Ten parishes in the Diocese of Covington gathered, Nov. 17, in taking baby steps to developing and implementing Walking With Moms In Need at their parish.

Walking with Moms In Need (WWMIN) is a nationwide initiative encouraged by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to increase support for pregnant and parenting mothers facing difficulties. As part of Walking with Moms In Need, parishes are asked to complete an inventory of the resources currently available in their local area, assess the results and identify gaps, and plan and implement a parish response based on their findings.

Realizing that neighboring parishes would all share the same inventory of resources and the monumental task of keeping such an inventory up-to-date, Deacon Mike Lyman reached out to neighboring parishes — Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell; Cristo Rey Parish, Florence; Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington; Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger; St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright; St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger; St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs; St. Paul Parish, Florence; St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood; and St. Timothy Parish, Union — to share ideas, information, resources and a timeline to help develop a pastoral initiative that would be worthy of its title Walking With Moms In Need.

“There’s a lot of really neat ideas — having a baby shower, getting gifts for people — but, truth be told, having a baby shower isn’t a wholesome way to help other people. We’re looking for ways to help other people who are facing hardships. Having a baby shower isn’t necessarily the most helpful thing to do,” Deacon Lyman said.

Parishes will work together to help pregnant and parenting mothers in need.

Blessed Sacrament Parish in Ft. Mitchell has already started an inventory and is hoping to share their progress with other parishes. Cristo Rey Parish in Florence has started a project to create a list of resources for pregnant and parenting mothers and is also hoping to share their progress with other parishes. Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Burlington has started a project to create a list of resources for pregnant and parenting mothers and is also hoping to share their progress with other parishes.

St. Agnes Parish in Ft. Wright has started a project to create a list of resources for pregnant and parenting mothers and is also hoping to share their progress with other parishes. St. Barbara Parish in Erlanger has started a project to create a list of resources for pregnant and parenting mothers and is also hoping to share their progress with other parishes.

St. Joseph Parish in Crescent Springs has started a project to create a list of resources for pregnant and parenting mothers and is also hoping to share their progress with other parishes. St. Paul Parish in Florence has started a project to create a list of resources for pregnant and parenting mothers and is also hoping to share their progress with other parishes.

St. Pius X Parish in Edgewood has started a project to create a list of resources for pregnant and parenting mothers and is also hoping to share their progress with other parishes. St. Timothy Parish in Union has started a project to create a list of resources for pregnant and parenting mothers and is also hoping to share their progress with other parishes.

Parishes will work together to help pregnant and parenting mothers in need.

“O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord’s Nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.”

—Roman Missal third Sunday of Advent, Collect
‘With One Heart’ Covington Deanery Strategy Session drew diverse crowd fully engaged in the sharing and listening process

Laura Keener
Editor

Over 80 people attended the Covington Deanery Strategy Session, Dec. 6, held at Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington. Brendan Menuey, leadership consultant, Catholic Leadership Institute, led the final of five two-hour listening and sharing sessions held in deaneries throughout the diocese. After opening prayer by Bishop John Iffert, Mr. Menuey began the session explaining the three ways that the With One Heart initiative is gathering information so that the diocese and individual parishes can develop a pastoral strategic plan. The five Deanery Strategy Sessions, which were open to the public and held in each of the five deaneries, is one source of data collection. The second source of data collection is coming from the Focus Group Sessions — priest group sessions, dean group sessions and parish leader group sessions — that were held concurrently in each of the five deaneries.

The third and largest source of data collection will be coming from the Disciple Maker Index survey scheduled to open in Lent 2023. Every parishioner will be invited and encouraged to participate in the 75-question survey.

When asked how the Deanery Strategy Sessions, Focus Group Sessions and survey differ from the recent Global Synod on Synodality listening sessions, Mr. Menuey said, “the Synod was more to listen to each other without the same sort of outcome. This is going to actually produce outcomes with goals, with numbers for your diocese. The Synod wasn’t going to result in goals for the bishops or goals for dioceses or even goals for Rome. It wasn’t going to set targets and strategies and actions (for your parish and diocese) — this is.”

Justin Martyr reminds us of the Incarnation at Advent

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a feast day associated with a series of Marian apparitions in Mexico in December 1531.

The Virgin of Guadalupe appeared to St. Juan Diego, an indigenous Mexican, four times, and once to his uncle, Juan Bernardino. As the story goes, Juan Bernardino, his uncle, fell very ill, and Juan Diego sought out the assistance of a Catholic priest. In doing so, he went an alternate way to avoid the Virgin Mary in the spot where she had appeared to him before to avoid being delayed. The Virgin, however, intercepted him and scolded him for this before reassuring that she had appeared to him before to avoid being delayed.

According to her instructions, St. Juan Diego went to the summit of Tepeyac Hill, which was barren that time of year, and found growing Castilian roses, not native to Mexico, blooming on the mountaintop.

St. Juan Diego would gather the roses in his cloak and would later open his cloak before Archbishop Zumarraga, revealing an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

The Virgin of Guadalupe is celebrated at the patroness of the country of Mexico, as well as the Americas as a whole. Her feast day is widely celebrated in Mexico, and within Mexican communities in the United States and beyond.

In the Diocese of Covington, Cristo Rey Parish, Florence, will be celebrating a Mass Dec. 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, with Bishop John Iffert at 7 p.m. All are welcome.

An image of the Virgin of Guadalupe as she appears on the cloak of St. Juan Diego enshrined in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico City.

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Retirement Fund for Religious Collection
December 17–18

The Retirement Fund for Religious collection will be held in all parishes in the Diocese of Covington the weekend of Dec. 17–18. Why we ask—Religious communities are financially responsible for the support and care of all members. Income, earnings, and expenses are managed separately from the parish and diocesan structures of the Catholic Church.

Today, religious past age 70 outnumber religious under age 70 by nearly three to one.

There are 24,924 religious past age 70 living in the United States. In 2021, the average annual cost for their care was roughly $50,000 per person; skilled care averaged $78,000 per person.

Since 2009, the annual cost to support senior women and men religious has exceeded $1 billion.

In 2021, 70 percent of the religious communities providing data to the National Religious Retirement Fund had a median age of 70 or higher.

The average annual Social Security benefit for a religious is $7,326, whereas the average US beneficiary receives $19,696.

Last year, parishioners in the Diocese of Covington donated $35,884.55 to the collection. A portion of these funds were returned to the diocese to support local religious communities care for their retired members. Please prayerfully consider a generous donation to the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Please give to those who have given a lifetime.

Diocese of Covington Pro-life Office making preparations for local pro-life prayer events after Roe

Staff report

The March for Life, an annual peaceful protest held annually in January will look different this year, not only in Washington DC, but also in the Diocese of Covington. With the overturning of Roe v Wade, protecting the unborn in the Commonwealth of Kentucky is now in the hands of the people and their elected officials. With that in mind the Diocese of Covington will increase its efforts to raise awareness within the local community of the importance of the sanctity of life from conception.

