Laura Keener
Editor

Atop a black draped catafalque decorated with symbols of Pope Benedict XVI, sat a replica of the Papal tiara, Jan. 5, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. A portrait of Pope Benedict XVI faced mourners who came for the celebration of the memorial Mass for the late pontiff.

In Rome earlier that day, Pope Francis celebrated the Funeral Mass of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Bishop John Iffert celebrated the memorial Mass at the Cathedral with many priests of the diocese concelebrating and Bishop Emeritus Roger Foyes in choir. The memorial Mass kicked off nine days of mourning in the Diocese of Covington, with everyone in the diocese encouraged to pray one Our Father, one Hail Mary and one Glory Be each day through Jan. 13.

As Bishop Iffert began his homily, he shared that he recently learned that celebrants are to wear red vestments when celebrating a memorial Mass for a deceased pope. “Red, the Instruction said, because the papal ministry rests upon the blood of the martyrs,” he said.

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Pope Benedict XVI (1927-2022): ‘A simple, humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord’ is laid to rest

Maria Wiering
OSV News

―Lord, I love you.‖

For many who knew him or studied his works, Pope Benedict XVI’s final words before his death Dec. 31 encapsulated the message of his papacy and even his life. “That ‘Jesus, I love you’ — there’s nothing more that sums up his person,” said Father Harrison Ayre, a priest of the Diocese of Victoria, British Columbia, and a doctoral candidate focusing on Pope Benedict’s theology “If people can see that and hear that, I think they will understand the man deeply.”

(Continued on page 12)
The diocese continues to remember Pope Benedict XVI

Staff report

As the world continues to celebrate the life and mourn the death of Pope Benedict XVI, the Messenger reached out to others who knew or were inspired by Pope Benedict XVI. Here are their reflections to his life, teachings and death.

Kind, gentle, dedicated churchman, magnificent theologian
Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys

My first encounter with the future Pope Benedict XVI came when I was a seminarian and a young priest through his writings. What a magnificent theologian! Later, as a Bishop, I would encounter him on an ad limina visit (which Diocesan Bishops are required to make to Rome every five to seven years) while he was the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (now the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith). Of course, at the time he was characterized in the media as the Pauskonzervativen and/or God’s Rottweiler because of his adherence to the doctrines and dogmas of our faith. Not knowing what to expect I admit that there was some apprehension as I went into the meeting with my brother bishops. What we found was a kind, gentle, understanding and certainly erudite servant of the Gospel whose concern was for the well-being of each of us and of our episcopal ministry. A far cry from the characterizations that had been leveled against him.

I had several instances to confer with him while he was still Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and always found him ready and willing to help in any way he could. He was always most gracious.

Once he had assumed the Chair of Peter as Pope, I met him yet again on another ad limina visit. Again, he proved to be his kind and gracious self who exhibited a genuine interest in the state of the Church in general and our Diocese in particular. I cherish the pectoral cross he gave me and a challenge.

In summary, I found Pope Benedict XVI to be a dedicated priest through his writings. What a magnificent priest!

Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel celebrates 25 years with the Lord

Laura Keener
Editor

The Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel at St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright, celebrated its 25th anniversary on the Feast of Epiphany, Jan. 8. The 24-hour dedicated adoration chapel, the first of its kind in the Diocese of Covington, first opened on the same feast Jan. 4, 1998. The idea for a dedicated adoration chapel was placed on the heart of a parishioner. After two years of praying, planning and petitioning for the establishment of the chapel, Bishop Robert Muench gave his approval.

Among the diocesan guidelines developed specifically for the opening of the Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel, two adorers are needed for each hour to cover illnesses and absences—a minimum of 288 adorers. The Blessed Sacrament was never to be left alone while exposed.

Following the methodology established by Father Martin Lucia, a Missionary of the Blessed Sacrament who helped establish the chapel, the St. Agnes Adoration Chapel Core Team was able to achieve what they initially feared was impossible—the registration of not the minimum 288 but over 500 adorers. Those core team members included: Father Mark Keene, pastor; