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Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The origins of the Bambinelli blessing

A recent, but beloved, annual tradition, the blessing of the Bambinelli, also called Bambinelli Sunday, was instituted by Pope John Paul II in 1969. In Rome, the tradition falls on the Third Sunday of Advent, and children and their families are invited to bring with them their baby Jesus (Bambinelli) from their home nativity scene. The pope then blesses the Bambinellis following his Sunday Angelus address.

Pope Francis continues this tradition to this day, and parishes worldwide have also adapted the Bambinelli blessing into their Advent season, reinforcing the birth of Christ as the true meaning of the Christmas season.

This year, the Diocese of Covington will host a Bambinelli blessing of its own, Dec. 10, 6 p.m. at St. Mary’s Park, Cathedral Square, Covington. Children of the Diocese of Covington and their families are invited to bring the baby Jesus from their family nativity scene for Bishop John Iffert to bless. The diocesan Christmas Tree will also be blessed and lit celebrating the joy of the third week of Advent as the Church approaches Christmas. Adding to the festivities, school choirs will sing traditional Christmas hymns and homemade cookies by the Curia staff will be served along with hot chocolate.

Everyone is welcome. An RSVP is not necessary but is appreciated, scan the QR code or visit www.covdio.org.

Grab the Baby Jesus from your home nativity scene and bring your family to join Bishop John Iffert for blessings, hot chocolate, homemade cookies, live Christmas choirs and more!
Saturday, Dec. 10, 6–8:30 p.m. at St. Mary’s Park, Cathedral Square, Covington.
In wake of failed Amendment 2, Kentucky cause for life not over

“...the attorney general of Kentucky announced that, in their opinion, the trigger law was in effect and that the condition to trigger was in effect,” said Mr. Hall. However, the law in effect, Louisville’s abortion providers, Planned Parenthood and EMW went to the Jefferson circuit court to argue that the trigger law and heartbeat bill were both unconstitutional.

In 2021, Amendment 2 was put on this year’s ballot in anticipation for these issues, said Mr. Hall. “The amendment would have made clear that there’s no right to abortion in the state constitution,” he said.

“No, it’s up to the court,” concluded Mr. Hall.

On Tuesday, Nov. 15, Kentucky’s Supreme Court heard arguments on the law banning abortion. There is no timetable for when the justices might announce their decision.
Serving at the altar grows youths’ relationship to the Eucharist

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

St. Tarcisius, a Roman martyr celebrated as the patron saint of altar servers and as one of the first recorded instance of a youth fulfilling that role in the Church, held the special responsibility of carrying the Eucharist to the people.

Today, altar servers, usually lay youth, fulfill a similar role in the Mass — assisting the priest celebrant with various tasks, including carrying the cross and processional candles, holding the book for the priest and presenting the gifts during the preparation of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

Lindsay Powers is a student at Covington Latin School, Covington, and a pontifical server; a server for Masses at which the Bishop presides, for the Diocese of Covington. She has been serving for seven years, the past four as a pontifical server. Miss Powers, who enjoys and honors the “responsibility and duty” of serving at the Mass, believes that her experience as a server helped to strengthen her relationship with the Mass and with the Eucharist.

“Serving grows your relationship with the Mass because it puts you right in the middle of it. You are able to understand each part of the Mass a little better as you go. You get to see how each of your actions throughout the Mass affects the liturgy and how each action is important. Your relationship with the Eucharist grows as a result of your focus and attentiveness to what is happening,” she said, concluding that serving has “absolutely” grown her relationship to the Eucharist.

For young people who may find their mind wandering at Mass, or find themselves growing distant from the Eucharist, serving holds promise. Powers, as a pontifical server, a server for Masses at which the Bishop presides, for the Diocese of Covington. She has been serving for seven years, the past four as a pontifical server. Miss Powers, who enjoys and honors the “responsibility and duty” of serving at the Mass, believes that her experience as a server helped to strengthen her relationship with the Mass and with the Eucharist.

Your relationship with the Eucharist grows as a result of your focus and attentiveness to what is happening,” she said, concluding that serving has “absolutely” grown her relationship to the Eucharist.

For young people who may find their mind wandering at Mass, or find themselves growing distant from the Eucharist, the experience may help strengthen that bond and reignite love for the Mass.
Poetry (Exodus 32:1-14)

There are many definitions of prayer. One of the simplest is “conversation with God.” Conversations, of course, come in a variety of types. Surely, the kind of conversation we mean when we refer to prayer, is the kind we have with trusted friends. While these conversations always involve some degree of trust, understanding and mutual self- revealations, they are not always intense or deeply meaningful. Maintaining deep and emotionally satisfying conversations constantly would lead to psychological exhaustion. Even with our friends we sometimes merely seek information or request favors.

Some of our conversations with close friends do move to a level that involves risks. They feature a kind of trust that allows us to be ourselves with them. Both are open, honest and vulnerable. We neither fear our accomplishments nor exaggerate our faults. Honesty in every aspect prevails. This is the kind of conversation we hope to arrive at, at least occasionally with God. In these conversations we come to know God better; but we also see ourselves more honestly. Confidence in God’s faithful love of us allows us to see and accept ourselves in that comforting light.

I suspect God does not want us to put ourselves down about our accomplishments. Prayer is honest.

We are not afraid to challenge friends when their actions are incomprehensible. Conversations with friends are sometimes light, sometimes emotional or even tense. The same is true for our conversations with God. We do not shy away from difficult personal questions. We ask questions about the meaning and purpose of our lives; we ask God about his purposes.

If God is testing Moses, Moses passes this test with flying colors: “Why, O LORD, should your wrath blaze against YOUR OWN people whom YOU brought out of Egypt with such great power and so strong a hand!” (Exod 32:11). Rejecting the claim that they are his, Moses emphatically recognizes God’s role in the endeavor. This is an honest moment of clarity for Moses. Prayer leads us to know ourselves better.

Prayer offers an honest moment of clarity for Moses. Prayer leads us to know ourselves better.

Because prayer is honest and authentic, it is an ideal place for us to face challenges about what we believe about ourselves and how we are living our call. Whatever we see in prayer, we can say it aloud: God can hear it and God will answer it. We do not have to be afraid to say what is on our mind. We can say what we know and what we think.

Prayer is honest.