According to Faye Roch, director of the Diocese of Covington’s Pro-Life Office, the office “is planning local pro-life prayer activities and events that highlight the need of directing our efforts to the state level. Much education and awareness are needed to convert the hearts of our community and legislators who believe that abortion is necessary in today’s culture.”

The Pro-Life Office is also concentrating its efforts in the Walking with Moms in Need initiative. (See related story page 1) This ministry creates “islands” of mercy within the Diocese of Covington’s parishes and schools to support those moms and families who are choosing life.

For those choosing to travel to Washington DC, the Pro-Life Office has blocked rooms for Jan. 20, 2022, but the pilgrimage will be smaller than in past years.

Dec. 10
Mass followed by lunch, St. Joseph the Worker Motherhouse, Walton, KY, 10 a.m.
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 4:30 p.m.
Diocesan Christmas Tree Lighting and Bambinelli Blessing Celebration, St. Mary’s Park, 6 – 8:30 p.m.

Dec. 11
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 5:30 p.m.
Dec. 12
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass, Cristo Rey Parish, Florence, 7 p.m.

Serra Club for Vocations
$2,000.00
Priest Retirement Fund
$2 Thousand Dollars
Serra Club for Vocations

Serra Club Priest Appreciation Dinner

The 2022 Priest Appreciation Dinner, sponsored by the Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky, took place Dec. 1 at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell. Serra Club representatives presented the Diocese of Covington with a $2,000 donation to the Priest Retirement Fund. Presenting the check on behalf of the Serra Club are Donna Heim, chair of the Vocations Committee and Nick Winnike, president. Accepting the check for the Priest Retirement Fund committee are Father Michael Grady, member of the committee and Father Mark Keene, committee chair. The Priest Appreciation Dinner celebration is one of several ways the Serra Club expresses its gratitude to priests for their vocation and to offer continued support and prayers.

Diocese of Covington celebrates service

The Diocese of Covington’s Curia staff annual “Service Awards Luncheon,” was held Friday, Dec. 2, honoring diocesan staff for milestone-years of service to the diocese and its people. Celebrating five years of service are: Shannon Barnes, Amy Buerer, Becky Capella, Jennifer Cox, Bob Hagedorn and George ‘Gar’ Read. Celebrating 10 years are: Brandilyn Molaugh and Marylu Steffen. Celebrating 15 years is Sheila Dunford. Celebrating 20 years is Faye Roch. Celebrating 25 years are: Vicky Baurle, Nyra Hopkins and Amy Littleton. Celebrating 35 years is Elaine Schaefer, pictured above with Bishop Efford.
did not hallucinate.

**Books for Christmas — 2022**

Last month’s midterm elections made it painfully clear that many pro-life advocates and politicians are at sea in the post-Roe v. Wade environment. Shawn Carney and Steve Karleys “What to Say When: The Complete New Guide to Discussing Abortion” (Kolbe & Anthony Publishing) is a good primer for all those working to rebuild a cul-
ture of life in the United States.

David Hoffman’s “Give Me Liberty: The True Story of Oswaldo Payá and His Daring Quest for a Free Cuba” (Simon & Schuster) is the gripping tale of a man of Christian con-
science who would not be coerced by Castroite thugs — and was almost certainly murdered by them as a result. This powerful biography strengthens the case that Mr. Payá should be considered a contemporary martyr.

The Brooklyn Dodgers’ immortal number 42 was a man of no less courage than Oswaldo Payá. In “True: The Four Seasons of Jackie Robinson” (St. Martin’s Press), Kostra Kennedy is especially effective in helping us imag-
ine life in Montreal in 1946 (Robinson’s Triple-A stop before the big leagues) and baseball-mad Brooklyn in 1949. The author lapses into wokery by questioning Robinson’s criticism of Paul Robeson before a congres-
sional committee. Notwithstanding that nod to political correctness, Kennedy paints a moving portrait of one of the great American heroes: a man committed to racial equality in a colorblind society. Would that 42 were with us today.

And while we’re on the subject of God’s sport, let me recommend “The Grandest Stage: A History of the World Series,” by Tyler Kepner ( Doubleday). I enjoyed this rich-
yearbook of baseball gems so much that I tem-
porarily forgot my grievances over the 1960, 1971 and 1979 Series, all of which broke my heart.

In this season of renewed nuclear nervousness, Serb.

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**The path of encounter**

I have always believed that faith is a gift. Yet for some, it seems that the journey to faith is long and hard. We resist, we stumble, we avoid the truth until we hit rock bottom. But there is nowhere else to turn except to a higher power, to our creator and our Savior. Once we turn to our Lord, we find him present everywhere, and we realize that we have been accompanied and loved from the beginning. When we have received faith, we are often inspired to share our faith with others, even if it isn’t sure how Scripture provides loads of hints on how we can share faith. For example, our Lord tells us that the greatest commandments are to love God and love our neighbor. And when asked, our Lord tells us in a parable that the good Samaritan is our neighbor, the one who vowed mercy. Further, in Matthew 25, the Lord suggests a number of ways that we may be called to serve others. It is, to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit the imprisoned. It follows, then, that our Catholic faith inspires us to serve those around us. At Catholic Charities, I have had the privilege of inviting people of faith to join us in loving our neighbors by serving them through our various ministries. Our programs literally cover all of the ways to serve that our Lord mentions in Matthew 25: Seagulls as the hands and feet of Christ, we encounter our neighbors with various needs, sometimes in dire circumstances, and often without notice.

Catholic Charities is a ministry of mercy, offering dignity, respect and attention by our holiness toward that end. As other people of faith see the affect we have on others, they are quickly drawn in to be part of this remarkable work.

The most amazing thing is how we are changed, too, when we recognize the face of Christ in those we serve. If you have been blessed and your faith has grown through this process, you wouldn’t you like to join us in being the hands and feet of Christ for our neighbors? To learn more about volunteer opportunities at Catholic Charities, check out the volunteer tab on our website, www.covingtoncharities.org.

**Receive the true gift that keeps on giving this Christmas and throughout the New Year**

Most of us really enjoy the exchange of gifts at Christmas. We also have probably heard that the greatest gift of all is the gift of Jesus, the Son of God, whose birth we celebrate on Christmas. But the true gift of Jesus actually came about one hundred years later from that same Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave to free us from our sins, reconcile us to God, and open the way to eternal life for each one of us. That is the gift we call salvation, and it is offered to us all. But we have to receive that gift, accept that gift and participate in the relationship with God that was restored by that gift in order to make it effective and truly be saved.

The great thing about Jesus’ gift of himself is that it is the gift that keeps on giving — eternally. For Jesus himself said, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.” (John 6:51).

We have the opportunity to keep receiving Jesus, himself, every time we come to Mass and receive the true body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus in the Eucharist. That’s right! The God of the universe, the Almighty, All-Powerful, All-Loving, Eternal God not only came down to earth and took on human form in a baby at Christmas and sacrificed himself for us, but Jesus, God the Son, also left us the gift of himself, in the form of bread and wine, so that we could receive him into ourselves and become like him. This is the life-giving gift that is available to us as Catholic Christians every Sunday — in fact, every day of the week in many parishes. Why would anyone ever pass up the opportunity to receive such a gift?

