unborn children.
Give us grace to defend
Our brothers and sisters
in the womb
By our prayers, our words,
And our self-sacrificing actions.
We pray through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For more information about the Pro-Life Office or to be added to our e-mail newsgroups, visit us online at www.covdio.org/prolife/  or call (859) 392-1500.

We Choose Life

Pro-Life Office
of the Diocese of Covington

Mission Statement
The Pro-Life Office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, guided by our bishop, promotes the sanctity and legal protection of human life from conception to natural death through prayer, pastoral care, public policy and education.

We Choose Life Committee
Felice Roche, the director of the Pro-Life Office, learned a lesson at 40 Days for Life that she has never forgotten.

“A few years ago I attended a Saturday morning Mass at Holy Name Church in Cincinnati during the 40 Days for Life Campaign. Being a full-time working mom, I am a bit selfish of my time off and was putting myself on the back for making the ‘sacrifice’ of getting up early on my off day to attend Mass and pray outside Planned Parenthood. A light drizzle had started before Mass, and while processing out of church, I could feel the cold moving in. Many of those attending were students from our diocesan high schools, including some members of a football team, and as we all walked along, praying together in the increasing wet and cold, I decided no one would notice if I slipped away.

“The end of the rosary was drawing near and I was planning my getaway — when several students dropped to their knees. This small act by those young men brought me to my knees and drew my heart back to the reason we had all come — to pray for the souls of those lost to abortion and for the conversion of hearts of those touched by the experience of abortion.”

The Diocese of Covington will again participate in the spring 40 Days for Life Campaign, which begins Ash Wednesday. Why not join hundreds of thousands of pro-life people worldwide in offering Lenten prayers and fasting this year for an end to abortion?

Since launching in 2007, the 40 Days for Life global campaign has involved 64 nations with over a million participants. Most importantly, over 20,000 lives have been saved, 221 abortion workers have quit their jobs and 141 abortion facilities have closed.

Locally, the 40 Days for Life spring campaign extends from March 2 – April 10. Peaceful pro-life prayer vigils will be held at Planned Parenthood on Auburn Ave, Cincinnati. All are invited to unite their prayers, witness and fasting with hundreds of others at similar locations nationally and internationally to bring about an end to abortion and the conversion of those who reject the sanctity of human life.

“Committing time to pray outside of an abortion facility is an appropriate sacrifice for Lent,” says Mrs. Roche, “especially with the often-cold temperatures. And for those who are uncomfortable with being a public witness, it can bring additional special graces.” Another benefit is the opportunity “to meet, face to face, pro-life people from a wide geographic area and surrounding churches.”

For more information on 40 Days for Life and the Planned Parenthood vigil contact Mary Clark at (513) 791-4039, or cincy66days@fuse.net.
VATICAN CITY — The same love that gave St. Joseph the strength to protect Jesus and Mary must inspire Christians to love the Church, especially when calling out its sins and flaws, Pope Francis said.

Love “makes us capable of speaking the truth fully in a nonpartisan way; of saying what is wrong but also of recognizing all the goodness and holiness that are present,” the pope said Feb. 16 during his weekly general audience.

“Nowadays it is common, it is an everyday occurrence, to criticize the Church, to point out its inconsistencies — and there are many — to point out its sins, which in reality are our inconsistencies, our sins, because the Church has always been a people of sinners who encounter God’s mercy,” the pope said. “Let us ask ourselves if, in our hearts, we love the Church.”

Reflecting on St. Joseph as the patron of the universal Church, the pope said he was concluding his series of audience talks about the foster father of Jesus.

The Gospel stories involving St. Joseph note that he takes Jesus and Mary with him and obeys God’s commands, thus highlighting his role as their protector, the pope said.

Departing from his prepared remarks, he added that “a very beautiful aspect of the Christian vocation” is protecting life and “protecting human development.”

“The Christian is — we may say — like St. Joseph: he or she must protect,” he said. “To be a Christian is not only about receiving the faith, confessing the faith, but protecting life, one’s own life, the life of others, the life of the Church.”

Christians, he continued, “must always ask ourselves whether we are protecting with all our strength Jesus and Mary, who are mysteriously entrusted to our responsibility, our care, our custody.”

St. Joseph, “in continuing to protect the Church, continues to protect the child and his mother, and we too, in loving the Church, continue to love the child and his mother,” he said.

Loving the Church, he added, means protecting and walking with all its members.

“The Church is not that small group that is close to the priest and bosses everyone around; no. We all are the Church, all of us,” he said. “This is a good question: when I have a problem with someone, do I try to protect them or do I immediately condemn them, speak ill of them, destroy them? We must protect, always protect!”

Pope Francis encouraged Christians to seek St. Joseph’s intercession, especially in “the most difficult times in your life and the life of your communities.”

“Where our mistakes become a scandal, let us ask St. Joseph to give us the courage to speak the truth, ask for forgiveness and humbly begin again. Where persecution prevents the Gospel from being proclaimed, let us ask St. Joseph for the strength and patience to endure abuse and suffering for the sake of the Gospel,” the pope said.