God announces an intention to obliterate the people and start the whole project over with Moses (Exod 32:10). Will Moses accept God’s offer to revoke the promise to Abraham, wipe out the people and make Moses the father of many nations? Is it an offer he cannot resist? Does Moses care about the people or would he sell them out for his own benefit? In prayer Moses faces these challenges about what we believe about ourselves and how we are living our call.

Moses takes the opportunity to challenge, or investi- gate, God’s fidelity to the covenant that includes the descendants of Abraham possessing the land to which they are going. Appealing to God’s faithfulness he admonishes God to remember the promise to bring Abraham’s descendants into a land that will be their perpetual heritage. What about that? Can you, God, go back on that promise and still be God (Exod 32:13)?

This is a brave and honest question on Moses’ part. Sometimes, we undoubtedly wonder what God is doing in our lives and our world. We can be honest with God in prayer just as we can with trusted friends. We can even wonder if God is true and just. There is no need to fake understanding or approval. Prayer involves being honest with God about all our questions and doubts. Faking it does not work in real conversations.

Perhaps, it is only now that Moses totally commits himself to the people and his mission. Just as we learn more about ourselves in honest conversations, so prayer leads us to know ourselves authentically and commit our- selves to our faith journey. This happens when we can avoid pretense because we trust that we are loved by God just as we are.

Divine Providence Sister Fidelis Tracy is a retired theologian at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky.
**VIEWPOINT**

**Julie Feinauer**

**Heres Jesus’ incarnation — even as Jesus is, always and always will he be — he became man for us. He knew with his example of love, each soul would have a pathway to follow. Step by step, the way was shown.**

We can know true love because our Lord Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice of his very life to save our souls. We are told, “Do not be afraid, I go before you.” These words should give us strength and hope that we are guided and protected by one who truly knows, because he traveled this road of life before us. Jesus, because he is God and man, knows the needs of the soul and of the body. He understands the heart and knows the Sanchez of humanity and refuses to leave us unattended; we are always loved, always watched over.

**In all aspects of our lives, we look to role models to give us a road map to success. Unfortunately, in today’s world many follow those who do not have the one true goal in mind — making it to heaven. If we take time to notice those examples of faith in our lives, we can see that the real role models we need are not on TV and don’t have media clout. They are, however, here for us even when our life seems to stray off the path. You cannot understand what Jesus is doing unless you’ve experienced it in action. In this, Jesus is our first role model.**

Today, however, the warm, nostalgic sentiments once associated with this holiday have been overshadowed by our 21st century infliction of the first Thanksgiving as a veritable table of colonialism and the oppression of indigenous peoples.

Whatever our political perspective or historical perspective, on November 24 millions of people across America will pause from their regular weekday routines, to give thanks, to remember and to reflect on what they are thankful for every man, woman and child, and for “the great beneficent Author of all good that was, or that will be.”

Looking back at a different page of Thanksgiving history, I learned that when George Washington proclaimed the first national celebration of Thanksgiving in 1789, he didn’t even mention the events of 1621.

He called for Americans to devote the first Thanksgiving “to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all that was, or that will be.”

Washington asked Americans to unite in giving God sincere and humble thanks for his kindness and protection, for his Providence and manifold mercies, and for “the great degree of tranquility, union and plenty” that they enjoyed. Sincere and humble thanks for God’s mercies and Providential care, and for the relative peace and plenty that we enjoy — aren’t these things we can all celebrate? This is not to say that our lives or our nation are perfect — far from it.

But despite a worldwide pandemic, a conflict that Pope Francis is calling a third world war, an international food crisis, natural disasters and ecological threats across our planet, we are still here. Our lives are in God’s hands and our every breath flows from his Providence love. Let us thank him for our blessings, however small we may believe them to be. Even as we thank God, there is something else we can do this Thanksgiving — let’s ask ourselves how we might pay it forward by sharing our blessings with others. The Collect, or opening prayer for the Mass to be celebrated on Thanksgiving proposes just this: “Father all-powerful, your gifts of love are countless and your goodness infinite; as we crops of  our blessings, we ask you to use them to God. May all people, young and old, find love and meaning in this Thanksgiving, that together, we can live through our darkest days. When it seems hope-}

Father Stephen Bankemper is pastor, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Ky.

**Father Stephen Bankemper**

**A new Thanksgiving meaning**

After reading up on the history of Thanksgiving, I discovered another meaning during my research with a book by Kennett Ham, titled Thanksgiving. The Collect, or opening prayer for the Mass to be celebrated on Thanksgiving proposes just this: “Father all-powerful, your gifts of love are countless and your goodness infinite; as we crops of  our blessings, we ask you to use them to God. May all people, young and old, find love and meaning in this Thanksgiving, that together, we can live through our darkest days. When it seems hope-

A new Thanksgiving meaning

Father Stephen Bankemper is pastor, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Ky.
**Be Witnesses**

“Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living!”
— Pope Francis

**A journey towards joy**

Karen Kuhlman
Messenger Correspondent

All Saints Day is barely behind us and Thanksgiving is still at a distance, but the culture pushes us forward to a secular Christmas still five weeks away. It can be challenging to ignore a sense of urgency as we begin thinking about everything we must accomplish to celebrate a meaningful Christmas with our families and loved ones.

Notre Dame Sister Ruth Lubbers is a spiritual director and vocation director for the Sisters of Notre Dame in Covington. She offers a few suggestions to take on the journey toward Christmas that may give a better perspective. Using Advent as a guide, she provides a few examples of how real joy might be found when arriving at the destination.

The Church marks the beginning of the new 2023 liturgical year on the First Sunday of Advent, Nov. 27 this year. Catholics take the coming weeks of the Advent Season as an opportunity to fervently pray for the arrival of Christ in the hearts of the people of the world on Christmas.

When preparing for a journey, plans are laid and essentials gathered to take along. Sister Ruth said: “Mary put all that aside and trusted in God’s provident care as she set out in haste on a journey she had not planned. But she was not alone as she ran to visit Elizabeth: Mary took God with her.”

Sister Ruth continued, “It is helpful to pack a spiritual backpack for our Advent journey. The beautiful Scripture readings of the season are an excellent place to start. The purple candles of the Advent wreath remind us of the immortality of our souls. The pink candle and the green of the wreath remind us to look forward with hope and anticipation — not just to the coming of the Lord at Christmas, but also to Christ’s second coming and the promise of everlasting life through him.”

