St. Therese honored as 2022 Blue Ribbon School

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

For the first time in the school’s history, St. Therese School, Southgate, has been honored as a Blue Ribbon School by the US Department of Education for 2022. This prestigious award recognized only 297 schools as National Blue Ribbon Schools this year, and only 24 private schools, with St. Therese School being among them.

According to the US Department of Education’s website, “The National Blue Ribbon Schools award affirms the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging content.”

Mrs. Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Covington, came to St. Therese School to congratulate the students on their achievement, Sept. 16, saying, “Congratulations to all of you for all your hard work … we are very proud of you. We are proud of your school, your principal and all of your standards, and we thank you for your hard work.”

In celebration, blue balloons were released to the celebratory students during the award’s announcement — excitement filling St. Therese’s gymnasium as the balloons were tossed amongst the students, who would later be treated to blue ice balls and popcorn to further celebrate this achievement.

St. Therese School will always be recognized as a Blue Ribbon School in the past.

Following this announcement, Bishop John Iffert commented on the achievement, “There’s a very popular saying that good news travels fast. St. Therese School earning the National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence designation is indeed great news that traveled to me, all the way to Rome, in the matter of seconds,” said Bishop Iffert, who was in Rome for the annual Course of Formation for New Bishops. “I am delighted that St. Therese School has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a 2022 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. I congratulate Katie Boruske, principal, and the students, teachers, and parents for creating a school environment where academic achievement is not only envisioned but attained. I can’t wait to celebrate with you.”

For a list of Diocese Blue Ribbon Schools, see page 20.

Deacon candidate Tom Murrin views ordination as a ‘starting point’

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

In preparation for his ordination to the permanent diaconate this October, Tom Murrin joined the Messenger for an interview regarding his vocation and faith journey.

Originally from Cleveland, Ohio, Mr. Murrin came to Cincinnati as part of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Graduating with an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering from the University of Detroit, Mr. Murrin spent his 20s in Over-the-Rhine, Cincinnati, working with the homeless population there.

“I worked at Tender Mercies, which is a housing organization that houses the chronically mentally ill,” said Mr. Murrin, who also worked at the St. Joseph Catholic Worker

(Continued on page 18)
VATICAN CITY — Close to 200 bishops at the beginning of their ministries in dioceses and eparchies around the world, including Bishop John Iffert of the Diocese of Covington, met Pope Francis Sept. 19 at the end of a week of conferences.

Pope meets prelates attending weeklong course for new bishops

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

SUMMIT22 Core Team meets
The SUMMIT22 Core Team met for the first time, Sept. 14, at Milligan Hall, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood. The core team helps prepare for the SUMMIT22 Eucharistic retreat, which will take place Oct. 7-9 at Covington Catholic High School. This is the 17th annual Eucharistic youth retreat in the diocese, formerly named YOUTH 2000. For registration and information visit www.covdio.org/summit22/.

You’re invited!
Bishop John Iffert will celebrate the annual Pro-Life Mass

Tuesday, Oct. 4, 7 p.m.
at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington
Father Conor Kunath will be the homilist.
The rosary will be prayed at 6:30 p.m.
Bring your family and friends as we join together on this joyful occasion and greatest support of life — celebrating the Eucharist.
For information, call the Pro-Life Office (859) 392-1500

(above) Pope Francis listens as Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, speaks during an audience with almost 200 new bishops, including Bishop Iffert, participating in a formation course, at the Vatican Sept. 19, 2022. The course for new bishops was sponsored by the dicasteries for Bishops, for Evangelization and for Eastern Churches.

(above) Bishop Iffert looks over material during a Formation Course for New Bishop session in Rome.

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Because the COVID-19 pandemic had forced the suspension of the annual formation course for new bishops, the 2022 courses were held in multiple sessions with the first groups of bishops — more than 150 of them — meeting Pope Francis in early September, and bishops from mission territories meeting him Sept. 17.

The Dicastery for Bishops, the Dicastery for Evangelization and the Dicastery for Eastern Churches organized the courses.

The themes for the 2022 sessions included: the meaning of "a synodal church"; crisis management with special attention to handling situations and allegations of abuse; the church after the pandemic; a review of what canon law says about administering a diocese; communication and use of the media, ministry to families with special attention to the pope’s exhortation "Amoris Laetitia"; and promoting care for all people and for the environment with special attention to "Laudato Si’" and "Fratelli Tutti."

While the course offers practical information to the bishops and a chance to pray and meet with their peers from around the world and with top Vatican officials, it is especially a chance to respond to Pope Francis’ desire that bishops have an opportunity for "an intense spiritual reading of the call to the episcopate, first and foremost as a path of grace and sanctification, for the pastor and, through him, for his people," said a statement from the Dicastery for Bishops.

"No one can carry out a pastoral ministry in the church without a profound experience of being saved and of knowing how, beginning with him, such mercy is truly offered, constantly and without discrimination, to every man and woman," it said.

(above) Bishop Iffert celebrates Mass for the Sisters of Notre Dame, Sept. 9, at their Generalate and Motherhouse in Rome, Italy. Con-celebrating is Bishop Michael McCourgan of the Diocese of Belleville, also in Rome attending the sessions for new bishops.

(right) Following Mass, the Bishops and Sisters enjoyed dinner on the rooftop together.

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**Cemetery Visitations**

**Oct. 9**
Holy Guardian Angels Cemetery, Sandfortown, 2 p.m.

**Oct. 16**
St. John Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell, 2 p.m.
St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell, 2:45 p.m.
St. Stephen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas, 3:45 p.m.

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**Vote Yes on #2**

**KY’s ProLife Constitutional Amendment – NOVEMBER 8, 2022**

**Can the Catholic Church ask parishioners to vote “Yes for Life,” Nov. 8?**

Yes, the Diocese of Covington, parishes, and Catholic agencies can and should encourage members and the public to vote "Yes" on Amendment #2. Church and school facilities may not be used to promote a particular political candidate. The "Yes for Life" amendment is a constitutional issue not a political candidate.

**Voting Sites**

- **Oct. 27**
  - St. Joseph Heights, Park Hills, 10 a.m.
- **Oct. 29**
  - St. Cecilia School, Independence, 8:30 a.m.
  - Prebyteral Council meeting, 1:30 p.m.
  - ACUE donor recognition reception, Drees Pavilion, Covington, 6 p.m.
- **Sept. 30**
  - Diocesan Curia offices closed
  - Celebration of first anniversary of Bishop Iffert’s consecration and installation and CJ kickoff, 5:30 p.m.
  - St. Mary’s Park, Covington

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**Celebration Reminder**

**2022 Wedding Anniversary Couples Vespers**

The Office of Catechesis and Evangelization is thankful for the 148 reservations received from couples celebrating their significant Wedding Anniversary in 2022.

To honor your wedding anniversary Bishop John C. Iffert will celebrate Vespers on Oct. 2, 3 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

We look forward to seeing you there!
India’s first Dalit cardinal has his mission cut out

India has just elected a tribal woman as the republic’s president. Now it has its first cardinal from a group that was, till 1947, considered “untouchable” — whose very president. Now it has its first cardinal from a group that is meant by the challenge that is given to those who

The Constitution of India gave them the sanitized and statutes that listed peoples or groups deserving of affirmative action because of the civilizational persecution over the last 200 years.