St. Joseph’s intercession, he added, is also a source of comfort for the poor and the suffering and an encouragement for those “who serve the least, the defenseless, the orphans, the sick, the rejected of society.”

“How many saints have turned to him! How many people in the history of the Church have found in him a patron, a guardian, a father!” the pope said.
Friday Lenten Fish Frys

St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright, 5–8 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, no carry out
St. Augustine Parish, Covington, 4–7 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8, 15
St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger, 4:30–8 p.m., Drive-thru closes at 7:30 p.m. March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1 and 8.
St. Benedict Parish, Covington, 4:45–7 p.m. March 4, 18, 25 April 1, 8
St. Bernard Parish, Dayton, 5–7 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8

St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, 4:30–7:30 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8
St. Cecilia Parish, Independence, 5–8 p.m., March 18, 25, April 1, 8
St. Edward Parish, Cynthia, 11 a.m.—7 p.m. and 5–7 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8
Holy Cross District High School, Latonia, 5–8 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8
St. Joseph Academy, Walton, 4:30–8 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8

Knights of Columbus Lenten Fish Fry, lunch 11:00–2:00 p.m.; dinner, 4:30–8 p.m.
St. Mary Parish, Alexandria, 4–7:30 p.m. March 4, 11, 18, 25
Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger, 4–8 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8
Our Savior Parish, Covington, noon–6 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8
St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill, 4:30–7:30 p.m. March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8

St. Paul Parish, Florence, 4:30–7:30 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8
St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas, 4–8 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8
St. Timothy Parish, Union, drive-thru, 4:30–7:30 p.m.; dine-in, 5–7 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8
St. William Parish, Williamstown, 4:30–7:30 p.m., March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1, 8, carry out only

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Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the Messenger are available online at covdio.org/messenger.

Newsworthy

The following students have been recognized as 2022 National Merit Finalists by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation:
Covington Latin School: Jacob Schuetter
Notre Dame Academy: Abigail Breeze, Macie Feldman, Grace Heberling and Samantha Mazzaro;
Covington Catholic High School: Samuel A. Epple.
Villa Madonna Academy High School: Ben Dropic.
St. Henry District High School: Peter Constant.

The prayer intention for March, as recommended by Pope Francis, is for Christians facing new bioethical challenges; may they continue to defend the dignity of all human life with prayer and action.

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW Sundays, noon to 1 p.m. Viewers can tune-in on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517; and DirectTV 25.

Catholic Courses for Adults — the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization offers courses for teachers, parish and school catechists, diaconate aspirants, and all adults who would like to expand their knowledge of the Catholic faith. Cost $35. Call Isaak A. Isaak at 392-1500, ext. 1529.

First Friday Mass, Bishop Brossart High School, March 4, 6:45 a.m., St. Francis of Assisi Chapel.

Mount St. Mary’s Seminary and School of Theology is offering classes for adults. Learn more at www.athenaeum.edu.

New Hope Center’s Father Daughter Dance March 5 & 6, 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Fort Thomas Mess Hall. 6th–12th graders and their fathers, $45 per father-daughter couple. $35 each additional daughter. Semi-formal attire, scholarships available, dinner served. Reserve tickets at www.givingforhope.com.

Annual Crusader Royale, March 5, 7:30 p.m. Cost $70 per person. Register at https://Royale2022.givesmart.com.

Bishop Brossart High School euchre tournament, March 11. Hegezvari Hall. Doors open 5:30 p.m., tournament 7 p.m. Cost $25 per player. Contact ckremer11@icloud.com or 786-7604 to register.

St. William Church Lenten Fish Frys

Fridays During Lent
March 4th—April 8th
Drive Thru Only
4:30pm—7:30pm
Call 859-428-7535 to order ahead
6 Church St, Williamstown, KY 41097
People and Events

The sin of pride
In Religion class, 6th graders at St. Agnes School, Ft. Wright, created their own towers of Babel and learned about the sin of pride.

Priests, Deacons and pancakes
Father John Sterling, pastor, and Deacon Chuck Melville, St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger, visited with students at St. Henry School, Elsmere, to join them for lunch and talk with them about vocations.

Bishop Brossart High School Art Gallery presents:
Ceramic Works by Charity Rust-Jordan, March 13–April 3, Sundays, noon–4 p.m.; Monday–Saturday by appointment 630-2874.

Thomas More University open house, March 22, 6-8 p.m. RSVP at thomasmore.edu/preview or contact admissions by e-mailing admissions@thomasmore.edu or calling 344-3332.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky is hosting its second annual art fundraiser event, “Creative Compassion,” March 31, Drees Pavilion, Covington. Tickets available online at www.svdpnky.org. Cost $65. For information e-mail marypat.behler@svdpnky.org.

Retreat for women and men, April 8–10, St. Walburg Monastery Guest House, Villa Hills. Due to COVID restrictions at the monastery meals will be “on your own,” bringing food in or going out. Arrangements and fees are determined with reservation. Contact Sister Dorothy Schuette, 443-8515 or dorothysosb@gmail.com.

Thomas More University’s preview day, April 27, 6-8 p.m., for students beginning their college search. RSVP at thomasmore.edu/preview or contact admissions by e-mailing admissions@thomasmore.edu or calling 344-3332.

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American Catholics Can Have a Major Impact in Haiti by Rebuilding Lost Homes

Within a few horrifying minutes, the lives of hundreds of Haitian families were literally turned upside down. On Aug. 14, a massive earthquake struck Haiti’s Tiburon Peninsula, causing 2,268 deaths, injuring more than 12,760 people, and damaging hundreds of homes, parishes, schools and medical buildings. It was a day Jim Cavnar remembers very well. As the president of Cross Catholic Outreach, he understood exactly how the disaster would impact Haiti’s poorest families.

“There’s not a more life-transforming gift a donor could give.”
Jim Cavnar, Cross Catholic Outreach

“The earthquake came without warning, killed indiscriminately, and left scores of shattered lives — and homes — in its wake,” he recalled. “While it was centered in a part of Haiti that is less populated than the country’s capital city, we were on high alert that day because the Tiburon Peninsula contains a lot of makeshift homes, and we knew they would never hold up to an earthquake of that severity.” (See related story on opposite page.)

Even before roads had been cleared and damaged bridges could be repaired, Cross Catholic Outreach had found routes to provide earthquake survivors with food and other relief supplies. The ministry continued this emergency relief work for weeks following the disaster, and it also began working with its in-country Catholic partners to determine what kinds of long-term support would be needed. It was then that Cross Catholic Outreach’s staff learned something encouraging. The homes it had been building for poor families prior to the earthquake were among the few structures that had remained intact during the tremors; few had sustained any serious damage, while many other cement houses in the area had been reduced to rubble.

“That proved the importance of our commitment to build simple but high-quality homes for the poor in Haiti,” Cavnar said. “It also inspired us to expand our plans so we could provide new homes to the families that had lost everything in the earthquake. The success of our design must have been a comfort to them too. They could be confident knowing they were receiving a house that would provide better protection from any major storm or earthquake to come.”

In recent months, Cross Catholic Outreach has worked with its Haitian ministry partners — typically leaders of local parishes and Catholic ministries — to formalize its housing project and mobilize construction teams. As with all of its programs, Cross Catholic Outreach will approach this housing project in a way that blesses families both materially and spiritually, according to Cavnar.

“We believe in integral human development. That is a formal term used by the Catholic Church, but its meaning is actually very simple,” he said. “It means we believe spiritual and emotional support must accompany the material aid we provide. We stress that because we know true, lasting change is only possible when we address the needs of both the body and the soul.”

Cavnar added that Cross Catholic Outreach feels a sense of urgency and is eager to get its next large-scale housing project underway.

“We’ll be launching a campaign soon to get funding for this effort from Catholic donors in the U.S.,” he said, “and we are confident a lot of individuals, families and even Catholic businesses will want to participate. No one wants these Haitian families to be homeless or living in tents because of this disaster. Our housing project will build quality homes at a very reasonable cost using local labor, which also helps support poor families in Haiti through job training and employment. There’s not a more impactful or life-transforming gift a donor could give.”

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach’s housing program and other ministries to the poor can contribute through the brochure inserted in this issue or by sending a tax-deductible gift to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC01914, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20096-7168. The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission Partner, or write “Monthly Mission Partner” on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.

Cross Catholic Outreach Endorsed by More Than 100 Bishops, Archbishops

Cross Catholic Outreach’s range of relief work to help the poor overseas continues to be recognized by a growing number of Catholic leaders in the U.S. and abroad.

“We’ve received more than 100 endorsements from bishops and archbishops,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach (CCO). “They’re moved by the fact that we’ve launched outreachs in almost 40 countries and have undertaken a variety of projects — everything from feeding the hungry and housing the homeless to supplying safe water and supporting educational opportunities for the poorest of the poor. The bishops have also been impressed by CCO’s direct and meaningful response to emergency situations, most recently by providing food, medicines and other resources to partners in Haiti, El Salvador and areas of Belize impacted by natural disasters.”

Archbishop Thomas Rodi of Mobile, Alabama, supports this mission, writing, “It is a privilege for me to support Cross Catholic Outreach. This organization funnels ministries to our neighbors in need in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and the Pacific. Through the generosity of so many, the love of God is made visible to many who are coping with the most difficult of daily living conditions.”

In addition to praising CCO’s accomplishments, many of the bishops and archbishops are encouraged that Pontifical canonical status was conferred on the charity in September 2015, granting it approval as an official Catholic organization. This allows CCO to participate in the mission of the Church and to give a concrete witness to Gospel charity, in collaboration with the Holy Father.

“Your work with the Diocese for Promoting Integral Human Development is a strong endorsement of your partnership with the work of the Universal Church,” Archbishop Cordileone of San Francisco said. “By providing hope to the faithful overseas by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, delivering medical relief to the sick and shelter to the homeless, and through self-help projects, you are embodying the Papal Encyclical Deus Caritas Est.”
Cross Catholic Outreach Remains Committed to Helping Haiti’s Poor Recover From Historic Disaster

Is August 14 an anniversary you remember? It would be if you, your family or friends had close ties to Haiti — particularly to the country’s southwest provinces. On that day in 2021, Haiti experienced a devastating magnitude 7.2 earthquake and thousands of families were literally shaken to their core.