Many people get hung up on the fact that the Church says Sunday Mass is an obligation. Some people don’t want the Church to tell them what to do. But if each of us really understood the great gift that is available to you every Sunday and more! What could possibly be more important, more exciting, more worthwhile than receiving the gift that keeps on giving — eternally.

Vicki Klocke is director of RCIA and Adult Faith Formation for St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, Ky.
Christmas: A time of joy, a time of peace, a time of life!

Father Andrew Young
Contributor

Christmas is a time when we tend to focus on many things: lights, pagewants, trees, gifts, family and friends. It is a time when we often experience special feelings of joy, excitement and goodwill toward others. This season is also one that calls us to reflect on one of the most basic facts about human existence: namely, the beauty and dignity of each and every human life.

At the very core of Christmas is the truly heavenly celebration of the dignity of life and the fact that every life has value and meaning, no matter how small, vulnerable or seemingly inconsequential that life may be. Christmas should give us all reason to pause and give thanks for the gift of life that our God cherishes so much that he would go to earth-shattering lengths to prove its worth.

We read in the book of Genesis about how God saw all his creations as good. It was out of complete love that God gave life to our first parents and continues to give each of us. God did not need to create Adam and Eve, or anything for that matter, but he chose to do it because he wanted to share his life with us, to give us the joy of his life and to allow us to spend eternity with him. Once Adam and Eve sinned, God did punish them but he also set in motion a plan to restore them to union with him, a plan that would literally change everything, a plan that shows God’s deep love for all humanity and the plan’s name is Jesus Christ.

This plan, put into motion in the Garden of Eden, prefigured by the prophets and awaited by countless souls over the course of centuries, came to fruition on a day when an unsuspecting young woman, a virgin no less, accepted God’s invitation and allowed God himself to take human flesh. This event, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, began with a simple “yes” and Our Lady’s trust in the Lord. It was this trust that guided the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph through the period of her unexpected pregnancy, the birth of Christ, and even their need to flee into Egypt following the birth of the Lord.

Christ’s arrival onto the human scene truly began at the moment of Mary’s acceptance of the Archangel Gabriel’s message. It was at the moment of the Lord’s conception that human history was forever changed and Scripture verifies this truth.

In the Gospel of Luke (1:26–38) we read about that marvelous encounter between Mary and Gabriel. In this meeting, the archangel tells Mary that she would conceive a child. This child, she is told, will be the Son of God. This small detail is often overlooked when reading this passage. Like so many other Biblical accounts, when we grow very familiar with them, we tend to overlook the little details. But it is often in those details that some of the greatest truths are conveyed. Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive “a child,” not a group of cells that would eventually become a child. Here, we see an extremely clear Biblical example of the truth of human life beginning from the very moment of conception. Likewise, in the Gospel of Matthew (1:18) the Infancy Narrative begins by saying that Mary was “found with child through the Holy Spirit.”

While Scripture does not give us many details about the period of Mary’s pregnancy, it does point out a key event — the visitation of Mary to Elizabeth. In Luke 1:39-43, we are told about a marvelous encounter between four people — Mary, Elizabeth, John the Baptist and Jesus. Jesus, although conceived very shortly before this encounter, elicited a response of pure joy from his unborn cousin who, Scripture tells us, “tippeded” in his mother’s womb. This simple encounter serves as yet another reminder to us of the truth of life in the womb, and not just any life, but joyful life.

All of this culminates in the absolutely marvelous birth of Jesus Christ in the stable in Bethlehem. The little child whose conception was announced by an angel, who spread joy to others even from within the womb, had a humble birth that was triumphantly announced to the world by an army of angels.

God chose to become the most vulnerable being on earth — a newborn baby. It was a shocking humility at the time and should call us to remember with a certain shock and reverence that Jesus Christ, God himself, the very one who made us, sustains us in life, and saved us, entered the world in the same manner that all humans do. He began his earthly life in the womb of his Blessed Mother and showed the world that a baby can completely change the world.

The message of Christmas is one that calls us to remember these basic facts of our faith and about humanity. In our world today we can easily become distracted from these details and lose sight of what is truly important about this season. While the gifts, trees, decorations, and events are enjoyable and meant to bring us closer to family and friends, we cannot forget that all of it, every single bit of it, is due to a small baby that was born 2,000 years ago, a baby that changed the world, a life that gave us life.

God’s decision to enter the world in this manner shows us the absolute dignity and value of each and every human life. It shows us how deeply God values human life and that he will go to extraordinary lengths to protect it. This Christmas, may each of us remember the beauty of the gift of life and may we, like the angels in Bethlehem, proclaim it for all the world to hear.

Father Andrew Young is pastor of St. Patrick Parish, Maysville and St. James Mission, Minoa.

“Christmas is joy, religious joy, God’s joy, an inner joy of light and peace.”

—Pope Francis

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

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

Resources
The Incarnation
Old Testament: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.” — Isaiah 7:14

New Testament: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel,” which translated means, “God with us.” — Matthew 1:23

The Nicene Creed
This is the beautiful way the Nicene Creed expresses the importance of human life and the faithfulness of God in the Incarnation.

We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father; who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who has spoken through the Prophets.

And we believe one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, the communion of all the saints, the communication of grace through baptism, the continuation of the Divine Sacrifice on the Altar, the expectation of the parousia, the communion in one body with Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting.

Father Andrew Young is pastor of St. Patrick Parish, Maysville and St. James Mission, Minoa.
No heat, no electricity: Bishop warns of new wave of Ukrainian refugees

Meeting in Romania Nov. 29, NATO ministers pledged help in restoring Ukraine’s power grids, as well as further arms supplies. However, the director of Caritas in Poland, Father Marcin Izycki, confirmed Nov. 30 that church-funded reception centers were being readied for a new refugee influx.

Meanwhile, a Caritas-Spas director in Kharkiz, Father Wojciech Susiwicz, told Vatican Radio Nov. 26 lack of electricity and heating had prevented children from attending online classes in city basements. He said the greatest need was for generators, power banks, wood stoves, medicine and warm clothes.

In Kyiv, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said citizens were having to adjust to two-three hours of electricity per day, with little street lighting.

The project manager of Caritas-Spas, Olena Noha, told Austria’s Kathpress agency Nov. 29 people were being “worn down” by “darkness and constant fear of missiles,” with food now also running short in surrounding villages.

She added that Russian-controlled internet sites were encouraging Ukrainians to blame their government for the crisis, with claims “there is still electricity in the city center and among rich people.”

Bishop Sobilo told CNS his church in besieged Zaporizhzhia was still providing daily Masses, but church activities had ceased in Russian-occupied areas, where a third Ukrainian Catholic priest, Father Oleksander Bogomaz, was reported abducted by Russian troops Dec. 1 from his parish at Melitopol. In November, two other priests were taken by Russian troops.

The Russians aim to destroy as much as possible, wherever they can, in life becomes impossible,” the bishop said.