Caste is a reality in religions in India, and the Catholic and Protestant churches are no exception to the rule. There are no longer walls dividing parish graveyards as they did in the southern states that have 500 to 2,000 years of a Christian footprint. Skirmishes, loud or silent, still take place in parishes, even more so in semi-culturally and occasionally in clergy homes.

Those of us who travel and meet junior, middle and senior clergy in public and in private, know for a fact the depth of casteism raving the innards of the church. John Dopal is a journalist and human rights activist based in New Delhi. He is secretary-general of the All India Christian Council and a past president of the All India Catholic Union. His column has been provided by Catholic News Service. His remarks are his own and do not reflect the opinion of Catholic News Service or UCA News.
The metrics in understanding the Word of God

In the late '90s, I was in Compton, California, teaching high school religious education for Seniors in the parish served by the Comboni Missionaries.

One evening as I read from Zechariah 2:8, the passage, “Anyone who harms you harms my most precious possession.” I asked my students, “Who knows what God is trying to say here through the mouth of the Prophet Zechariah?” One of the students said, “About me.” I asked, “How did you know about that?” He smiled. “It is obvious that everyone of us here is God’s precious possession just like the Jews were.” I asked, “Do you know what the Catholic Church teaches on how passages of the Bible should be understood or interpreted?” He said, “No.”

I explained that like the mystery of Jesus (divine and human) the Word includes both the human and the divine. Any reflection or interpretation on the Word of God must respect the balance between the human and the divine. Otherwise, if you separate these two aspects of interpretation, reflection, then you are doing a disservice to the mystery. An example of this can be Joseph’s two dreams. One in Genesis 40:9-11: “We were tossed up bundles of grain out in the field. Suddenly my bundle stood up straight. Your bundles gathered around my bun-
dle and bowed down to it.” The second dream from Genesis 37:9. He says, “I had another dream. This time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” Joseph and his family view these dreams only from a human viewpoint. His family was thinking that Joseph was better than the rest, whereas from God’s viewpoint, Joseph was to feed his family in Egypt, and prove to be a guiding light for them. Another example is that if you would say, Jesus was merely human you would not respect his divinity; also, if you say the words of the Bible are only of human origin you would not respect God’s authorship of the Bible. Each story in the Bible alerts the reader/interpreter to the spiritual theme of the Bible that goes beyond the lim-
ited and earthly interests of mortals.

Therefore, the passages of the Bible cannot be under-
stood just from the human side alone without including the divine; otherwise, if you try to separate these two aspects of understanding, then you are doing a disservice to the mystery. That is why we must be careful in inter-
preting a sentence, or even a passage isolated by itself; otherwise, we may miss the meaning of what God and the sacred human author is intending to communicate to us. That is why Biblical reflections and interpretations have been entrusted to the authority of the Church (the Magisterium).

That is why all need to study the Word of God. Knowing your Bible does not just happen like that. You must work hard at it and try anything else. The beliefs of those who have a fundamentalist, literal interpretation of the Bible can be a challenge to Catholics who have not studied Sacred Scripture and its interpretation. With our faith under attack by fundamentalists, we need to know how to answer their questions truthfully and correctly. We need to be informed Catholics, and to be able to intel-
lectually combat those who feel it necessary to condemn our faith.

Biblical fundamentalism refers to a large and growing number of Christians who tend to interpret the Bible lit-
erally. One such belief is that the Bible was written inspired by God. Therefore, they tend to take the words of Scripture in their literal sense. They also believe that something is not found in Scripture; then it is not be-
important to religious faith. Fundamentalism tends to disapprove of the Church (the Magisterium) in interpret-
ing the meaning of Scripture. They deny the teaching authority of the bishops and the pope, while Catholics believe that this teaching authority is necessary for the unity of the Church and that it was basic to Christianity from the beginnings of the Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church and Evangelization sponsors workshops on the books of the Bible, presented by Father Timothy Schehr. The workshops provide adult learners with a more in-depth understanding of specific books of the Bible. This is a wonderful opportunity for anyone to learn, know and understand more about the Catholic Bible.

Father Timothy Schehr is a retired biblical scholar and chaplain of the Athenaeum of Ohio, School of Theology at the Atheneum of Ohio. He has a B.A., M.Div and M.A. from St. Mary’s School of Theology at the Atheneum of Ohio. He also has a

Sand and stone (John 8:1-11)

Forgiveness is difficult — forgiveness of others and of myself. When I have been deeply hurt, I attempt to forgive but some kind of residue sticks in my mind and heart. Hard feelings crop up over and over in the presence of those who have hurt me. Forgiving myself is equally difficult. No matter how distant the hurtful things I have done, they continue to plague me with feelings of unworthiness. Is that the matter of accepting God’s forgive-
ness? Do we pray that God memories our fail-
ures and sins despite the forgiveness promised by our good and gracious God. When some mistake

For any of us, it is difficult to accept that God does not share our human trait of hard-heartedness. I mase on the story that John tells us about a woman. The text states that she was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Do any consider the impossibility of being caught in this act alone? Where is the other caught in this act with her? Does anyone observe if her clothes are torn, her face bruised, Hard, stony hearts had no con-
sideration of innocence. Another walked away as they drugged her out. Accusing words of those with stony hearts demand to see torn flesh.

I have wondered about their thoughts as they accused her. Was their religious upbringing so focused on the rules, especially the ones around sexuality, that they were horrified by this act? Did the religious practice they learned in their youth emphasize diligent keeping of rules more than compassion and quality of relation-
ship? Had they become judges of others as some spectacle was necessary to prevent future transgres-
sions. Did they set themselves up as judges of others as they sought purity within their religious world? The reli-
gious atmosphere of our own upbringing, focused on rules, especially rules around sexuality, and keeping these rules as the evidence of fidelity.

Perhaps the motivation was not religious purity. Were they thirsty to see blood, the red marks of the stones on her skin because they desired her and felt envy for the one walking away? Did they desire violence because of their own feelings of guilt? Or were they moved to some spectacle was necessary to prevent future transgres-
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gious atmosphere of our own upbringing, focused on rules, especially rules around sexuality, and keeping these rules as the evidence of fidelity.
The Legacy of Women Religious in the Diocese of Covington

Karen Kuhman
Messenger Correspondent

Part Two

In 1874, the Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld, Germany, suffered the religious persecution of the Kulturkampf in German Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck forbade the Sisters to wear their habits or to work in hospitals. He seized their schools and orphanages, forcing approximately 250 women religious to flee to the safety of America. When eight Sisters of Notre Dame arrived in Covington in 1874, Sister Modesta Toebbe — the sister of Bishop August Toebbe, second Bishop of Covington — was among them. David Schroeder, executive director of the Kenton County Library and former archivist of the Diocese of Covington and Thomas More College, explains: “The Sisters were from northwest Germany, as were many of Covington’s immigrant families. Their shared German language made the Sisters of Notre Dame a good fit for the Diocese.”

The Sisters began their American ministry in Covington in German-speaking parishes and schools. Despite hardships, the sisters were intent on learning the English language for themselves and German immigrant families. The Sisters’ first convent was located near Mother of God Church. They assumed the operation of Mother of God School, established in 1841 on Fifth Street, and founded Notre Dame Academy across the street in 1876.