Lives were lost. Homes became piles of rubble. Roads and bridges were destroyed, and families were driven into the streets in fear. The temblor was even larger than the notorious 2010 earthquake that shocked the world with its widespread destruction in Haiti’s capital city.

While the destruction caused by the 2021 earthquake was staggering, most Americans were unaware of the disaster because they saw or heard very little about it on the news. “We work in Haiti, so we understood the scale of the August 14 disaster, but very few American Catholics were aware of what had happened,” confirmed Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach. “That’s probably because the earthquake occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, and because a blizzard of other international news stories hit during the same week. The disconnect is understandable, but you can imagine how discouraging it was to the earthquake survivors. Thousands had lost family members, homes and possessions, and they wondered if their pleas for help were even being heard.”

Fortunately, Cross Catholic Outreach was aware of the disaster’s impact and remained vigilant, doing whatever it could to provide relief. In the months following the earthquake, it arranged shipments of food, medicines, tarps for temporary shelter, and other important supplies to the areas where the needs of the poor were greatest.

“As you might expect, we faced a lot of challenges, particularly in arranging transportation. Roads had been blocked by debris, and bridges were down. It took perseverance and teamwork, but we were able to get our relief supplies through,” Cavnar said. “Cross Catholic Outreach also received cash contributions from our donors, so we were able to wire funds directly to in-country partners within the disaster area, enabling them to obtain food and other resources locally. In the weeks immediately after the earthquake, that combination of material aid and grants had a lifesaving impact, and we’re deeply grateful to the many U.S. donors who helped fund our relief effort.”

Eventually, the focus of Catholic leaders working in the hardest-hit areas of Haiti shifted from providing emergency aid to finding solutions for long-term challenges. For example, families had found ways to create makeshift shelters or were huddling under tarps, but they clearly needed more substantial shelter, especially if they had children.

“That’s why constructing housing is our priority now,” Cavnar said. “Once food, water and medical needs are addressed after a disaster, it is essential that we get families out of tents and other primitive shelters and into safe, sturdy homes. The house can have a simple design, but it should be well constructed, secure and meet sanitary needs. Supplying this housing is critical because it restores hope and gives families a foundation for rebuilding their lives. The homes we build are perfectly suited to the areas we serve, and they are designed to address these poor families’ need for shelter and security.”

According to Cavnar, Cross Catholic Outreach is currently finalizing a major housing reconstruction project in Haiti with the goal of restoring hope to more of the families the earthquake displaced. When the campaign is launched, Cavnar is confident hundreds of American Catholics will want to join the cause and build homes for these displaced families.

“I have been involved in ministries to the poor for 30 years and worked on many relief projects like this before. In my experience, Catholics are deeply compassionate people and are always eager to help needy families, particularly in the wake of a disaster,” he said. “They understand how important having a safe home is to their own family, and they sympathize with parents who feel hopeless desperation when their children are suffering and there is nothing they can do to improve their situation. For some, providing a home to a poor family is also a way to show gratitude to God for the blessings he has bestowed on them. Others see it as a tangible way to respond to Christ’s call to love others as you love yourself.”

Sponsoring a home for a needy family is also popular because it produces a tangible impact with long-term benefits, Cavnar said. “When people give, they want to know their contribution is achieving something specific and will improve someone’s life in a profound way,” he said. “That is another reason both our disaster relief efforts and our home-building initiatives are so popular. When you donate to those causes, you know your gift is going to produce a significant benefit to the families being helped. In the case of relief efforts, it can literally save a life. With the gift of a home, you restore lost hope and bless a family for many years to come.”

How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach’s effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper, or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC81914, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than needed, funds will be directed to other urgent needs in the country.
Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The number of Catholics and of Catholic men and women who devote their lives to serving them continues to grow in Africa and Asia, Vatican statistics show, but pastoral ministry is still much more readily available to Catholics in Europe.

At the end of 2020, the number of Catholics in the world reached 1.36 billion, an increase of 16 million over the previous year, according to the Vatican’s Central Office of Church Statistics, which published a brief overview of the global numbers in early February.

While Catholics remained about 17.7 percent of the global population, their numbers grew in Africa by about 2.1 percent and in Asia by 1.8 percent while in Europe the increase was just 0.3 percent, said the summary, which was based on numbers reported Dec. 31, 2020.

And while just over 20 percent of the world’s Catholics live in Europe, 40 percent of the world’s priests minister there. The Americas have 48 percent of the world’s Catholics, but only 29.3 percent of the world’s priests. The Vatican reported that 18.0 percent of the world’s Catholics live in Africa and are served by 12.1 percent of the world’s priests; 11 percent of Catholics live in Asia served by 17.3 percent of the world’s priests, and just under 1 percent of the global Catholic population lives in Oceania where 1.1 percent of the world’s priests live.

The Catholic Church also had 5,363 bishops at the end of 2020, with 13.4 percent of them ministering in Africa. The total number of diocesan and religious-order priests decreased globally to 410,219, the Vatican office said. But the decrease was due to falling numbers in Europe, North America and Oceania. The number of priests increased in Africa and Asia.