“We are praying to God for his mercy — that we will be purified and saved, and that Russians may still be converted and see the terrible harm they are inflicting. When one destroys another and robs him of his life, this cannot be a Christian act.”

Meanwhile, Ukrainian Ambassador Sviatoslav Shremshuk of Kyiv-Holhov appealed to parents and teachers not to neglect the upbringing of youngsters. He said many parents faced “ever more dramatic repression” in occupied areas for failing to send their children to Russian schools.

“It seems the Russian occupier, powerless against losses and defeats at the front, is unleashing its anger and hatred on the most defenseless,” the major archbishop of Ukrainian Catholics said in a Dec. 1 message to Ukrainians.

“Throughout Ukraine, the enemy is trying to destroy everything systematically that provides our people with an opportunity to live and survive, especially in this cold season… the whole of Ukraine lives daily in anticipation of new massive attacks.”

Bishop Sobilo told CNS he planned to visit Ukrainian front-line positions to ascertain the needs of local civilians “now that frost and freezing temperatures have arrived.”

“We’re grateful to Western Catholics for help we’ve received over these nine months — especially in prayer, but also through material support enabling us to survive,” the bishop added.

“We’re now again asking Catholics, especially in the U.S., not to forget about this war, but to remain in solidarity since we have to keep going until the spring, ensuring enough people stay to keep our communities alive and our churches open.”

Jonathan Luxmore
Catholic News Service

WARSAW, Poland — A Ukrainian bishop warned huge numbers of citizens could flee to Western countries during winter, and he appealed for continued international support in the face of a threatened “humanitarian catastrophe.”

“When Moscow began this war last February, millions headed for the borders — if it now destroys our energy supplies, there’ll be a similar wave of refugees,” said Auxiliary Bishop Jan Sobilo of Kharkiv-Zaporizhzhia.

If everyone leaves, our own soldiers will ask who they’re supposed to be defending. That’s why we’re working with city officials to organize “heating points” in his church and residence so people could come to warm up.

However, he added that the parish’s one small generator now needed repairs, and he said local bakeries and food companies now lacked oil and diesel to maintain production.

“We face a huge humanitarian catastrophe — people in multi-story apartment blocks will have no chance of surviving when there’s no water, electricity or gas, and no lighting, lifts or toilets,” Bishop Sobilo told CNS.

“Most are already exhausted with this war — and with a cold winter now beginning, many, especially those with children, are getting ready to leave. Power is also being switched off continually in Lviv and other western towns, so a huge wave of refugees will head for Poland and other countries.”

Aid organizations have highlighted worsening conditions in Ukraine’s towns and cities, where municipal rooms and tents have been equipped to provide heating, food, water and electricity to charge mobile phones.

Local resident Tetiana Reznychenko is seen in her flat, which has no electricity, heating and water, on the fifth floor of an apartment building destroyed by a Russian military strike in Horenka, Ukraine, which was heavily damaged by fighting.

Triestinadiamond.com
Notre Dame Academy appoints new president
Staff report

Notre Dame Academy recently announced the selection of its next president — Trish Miller.

“I feel truly blessed to have the opportunity to serve in the role of president at Notre Dame Academy and given my background in educational and business leadership, I feel that I am in a unique position to make a positive impact at NDA,” said Ms. Miller.

The search for a new president was necessitated by the resignation of Dr. Laura Koehl in February 2021. In April 2021, the Notre Dame Academy Board of Directors formed a Presidential Search Committee and began an extensive nationwide search in partnership with Educational Directions of Portsmouth, Rhode Island.

“I thank the Notre Dame Academy Board of Directors and Presidential Search Committee for their work. I congratulate them on completing a successful search for the next president of Notre Dame Academy and welcome Trish Miller to the Diocese of Covington,” said Bishop John Iffert.

“We are proud of our Catholic High School system here in the Diocese of Covington. Since 1906, Notre Dame Academy has educated and formed young women in the Catholic tradition and the vision of St. Julie Biliart. Our Schools Office and I look forward to continuing that relationship to advance the formation of the next generation of young women for Gospel witness, after the example of the Sisters of Notre Dame.”

Ms. Miller has both educational and business leadership experience. She began her career as principal owner of West Chester Permit and Transportation Marketing Services in West Chester, Ohio. After 20 years, Ms. Miller found herself in a much wanted role. Working with the principal, she has focused on the advancement of La Salle’s mission and vision.

Ms. Miller is now looking forward to being part of our NDA community and, in collaboration with the Board of Directors, faculty staff and administration, continue to provide for a transformative experience for our young women.

“It is an exciting time for Notre Dame Academy as they welcome their next president, Trish Miller. We welcome her to the Diocese of Covington and look forward to her leading Notre Dame Academy into the future while continuing their tradition of faith and academic excellence,” said Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Covington.

Notre Dame Academy began the President/Principal model of leadership in 2016 naming Notre Dame Sister Mary Shama Banker-uper to the position. Notre Dame Sister Mary Lynette Shelton served as the second president of Notre Dame Academy from 2011 to 2014. Dr Laura Koehl served as the third president of Notre Dame Academy from 2014 to 2021.

Trish Miller
High School Open Houses
The Catholic high schools in the Diocese of Covington invite all interested eighth-grade students and their parents to this year’s Open Houses — meet faculty and staff, hear from current students and get a feel for the spirit of the school.

Holy Cross District High School, Covington
Jan. 29, 6-8 p.m.

St. Patrick High School, Maysville
Contact school for information and a tour.

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW. Sundays, noon to 1 p.m. Viewers can tune in on the following channels: antenna 12.2, Spectrum 117 or 23, Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517, and DirectTV 25.

The Newport Central Catholic Theatre Department presents “Noises Off” Dec. 9, 10 and 11, at its Cuffardi Family Blackbox Theatre. “Noises Off” is a slapstick farce about actors rehearsing for their upcoming play. Tickets are $18 adults, $15 students and may be purchased on GoFan.co or at the door.

“12 Dates of Christmas” presented by the Thomas More University Villa Players in conjunction with the American Legacy Theatre, Dec. 8-18, Thomas More Theatre, Crestview Hills. This heartwarming, one-woman play offers a hilarious and modern alternative to the old standards of the holiday season. Bring a gift to donate to Toys 4 Tots. A portion of the proceeds benefit the Ron Mielech ’57 Scholarship fund at Thomas More. Show times vary — tickets available at americanlegacytheatre.org.

Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, 9th annual International Nativity Display, Dec. 11, 13, 18, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and Dec. 24, 9 a.m.-noon. The display features over 160 nativity sets made by artists and craftsmen from 78 different countries. Free and open to the public.

St. Augustine Parish, Augusta, winter bingo, Dec. 11, beginning at 1 p.m. There will also be pull-tabs, a split the pot raffle, food and refreshments. Proceeds benefit the Bracken County St. Vincent de Paul Society and the St. Augustine Benevolent Emergency Fund.

Cincinnati Catholic Alumni Club invite single Catholic men and women for a dinner, Dec. 11, 5-7 p.m., Montgomery Inn, 9440 Montgomery Road, Cincinnati. For reservations, call (513) 574-8773 or (513) 240-1232.

Harp of Christmas Peace concert with Diane Schneider, Dec. 13, 5 p.m., St. Benedict Church, Covington. Everyone invited, free will offering accepted.

Advent Mission with Father Michael Henniger, St. Agnes Church, Ft. Wright, Dec. 14 and 21, 7-8 p.m. Father Henniger will offer reflections on the theme, “The Musical of the First Two Chapters of the Gospel of Luke,” followed by Eucharistic exposition and adoration. Confessions will be offered during adoration. Benediction will close the mission each evening.

Penance service, Dec. 15, 7-8:30 p.m., St. John Parish, Carrollton.

St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, 16th annual Christmas Collage Concert, Dec. 18, 7-8 p.m. This is a concert of sacred music featuring the St. Joseph Music Ministry (cantors, Children’s Choir, Contemporary Ensemble, Glory Ensemble, Handbell Choir, Instrumentalists, Men’s Choir, Praise Ensemble, Small Ensemble, St. Joseph Choir and Women’s Choir). This is a free event with a reception following.

Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, Young Adult Social, Dec. 18 after 10 a.m. Mass at Covington Latin School. In unity with the Global Celebration of Young People as directed by Pope Francis, young adults are invited for refreshments and conversation. Deacon Jerry Fransen will offer a short teaching on this year’s theme of the Global Celebration: “Mary arose and went in haste” (Luke 1:39) as related to the Cathedral’s window of the Annunciation.

Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, Boys basketball alumni night, Dec. 20, at 8, 9 and 7:30 p.m. Alumni and one guest admitted free.

Healing Masses, St. John Parish, Carrollton, Dec. 21, 7 p.m. and a Spanish Mass, Dec. 27, 7 p.m.

A visit from St. Nicholas
(above) On the feast of St. Nicholas, Dec. 6, the benevolent third century Bishop made a visit to the students at Holy Trinity School tossing golden candy coins for the students to share. St. Nicholas is known as the patron saint of children.

Christmas in Paris
The Crusader ladies and their best men danced the night away at “Christmas in Paris” daddy/daughter dance at St. Henry School, Erlanger, Dec. 2, a grand time was had by all.

Give thanks
The students at Prince of Peace School, Covington, showed generosity and love for others this Thanksgiving season. The children collected food items, which were donated to the Rose Garden Home Mission, Covington, for their Thanksgiving meal distribution to those in need. The Franciscan Daughters of Mary, who operate the mission, accepted the gifts with joy.
Advent is opportunity to get off pedestal of superiority, pope says

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The season of Advent is a moment of grace to help believers stop being presumptuous and pretending to be self-sufficient, Pope Francis said.

There is only one way to begin a new life: “the way of humility — to be purified from the sense of superiority from formalism and hypocrisy,” the pope said Dec. 4, the second Sunday of Advent.

People need to see themselves “as sinners, and to see Jesus as the savior who comes for us, not for the others, for us, just as we are, with our poverty, misery and failings, above all with our need to be raised up, forgiven and saved,” he told visitors and pilgrims gathered in St. Peter’s Square for the recitation of the Angelus prayer.

The day’s Gospel reading described St. John the Baptist’s sharp rebuke of those who were known for their duplicity and presumption, and his urgent appeal to repent.

When St. John the Baptist says, “Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance,” the pope said, “This is a cry of love, like the cry of a father who sees his son ruining himself and says to him, ‘Don’t throw your life away’.”

If people presume they always are right, they will fail to welcome this loving invitation and miss an opportunity to begin a new life, he said.

“In essence, dear brothers and sisters, hypocrisy is the greatest danger, because it can even ruin the most sacred realities. Hypocrisy is a serious danger. This is why the Baptist — as Jesus would be later — is harsh with hypocrisy,” the pope said. “It requires getting off the pedestal and being immersed in the water of repentance. Advent is a moment of grace to take off our masks — every one of us has them — and line up with those who are humble, to be liberated from the presumption of the belief of being self-sufficient, to go to confess our sins, the hidden ones, and to welcome God’s pardon, to ask forgiveness from those whom we have offended,” he said.

“This is how to begin a new life,” he said.

Pope Francis is framed by the Christmas tree in St. Peter’s Square as he leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking the square at the Vatican Dec. 4, 2022.
Dobbs decision dominates Supreme Court’s year

Carol Zimmermann

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court’s Dobbs decision — overturning Roe v. Wade — is no doubt one for the history books.

The 5-4 decision in June in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization was anticipated for months. The decision was leaked a month early and became a hot topic of conversation for months afterward.

Heated reactions to the still-being-investigated leak prompted fences to be placed around the Supreme Court from May to August at the site of gatherings of both protest and support of the court’s action.

In June, after a man had been found near the home of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, angered by the Dobbs leak and saying he planned to kill the justice, Congress passed a measure for around-the-clock security protection for families of Supreme Court justices.

The court’s ruling said there is no constitutional right to abortion in the United States, immediately bringing all abortion policy decisions to the state level and prompting state ballot measures on abortion in the November election.

The justices were disappointed in the state votes allowing abortion, in stark contrast to their response to the Dobbs decision, which they called an “historic day in the life of our country, one that stirs our very dangers that forced them to seek refuge in the United States in the first place.”

With its new term that began Oct. 3, the court jumped into affirmative action, voting, immigration, the environment and freedom of speech. It also once again opened its doors for oral arguments to the public for the first time since the start of the pandemic in 2020.

In a case examining the scope of free speech protected by the First Amendment, the Supreme Court Dec. 5 ultimately seemed to favor a broad view of free speech for a Colorado web designer who has said she should not be required to create wedding websites for same-sex couples based on her Christian beliefs about marriage.

The designer, Lorrie Smith, said her First Amendment right to free speech exempts her from Colorado state law forbidding businesses from discriminating based on sexual orientation.

Smith’s case is similar to a 2018 case involving a Colorado baker who refused to make a custom wedding cake for a same-sex couple based on his religious beliefs.

The court ruled that the baker did not violate Colorado’s anti-discrimination law, but the justices did not specifically deal with First Amendment protections, which some religious groups, including the USCCB, said the court must clarify.

Another significant topic before the court this year challenges how higher education institutions use race as a factor in the admission process.

A group of Catholic colleges urged the court to uphold affirmative action in admissions saying the right to consider racial diversity in admissions is essential to their academic and religious missions and is “inextricably intertwined” with their religious foundations.

The court’s very busy year began with a close look at the employer vaccine-or-test rule. It blocked a rule by the Biden administration that would have required employees at large businesses to show proof of a COVID-19 vaccination or wear masks and get tested each week for the coronavirus. It also said the vaccine mandate for most health care workers could go into effect.

The court ended its year with a pandemic-related case rejecting a challenge to New York’s vaccine mandate for health care workers with no religious exemption.

Pro-life demonstrators celebrate outside the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington June 24, 2022, as the court ruled in the Dobbs v. Women’s Health Organization abortion case, overturning the landmark Roe v. Wade decision.