Mr. Schroeder said, “Many diocesan schools preexisted the arrival of the women religious, but the Sisters’ presence professionalized the schools. Initially, the parish schools were small and staffed by lay teachers who may have had little training. The Sisters taught in urban and rural parish schools across the Diocese in an era of tremendous growth in the region. For example, St. Aloysius Grade School was founded in Covington in 1865 by the Franciscan Sisters. It eventually grew to an enrollment of 900 students in two separate buildings — one for boys and one for girls. The Sisters’ ministry extended to schools in urban, suburban and rural communities. They are a part of the history of Thomas More University. They built St. Joseph Heights, their Provincial House, in 1963. The Sisters founded St. Claire Healthcare in Morehead, Ky., located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The center provides the region’s people with an integrated healthcare system and the largest rural hospital in northeastern Kentucky. It is also the region’s largest employer. The 1,000 staff members and 100 medical providers made national news recently as they worked tirelessly with patients in the occupancy hospital for months during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

In this archived photograph from 1966, Notre Dame sisters Sister Mary Joell Overman (far right), and the recently elected superior general Sister Mary Rapaelita Bockman (center), present Pope John Paul II with a card commemorating his 40th jubilee.
The Campbell County Extension Service has awarded the environmental science class at Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport, a grant to be used to construct a greenhouse on campus for environmental science students.

Since COVID, many of the “hands-on” activities of the environmental science classes had to be put on pause, said Beth Sketch, science department chair at Newport Central Catholic.

“One of my personal goals as a science department chair was to make sure we do as much as we can to get the students back into that hands-on feeling,” Ms. Sketch continued.

The grant proposal was a collaboration between the junior and senior students in this year’s environmental science class and Ms. Sketch herself, and the class hopes to complete the project before Christmas break this December.

The project will be completed by the students in the environmental science class, assisted by students in the St. Joseph Institute’s vocations class, who will build the greenhouse frame.

“This project is based off of a design we got from the internet,” said Ms. Sketch. “The idea is that it’s upcycled. The fact that we’re taking junk and turning it into something usable was attractive to an environmental science class.” The class intends on re-purposing plastic two-liter bottles for the walls and insulation of the greenhouse.

“Part of the idea of the grant is environmental stewardship,” Ms. Sketch continued. “The goal is to have both vegetables and flowers, but we want to learn a lot about pollinators, what it means to be heirloom and something being native versus invasive.”

To help with the project, the environmental science class is seeking donations of empty two-liter bottles to complete the greenhouse walls, the specific plans calling for 1,500 bottles. Donations of these bottles can be dropped off to the main entrance of the high school.

“It’s not just a project for this year,” said Ms. Sketch. “the hope is that whatever we’re doing continues to grow… it’s something that can help benefit not just our school, but our community.”

Environmental science students at Newport Central Catholic collect plastic 2-liter bottles for the construction of their on-campus greenhouse.
U.S. synod report finds participants share common hopes, lingering pain

Dennis Sadowski
Catholic News Service
WASHINGTON — Catholics across the country continue to feel wounded by the clergy abuse crisis, seek a more welcoming church in which their “lived reality” is prioritized over rules and regulations, and desire lifelong spiritual, pastoral and catechetical formation as disciples, according to a report synthesizing the 10-month synodal process in diocesan and archdiocesan phase.

Released Sept. 19 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the report summarizes the concerns, hopes, pains and desires voiced by an estimated 700,000 participants who joined thousands of listening sessions and other events during the diocesan phase in the lead-up to the Synod of Bishops on synodality in October 2023.

There are roughly 66.8 million Catholics in the U.S., according to the report, meaning more than 1% of Catholics participated in the listening sessions. “The listening is an opening movement toward a wise discernment locally, regionally and nationally about what our deepest concerns, our deepest hopes are right now at this moment in time,” Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, who is overseeing the U.S. involvement in the synodal process, told Catholic News Service.

Bishop Flores, who chairs the USCCB’s Committee on Doctrine, said the process that has unfolded since October — and led to the 16-page synthesis report sent to the Vatican — enabled people to respectfully listen to each other and develop a new understanding of what life in the church can be.

“It’s an important step that gives us an experience as a local church,” Bishop Flores said. “That’s why I think it’s always important to see that this is a seed that is planted and has a chance to grow. I think that’s what the Holy Father is asking for us.”

Titled “National Synthesis of the People of God in the United States of America for the Diocesan Phase of the 2021-2023 Synod,” the report was prepared in advance of the Synod of Bishops called by Pope Francis.

The synod’s theme is “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.”

The report is the synthesis of 290 documents received by the USCCB from various contributors. The report said the documents “represent over 22,000 reports from individual parishes and other groups” that emerged from more than 30,000 opportunities to join the synodal process.

The national synthesis report draws from the 14 intermedial syntheses submitted by teams from each of the geographic regions of the U.S. church. All 175 Latin dioceses and archdioceses submitted syntheses that were incorporated into the regional reports.

The 18 Eastern Catholic eparchies and archeparchies, which make up a separate region under the USCCB, submitted their reports directly to the Vatican.

For the process, the USCCB created a 16th “region” for the numerous Catholic national ministries, universities, associations and organizations working throughout the country. Those organizations submitted 112 summary reports.

In a letter introducing the report, Bishop Flores described the document as “an attempt to synthesize and contextualize the common joys, hopes and wounds called forth with the help of the Holy Spirit in the unfolding of the synod.”

“While not a complete articulation of the many topics and perspectives shared in the listening process, this synthesis is an attempt to express the broader themes that seemed most prevalent in the dioceses and regions of our country,” he wrote. (Continued on page 14)
Happy birthday Mary!

(Left) As part of a celebrating the birthday of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, second graders at St. Patrick School, Taylor Mill, painted prayer boxes that they will take home. The boxes will hold holy water bottles and rosaries. The students discussed the reverent way they should care for these items.

Join Bishop John Iffert and the Pro-Life community for the annual diocesan Pro-Life Mass. 7 p.m., Oct. 4, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington; rosary begins at 6:30 p.m.

Diocese of Covington High School information night. Oct. 5, 6–8 p.m., Mary Seat of Wisdom Chapel on campus of Thomas More University. Join us for an informative evening centered around one of the many excellent local options for a Catholic high school education. You’ll hear from representatives from parochial high schools in the Diocese of Covington and learn about AP college credit and the Dual-Credit program at Thomas More University RSVP at tmuky.us/diocovhsinfo.

SUMMIT 22. Oct. 7–9, Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills. This retreat is for women and men “Walking Your Path with Christ,” a silent directed retreat for women and men, held at St. Walburg Monastery Guest House Oct. 7–9, with spiritual director Sister Dorothy Schurman. The number of retreatants is limited to four persons; cost $175. Contact Sister Dorothy, 443-8515 or dorothysoes@gmail.com by Oct. 3.

Father Conor Kunath will lead a Morning of Reflection and Remembrance,” St. Elizabeth Healthcare “Perinatal Loss Service of the Assumption, Covington. Cost $175, which includes 2 nights lodging and all meals. Visit stanneretreatcenter.org or call 443-2003, ext. 301. Registration deadline Oct. 28.