“Think of how we might bring others along on the journey, especially those suffering or experiencing sorrow. Look for ways to be Good Samaritans to our neighbors. When grieving the loss of a loved one, we can give them a presence at our gatherings. With the lighting of a candle in their remembrance during Advent, we express our continuing love for them and the hope that we may one day be reunited with them in heaven.”

The women religious of the Diocese of Covington have been companions on the journey since the very early days of the Diocese. They have provided education, sheltered children bereft of a loving home, comforted the sick and welcomed the stranger. The sisters sacrificed much for the love of others without regard for themselves and often worked without pay, disregarding their present or future needs. The Diocese of Covington participates in the annual national Retirement Fund for Religious Collection the weekend of December 10–11 as a way to express gratitude for the sisters.

**Religious Communities in the Diocese of Covington**

Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery www.stwalburg.org
Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis www.brotresofthepoorofstfrancis.org
Passionist Nuns www.erangerpassionists.com
Sisters of Divine Providence www.cdpkentucky.org
Sisters of Notre Dame www.sndky.org
Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker www.szjw.org

**Public and Private Associations**

Franciscan Daughters of Mary www.fdofmary.org
Missionaries of St. John the Baptist www.msjb.info

For more information about consecrated life in the Diocese of Covington, contact Sister Fran Moore at (859) 392-1300.

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**November 18, 2022**

**Messenger**
Pope avoids row with Italy on migration but says lives must be saved

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis avoided a direct confrontation with Italy’s new government over immigration policies, but he still insisted “lives must be saved.”

Returning to the Vatican from Bahrain Nov. 6, the pope was asked about the struggle that four humanitarian rescue boats were having in getting Italian government authorization to dock in a port and disembark the more than 1,000 migrants they had rescued from the Mediterranean over the previous two weeks.

“The pope did not say anything he had not said before,” what was new was the government of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who took office less than three weeks earlier. All along, Meloni had said her government would tighten immigration requirements, increase deportations and rebuff the ships nongovernmental organizations run to rescue people trying to cross the Mediterranean.

“You know that today the Mediterranean is a cemetery, perhaps the largest cemetery in the world,” the pope said.

But Pope Francis agrees with one point Meloni and her Cabinet members have made. As he told reporters on his plane Nov 6. “The European Union must take in hand a policy of collaboration and help. It cannot leave the responsibility for all the migrants” to the four countries where most arrive by sea: Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain.

And the pope praised the Italian government for allowing the most vulnerable passengers — women, children and the sick — to disembark from the two of the rescue boats. He did not comment on the Italian government’s order that the two ships — the Humanity 1 and the Geo Barents — return to sea with the 250 adult men the Italian government determined were not “vulnerable.” The decree cited the need to maintain “public order and security” and noted that the migrants were taken onboard in waters outside Italy’s “search and rescue area.”

As of Nov. 8, the captains of the two ships refused to leave the Catania port, saying international maritime law required them to disembark rescued passengers at the nearest safe port.

The German charity SOS Humanity said Nov. 7 it had filed a court case against the Italian government’s order as a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights and has appealed in Catania for emergency asylum hearings for those still onboard.

In Reggio Calabria early Nov. 8, the ship Rise Above was allowed to disembark all 89 asylum-seekers it had rescued because, the government ruled, they were taken aboard in the “search and rescue area.”

Late at night Nov. 8, the Italian government allowed all the passengers on Humanity 1 and Geo Barents to disembark and go to a temporary processing center. Meanwhile the Ocean Viking, a rescue ship with 234 passengers aboard, was headed to Marseille, France, after repeatedly being denied a safe port in Italy or Malta.

The new Italian government was insisting that since Humanity 1 is a Germany-flagged ship and the other three rescue boats are flagged by Norway, those governments should be from the International Organization for Migration and theing a place of safety for disembarkation,” said a statement Nov. 6, “The need expressed by the Ministry of the Interior that Italy not be left alone in the face of the huge number of migrants knocking on Europe’s doors is more than just,” the archbishop said in a statement.

But fixing the situation requires a political solution by the European Union countries, which will take time, he said. “Clearly one cannot wait for the process of a political and legislative debate to end without, in the meantime, ensuring the safety of so many people, created in the image of God like each one of us, who cannot be left to wander the Mediterranean or be rejected without falling into despair or even losing the priceless gift of their lives.”

Archbishop Luigi Renna of Catania and representatives of the archdiocesan Caritas and the Community of Sant’Egidio visited late Nov. 6 with the asylum-seekers allowed to disembark from the Geo Barents. Caritas and Sant’Egidio have offered to help the government resettle all of the passengers onboard.

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At USCCB’s fall general assembly Archbishops Timothy Broglio, William Lori elected USCCB’s next president, vice president

Dennis Sadowski
Catholic News Service

BALTIMORE — Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archbishop of the Military Services was elected Nov. 15 to a three-year term as president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops during the fall general assembly in Baltimore.

The native of suburban Cleveland was chosen from a slate of 10 nominees, winning with 138 votes.

In subsequent voting, Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore was elected to serve a three-year term as vice president. He was elected on the third ballot by 143 to 96 in a runoff with Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana.

Under USCCB bylaws, the vice president is elected from the remaining nine candidates.

The two top options begin their terms at the conclusion of the fall assembly Nov. 17.

Archbishop Broglio, 70, worked in the Vatican diplomatic corps before being named the head of the military archdiocese in 2007. He has served as conference secretary for the past three years.

The prelate has been an advocate for members of the U.S. military around the world. He regularly visits U.S. service members as part of his responsibilities in leading the archdiocese. Archbishop Broglio also has been an advocate for pro-life causes.

Because Archbishop Broglio is conference secretary, the bishops Nov. 16 elected Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City as his replacement.

Similarly, Archbishop Lori, 71, stepped down as chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities with his election as USCCB vice president. On Nov. 16, the bishops elected Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, as the new pro-life chair.

Archbishop Broglio has served as chairman of the bishops’ Committee on International Justice and Peace and as a member of the Task Force for the 2013 Special Assembly.

He also served on the committees for Religious Freedom and International Justice and Peace and the sub-committees for the Defense of Marriage and Health Care.