President Joe Biden signed the Respect for Religious Freedom Act into law in May.

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mvlopenhien@stcharlescommunity.org
US Catholics Playing Important Role in Church’s Effort to Supply Safe Water to Needy Families in Kenya

Three hours. That’s how long it can take Francisca Ngo to walk to the Tange River to fill her water can. To get an early start, she leaves her home before dawn — but that adds a significant risk to her chore. Dangerous animals are common in Kenya’s rural areas, and by traveling in the dark she has a much greater chance of encountering one of them during her journey. Elephants compete for the region’s scarce water resources, and they can be especially frightening when provoked.

“A thirsty elephant’s potential for violence poses such a great threat that families will sometimes go thirsty rather than risk having any confrontation with one,” Jim Cavnar confirmed. “Imagine if you were placed in a similar situation and had to do a risk assessment every time you wanted to get water to drink, bathe or cook. It’s really heartbreaking to see these poor families must endure.”

Cavnar is the CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach, a highly respected Catholic relief and development agency serving the poor in developing countries, and his team specializes in funding Church-organized solutions to provide safe water solutions for poor families living in rural African communities.

While wild animals can be a real threat, Francisca’s biggest daily challenge actually has more to do with the time it takes to locate and collect water — that and the health problems her family suffers from drinking out of a contaminated source like the Tange River,” Cavnar said. “Sourcing and gathering water is a backbreaking and time-consuming chore, and it is especially hard on mothers with children. Given the time it takes Francisca to reach the river and return — and she sometimes has to go more than once a day — it is amazing she finds the time and energy to care for her kids or complete her other household tasks.”

Making matters worse, the water Francisca is collecting isn’t even clean. In fact, its contamination by bacteria and parasites creates yet another hardship the family must endure.

“Sometimes it is hard water to drink. You can see some organisms moving around in the water,” Francisca said.

For these and other reasons, Francisca is eager for the Church to help her village find a permanent solution to its water crisis — and the other women in her area have expressed the same plea for deliverance.

“As women, we have a very challenging time due to the lack of water,” said Stella Patrick, a married mother of four who survives by subsistence farming. “We take some three hours to fetch water for our domestic use,” she said, “and it is usually very hectic because we have to fetch water carrying our jerrycans. We fetch untreated water — very dirty water. We usually use it for drinking, and it is not good for our health.”

Fortunately, Church leaders in Kenya are aware of these hardships and — with the help of American Catholics — they have been working on providing solutions to the water shortages local families have been facing. One of the most successful of these relief efforts involves a partnership between Cross Catholic Outreach and Good Samaritan Water Sanitation Services, a Kenya-based nonprofit organization founded by Father Fabian Hervi.

According to Cavnar of Cross Catholic Outreach, this partnership started in 2018.

“Working together, we’ve been able to install many safe water wells in the last few years, but there’s still a lot more we can accomplish,” Cavnar said. “It’s their contributions that make these important outreaches possible.”

Fr. Fabian recently visited Stella’s community — a place called Senda — to see the local water source with his own eyes.

“Travelling from Senda to where they get water is exactly 5.2 kilometers,” he said. “To go and get back means somebody needs to spend close to six hours getting water. Six hours — almost a full workday — just to fetch as much dirty water as you can carry.”

Will Francisca and Stella get the water supply they so desperately need? Cavnar and Fr. Fabian believe they will because they are confident American Catholics will step forward to provide the financial support needed to drill the wells needed by these communities.

“Catholics — especially those who have been blessed during their own lives — are eager to share what they have with those in need,” Cavnar said. “Now that they are aware of the hardships water scarcity is creating in Kenya, I believe they will do everything they can to help these struggling families.”

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. AC02333, 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 repositioned to other urgent needs in the charity.
True love of God or love of another person should lead to a sense of freedom, not to a need to possess or control, Pope Francis said.

“Possessiveness is the enemy of goodness and kills affection — pay attention to this,” the pope told people at his weekly general audience Dec. 7.

Cases of domestic violence, which occur too often, he said, “almost always arise from the claim to possess the affection of the other, from the search for absolute security that kills freedom and stifles life, making it hell.”

Continuing his series of audience talks about spiritual discernment, Pope Francis said that what one feels and notices after making a decision also is part of the process.

And a “good sign” that a decision was right, he said, “is the fact of remaining free with regard to what has been decided, being willing to question it, even to give it up in the face of possible contradictions” and asking what the Lord was trying to teach through the experience.

God does not want to deprive people of something they want or hold dear, the pope said, but he does want people to live “with freedom, without attachment. Only God knows what is truly good for us.”

“We can only love in freedom, which is why the Lord created us free, free even to say no to him,” Pope Francis said. “Offering him what we hold most dear is in our best interest, enabling us to live it in the best possible way and in truth, as a gift he has given us, as a sign of his gratuitous goodness, knowing that our lives, as well as the whole of history, are in his benevolent hands.”

Explaining that when one makes good choices it benefits every area of one’s life with a greater sense of peace and harmony, the pope said the spiritual life is “circular.”

He used the example of deciding to pray an extra half hour a day.

Pope Francis makes the sign of the cross as he visits the Nativity scene during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican Dec. 7, 2022.

He used the example of deciding to pray an extra half hour a day. The goodness of that decision will be seen in how other parts of one’s day improve, bringing more serenity, less anxiety and “even relations with some difficult people become smoother.”
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 nominally thirty-seven and one-half hours. The Campus Minister and NKU’s Catholic Newman Center (www.nkunewmanclub.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 interfacing with Diocesan, 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 email to skoplyay@covdio.org or by fax to (859) 392-1589.

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Give joyful witness and lobby hard for families, pope tells Italian groups

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Italy’s declining birthrate is alarming, and groups that assist Italian families must do more both in terms of lobbying and witnessing to the joy of family life, Pope Francis said.

“We are living in a serious demographic winter, and we must react to it with all our force, with our work, with our ideas,” the pope said Dec. 2 as he welcomed members of the Italian Forum of Family Associations to the Vatican.

“My secretary told me the other day that, walking through St. Peter’s Square, he saw a woman with a stroller, and he wanted to see the baby but there was a puppy inside,” the pope said. “It’s a symbol. That’s why I’m telling you. We need children.”

The first task of Catholic family associations, he said, is to witness to the “joy of being a family.”

Such a witness does not involve pretending everything is always wonderful, he said. “We all know that family life is made up of moments that are happy and others that are sad, of periods of serenity and others that are most difficult, sometimes really hard.”

But there is a joy that passes through all those situations, because it is on a deeper level and comes precisely from being a family and, with a deep sense of gratitude, perceiving that as a gift from God and from one’s parents and grandparents and children and grandchildren.

“I repeat, I am not talking about an ‘ideal’ family, a standard model to apply in order to be happy,” the pope said. “Every family has its journey and its story, just like every person does.”

In lobbying for family-friendly services and government policies, the associations should not “start from a particular ideology, but on the basis of the doctrine and the social practice of the church,” he said.

And, the pope said, the method must be one of dialogue, not working for partisan interests, but for the common good.