The 30th Annual Eight Grade Pro-Life Essay Contest is open to all 8th graders in the Diocese of Covington. Winners will be awarded Scholarships to Diocesan High Schools: 1ST PLACE $1000, 2ND PLACE $700 and 3RD PLACE $500. Entry forms and guidelines are available on the pro-life webpage (https://covdio.org/pro-life/) or by emailing Peggy Pocela at ppocela@covdio.org.

New England Catholic Homes’ Children’s Home (DCCH) Center from 8:30 a.m. – noon., Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Open to the public, no pre-registration is required. There is a $5 per person donation. Please call 859-585-8500 for information.

These items.

To “tke off for the Kids,” Sept. 30, Pioneer Golf Course, Independence. Shotgun start 10:30 a.m. cost $100/golfer, includes 18 holes of golf with cart, lunch buffet, refreshments, and dinner. Proceeds to replace outdated A-C units. Call 485-4444 or e-mail tke@wanalton.com.

The Northern Kentucky Regional College fair, Oct. 11 at Thomas More University, 6–8 p.m. in the Connor Convocation Center on the Crestview Hills campus. TMU and Northern Kentucky University are partnering to host this annual event, which will welcome more than 30 colleges and universities and assist high school students with the college search process.

Thomas More University Dance Team Experience Day. Oct. 15, 10 a.m.–1 p.m., Thomas More University, Crestview Hills. Open to any high school student who would like to continue as a member of a dance team in college. Learn the Saints fight song, attend a home football game, and bring your best questions. RSVP at tmuky.us/23danceday.
Roots of 19th Century religious decline ran deep

Part 2 of a series

The first Eucharistic Congress of the United States, held in 1895 on the campus of Catholic University in Washington, D.C., brought together clergy and bishops from across the nation in a first-of-its-kind assembly to do just one thing: proclaim the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

“Our main object,” the official report stated, was to “call the attention of the priests of the East to the Eucharistic movement and to awaken the interest of the laity in it.” The congress—organized under the auspices of the Priests’ Eucharistic League of America, with the blessing of Pope Leo XIII and presided over by the Diocese of Covington’s Bishop Camillus Maes—was a resounding success. So much so, that at least five more national congresses would come to be held in the United States alone before Bishop Maes’ death in 1915.

But it started with this first one, memorialized for posterity in the stained-glass window we see today in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of Covington’s Cathedral Basilica. The scene shows the Eucharistic procession at the conclusion of the congress moving toward an altar erected beneath the portico arches of Catholic University’s newly dedicated McMahon Hall. Bishop Maes, vested in a golden cope, carries the ostensorium containing the Holy Eucharist amid a throng of bishops, priests, and faithful. Though not historically accurate in some of its details, the scene is undoubtedly meant to evoke the joy and accomplishment of that First National Eucharistic Congress.

But the window is more than this. It seems to have been Bishop Maes’ intention not simply to illustrate the American Church’s accomplishment, nor even to emphasize the necessity for belief and renovation of the real presence, but also to challenge us to look deeper into the broader story of why Eucharistic Congresses were necessary in the first place. By the 1880’s, the slow decline of religion in general had become a concern to the Church in both Europe and in America. More worrisome, however, was the steep decline among both clergy and lay faithful in the “real presence” belief.

It may be said that the roots of this decline in religion can be traced back to the Enlightenment, an intellectual and philosophical movement that dominated Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. Its central doctrines were opposed to the rule of monarchy and the power and influence of the Catholic Church in society. It focused on a range of ideas including individual liberty, natural rights, human happiness, the value of reason, scientific evidence, and ideals such as progress, constitutional government, and the separation of church and state.

Where monarchs and ruling nobility had once been viewed as earthly representatives of an eternal order modeled on the City of God, Enlightenment thinking was seen as a mutually beneficial social contract among the citizenry with the aim of protecting their natural rights and self-interests at all costs. Religion came to be viewed as a threat to individualism and religious beliefs and practices were cast aside in lieu of secular alternatives. What is clear from history, however, is that the Catholic Church became one of the main targets of Enlightenment intellectuals who systematically questioned every aspect of society and government.

The effects of Enlightenment thinking first manifested in 1756 with the outbreak of the American Revolution. The colonies repudiated the rule of King George III in favor of self-government and the natural rights of man. Centuries of religious persecution in England had fostered the independent growth of religion in the American colonies. It was a powerful, cultural synthesis of Evangelical Protestantism, deism, and rationalism, and reason that provided a moral sanction for opposition to British rule, an assurance to every American that revolution was justified in the sight of God. Religion became a major contributor to winning the Revolutionary War and it helped in shaping the new Republic. Yet, the founding fathers retained the basic Enlightenment principles when crafting a new Constitution, declaring “We the People” while simultaneously separating Church and state and omitting any thought or dependence on Divine institution.

Enlightenment thinking took a decidedly more tragic turn in 1789 with the French Revolution that followed. With nearly all of France’s 28 million citizens as Roman Catholics, and with the Church second in power only to the monarchy itself, the new revolutionary government’s first action was to declare the Catholic Church an enemy of the state. It cancelled the taxing power of the Church and confiscated all its property. Clergy were hunted down and persecuted with ferocious and dogged tenacity. Unknown thousands of priests, bishops and nuns were massacred. Churches and sanctuaries were destroyed, convents and monasteries pillaged and sacked, the Holy Eucharist desecrated.

In September 1792, three Church bishops and hundreds of priests were brutally murdered by angry mobs in what became known as the September Massacres. An entire convent of Carmelite nuns were guillotined in Compiegne for refusing to deny their faith. The Archbishop of Paris was forced to resign his duties and march through the streets of Paris wearing a red “Cap of Liberty” instead of his mitre. Catholic religious holidays were outlawed and replaced with festivals to celebrate the harvest and other non-religious symbols. One of the most notorious was the cult known as the Féte de la Reason or “Festival of Reason.” It was first celebrated in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, where the high altar had been torn down and an altar to Liberty erected with the inscription “To Philosophy.” Festive maidens in Roman dresses and colored sashes danced around a costumed Goddess of Reasus who represented Liberty.

But the turbulent effects of the French Revolution were a fate not confined only to France. It’s widespread dechristianization spread to other countries like Italy and Belgium. In 1796, the French army under the command of a young Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Italy and conquered the Italian states. French troops marched on...
Rome, attempted to force a renunciation of temporal authority from Pope Pius VI and, when he refused, took the pontiff prisoner, effectively ending all authority of the Papal Government. Pius VI died in 1799 while still a prisoner of the French.

Belgium, then part of the Austrian Netherlands, had been invaded and annexed in 1795, resulting in the rapid implementation of the same reforms which had been passed in post-Revolution France. Like a Leviathan’s hungry tentacles, death and destruction at the hands of the French reached across Belgium, closing churches, seminaries, and religious houses. Clergy were forbidden to wear ecclesiastical garb and were forced to publish a declaration recognizing France as the sovereign authority. The University of Louvain — long an institution for the education of seminarians and clergy — was closed for not providing “the kind of public instruction conformable to Republican principles.”

More than 7,500 Belgian priests were illegally condemned and either deported or executed. One of those who narrowly escaped with his life was Rev. Charles Nerinckx (1761-1824). Ordained in 1785, the Flemish-born Nerinckx refused to comply with the French reforms. With a warrant out for his arrest, he went into hiding and evaded his would-be captors for four years, finally fleeing in disguise to the United States. He eventually made his way to Kentucky where he became one of its most renowned Catholic missionary priests.