He was ordained a priest in the Diocese of Cleveland in 1977. In the Vatican diplomatic corps, he served as secretary in the apostolic nunciature in Ivory Coast and later in the Dominican Republic and apostolic delegate to Puerto Rico.

In 2001, he was named nuncio to the Dominican Republic and apostolic delegate to Central America.

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Students at St. Henry School, Elsmere, celebrated Mass with veterans on Veterans Day. The veterans sat with their meals provided. Cost: a donation. For information visit Discipleship, Peebles, Ohio. Guest Rooms available; Messenger November 18, 2022.

Men’s retreat information call 344-3544. For more information on the current season, visit cathedralconcertseries.org or call Isaak A. Isaak, Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, 513.357.3328.

Thomas More University Winter Wonderland, Dec. 1, 6:30-9 p.m. Thomas More University student clubs join forces to offer winter and holiday activities that are family friendly and focused on engaging younger children. There will be a petting zoo, food trucks, arts and crafts, and more. Reservations not required. For information call 344-3544.

The Cathedral Concert Series continues its 46th season with the Advent Festival of Lessons and Carols, Dec. 3, 8:30-11 a.m. Families are invited to the Cathedral Mission Center, Cincinnati, for a pancake breakfast, activities and a chance to see the animated nativity. Call (513) 474-4997, or e-mail nolan@combonimissionaries.org.

The High School Placement Test (HSPT) is an assessment used to determine high school placement into honors and advanced classes and awarded scholarships. The HSPT will be administered in the Diocese of Covington Dec. 10. Newport Central Catholic High School is offering a two-hour HSPT preparatory course. Dec. 4 and 6, 4:30-6:30 p.m. This course is available to all 8th grade students in the Diocese of Covington, regardless of where they plan to take the exam. Cost $45 includes printed course materials for further test prep. Payment can be made the day of the session by cash or check. Registrations will be accepted the day of the event; pre-register at nchs.org.

Harp of Christmas Peace concert with Diane Schneider, Dec. 11, 7-8 p.m., The Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. E-mail Peggy Piccola at ppiccola@covdio.org.

The 30th annual Eighth 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 e-mailing Peggy Piccola at ppiccola@covdio.org.

Notre Dame Urban Education Center (NDUCE) is seeking adult and high school volunteers to tutor children in grades K-10 for its Homework PLUS program from 3-5 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Come and make a difference in the life of a child. Call NDUCE at 263-4476, or e-mail Sister Maria Therese at smtherese@nduec.org. Volunteers 16 and older must be VIRTUS compliant.

The HSPT will be administered in the Diocese of Covington Dec. 10. Newport Central Catholic High School is offering a two-hour HSPT preparatory course. Dec. 4 and 6, 4:30-6:30 p.m. This course is available to all 8th grade students in the Diocese of Covington, regardless of where they plan to take the exam. Cost $45 includes printed course materials for further test prep. Payment can be made the day of the session by cash or check. Registrations will be accepted the day of the event; pre-register at nchs.org.

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Pope Francis is the first pope to visit Bahrain — here is his trip in briefs

Catholic News Service

Pope Francis promised reporters traveling with him to the Gulf nation of Bahrain that his Nov. 3-6 visit would be an “interesting trip.”

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In Bahrain, pope calls for full religious freedom, no death penalty

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Religious leaders must build community, unity, peace, pope says

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Source of evil is rejecting God, one's neighbor, pope tells Muslim scholars

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Jesus gives people the power to love everyone, even enemies, pope says

AWALI, Bahrain — Pope Francis made a significant public appearance in Bahrain Nov. 5 with a strong message of reconciliation and respect for all cultures.

The pope, in a homily before his celebratory Mass at the Our Lady of Peace Church in Awali, told the congregation: “Seek to be guardians and builders of unity, reaching out to dialogue with others and living as brothers and sisters.”

The pontiff had arrived in Bahrain Nov. 3 for a four-day visit, the first papal visit in the Arab Gulf country, which has a population of about 1.5 million and is an important commercial hub.

About 9% of the population is Christian and others come from other cultures, with the majority of the population being Muslim. The majority of all religious backgrounds were a “miniature symbol” of the peaceful co-existence and culture of care he has called for: “Your presence here with us will surely raise awareness about our cultural diversity and shared beliefs, as well as our commitment to establish a vibrant and respectful society for present and future generations,” Sister Rosalyn Thomas, a member of the Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel, told the pope.

In the 54 years since the sisters founded the school in Bahrain, “you have been its most treasured and most revered guest,” Sister Thomas told him.

Another honored guest was school alumnus, Lt. Abdulla Attiya. A member of the Bahrain Royal Guards, he broke a world record in December last year, running a marathon in full military gear in 3 hours, 40 minutes and 7 seconds, which also got him a place in the Guinness Book of World Records.

“Attiya. A member of the Bahrain Royal Guards, he broke a world record in December last year, running a marathon in full military gear in 3 hours, 40 minutes and 7 seconds, which also got him a place in the Guinness Book of World Records,” he said. The pope thanked Sister Rose Celine, a member of the Sisters of the Apostolic Carmel, for her testimony about her congregation’s work in girls’ education, faith formation and prison ministry.

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Catholic Missions Use School Lunch Programs to Feed Hungry Children in Poor Communities

Extreme hunger has been on the rise in developing countries around the globe, but Catholic missions have developed an effective way to combat the problem — especially where children are at risk. They have instituted school lunch programs to ensure needy boys and girls in the poorest communities receive at least one nutritious meal.

Sadly, for some of the participating children, that school lunch is the only food they will eat all day.

“I once met a poor father who grieved every time the weekend approached because he had no money and no food to offer his children on those days. He knew his kids would eat when they went to the Catholic school on weekdays, but when his kids were home on the weekends, they often went hungry,” shared Jim Cavnar, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, a respected relief and development ministry working in these impoverished areas.

“We eventually found a way to deliver general food supplies to his community, but his story indicates just how critical Catholic school lunch programs are to the children in developing countries like Haiti, Guatemala and Nicaragua.”

Once you have seen the extreme poverty families face in the developing countries, Cavnar listed, it is easy to understand why hunger is such a frightening prospect to the parents in those places. Life is very hard for poor families in those nations, but it is particularly challenging to those living in rural areas where winds of weather can so easily disrupt their incomes and their lives.

“Most rural families are subsistence farmers,” Cavnar explained. “They work very hard, but it is still a struggle for them to feed their families. When the weather doesn’t cooperate or pests destroy their crops, their children go hungry — and some even fall prey to malnutrition. That’s a very dangerous condition because it puts their sons and daughters at risk of long-term mental and physical impairments. It also weakens immune systems, which produces additional problems when an illness such as COVID-19 strikes. In fact, almost any serious illness or disease can be deadly when your immune system is compromised.”

Solving this hunger problem required Cross Catholic Outreach to find a solution that would cost-effectively reach a significant number of children in one place and at one time.

“Catholic schools were identified as the most logical place to host a feeding program, so we made it a priority to supply them with food for lunches,” Cavnar said. “We have other methods of getting food out to hungry families, but the school-based feeding programs are the most effective ways we can put healthy meals in the hands of needy boys and girls. We also supply Vitafood to those schools whenever possible because the meals are specifically formulated to be both highly nutritious and culturally appropriate to the countries we serve.”

Beyond satisfying the hunger of children, the program also has an important educational impact, according to Cavnar.

“Hungry children struggle to concentrate in school, and eventually they fall behind. When a family finds it hard to make ends meet and their children don’t seem to be progressing in their studies, those parents are tempted to pull their sons and daughters out of school altogether. We can’t let that happen. We need to ensure these children are able to succeed in school so they can eventually break free from the poverty that has plagued their families for generations.”

While Cavnar believes the school-based feeding programs currently underway are successful, he believes even more can be done if Catholics in the United States remain committed to the cause and generously support the Church’s efforts.

“Now that they understand the hardships hunger creates, I’m optimistic my Catholic brothers and sisters in the U.S. will be eager to help,” he said. “That’s because every meal we are able to ship can have a life-transforming impact on a child.”

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. AC02332, 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 that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than is needed, funds will be redirected to urgent needs in the ministry.
Pope: Darkness, desolation invites people to draw closer to God

Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Moments of difficulty and desolation are opportunities for praying, drawing closer to Jesus and discerning the right path, Pope Francis said.

"The spiritual state we call desolation ... can be an occasion for growth," the pope said Nov. 16 during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square.

"Indeed, if there is not a little dissatisfaction, healthy sadness, a healthy capacity to dwell in solitude, to stay by ourselves without fleeing, we risk always remaining on the surface of things and never making contact with the center of our existence," he said.

"Desolation causes a ‘rousing of the soul,’ it keeps us alert, it fosters vigilance and humility, and protects us from the winds of fancy,” which are indispensable for growth, he said.

"Desolation causes a "rousing of the soul," it keeps us alert, it fosters vigilance and humility, and protects us from the winds of fancy.'
— Pope Francis

Continuing his series of audience talks on spiritual discernment, the pope reflected on desolation and why the feeling occurs.

In an earlier audience, Pope Francis had defined desolation as the "darkness of the soul" and the inner sense of unrest and dissatisfaction.

During his Nov. 16 catechesis, the pope said the dark, sad moments challenge complacency, prompt people to appreciate God's graces and act as an incentive to grow in one's spiritual life by drawing closer to Jesus.

"For many saints, restlessness was a decisive impetus to turn their lives around," he said.

But, he said, when someone lives in a world of "perfect" and "artificial serenity" where they ignore or do not try to understand their true feelings, they will be "indifferent to the sufferings of others and incapable of accepting our own."

"Important choices come at a price," the pope said, but it is "a price that is within reach of everyone." It is a price paid with prayer, discernment and the effort of coming to a decision.

"Let us think of our childhood," he suggested. "As children often we look for our parents to obtain something from them, a toy, some money to buy an ice cream, permission. And so, we look for them not for themselves, but for gain. And yet, they — our parents — are the greatest gift, and we understand this gradually as we grow up."

Often people's prayers also are like that — simply requests for favors without any real interest in Jesus, Pope Francis said.

"It may seem strange, unreal, to ask the Lord, ‘How are you?’" the pope said. But, "instead, it is a beautiful way to enter into a true, sincere relationship, with his humanity, with his suffering, even with his solitude.

"It is good to learn to be with the Lord without ulterior motives, exactly as it happens with people we care for: We wish to know them more and more, because it is good to be with them," he said.

Do not be discouraged by difficulties and "do not be afraid of desolation," he said. Move forward with perseverance, "seeking to find Christ's heart, to find the Lord and the answer will come, always."
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OPPORTUNITIES AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington is adding services and growing, and this is an exciting time to serve in our local Church. If you have a desire to work in an environment where you can truly make a difference by serving others, Catholic Charities seeks candidates to fill the following positions:

Client Care Services Specialist

The primary purpose of this full-time position is to assist, serve and support clients and inquirers seeking services and assistance, and provide administrative support to the process. We are looking for a person who is client service focused, a compassionate listener and problem solver with a calm and pleasant demeanor; able to use background in human services to make initial human service needs assessments and assign or refer inquirers based on knowledge of our resources and those in our community. A bachelor’s degree in a human services related field and strong attention to detail are also required.

Food Pantry Outreach Assistant Coordinator

We are seeking a dedicated and compassionate individual to help run the mobile food pantry program in the rural counties of the Diocese of Covington. This is a unique opportunity for someone to put their faith in action tangibly by helping to address hunger and be the hands and feet of Christ in the outlying area of our diocese where there are limited resources and is considered a food desert. This is a part time hourly position, averaging up to 20 hours a week.

Parish Kitchen, Weekend Manager

Parish Kitchen is a special ministry that serves a free lunch every day in Covington to anyone who is hungry. We are looking for individuals who feel a call to serve within the context of this ministry, and who can be working with the population we serve. We are currently in need of additional Weekend Managers on Saturdays and Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and cleanup after closing. Ideally, two Weekend Managers work together to oversee all aspects of this operation. Prior experience in one or more of the following would be a strong plus: food service, ministry and social work. You may be scheduled as few as once a month, or up to 4 or 5 times per month, depending on your availability and others.

Catholic Charities offers excellent benefits including generations paid time off. To learn more details about any of these job opportunities, please visit our website at https://www.covingtoncharities.org/news-events/job-opportunities.

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CAMPUS MINISTER

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington seeks faith-filled individuals who are interested in working with young adults to serve in the capacity of Campus Minister at Northern Kentucky University. The work week will be full time, nominally thirty seven and one-half hours. The Campus Minister and NKU’s Catholic Newman Center (www.knumericmanclub.org) offer an evangelizing presence along with spiritual support and opportunities for a full living and development of the Catholic faith among Catholic students, especially the support of spiritual life and formation opportunities. Responsibilities include providing support, leadership, and spiritual guidance to participating students; proactively engaging prospective participants, especially freshmen; presenting an ongoing, visible presence on campus; facilitating timely and effective communications with students and parents, including regularly updating the website, Facebook page, and database; regularly interacting with Dining Services, local Parish, and University staff; and overseeing maintenance and upkeep of the Newman House. Requirements include a minimum of a Bachelor’s degree, preferably in Theology or Pastoral Ministry, and previous experience in young adult ministry and management. Interested individuals may send a cover letter and resume, including compensation history and references with contact e-mail addresses, to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR, by email to skoplyay@covdio.org or by fax to (859) 392-1589.

PART-TIME ACCOUNTANT

Under the direction of the President, this position is responsible for performing a variety of accounting duties. The job duties will require administering financial functions such as Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, and General Ledger postings. Experience with automated financial management systems preferred. Serve as backup for client payroll completion. Benefits: Paid Time Off and Paid Holidays. Non-Profit experience a plus. To apply or for more information contact Director of HR at michelle.peck@bawac.org

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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 Koplyay by e-mail: skoplyay@covdio.org. (859) 392-1500. EOE

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Call Chuck at the Messenger for information on placing your ad in the Classified Advertisements. (859) 392-1500
Annual National Prayer Vigil for Life will take place in Washington

USCCB: ‘Still a great need for prayer and advocacy’ to end abortion

WASHINGTON — The National Prayer Vigil for Life held each January will continue even with the Supreme Court’s reversal of Roe v. Wade because there is “still a great need for prayer and advocacy” to end abortion and protect the unborn and their mothers, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said Nov. 11.

The vigil is hosted in Washington by the USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and The Catholic University of America’s Office of Campus Ministry.

Scheduled for Jan. 19-20 at the national shrine, the vigil has always coincided with the eve of the March for Life, which marks the date of 1973 decision of the court’s Roe v. Wade ruling that legalized abortion nationwide. The 2023 March for Life is Jan. 20.

“The National Prayer Vigil is a time to praise God for the great gift of the recent Supreme Court Dobbs decision, overturning the tragic Roe v. Wade decision made almost a half-century ago,” said Kat Talalas, assistant director of pro-life communications at the USCCB.

“State and federal legislators are now free to embrace policies that protect preborn children and their mothers,” she said in a statement. “Yet, there is still a great need for prayer and advocacy from the faithful, as there will be intensified efforts to codify Roe in legislation and policies at the state and federal levels.”

She added that “many prayers and sacrifices are needed to transform our culture so that all may cherish the gift of human life and offer life-giving support to vulnerable women, children, and families.”

The opening Mass for the vigil will take place at 5 p.m. (EST) Jan. 19 with Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities, as the principal celebrant and homilist.

The Mass will be immediately followed by a Holy Hour for Life. This will start off a series of national and diocesan holy hours throughout the night from dioceses across the country, which will be broadcast on the USCCB’s website, www.usccb.org.

The nationwide vigil concludes at 8 a.m. (EST) Jan. 20 with a closing Mass to be celebrated by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph L. Coffey of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services.

A live television broadcast of the vigil will be provided by the Eternal Word Television Network and will be available via livestream on the national shrine’s website, nationalshrine.org.

The USCCB pro-life secretariat also is encouraging Catholics across the country to observe a nationwide prayer vigil from Jan. 14 to Jan. 20 to pray for an end to abortion “and a greater respect for all human life.”

The Department of Catholic Schools announces the annual
High School Placement Test
Saturday, December 10, 2022
9 a.m. to Noon

The High School Placement Test is administered to current 8th grade students who are interested in attending a Catholic high school in the Diocese of Covington.

The registration process is coordinated through each individual high school.

Registration deadline: Friday, December 2, 2022

For further information, contact any secondary school listed or the Department of Catholic Schools at 859-392-1500.

The following schools do not administer the standard High School Placement Test.

Contact the school directly for admission information.

Bishop Brossart
4 Grove St.
Alexandria, KY 41001
859.635.2108
www.bishopbrossart.org

Covington Catholic
1600 Dixie Hwy.
Park Hills, KY 41011
859.491.2247
www.covcath.org

Newport Central Catholic
13 Carothers Rd.
Newport, KY 41071
859.292.0001
www.ncchs.com

Notre Dame Academy
1699 Hilton Dr.
Park Hills, KY 41011
859.261.4300
www.ndapandas.org

Villa Madonna Academy
2500 Amsterdam Rd.
Villa Hills, KY 41017
859.331.6333
www.villamadonna.org

Covington Latin
21 East Eleventh St.
Covington, KY 41011
859.291.7044
www.covingtonlatin.org

High School Placement Test Scholarships will be awarded to students only from the high school where the student took the test.

Entrance exam – Dec. 10 at 9 a.m. or Feb. 11 at 9 a.m.

Schools in the Diocese of Covington accept students of any race, color and national or ethnic origin who otherwise meet the criteria for admission.
Study: Nations with euthanasia, assisted suicide have higher suicide rates

Simon Caldwell
Catholic News Service

MANCHESTER, England — Nations that legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide develop higher rates of “self-initiated” suicides than those that do not, according to a new research document by a Catholic bioethics institute.

The Oxford-based Anscombe Bioethics Centre, which serves the Catholic Church in Great Britain and Ireland, also found that women were more likely to commit suicide in jurisdictions that have permitted euthanasia and assisted suicide.

The bioethics institute based its conclusions on evidence from studies in Europe and North America that showed physician-assisted deaths were accompanied by an unexpected pattern of high and rising “self-initiated deaths” — including disproportionately and often significantly high rate of suicides among women in particular.

No study examined by Anscombe revealed a reduction in non-assisted suicides in any states that have legalized euthanasia or assisted suicide.