The statistical office noted an “obvious imbalance” in the ratio of Catholics per priest in different regions. Globally there is one priest for every 3,314 Catholics in the world. But the ratio is one priest for 1,746 Catholics in Europe, 2,086 Catholics per priest in the Americas and 3,089 Catholics per priest in Africa.

The number of religious brothers rose in 2020 to 50,569, the office said, with the numbers going up in Africa, Asia and Europe. And while the number of women religious in Africa and Asia increased, the total was not enough to offset the declines in Europe, the Americas and Oceania. The total number of professed women, it said, was 619,566 at the end of 2020.

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A priest is pictured in a file photo accepting offertory gifts during Mass at St. Therese of the Child Jesus Catholic Church in Yaounde, Cameroon. The Vatican’s Central Office of Church Statistics says global Catholic population has reached 1.36 billion, with largest percentage of growth in Africa and Asia.
Sister Mary Martha Beiting (formerly known as Sister M. Ralph) was born into the loving family of Ralph and Martha Beiting on Aug. 3, 1934. She was the eighth of 11 children. Martha attended grade school at St. Joseph School, Cold Spring, and graduated from Academy of Notre Dame Providence, Newport. After working for a year at Western and Southern, she realized that God was calling her to follow him as a Sister of Notre Dame and entered the community in August 1954. Sister Mary Martha made her profession of vows on Aug. 17, 1957.

Sister Martha studied Child Care Education at Thomas More University, Xavier University, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She taught elementary grades in the Covington Diocese for a few years before ministering for more than 30 years at St. Aloysius Orphanage, Cincinnati, Ohio, and the Diocesan Catholic Children’s Home, Ft. Mitchell, Ky. She gave guidance and care to many children throughout the years, nurturing them with stability and love when it was needed the most. Sister Martha also provide some years of service in housekeeping at Notre Dame Academy, St. Claire Medical Center, and St. Joseph Heights.

As Sister Martha transitioned to retirement, her ministry focused on her community. She served in many facets of community life. She delighted in creating holiday decorations and making delicious candy and cookies. Working in transportation, she accompanied sisters to their doctors’ appointments. She also led the craft program at St. Joseph Heights and assisted with activities. As her health became more fragile, she welcomed visitors to sit and socialize about the daily events, always making one leave with a smile. The Sisters of Notre Dame are truly thankful for the many talents and gifts Sister Martha shared with everyone. She will be dearly missed.

Sister Mary Martha went home to God peacefully on Feb. 19, 2022. She was preceded in death by her parents and her brothers Rev. Ralph Beiting, Raymond, Paul, Jim, and Stanley Beiting, and her sisters Dorothy Noll and Ann Shadle. She is survived by her brothers Donald and Jerry Beiting, and her sister Mary Lou Deavy. Sister also leaves behind many beloved nieces and nephews, great nieces, and nephews.

Visitation and wake services were held Feb. 23 at St. Joseph Heights. Followed by the Mass of Christian Burial in the convent chapel. Interment was in the convent cemetery the following morning. Memorials are requested to The Sisters of Notre Dame, Covington, Ky.
Vatican astronomers are part of two new discoveries in outer space

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Two Jesuit astronomers from the Vatican Observatory were part of recent discoveries: one finding a new member of the solar system and another finding evidence for a long-lost galaxy “eaten up” by the Milky Way.

Jesuit Father Richard Boyle discovered the existence of a new object, named “2021 XD7,” in the outer solar system past Neptune, and Jesuit Father Richard D’Souza co-authored a new study identifying a previously unknown dwarf galaxy, named Pontus, that merged with Earth’s home galaxy of the Milky Way.

The Vatican Observatory made the first announcement Feb. 2, saying Father Boyle discovered the new object in early December after his observations were analyzed by Kazimieras Cernis, a Lithuanian astronomer and astrophysicist. Peter Vereš, who works at the International Astronomical Union’s Minor Planet Center, computed the object’s orbit, it said. Vereš is an alumnus of the Vatican Observatory’s 2007 summer school program and its “super” summer program for alumni in 2009.

Father Boyle, who specializes in observational astronomy, made the discovery using the Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope on Mount Graham in Arizona.

“2021 XD7” is a “trans-Neptunian object,” which is any minor or dwarf planet in the solar system whose orbit is outside the orbit of Neptune, the system’s outermost planet.

The new body takes nearly 287 Earth years to make a complete orbit around the Sun and it follows an elliptical path ranging from 3.2 billion miles from the sun at its closest point, to 4.8 billion miles from the sun at its farthest away. For comparison, Neptune, which is the eighth and farthest-known solar planet from the Sun, takes about 165 Earth years to make a complete orbit with an average distance of 2.8 billion miles from the sun.

Not much is known yet about the object’s size other than it is smaller than Pluto — the first “trans-Neptunian object” (TNO) to have been discovered. The International Astronomical Union downgraded the status of Pluto from planet to “dwarf planet” in 2006 because it is not “gravitationally dominant” enough to clear away bodies of comparable size in its vicinity.