Another was Father Benedict Joseph Flaget (1763-1850). He was a young priest teaching theology at the University of Nantes when it was closed by the Revolutionary Council in 1791. Fleeing with fellow priest, Rev. John Mary David and seminarian Stephen Badin, Flaget sailed from Bordeaux to Philadelphia in January 1792. Like Nerinckx, Flaget and Badin would find their way to Kentucky. Father Badin becoming a missionary in the footsteps of Nerinckx and Flaget the first Bishop of Bardstown in 1848.

While the French Revolution nearly destroyed Catholicism in much of Europe, the first few decades of the 19th century witnessed a decline in Enlightenment influences. The Concordat of 1801 reconciled revolutionaries and Catholics and solidified the Roman Catholic Church as the majority church of France, and in 1826, the Confraternity of Penitents reestablished Eucharistic devotion to the French people. This movement also produced a similar reconciliation in Belgium where, on March 13, 1846, Camillus Paul Maes would be born into a devout Catholic family in the old Flemish city of Courtrai.

But this isn’t the end of this story. The specter of the Enlightenment would linger for years to come, until one day the same Camillus Maes, now the Bishop of Covington and a ranking member of the American episcopate, would find it necessary to confront a new threat of religious decline in America and reawaken in priests and lay faithful a new reverence and devotion for his beloved Holy Eucharist.

Next time: Pioneer priests brought the Eucharistic tradition to Kentucky.
Ministry Leader Wonders,
“Do We Have a Lazarus Starving on Our Doorstep?”

In St. Luke’s Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples a series of thought-provoking parables to help them understand the nature of God, his expectations for his followers and the pathway to eternal life in heaven. One of the most powerful of those stories is a cautionary tale, The Rich Man and Lazarus, which describes how a wealthy man ignores a beggar who arrives at his doorstep in desperate need. The poor man dies and is taken to heaven, while the rich man faces a fate in Hell.

While this can be challenging to read, it is one we should consider carefully and prayerfully in our modern world. According to one Catholic ministry leader, this parable is particularly relevant today in light of the suffering that exists in Haiti and other impoverished countries so close to America’s “doorstep.”

“When you visit an impoverished Haitian town like Ouanaminthe — a little more than an hour away from U.S. shores by plane — it’s hard not to feel like you are seeing the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus played out before your eyes,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach. “Like Lazarus, the people in Ouanaminthe are suffering and hungry. Like the wealthy man in the parable, most of us have the capacity to help. Shouldn’t we be asking ourselves, ‘Do we have a Lazarus standing at our doorstep?’ The situation certainly seems similar with so many suffering families this close to our country’s shores.”

According to Cavnar, extreme hunger is one of the most pervasive problems in Haiti, and it is a hardship compassionately

Catholics can and should address. “Cross Catholic Outreach has a number of major food distribution outreachs underway in the Caribbean and Central America, and Catholics in the U.S. can play an important role in making these efforts a success,” he explained. “Many are already involved and are having a big impact. Through Cross Catholic Outreach, they are funding feeding programs in Haiti, Guatemala and many other countries. They are also helping us send large shipments of donated food. Ouanaminthe and dozens of other impoverished communities are benefiting from these meals, so in a sense, we are accomplishing exactly what Christ taught in the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus — that we must show compassion and address the needs of those who suffer.”

One of the Catholic missions partnering with Cross Catholic Outreach to feed the hungry in Ouanaminthe is the Marie Louise Bayle Center run by the Apostolic Sisters of Mary Immaculate. This ministry has a comprehensive plan to help the poor, including both a school and a lunch program to address poor children’s nutritional needs. (See related story on opposite page.)

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“The Marie Louise Bayle Center is doing incredible things to lift up the very poor in that area of Haiti, and we’re doing everything we can to ensure they have the resources they need to succeed. Supplying food is one of our highest priorities because without those meals, the school would struggle to maintain its daily feeding program, and the children would suffer,” Cavnar said. “The name is true of other Catholic missions and ministries in the Caribbean and Central America. They are all eager to help the poor in their communities, but they need the support of U.S. Catholics to keep their programs running. Given the sacrifices these amazing priests and religious sisters have made to live and work among the poor, providing the food and other supplies they need to accomplish their goals is the least we can do. I’m humbled that Cross Catholic Outreach can be their supply line for resources, and I’m deeply grateful to our donors for helping us fund these efforts.”

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach food programs and other outreachs to the poor can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02156, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. 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.

Dedicated Catholics Make Major Impact on Poverty by Serving as ‘Mission Partners’

Consistency and reliability have long been recognized as important character traits in our society, and most of us raise our children to uphold those values, especially in the workplace. We do that because we know consistency and reliability produce stability and help us weather the unexpected storms in life.

The same is true when it comes to charity, according to Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach. That is why his ministry cherishes its Mission Partners — donors who have committed to monthly giving. “Mission Partners represent the foundation of our ministry,” he said. “Their commitment to helping the poor on a monthly basis gives us a steady, reliable way to serve. Without them, the missions we support in the developing world would be unable to commit to long-term projects, and it would be much more difficult for us to respond to disaster situations. When we can depend on the support of Mission Partners, we can move forward confidently and take on every challenge that’s put before us.”

Because monthly giving is so important to Cross Catholic Outreach’s work overseas, the ministry makes it as easy as possible for its donors to become Mission Partners. That option is included on appeals, on the charity’s website, and in the brochures it distributes at Catholic parishes and in Catholic newspapers.

Ultimately, we ask people to become Mission Partners because monthly giving has a huge impact on the priests, religious sisters and Catholic lay leaders working in the trenches, fighting to end hunger and alleviate poverty,” Cavnar said. “When they face an unexpected crisis or a natural disaster strikes, the missions know they can come to us for help because our Mission Partners have provided the resources needed to overcome those immediate challenges. We can make decisions in a matter of hours and send help within days — and the poor are blessed as a result.”
Feeding Hungry Children and Ending Malnutrition Remain Top Priorities for Cross Catholic Outreach

Walk the streets of Ouanaminthe, Haiti, and you will meet scores of destitute people who have come to that town in hopes of escaping hunger and high unemployment. Some will tell you they plan to stay. Others will say they intend to travel across the nearby border with the Dominican Republic because they’ve heard jobs are more plentiful there.

“All of these people are in Ouanaminthe because they desperately want to improve their lives and the lives of their children, but when they reach the town, most quickly discover the same hardships they were trying to escape,” explained Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, a respected Catholic relief and development ministry known for its work among Haiti’s poor. “Because these families have had almost no education and possess few job skills, they start at the bottom of the ladder. Some end up begging on the streets. Others may find jobs requiring manual labor, but these rarely provide more than a few dollars a day. So, in the end, these Haitian families face a real struggle to survive.” (See related story on opposite page.)

Cavnar went on to describe some of the hardships the poor of Ouanaminthe face. He said many families live in crowded, ramshackle houses along the town’s dirt streets, and their neighborhoods have no modern sanitation facilities or reliable electricity.