Open to life, but also to the needs of the society around them, the families should make “a political commitment in the widest and highest sense as a contribution to the common good of the country, so that families are not exploited and then penalized, but promoted and supported,” he said.

“We are in an awful demographic winter, horrible,” the pope said. Politicians talk about it a lot, but it is time “to pass from words to facts and from palliative measures to a real and effective therapy.”

The forum, he added, should not follow the debates simply to criticize one party or another, but to offer their experience and constructive suggestions.

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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

NOVENA

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O Holy St. Jude! Apostle and Martyr, great in virtue and rich in miracles, near kinsman of Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor for all who invoke your aid, special patron of those whose petitions are delayed and often not answered. We invoke you for we trust in your powerful intercession, because we know that you are able to obtain for us all that is needed. We beg you, O Merciful Saint, to inaugurate your intercession now. (Say 4 times) Amen.

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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

NOVENA

NOVENA TO ST. JUDE  O Holy St. Jude! Apostle and Martyr, great in virtue and rich in miracles, near kinsman of Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor for all who invoke your aid. Amen. L.A.D

NOVENA TO ST. JUDE

O Holy St. Jude! Apostle and Martyr, great in virtue and rich in miracles, near kinsman of Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor for all who invoke your aid, special patron of those whose petitions are delayed and often not answered. We invoke you for we trust in your powerful intercession, because we know that you are able to obtain for us all that is needed. We beg you, O Merciful Saint, to inaugurate your intercession now. (Say 4 times) Amen.

NOVENA TO ST. JUDE

O Holy St. Jude! Apostle and Martyr, great in virtue and rich in miracles, near kinsman of Jesus Christ, faithful intercessor for all who invoke your aid. Amen.

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New report says governments limit, restrict right to assemble peacefully

Catholic News Service

Even though the right to protest is guaranteed by international human rights laws and standards, governments keep limiting these laws and restricting such rights, said a new report from rights watchdog CIVICUS Monitor.

The report, "Global Assessment on Protest Rights 2022," released Dec. 7, urges governments to “halt hostile rhetoric that stigmatizes peaceful protests, such as portraying them as destabilizing and as a threat" and to ensure protesters are not subjected to intimidation and harassment. It also says governments must quit shutting down the internet and quit using public health emergencies as an excuse to limit the right to assemble peacefully.

Governments used law, policy, and practice to suppress peaceful and nonviolent gatherings in the backdrop of rules and regulations, said the report, released days before Human Rights Day, Dec. 10.

Josef Benedict, civic space researcher at CIVICUS Monitor, said countries’ use of “emergency regulations, anti-protest laws and even COVID-19 measures to block or disrupt protests as well as arrest and detain protesters” was “contrary to international human rights law and standards.”

Such actions “create a chilling environment for those who speak out and mobilize,” Benedict said in a news release.

Demonstrators hold placards with pictures of ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi as they protest against the military coup in Yangon, Myanmar, Feb. 22, 2021. Anti-coup protesters face ongoing threats of arbitrary arrest, torture, and deadly attacks from the junta, said a new report.
Globally, freedom of peaceful assembly faced restrictions in at least 100 of the 195 countries from October 2021 to September 2022, the report showed. In some countries, the law requires that people obtain authorization to hold protests. In other countries, a legal requirement to notify the authorities in advance of a planned protest is misconstrued by them as meaning that permission is required before holding protests. Instances have also been documented of law enforcement officers arresting protest organizers and protesters ahead of protests as a tactic to prevent protests, the report said.

It cited an example in Belarus, where popular movements sparked mass protests against the government and electoral fraud. Belarusian authorities enacted laws and regulations aimed at preventing and undermining further protests.

The report analyzed restrictions on protesters by region. It noted that in the Americas, at least 12 countries used excessive force to limit protests. It particularly cited police using firearms and repressing protesters in Haiti, used excessive force to limit protests. It particularly cited police using firearms and repressing protesters in Haiti.

In Myanmar, the junta has engaged in a violent crackdown on anti-coup protests by using the army and deadly weaponry. Reportedly, more than a thousand people have been killed by the junta, and there have been reports of the military using vehicles to ram into protesters.

Myanmar’s anti-coup protesters face ongoing threats of arbitrary arrest, torture and deadly attacks from the junta. Since April in Sri Lanka, the government has em- ployed state of emergency regulations to curtail mass protests related to the country’s economic crisis. This has allowed the authorities to arrest and detain suspects with- out warrants and due process safeguards. Curewills were imposed, internet access was restricted and social media shut down.

In Thailand, an emergency decree on the COVID-19 pandemic continued to be used to ban protests until the end of September.

In Hong Kong, the government blocked all forms of protest as part of its crackdown on dissent, the report said. It noted that in June, the government banned public commemoration of the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, for a third consecutive year, citing risks from COVID-19.

In Africa, rights groups also documented instances of the authorities using state of emergency regulations to curtail mass protests related to the country’s economic crisis. This has allowed the authorities to arrest and detain suspects without warrants and due process safeguards. Curewills were imposed, internet access was restricted and social media shut down.

In the Middle East, rights groups documented wide- spread use of state emergency regulations to curtail mass protests related to the country’s economic crisis. This has allowed the authorities to arrest and detain suspects without warrants and due process safeguards. Curewills were imposed, internet access was restricted and social media shut down.

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Cardinal Gregory blesses parish cemetery marker honoring enslaved

ST. INI GOES, Md. — When Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory blessed a parish cemetery’s memorial plaque honoring the unknown enslaved people buried there, Nov. 26, he noted the poignancy of his participation.

Wilton D. Gregory blessed a parish cemetery’s memorial plaque honoring the unknown enslaved people buried in the Archdiocese of Washington. “The top of the plaque has an image of Christ crucified on the cross, and the bottom includes a quotation from Wisdom 3:1: ‘The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them.’”

Cardinal Gregory, who became the first African American cardinal in 2020, read the prayers of blessing in an emotional voice as the people around him bowed their heads in prayer while standing on the grounds of the rural Southern Maryland parish.

“Brothers and sisters in Christ, a common Christian concern has brought us together to bless this memorial stone, which will mark the places in which the bodies of those who suffered the pain and injustice of slavery lie at rest, awaiting the dawn of the Lord’s coming in glory…”

May this stone be a sign of comfort to the living descendants of those buried here and a sign of their hope for unending life for their ancestors,” the cardinal prayed before sprinkling the marker with holy water.

After the service, he told the Catholic Standard, archdiocesan newspaper of Washington, that it was “terribly emotional to be able to stand here and bless these graves of former slaves. Put me in touch with my own roots.”

He said he has discovered in the Washington Archdiocese, especially in Southern Maryland, “that the faith that sustained those people was the same strength of faith that sustained the early Christians, because they were suffering. It’s the same strength of faith that is present here that was present then.”

Before the marker blessing, Cardinal Gregory celebrated a Mass at St. Peter Claver Church, named for the 17th century Spanish Jesuit priest known for his missionary work evangelizing thousands of enslaved Africans in South America.