In a statement on the Anscombe website, Jones said: “I am really concerned that the legalization of euthanasia or assisted suicide can have a negative impact on a people who are struggling to find their lives valuable and meaningful.”

“The evidence is out there, the threat is real,” he said.

Belgium, which legalized euthanasia in 2002, currently has the highest suicide rate in Western Europe,” he said. “In the Netherlands, which has more euthanasia than any European nation over the last decade and is now practiced widely in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with the UK and Ireland under pressure from to change their laws to permit the practice or to allow assisted suicide.

Euthanasia has been legalized in much of the Anglophone world over the last decade and is now practiced widely in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In Europe, a growing number of countries now permit assisted dying in either the form of euthanasia, which is legal in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain — or by assisted suicide, which is legal in such countries as Switzerland.

Euthanasia was introduced in Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands and found “quite strong evidence that total suicides increase following implementation of assisted suicide laws and some weaker evidence that part of the overall increase is driven by a net rise in unassisted suicides.”

Euthanasia and assisted suicide “is followed by considerable increases in suicide (inclusive of assisted suicide) and in intentional self-initiated death,” with women more “placed at risk of avoidable premature death.”

The paper compared self-inflicted suicide rates in European nations that permit euthanasia and assisted suicide and found them to be higher than those of neighboring countries that did not permit such practices.

In 2015, Jones demonstrated that the introduction of assisted suicide into several U.S. states was also associated with a significant increase in all types of suicides there.

In a growing number of countries permit assisted dying in either the form of euthanasia, which is legal in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain — or by assisted suicide, which is legal in such countries as Switzerland.

The Anscombe study did not include Canada, Australia or New Zealand.
New Ascension yearlong podcast starts Jan. 1, will present entire catechism

WASHINGTON — Beginning Jan. 1, Ascension Press will launch “The Catechism in a Year,” taking listeners through the four parts of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and helping the faithful understand and read the Bible.

According to Chartable Global Reach, a podcast measurement company, “The Bible in a Year” was No. 1 in 2022 in the religious/spiritual category. Each country’s local bishops control permissions and copyrights for the catechisms disseminated within their country. For this reason, Ascension currently only has permission from the USCCB to sell Ascension’s edition of the catechism within the United States. Ascension said it hopes to work with other episcopal conferences to receive their approvals in the future.

The catechism recognizes “that what God is doing in this world didn’t end” with Chapter 28 of the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible, Father Schmitz said. The fifth book of the New Testament tells of the founding of the church. “God continues to reach out to his people... (With the catechism) we get to love him more,” he added.

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“The Catechism in a Year” podcast with Scripture scholar Jeff Cavins. Father Schmitz read every verse of the Catholic Bible in 365 days, using a reading plan based on Cavins’ “Great Adventure Bible Timeline.” The reading plan organizes the 14 narrative books of the Bible into 12 periods to help readers understand how they relate to one another and to God’s plan for salvation.

A priest of the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota, Father Schmitz is a popular Catholic speaker and author. He and Cavins created the Bible podcast with the backing of Ascension.

“We don’t think it’s an accident that after ‘Bible in a Year,’ the No. 1 requested thing from our audience was a ‘Catechism of the Year’,” said Lauren Joyce, communications and public relations specialist at Ascension, a multimedia Catholic publisher based in West Chester, Pennsylvania.

“With the Bible, we’re going to do with the catechism,” the priest said about the podcast. “For 365 days, we are going to take a little section of the catechism every single day.

In 60-minute episodes, he’ll unpack questions raised by listeners of the “The Bible in a Year” podcast with Father Schmitz and other guests.

“The Catechism in a Year” podcast will be available for free on all major podcast platforms as well as the Hallow app. Ascension also is providing Catholic schools and parishes free materials promoting the podcast, including flyers, posters, media graphics and bulletin announcements.

Throughout 2023, the priest has hosted the popular “The Bible in a Year” podcast with Scripture scholar Jeff Cavins.

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Helping the faithful understand and read the Bible with Cavins’ timeline learning system and the podcast format “made such a big difference for accessibility” she said at a Nov 2 news conference via Zoom. “Our audience is saying do the same thing for the catechism. ‘We know we should like it, we know we should read it (and) struggle to do so, so help us out.’”

In the 360 days before the news conference, the Bible podcast had reached an audience of 1.5 million people via various electronic devices, such as a cell phone, a tablet with downloaded episodes or YouTube.

According to Chartable Global Reach, a podcast measurement company, “The Bible in a Year” was No. 1 in 2022 in the religious/spiritual category.

Ascension also has released its new print edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Its four sections have navigation features for the reader, including color-coded corner tabs, key words and citations from Scripture, church councils, popes and/or doctors of the church. There is an extensive glossary and appendices, which include a timeline of ecclesiastical writers who contributed to the development of doctrine throughout the church’s history.

There also is an accompanying foldout chart, “The Catechism at a Glance,” which is “like a road map if you will,” John Harden, senior product manager at Ascension, explained at the news conference.

“The back side shows how all the sources of Scripture and tradition flow into the catechism,” he said, “and the front side shows how the four parts are arranged — what we believe, how we worship, how we live our lives as Christians and how we pray as Christians.”

He called it a joy to work on this edition of the catechism. “I really hope people learn to grow in love and appreciation for all we believe as Catholics,” Harden also “gave a big shoutout and thanks” to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for working with Ascension on the issue of copyright and permissions that allowed the Ascension volume to go forward. He noted that there will be an ongoing theological review of the “Catechism in a Year” podcast content and the podcast itself.

“Helping the faithful understand and read the Bible with Cavins’ timeline learning system and the podcast format "made such a big difference for accessibility" she said at a Nov 2 news conference via Zoom. “Our audience is saying do the same thing for the catechism. ‘We know we should like it, we know we should read it (and) struggle to do so, so help us out.’”

In the 360 days before the news conference, the Bible podcast had reached an audience of 1.5 million people via various electronic devices, such as a cell phone, a tablet with downloaded episodes or YouTube.

According to Chartable Global Reach, a podcast measurement company, “The Bible in a Year” was No. 1 in 2022 in the religious/spiritual category.

Ascension also has released its new print edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Its four sections have navigation features for the reader, including color-coded corner tabs, key words and citations from Scripture, church councils, popes and/or doctors of the church. There is an extensive glossary and appendices, which include a timeline of ecclesiastical writers who contributed to the development of doctrine throughout the church’s history.