“It’s heartbreaking, and in addition to these tragic living conditions, there is a serious problem with hunger. Putting even one decent meal on the table each day has become their priority, and the and death. And the solution isn’t always just a matter of filling a child’s stomach. Foods with little nutritional value may temporarily relieve hunger pains, but a child can still grow weak and suffer from long-term medical problems. That’s because some of the foods commonly eaten by the poor lack the protein, vitamins and minerals a child’s brain and body need to develop properly.”

According to Cavnar, this is one of the reasons Cross Catholic Outreach’s staff members monitor the feeding programs it supports in developing countries. It’s also why the ministry ships Vitafood meals to its partners in Haiti and other developing countries. Prepackaged Vitafood meals are scientifically formulated to meet nutritional needs.

“Many of the Catholic missions we help in Haiti and elsewhere rely on our shipments of Vitafood to run their feeding centers and operate their school lunch programs, and those ministries are deeply grateful to our donors for funding the supplies of food we send,” Cavnar said. “Our donors are thrilled to be a part of our food outreachs too. When they learn that families and children are suffering for lack of ‘daily bread,’ they are eager to help because they understand food scarcity has implications beyond hunger. Malnutrition and extreme hunger weaken the body, create medical problems and, in the case of young students, will hamper their ability to learn. A child who is deprived of dinner and breakfast isn’t able to focus when they go to school. All they can think about is the terrible hunger they feel.”

In addition to obtaining and shipping Vitafood to Haiti and other countries, Cross Catholic Outreach also arranges special food packing events in Catholic schools and parishes around the U.S. These hands-on volunteer experiences give students and parish groups an opportunity to assemble meal packets and personally participate in Cross Catholic Outreach’s efforts to end world hunger.

“American Catholics who take part in our food packing events and who fund our shipments of Vitafood are making a tremendous difference in the lives of the poor,” Cavnar said. “Their gifts of time, talent and treasure may save lives in some cases. I commend them all for their generosity and compassion.”

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. AC02186, 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 is needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.
U.S. synod report

The report is divided into four themes: “Enduring Wounds,” “Enhancing Community Participation,” “Ongoing Formation for Mission,” and “Engaging Discernment.” Each section summarizes common observations raised in the listening sessions.

It includes directly quoted descriptions of common concerns, hopes and desires from individual regional reports raised in the local listening sessions.

The report cites several “enduring wounds” expressed during the sessions. In addition to the still unfolding effects of the sexual abuse crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to exact a toll on the sense of community people felt before the virus swept around the world in 2020.

“The pandemic itself ‘has led to the fracturing of our communities in some ways, accelerating a trend toward disengagement and intensifying the isolation and loneliness of many, youth and elderly in particular. A large number of faithful have not yet returned to worshipping,’” the report said, quoting the Region 12 submission from Northwestern states.

Dissatisfactions and polarization in the church was a concern expressed in multiple regional reports. The Region 9 report covering four Midwestern states said division over the celebration of the Eucharist is disconcerting, particularly when it comes to the pre-Vatican II Mass.

A number of faithful have not yet returned to worship, the report said, adding that “receiving Eucharist does bring them more closely in solidarity with the poor.”

Participants in listening sessions expressed a “desire for lifelong spiritual, pastoral and catechetical formation as disciples.” Discussions in the sessions made clear the importance of evangelization as we continue to live out the church’s mission, which requires stronger formation.

Steps would include accompaniment with families in their formation as people long for a closer encounter with Jesus.

Suggestions also emerged on the need to “journey together” in the formation of clergy. The Region 5 intermediate report from Southern states suggested such formation was needed to better understand human and pastoral needs, cultural sensitivity, stronger emphasis on social justice, how to include laypeople in decision-making and “learning to speak with empathy, creativity and compassion.”

Laypeople, the synod report said, also expressed hope that a genuine appreciation for their gifts and talents would grow into a “relationship of collaboration” with pastors.

The final theme, “Engaging Discernment,” concluded that the diocesan phase of the synodal process was the first step in a church rooted in synodality, or walking together.

The synthesis report said the process enabled thousands of people to reengage “in the simple practice of gathering, praying together and listening to one another.”

It invited people to commit to “ongoing attentive listening, respectful encounter and peaceful discernment.”

Going forward, the report called for continued engagement with communities that did not participate broadly in the listening sessions particularly Indigenous people, ethnic communities and immigrants.

“Engaging and discerning with our sisters and brothers who experience the woundedness of marginalization, as well as those whose voice were underrepresented within the synodal process, will be essential for the unfolding of the synodal journey in our dioceses and in our country,” the report said.

The next phase in preparation for the Synod of Bishops is being called the continental phase. It will find groups gathering by continent to synthesize the reports submitted to the Vatican thus far. Synod officials will prepare the “instrumentum laboris,” or working document, to guide continental or regional ecclesial assemblies that will take place by March.

The North American report will be submitted by the U.S. and Canada. Bishop Flores said some preliminary outreach has already occurred among the teams from the two nations. Other continental reports will involve significantly larger gatherings of teams from individual ecclesial assemblies.

Those assemblies will produce another set of documents that will help in the drafting of a second working document for the Synod of Bishops in October 2023.

The synod is expected to produce a final document on how synodality can be practiced throughout the church.
Kidnapped nun 'filled with gratitude' following her safe release in Africa

Peter Finney Jr.
Catholic News Service

NEW ORLEANS — During nearly five months of captivity in Burkina Faso, Marianite Sister Suellen Tennyson wondered aloud where God was hiding in the midst of her isolation and loneliness.

Then, in an instant, she looked down at her feet, where one of her toenails had been battered and bloodied during a harrowing post-kidnapping motorcycle ride deep into the forests of West Africa, after which she was turned over to a rival Muslim group.

Her new captor saw her gouged toe and, inexplicably, began washing her feet.

“I’m sitting there, and this Muslim man is washing my feet. And I said, ‘God, is something going on here?’ It was like God was using him in some kind of way I was just taken aback,” Sister Suellen said in a Sept. 13 interview with the Clarion Herald, newspaper of the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Sister Suellen, 83, was abducted by a group of armed men the night of April 4-5 from the medical mission residence in Yalgo she had shared since 2013 with two other Marianite sisters and lay employees.

Through Sister Suellen’s ordeal, the Marianites of Holy Cross, of which she is the former international leader, heard nothing about her whereabouts. She was freed peacefully in late August in neighboring Niger into the custody of the FBI and U.S. Embassy and Air Force personnel.

No ransom was paid, Sister Suellen said, another one of the inscrutable mysteries of her harrowing experience.

Speaking from a safe haven in New Orleans where she returned quietly Aug. 31, Sister Suellen expressed gratitude that her life was spared and for the invisible actions of the uncounted people who prayed and worked for her release.

“That’s what I want to say, ‘Thank you to all these people,’” Sister Suellen said. “I am truly humbled by all of this. And the only way I can say thank you is ‘thank you.’”

The Muslim kidnappers who first grabbed Sister Suellen from her bed blindfolded and gagged her to keep her from yelling out to the other house residents. Her shoes, glasses and medication were left behind.

“I thought maybe they were going to leave me sitting on the porch, but all of a sudden they wrapped me up and took me by bicycle to a secret place,” she said.

Sister Suellen was turned over to her new captor, a woman who maintained that Muslims were the only ones who understood God’s will.