Discovering TNOs adds to building a model of how the solar system may have formed, and some scientists believe these objects may point out the location of “Planet Nine,” a hypothetical planet about the size of Neptune farther away than Pluto.

The Vatican Observatory announced Feb. 21 that Father D’Souza was one of 16 astronomers contributing to a study led by Khyati Malhan of the Max Planck Institute for Astronomy. The team used new data from the Gaia spacecraft to study the remains of smaller galaxies that merged with the Milky Way, which began forming 12 billion years ago. Mapping out these mergers is like making the Milky Way’s “family tree” and reconstructing how it was formed.

The astronomers confirmed evidence of five previously known mergers with former dwarf galaxies and found evidence for a sixth merger with a dwarf galaxy the authors called Pontus, the name of one of the children of the Greek goddess Gaia, as well as a “new candidate merger,” said the study published in The Astrophysical Journal Feb. 20.

Detecting such mergers in new ways is now becoming possible “due to the amazingly rich” batches of data being sent by the Gaia space mission, the study said. “This places us in a very exciting position to disentangle the merging events of the Milky Way halo” and to explore the chronological history of the galaxy.
Pope calls for day of prayer, fasting for peace in Ukraine

Juano Archo Esteves
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — As the threat of war loomed over the world, Pope Francis called on people to pray and fast for peace in Ukraine on Ash Wednesday.

Before concluding his general audience Feb. 23, the pope called on believers and nonbelievers to combat the “diabolical insistance, the diabolical senselessness of violence” with prayer and fasting.

“I invite everyone to make March 2, Ash Wednesday, a day of fasting for peace,” he said. “I encourage believers in a special way to devote themselves intensely to prayer and fasting on that day. May the Queen of Peace protect the world from the folly of war.”

In his appeal, the pope said he, like many around the world, felt “anguish and concern” after Russian President Vladimir Putin recognized the independence of the eastern Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The pope said that due to the “alarmingly” developing movements in the region, “once again, the peace of all is threatened by partisan interests.”

“I would like to appeal to those with political responsibilities to do a serious examination of conscience before God, who is the God of peace and not of war, who is the father of all and not only of some, who wants us to be brothers and sisters and not enemies,” he said.

He also urged world leaders to “refrain from any action that would cause even more suffering to the people, destabilizing the coexistence between nations anddiscarding international law.”

Putin’s recognition of the two breakaway regions’ independence was seen by Western leaders as a violation of international law protecting Ukraine’s territorial integrity and as a move that could pave the way for a Russian military aggression.

In a statement released Feb. 22, Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv-Halych, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, said Putin’s recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions has caused “irreparable damage” to the “logic of international relations.”

He also said the Russian president “destroyed foundational principles for a long-term process of restoring peace in Ukraine” and “created the path for a new wave of military aggression against our state.”

“Today, all of humanity has been placed in danger,” he said, because Putin’s action asserts that “the powerful have a right to impose themselves on whomever they wish, with no regard for the rule of law.”

Archbishop Shevchuk reminded world leaders of their duty and responsibility “to actively work to avert war and protect a just peace.”

“I call upon all people of goodwill to not ignore the suffering of the Ukrainian people brought on by Russian military aggression,” he said. “We are a people who love peace. And precisely for that reason we are ready to defend it and fight for it.”

Holy Year 2025 should ‘fan flame of hope’ after pandemic, pope says

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The Holy Year 2025 should focus on "restoring a climate of hope and trust" after the coronavirus pandemic and helping people repair their relationships with God, with each other and with the Earth, Pope Francis said.

"We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision," the pope wrote in a letter formally opening the jubilee year.

"the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity" will be necessary to end a real hope, the pope wrote.

The basi of Catholic Holy Year celebrations is the biblical jubilee year, "which is meant to restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone," the pope noted. For that reason, no Holy Year celebration can be authentic without involving and assisting the poor, including migrants and refugees.

"In the realization that all of us are pilgrims on this earth, which the Lord has charged us to till and keep," Pope Francis also expressed his hope that the jubilee pilgrimage also would include time "to contemplate the beauty of creation and care for our common home.”

Within the Church, he said, people should prepare for the Holy Year with prayer and by promoting synodality and "a renewed awareness of the demands of the universal call to responsible participation by enhancing the charisms and ministries that the Holy Spirit never ceases to bestow for the building up of the one Church.”

Pope Francis also asked that 2024 be devoted to "a great symphony of prayer. Prayer, above all else, to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and to adore him."

Included in the yearlong prayer program, he said, should be prayers "to thank God for the many gifts of his love for us and to praise his work in creation, which summons everyone to respect it and to take concrete and responsible steps to protect it.”

Joined in prayer, Christians express that they are of one, “which then translates into solidarity and the sharing of our daily bread.”

"May it be an intense year of prayer in which hearts are opened to receive the outpouring of God’s grace and to make the ‘Our Father,’ the prayer Jesus taught us, the life program of each of his disciples,” the pope wrote.

A Ukrainian residing in Japan shows a placard during a protest rally denouncing Russia over its actions in Ukraine near the Russian Embassy in Tokyo Feb. 23, 2022.

Pope Francis expressed "great sorrow" over the situation in Ukraine and called on Christians to observe a day of prayer and fasting for peace on Ash Wednesday, March 2.

In the wake of the Russian president’s actions, the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union announced sanctions against several Russian banks and institutions.

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**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 hopeless, 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. M.M.I.

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The bare life (Continued from page 3)

love giving us life and will end — we hope and pray — with Christ giving us abundant, victorious and eternal life through the redemptive power of his cross, resurrection, and ascension.

It is within the sure and stable reality of the Paschal Mystery of Christ that even here on earth, amidst its many fears and trials, that we can live — must live — our sting? Be not afraid. Only with an unshakable faith we can be firmly convinced that I want to help with that, and I can't assume that I must be the only one who takes up a burden. There are others who will join in doing that.

Q: Is the location itself an object of care or duty of an obligation to the people who live there? Msgr: I want to put the first importance on the people who live there for certain. I do think though — for the same very little the loss of our earthly life and much more sacrifice. The plain fact of our faith is that we should fear many fears and trials, that we can live — must live — the work of Lord, and thus living the victorious life, now and forever.

The cited Scripture passage — "So he took the morsel and gave it to John 13:30."
“Dog” (MGM) Channing Tatum co-directed and stars in this quirky, good-natured but not family-friendly road movie. He plays an ex-Army Ranger who, in exchange for the promise of a much-needed professional recommendation from his former commander, reluctantly agrees to transport a psychologically scarred war dog to the funeral of her handler. As scripted by Tatum's partner at the helm, Reid Carolin, the journey from Tacoma, Washington, to Nogales, Arizona, is rich in comic incidents but also showcases the brain-injured soldier's physical suffering and social marginalization as well as the predictable but still endearing bonding process that gradually unites the two wounded veterans. Since some of the humor involves the protagonist's sexual misadventures and a run-in with a marijuana farmer, the film can only be endorsed for grown viewers. The sexual preliminaries of a potentially aberrant encounter, drug use, brief irreverent behavior, sexual references, a few uses of profanity, about a dozen milder oaths, at least one rough term, much crude and crass language. CNS: A-III; MPAA: PG-13.

“Marry Me” (Universal) Generally amiable romantic comedy charting the unlikely relationship between a world-famous singing star and a dedicated but obscure math teacher. After discovering, moments before her mega-media-event wedding, that her equally prominent fiancé, also a vocalist, has been cheating on her, she summons the instructor out of the live audience for the combination concert and nuptials and impulsively exchanges vows with him instead. Overall, director Kat Coiro's screen version of Bobby Crosby's graphic novel has a note of old-fashioned charm thanks to the gallantry of the instructor's character in wishing to help his celebrity “spouse” in a moment of crisis and as a result of the fact that, physical intimacy being initially debarred by mutual consent, the couple get to know each other as friends in a process resembling traditional courtship. But the agreement on that score is eventually abandoned while a sequence involving a musical number in which the songstress' back-up singers cavort in latex nuns' habits and clerical collars is patently offensive and would fully justify believing viewers in avoiding the picture altogether. Distastefully irreverent images, offscreen premarital sexual activity, verbal and visual references to homosexuality, partial nudity, about a half-dozen uses of profanity and milder swearing, a few crude and crass expressions. CNS: A-III; MPAA: PG-13.

“Uncharted” (Columbia) Tense treasure hunt tale, adapted from a series of video games by director Ruben Fleischer. The younger of two orphaned brothers, having grown up to be a bartender and petty thief, is contacted by a mysterious adventurer who claims to have known his long-lost sibling and, partly in hopes of reuniting with the latter, agrees to assist the stranger in his search for a cache of Spanish gold hidden during the Age of Exploration. They're later joined, in their globetrotting pursuit, by a former associate of the freebooter but the trio's partnership is hampered by constant mutual mistrust and dogged by the opposition of a wicked mogul who, with the aid of a ruthless underling, is out to scoop up the booty for himself. The importance of loyalty and the dangers of greed are the principal messages underlying this thin stringing together of stunts, which only hints at romance between the junior members of the triad. But the overall tone is off-key, as is the momentary implication that rich people deserve to be robbed. Considerable stylized violence with minimal gore, a couple of uses of profanity numerous milder oaths, frequent crude and some crass language. CNS: A-III; MPAA: PG-13.

Movie Capsule

For full reviews of each of these films — go to catholicnews.com and click on “Extras,” then choose “Movies.” Catholic News Service (CNS) classifications are:

- A-I — general patronage;
- A-II — adults and adolescents;
- A-III — adults;
- L — limited adult audience;
- O — morally offensive.

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**National/World**

**Bishops Big Game leads to big win for students**

The friendly wager between Archbishop José Gomez of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and Archbishop Dennis Schnurr of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati on the Big Game between the Los Angeles Rams and the Cincinnati Bengals was a big win for students in both archdioceses, with more than $2 million raised for anti-trafficking programs.