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Bishops urged to remain focused on spreading Gospel message

BALTIMORE — The U.S. bishops Nov. 15 were urged to remain focused on the Church’s missionary role of spreading the Gospel message and to know that despite a growing secularism in the U.S., “the vast majority of our neighbors still believe in God.”

Gathered in Baltimore, the bishops heard these remarks during the afternoon public session of their annual fall general assembly respectively, from Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the papal nuncio, and Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, the outgoing president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The day’s agenda included elections for new leadership of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (see related article page 8); an overview of the pro-life landscape in the U.S. after Dobbs; reports on the process of listening and synodality; and a presentation on liturgical discernment among Church members for the world Synod of Bishops on synodality; and a presentation on liturgical discernment among Church members for the world Synod of Bishops on synodality; and a presentation on liturgical discernment among Church members for the world Synod of Bishops on synodality; and a presentation on liturgical discernment among Church members for the world Synod of Bishops on synodality.

Archbishop Pierre, a survivor of sexual abuse by a Catholic priest, said the Church must be about the work of healing those who are wounded.

He said the Church lives this work out in its outreach to immigrants and to young mothers in the “Walking with Moms in Need” initiative.

He spoke of the pandemic, “a long season of unrest in our cities,” a contentious presidential election as well as “deepening political, economic and cultural divisions,” a refugee crisis and “the overturning of Roe v. Wade.”

He raised alarm over what he saw as a U.S. society moving “hard and fast toward an uncompromising secularism,” adding that “traditional norms and values are being swept aside in the noisy, distracted media culture.”

Challenges also signal “a new opening for the Gospel,” a calling “to step up and to open every door for Jesus Christ, to shine his light into every area of our culture and society, to bring every heart to a new encounter with the living God.”

“It is not inevitable that our country will fall into secularism. The vast majority of our neighbors still believe in God,” Archbishop Gomez added. “Tens upon tens of millions of Catholics still serve God every day, and we are making a beautiful difference in the life of this country.”

“Our Catholic people are teachers and healers, seekers of justice and peace.”

As outgoing chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, Archbishop William Lori spoke to the bishops about the challenges for the Church following both the Supreme Court’s Dobbs decision which overturned Roe v. Wade and the many state referendums that passed in the midterm elections that either approved abortion protections or approved abortion restrictions.

The archbishop said the Church, in this environment, has its work cut out for it and should not only reinforce its teaching on life issues for its members but also speak out clearly as a witness in society insisting that all people be cared for, born and unborn.

At the close of their public session, the bishops were reminded of the work accomplished, and that still continues, in efforts to provide a safe environment and healing 20 years after the Church adopted the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” in response to the clergy abuse scandal.

Contributing to this report were Carol Zimmermann, Rhina Guidos, Mark Pattison and Dennis Sadowski.
Pope mourns violence, loss of life from attack in Istanbul

VATICAN CITY — As authorities in Turkey continued to investigate who was responsible for a deadly bombing in a busy shopping district in Istanbul, Pope Francis prayed for victims and the nation. “Assuring the injured and those who mourn their loved ones of his spiritual closeness, His Holiness prays that no act of violence will discourage the efforts of the people of Turkey to build a society based on the values of fraternity, justice and peace,” said a telegram, written on behalf of the pope and signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State. The telegram was sent to Archbishop Marek Sokrowy, papal nuncio to Turkey and published by the Vatican Nov. 15. “Pope Francis is deeply saddened to learn of the loss of life caused by the explosion in Istanbul on Sunday and he sends condolences to the families and friends of those who have died,” the telegram said. A bomb exploded Nov. 13 on a busy street, leaving six people dead and more than 80 people injured. Authorities in Turkey arrested a female suspect Nov. 14, claiming she had acted on behalf of Kurdish militants.

‘Situation is tragic,’ says bishop whose diocese includes Kherson, Ukraine

WARSAW, Poland — The Latin rite bishop whose diocese includes Kherson, Ukraine, accused Russian forces of “cruel and bestial behavior” in the recaptured port and warned his country would not negotiate with Moscow until all occupied territory is regained. “All the methods used by Soviet paramilitary police have returned with the Russian occupiers — the cruel and bestial behavior is absolutely unchanged,” said Bishop Stanislav Szyrokoradiuk of Odesa-Simferopol. “Although pressure is now being exerted on us to negotiate and cede territory, our government and armed services won’t agree to this. We’ve already struggled and suffered too much, while everyone knows any concessions will merely fuel further cruelties.” In a Nov. 15 interview with Catholic News Service, Bishop Szyrokoradiuk said destruction of Kherson’s infrastructure had left local Catholics without water or lighting. He said many civilians were helping Ukrainian troops clear wrecked masonry and trees from the city that Russian troops abandoned in early November after an eight-month occupation. He added that the Kherson’s Sacred Heart Parish was lucky to have its own generator and had received a busload of food and medicine from the diocese. Parish staff would hand it out to needy residents, he said. “The whole situation is tragic — most people have nothing at all, while communication links are down since cables, modems and satellite dishes were all ripped apart to allow only Russian TV and radio,” Bishop Szyrokoradiuk told CNS.

Russian ambassador confirms pope helped facilitate prisoner exchanges

VATICAN CITY — Russia’s ambassador to the Vatican confirmed Pope Francis helped facilitate recent prisoner exchanges with Ukraine and said the Vatican is ready to act as a mediator between Ukraine and Russia. The Italian news agency Ansa quoted the ambassador, Aleksandr Avedeye, as saying the exchanges of prisoners occur in accordance with the lists of military prisoners of the Armed Forces of Ukraine; the lists are handed over by Pope Francis. “In this case, we highly appreciate the personal actions of the pontiff, who is carrying out a very important humanitarian mission that allows hundreds of people to return to their families,” Avedye said. Returning to the Vatican from Bahrain Nov. 6, Pope Francis told reporters traveling with him that the Vatican is “constantly attentive” to what is happening in Ukraine, and that the Secretariat of State continues to do what is possible and has worked behind the scenes to help arrange prisoner exchanges. The pope also told reporters he thinks the cruelty of the attacks on Ukrainians and their civilians are the work of mercenaries, not Russians, who are “a great people” and have a strong “humanism.”
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