“I thought, ‘This is a Muslim. She knows God. I have no way of knowing if she’s right or wrong. If she’s right, I’m going to get through this. If she’s wrong, I’m going to die,’” Sister Suellen said.

She was held for nearly five months in deep forest encampments where she ate on the ground and slept in a tent, and often had to cover herself with her meager belongings to ward off the biting insects. Most days, she was blindfolded.

Of the 12 abductors, one was a woman who had put Sister Suellen in an embattled position by binding her hands above her head.

Sister Suellen’s abductors were Muslim because of a desta..
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Interested individuals may send a cover letter and resume, including compensation history and references with contact e-mail addresses, to Stephen Koplay, SPHR, by email to skoplay@covdio.org or by fax to (859) 392-1589.

STAFF WRITER/MEDIA CONTENT DEVELOPER
The Messenger is seeking a Staff Writer/Media Content Developer to join its media team. In this role, you will use your communication and web design skills to increase reader engagement, primarily through creating content for — the Messenger, the diocesan website, and diocesan social media platforms. Duties and responsibilities include creating content for various print and social media formats; proofreading content before publication; attending, taking photographs and reporting on events; and recording and editing short videos. Knowledge of Adobe Creative Cloud software is preferred. Candidates must be practicing Catholics with strong organizational skills, and the ability to meet deadlines and handle stress is an absolute requirement.

Interested candidates may submit a resume, references, and writing samples to Stephen Koplay by e-mail to skoplay@covdio.org, (859) 392-1500.

CUSTODIAN - MAINTENANCE MAN
St. Joseph School located in Cold Spring, Kentucky, is seeking a custodian / maintenance man. The position can be full or part time but requires a minimum of twenty hours per week, 11 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday. Responsibilities include school janitorial duties as well as basic repair and general maintenance of the school facilities, buildings and equipment under the supervision of the Maintenance Manager. Interested candidates may submit a letter of interest and resume to the parish office at: jssweb@stjoeparish.net.

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Send resume or detailed experience w/availability, pay requirements & contact info to: David Hastings c/o HONK, 502 Fry St., Covington 41011 or e-mail to dhasting@honkhomes.org

CUSTODIAN
St. Joseph School located in Cold Spring, Kentucky, is seeking a custodian / maintenance man. The position can be full or part time but requires a minimum of twenty hours per week, Saturday to Saturday, 11 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday. Responsibilities include school janitorial duties as well as basic repair and general maintenance of the school facilities, buildings and equipment under the supervision of the Maintenance Manager. Interested candidates may submit a letter of interest and resume to the parish office at: jssweb@stjoeparish.net.

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PASTORAL ASSOCIATE, ST. STEPHEN PARISH, ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI, OH

The role of PASTORAL ASSOCIATE is a full-time position reporting to the Pastor. The primary function of this position is to enable ongoing parish life including liturgy, pastoral care and administration, enabling people to draw closer to God by facilitating the growth of St. Stephen parish that is ministerially complete and to assist the pastor in his function of liaison between the parish and the diocesan church.

In addition to being an essential function in the daily life of the parish, this position also serves as a developmental role that could lead to the promotional opportunity over time of Pastoral Associate for the Family of Parishes of St. Stephen, Holy Family-Immaculata, St. Rose and Christ the King. The Pastoral Associate enables, encourages, develops lay leadership on all levels; works with parish council to develop goals and objectives that enliven the vision and meet particular needs of the community; oversees sacramental, liturgical life of parish; organizes community outreach programs; and engages parishioners in Stewardship initiatives.

Applicants should have 5–10 years job experience in the relative pastoral setting; a theological background in Ecclesiology, Christology, Sacramental and Liturgical Theology, Scripture, and Ethics and Morality; skills in pastoral counseling/pastoral care; have supervision experience in ministry; good interpersonal skills, and multi-cultural sensitivity.

For more details contact the St. Stephen Search Committee at: ststephensearchcommittee@gmail.com

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

The Diocese of Covington invites individuals to apply for the position of Assistant Director, School Lunch Program. The Assistant Director will work with the Director to successfully operate the School Lunch Program. This will include training new employees, onsite reviews of cafeterias, assisting with menu planning, direct certification for families, and processing D.O.D. and vendor food orders. The candidate we seek for this position will have previous food service experience, be fully certified by the local health department to work in food service, good attention to details, and have excellent interpersonal communications skills. Please send a letter of interest, resume with compensation history, and references (including contact email address) by email or by fax to Ms. Laura Hatfield, Director School Lunch Program, LHatfield@CovDi.o, 859-392-1551.

DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL

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Contemporary deficits

(Continued from page 5)

In the Gospel figure of the rich man, we see not only a man that “just does not know” (the truth deficit), but a man who does not see the poor man, Lazarus, at his gate (the compassion deficit). He has filled his life with the lie of his material prosperity and has — in ways he does not even comprehend — dehumanized himself and others. As the toxic mix of materialism and atheism, coupled to its neo-pagan moral vision, continues its long march as the ruling ideology in our society, not only will the truth deficit become ever more alarming, but the compassion deficit will also manifest itself more forcefully in various forms of hatred of the sick, the suffering, the mentally ill, the aged, the poor, and the preborn.

The Lord will not send Lazarus, but he has sent us to tell people “who just don’t know.” Will we do it?

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

Understanding the Word of God

(Continued from page 2)

Ph.D. from Hebrew Union College. Upcoming workshops are:

The Book of Proverbs — Nov. 19, 8:30-11:30 a.m. The book of Proverbs offers advice about how to live as a servant of God. What qualities identify someone as God’s servant?

The Book of Wisdom — March 18 and April 22, 8-10:30 a.m. This book encourages readers to seek wisdom. But where do we begin such a search? Discover that God is always there to offer us plenty of help. The Book of Wisdom is a two-part workshop beginning in 2023. All workshops are on Saturdays at Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium (Curia building) 1215 Madison Ave., Covington. The cost is $65 per workshop. Register at Covdio.org/register. Everyone is welcome to attend. Information is available on the diocesan website at covdio.org/sec/catholic/bible-study.

Inaak A. Inaak is co-director of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization.

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

“Prayer sustained me,” she said. “I went through my Mass every day I did each part of the Mass and received spiritual communion. That was the thing that kept me going because I had nothing.”

Valga is in northern Burkina Faso near Mali. Reliefweb reported in April that in the past two years, Burkina Faso’s northern and eastern regions had seen a “sharp deterioration in the security situation... due to the presence of non-state armed groups.”

Sister Suellen said she contracted malaria and lost 20 pounds during her captivity. Her diet consisted of “spaghetti, rice, sardines; spaghetti, rice, sardines, but no Italian sauce or good Croole sauce. No red beans and rice.”

“I have no desire for sardines anymore,” she said.

During her longest moments, Sister Suellen prayed for “peaceful patience.” Because she saw no end in sight.

“I had many conversations with God,” she said. “I would say, ‘OK, God, what’s your word to me today at this moment?’ Sometimes it was a Scripture passage or a story from Scripture. But, after a while, it was just messages to me. And the one that stayed with me the longest was ‘peaceful patience. You need to be peacefully patient.’

Eventually, her captor found a sofa for her so that she did not have to sleep on the floor.