"This past weekend, the community was mobilized to act on science, the world shifts. "The power of faith-based groups are designed to be used once and thrown away . Andersen, a co-chair of the UNEP, said. According to the UNEP, 1 million plastic drinking water bottles are purchased every minute, while 1 trillion single-use plastics are used worldwide every year. Half of the plastics are designed to be used once and thrown away. Andersen o the use of plastic from source to sink. We hope UNEA will be that historical milestone for the Paris Agreement was for the climate. And we hope and trust that every pregnancy implies the existence of another human being, other than the mother, in defenseless and vulnerable conditions."

Colombian bishops express 'deep pain' over vote to decriminalize abortion

MEXICO CITY — Colombia’s bishops expressed “perplexity and deep pain” over the country’s constitutional court’s decriminalized abortion during the first 24 weeks of pregnancy. The court handed down its ruling Feb. 21, continuing a trend toward abortion decriminalization in large Latin American countries — following Mexico in 2021 and Argentina in 2020. Before the court’s decision, penalties for having an abortion included a prison sentence of up to 24 months, according to Colombian media. In a statement Feb. 22, the Colombian bishops’ conference said in cases of sexual violence, abandonment and economic hardship, “when the woman is the victim, it’s reasonable that civil society and the legal system seek her defense and protection. (But) one cannot hide or minimize the fact that every pregnancy implies the existence of another human being, other than the mother, in defenseless and vulnerable conditions, who in turn has the right to be part of the human family,” the bishops said. “Protecting the supposed right to suppress an innocent human life puts at risk the very foundation of our work order and the role of love,” the bishops said.

U.N. wants faith groups to help work against plastic pollution

NAIROBI, Kenya — A senior U.N. official urged religious groups to help reach a global agreement to curb plastic pollution, amid experts warning that single-use or disposable plastics were choking the planet. Plaintiff Anderson, executive director of the U.N. Environment Programme, spoke during the interfaith online dialogue on religions and ecology organized by the U.S. body. The sessions, known as Faith for Earth Dialogue, ran Feb. 21-23. They are being held alongside the fifth session of the U.N. Environment Assembly in Nairobi. The assembly also will mark the 50th anniversary of the environmental program. “We have a suggested resolution before the member states, for starting a global agreement to end plastic pollution — to reduce the use of plastic from source to sink. We hope UNEA will be that historical milestone as the Paris Agreement was for the climate. And we hope and trust that every pregnancy implies the existence of another human being, other than the mother, in defenseless and vulnerable conditions."

**Supreme Court to hear arguments on ‘Remain in Mexico’ immigration policy**

WASHINGTON — The justices on the court’s highest court have agreed to hear a case that could decide the fate of Trump-era immigration policy that Biden administration officials have been trying to end. On Feb. 16, the U.S. Supreme Court said it would hear arguments on whether the Biden administration can put an end to the Migrant Protection Protocols, or MPP, a policy that demands asylum-seekers to the U.S. stay in Mexico until their cases can be heard in U.S. immigration courts. The policy has been a headache for the administration as President Joe Biden promised to end it, but it proved much more difficult to do so since he took office. As such he became president in January 2021, Biden passed the policy, thus formally ended it in 10 months later in June. But in August of that year, a judge with the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas ruled that it had to continue complying with the policy saying they had not ended it properly. The Supreme Court refused a Biden administration request to block that District Court ruling while the government pursued an appeal with the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. In December, the appeals court upheld the lower court ruling. Subsequent attempts at ending the policy have failed and it looks as it the high court will be the ultimate arbiter when it hears oral arguments in the case, Biden v. Texas, in April.

Faith-based groups assist Haitians coming to U.S. seeking refuge, help

NEW YORK — The first in what is envisioned as a series of webinars took place Feb. 16 to discuss how faith-based organizations are working together to assist Haitian families seeking refuge and assistance in the United States. Catholic Charities of New York, Catholic Charities USA, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network Inc. and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops are partnering in the effort. One of the speakers at the webinar panel was Stephanie Delia, founder of the Haitian Legal Network, which is working with Catholic Charities of New York in its new Haiti Representation Project. “As a Haitian attorney, my primary goal is access to justice for Haitian citizens and to help reach a global agreement to curb plastic pollution, amid experts warning that single-use or disposable plastics were choking the planet. Plaintiff Anderson, executive director of the U.N. Environment Programme, spoke during the interfaith online dialogue on religions and ecology organized by the U.S. body. The sessions, known as Faith for Earth Dialogue, ran Feb. 21-23. They are being held alongside the fifth session of the U.N. Environment Assembly in Nairobi. The assembly also will mark the 50th anniversary of the environmental program. “We have a suggested resolution before the member states, for starting a global agreement to end plastic pollution — to reduce the use of plastic from source to sink. We hope UNEA will be that historical milestone as the Paris Agreement was for the climate. And we hope and trust that every pregnancy implies the existence of another human being, other than the mother, in defenseless and vulnerable conditions."

**CBS**

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Holy Hour for priests

The Diocese of Covington’s priests gathered for the monthly Holy Hour for priests, Feb. 17, praying for victims of childhood sexual abuse by priests and the sanctification of priests. (above) Father Joseph Rielage (left), parochial vicar, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood and Father Eric Boelscher, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, reflect during the Holy Hour’s closing. (right) Father Daniel Schomaker, vicar general, closes the monthly Holy Hour.

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