In 2018, during a Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, then the archbishop of Washington, blessed the first commemorative bronze plaques honoring unknown enslaved men, women and children buried in cemeteries in the Archdiocese of Washington.

Cardinal Wuerl said then that the time had come “to right a wrong” and to remember and honor those people. That spring, those memorial plaques were placed in the archdiocese’s five major cemeteries.

In 2017, Georgetown University held a prayer service to express public contrition over the Maryland Society of Jesus’s 1838 sale of 272 enslaved women, children and men used from an earlier era.”

The Jesuits at that time had enslaved workers at the religious order’s plantations in Maryland who received sacraments as Catholics and kept that faith when some family members were separated after the sale and moved to plantations in Louisiana.

For generations, descendants of those families in Maryland and Louisiana have remained Catholic through periods of slavery, segregation and ongoing racial injustice.

Cardinal Gregory said, “The congregation responded ‘Amen.’”

He also said they would “pray for those who today are held in the bonds of plantation and contempt for those who may be from another culture, race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Those dreadful human sentiments are as binding and as confining as were the physical chains once used from an earlier era.”

Cardinal Gregory stressed that the marker’s blessing was also a time to pray for “freedom from any hatred that constrains the human heart and soul today that in time, we might all be free as God’s children were always destined to be.”

He said the people honored today “are nameless, but in God’s kingdom, they have a name.”

The congregation responded with a loud “Amen!” and applause.

After the blessing, some people lingered at the cemetery afterward, to stop and pray at the memorial marker and to walk among the graves there where their family members and longtime parishioners were buried.
Pope approves new law strengthening oversight of Vatican-related entities

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis has approved a new law strengthening the oversight of Vatican-related foundations and nonprofit organizations as well as detailing sanctions and clarifying existing norms on transparency, accountability and mandated compliance with anti-money laundering measures. The new law, which takes effect Dec. 4, applies to all legal “personae” or entities dedicated to a specific purpose and that are connected to the Holy See or Vatican City State. Those entities include foundations, nonprofit or volunteer organizations and specific funds that are dependent on and supervised by either the Secretariat of State, the Governorate of Vatican City State, an office of the Roman Curia, a pontifical academy or university or some other Vatican-related body. Because these entities were established by “the initiative of private individuals” to “carry out a mission or purpose beyond the work of the Roman Curia, they enjoy a ‘certain administrative autonomy,’” the pope wrote in an apostolic letter published “post mortem,” on his own initiative Dec. 6. However, since their assets and “goods are part of the patrimony of the Apostolic See, it is necessary for them to be subject not only to the supervision of the curial institutions on which they depend, but also to the control and supervision of the economic bodies of the Roman Curia,” the pope wrote.

Pope supports Jewish-Catholic project for social justice

VATICAN CITY — A person who helps others but does not worship God is a “good atheist,” while someone who claims to believe in God but does not do anything to help others “is a cynic, a liar,” Pope Francis said. Meeting with a delegation from the Latin American Rabbinical Seminary in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the pope supported their proposal to launch a series of educational programs aimed at helping Christians and Jews in Latin America tap into their common spiritual heritage to become “agents of social change.” Rabbi Ariel Stofenmacher, rector of the seminary, said: “God is a ‘good atheist,’ while someone who claims to believe about God, is talking about social things.” The “‘but’ two go together,” he said. Through the whole Bible, believers are called to love God and love their neighbor; “that is, worship and serve, worship and duty.”

Congolese Catholics take to the streets to protest increasing violence

KINSHASA, Congo — Catholics and other Christians in Congo took to the streets Dec. 4 to protest increasing violence, often caused when neighboring countries seek the nation’s valuable minerals. “No to the Balkanization of the DRC,” read one banner. “No to the hypocrisy and complacency of the international community” read another. And a third read “The Congo is not for sale.” The protest was called by the Congolese bishops’ conference and, in some areas, only the 6:30 a.m. Mass was offered so people could participate in the march. Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Buengulu, who was in Rome for a meeting of cardinals, voiced his support for the demonstrations. “The purpose of the march is to express our anger with this recurring crisis that has lasted in the Congo for nearly three decades, and we do not see any solution in sight,” he said via a video. “Every Congolese citizen who loves his country and is touched by the suffering of his people must raise up to oppose the project of Balkanization of the DRC,” Cardinal Ambongo Buengulu said. He specified that the march had no political overtones, but was “to show the whole world that we are one people united for the national cause, united for the unity and sovereignty of our country but also for the dignity of our people.”

Pope enlists a willing warrior to protest increasing violence

WASHINGTON — Pope Francis is getting more non-Catholics to do his work. The latest is Nicole Brown, who directed “The Letter: A Message for Our Earth,” a documentary on the pope’s 2015 encyclical “Laudato Si’. “I care a lot about creating a spiritual place,” Brown told Catholic News Service during a Dec. 7 video interview. Brown was speaking from Oxford, England, where he is at work on other environmental projects. “YouTube is a sort of spiritual place. PBR took on that spirit as well. They don’t feel that they (the two services) overlap. They both feel they want to hear this message, which speaks to very different demographics inside society, which I think is very good sign for the environment.” Brown grew up a Lutheran in Colorado. “Because of the small numbers of people at confirmation camp,” she said, there was a strong presence of “evangelical Christianity, which had a very literal interpretation” of the Bible. Brown shunned both the evangelicals and his own faith tradition as a result. “I carried this prejudice with me for 20 years,” she disclosed.

Pope, Council of Cardinals meet, discuss synod, safeguarding, COP27

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis and his international Council of Cardinals met in person at the Vatican Dec. 16, discussing the continental phase of the synod process, safeguarding and the UN climate change summit, the Vatican press office said. Also, “the meeting was an opportunity for a mutual exchange of updates on some current affairs in different key geographical areas and for an overall assessment of the council’s progress in recent years,” the Vatican said in a written communiqué Dec. 7. All seven members of the council participated: Cardinals Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state; Jean P O’Brien of Boston; Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India; Reinhard Marx of Munich and Freising, Germany; Frédélim Ambongo Besungu of Kinshasa; and Giuseppe Bertello, retired president of the commission governing Vatican City State. According to the Vatican press office, the pope and cardinals spent the first day reflecting on the discussions and outcomes of the 20th UN Climate Change conference, or COP27, held in November in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, following reports given by Cardinals Parolin and Ambongo Besungu. The second day they discussed the continental phase leading to the Synod of Bishops 2023-24 after hearing a report from Cardinal Mario Grech, synod secretary-general, which included what came out of synod surveys and outreach done online in collaboration with the Diocese for Communication.

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School lunch managers celebrate Christmas

The Diocese of Covington’s School Lunch office hosted a party and luncheon, Dec. 1, for the managers of the school cafeterias across the diocese. Becky Capella, Anita Neufelder and Laura Hatfield of the School Lunch Office, “wanted to give a little cheer and a big thank you to all the school cafeteria managers and staff,” said Ms. Hatfield, director. “We want to acknowledge the hard work they do every day, serving an average of 3,927 meals per school day. These are some of the hardest working people in our diocese and we appreciate everything they do.”