In August, without warning, she was moved again on another motorcycle ride. By the end she was so tired she begged for a rest because she was barely able to hang on.

Finally, it realized that she saw three men dressed in African garb along with another man dressed in a nice shirt and pants.

“I was thinking, ‘Oh Jesus, is this another group I’m going to have to stand up all over again with?’” she said.

“But the good news is they had a truck and not a motorcycle. One of the men came to me and said, you can sit in that jacket off. And he turned to me and he said, ‘You’re free!’ I said, ‘What? Free? Who are you?’”

They were now in neighboring Niger. The men took her to a house.

“We stopped to get something to eat, and the man said, ‘You need to take a shower. Let the woman of the house help you,’” Sister Suellen said. “Oh, I felt like I was in heaven.

And then it dawned on me. That was the first time I had seen in five months.”

Back in New Orleans, Sister Suellen underwent medical checkups. She is regaining her strength and using a walker to guard against falls, but she is getting stronger.

“The story is about the contrast between stone and sand. Judgments etched in stone, judgments written in sand, unwritten in the writing. Are the judgments wiped away, erased by the rising tide, by wind on the beach, by the tread of time? Not just forgotten but gone. Gone before they are formed. Are God’s judgments written in sand? O happy sinner, God has amnesia. Amnesia God, forgetting our offense, wiping it out. Remember me. Remember me, remember only your good creation.

Is the question this story asks of me about my heart? Stony in judgement or ground into softness and compassion? Make me like you, amen. God. My stony heart pulverized to bits. Ground down to powdery sand by the rising tide. Eroded by the thoughtful tidal waves.”
Prayers, support needed for those with Alzheimer’s disease, pope says

VATICAN CITY — Marking World Alzheimer’s Day Sept. 21, Pope Francis asked people to pray for all those affected by the illness, including families and caregivers. Alzheimer’s disease “affects so many people, who are often pushed to the margins of society because of this condition,” the pope said at the end of his general audience talk in St. Peter’s Square Sept. 21. “Let us pray for those suffering from Alzheimer’s, for their families, and for those who lovingly care for them, that they may be increasingly supported and helped,” he said. He also asked that people pray for men and women facing hemodialysis, dialysis or an organ transplant.

September is World Alzheimer’s Month, which is an initiative by Alzheimer’s Disease International (ADI) to raise awareness, challenge the stigma surrounding Alzheimer’s and dementia, and garner more support for those affected. Dementia is a general term for a group of symptoms that negatively impact memory and Alzheimer’s is a specific disease that is the most common cause of dementia.

‘Enough is enough,’ say bishops after kidnapping, church burning

YAOUNDE, Cameroon — Catholic bishops in Cameroon’s war-torn English-speaking regions said they were left in “shock and utter horror” following the burning of a church and the kidnapping of five priests, a nun and three laypeople. The incident occurred Sept. 16 at the St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Nchang, in southwestern Cameroon. The people kidnapped were taken to an unknown destination in the surrounding forests. The kidnappers, identified only as separatist fathers, told the church to pay a ransom of $50,000, a request the church has rejected. “I have spoken to all nine bishops to support and help,” Father Christopher Eboka, communications director at the Mamfe Diocese, told Catholic News Service Sept. 21. “They say they have not been tortured but, every day, they are being reminded that if the ransom isn’t being paid, they will be killed one after the other.”

“The police, instead of an aggressive attitude, should guarantee security,” he continued in a tweet dated Sept. 20. “The police, instead of an aggressive attitude, should guarantee security.” Videos on social media showed a police officer informing parishioners of the prohibition on holding a procession, but being jeered by people inside the church. Celebrations of the Eucharist occurred, but not processions.

Vatican basilica provides background for new film on St. Peter

VATICAN CITY — For two weeks in October, the facade of St. Peter’s Basilica will be the screen for the nighttime showing of a short film about the life, the call and the ministry of St. Peter. The eight-minute 3D film, using art from the basilica and from the Vatican Museums, will be projected onto the facade every 15 minutes from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m. Oct. 2-16. The narration is in Italian with subtitles in English. “What are the features of the church? What is its true face? What is the ‘face’ of the pope? The scandals? Its mission? Its doctrines and catechisms? Its social commitment?” asked Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, archpriest of the basilica. While all those are part of the church, the cardinal told reporters Sept. 20, “sometimes you need to dust off the mirror” and provide a clearer, more basic image of the church to both believers and visitors, which is why the basilica wants to present to the public the life and faith of St. Peter.

Church says no to processions after police surround parish in Nicaragua

MEXICO CITY — Police in Nicaragua have thwarted the celebration of feast day processions for patron saints in a city considered safe for the ruling Sandinista regime, which continues increasing its repression of the Catholic Church. Police have surrounded churches in the city of Masaya, 10 miles south of the capital, Managua, to prevent parishioners from removing statues of their patron saints and holding processions, according to videos posted on social media. “It is absurd that the dictatorship sees the religious celebrations of Masaya’s patron saints as a threat,” twisted Father Edvino Roman, former pastor at the St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Masaya. Father Roman has gone into exile. “This is not an attempt to measure forces. It’s allowing Catholics to celebrate,” he continued in a tweet dated Sept. 20. “The police, instead of an aggressive attitude, should guarantee security.” Videos on social media showed a police officer informing parishioners of the prohibition on holding a procession, but being jeered by people inside the church. Celebrations of the Eucharist occurred, but not processions.

Bishops speak against transport of migrants; it ‘offends God,’ says one

WASHINGTON — Several U.S. Catholic bishops slammed the actions of Republican politicians who have recently begun to send out of their states groups of women, children and men seeking refuge. They said these politicians are falsely telling the migrants that work, food and other benefits await them if they get on planes to other locales, but instead the only thing they find on the other end of the trip is confusion. “To use migrants and refugees as pawns offends God, destroys society and shows how low individuals can stoop for personal gain,” wrote San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller on Twitter Sept. 18. He was one of several bishops to speak out after the latest drop-off of migrants — two groups of mostly Venezuelans who were flown Sept. 14 to Martha’s Vineyard in Massachusetts by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. More than 6 million people have fled Venezuela because of political turmoil that has sent the country into an economic spiral, causing what the UN refugee agency calls the “second-largest external displacement crisis in the world.” Though many have fled to near-by countries, others, with family in the U.S., have opted to make the long trip north. The Texas archbishop said the tactics to ship them off elsewhere “promote human trafficking,” and he called out the “sick actions” of political leaders who do “little about the issue.”

The majority and beauty of the art, architecture and history of the basilica. Both types of visitors must be welcomed, he said, and helped to understand why the church, built over the tomb of St. Peter, is so important to Catholics and to Christians in general.
Covington Diocese Blue Ribbon Schools
Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria 2018
Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills 2006, 2018
Covington Latin School, Covington 2003
Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Burlington 2006, 2018
Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills 1996, 2012, 2019
St. Agnes School, Ft. Wright 2009
St. Cecilia School, Independence 2018
St. Henry District High School, Erlanger 2012, 2021
St. Henry Elementary School, Elmere 2016
St. Joseph School, Cold Spring 2018
St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs 2006, 2017
St. Mary School, Alexandria, 2016
St. Paul School, Florence 2014
St. Therese School, Southgate 2022
St. Thomas School, Ft. Thomas 2006, 2019

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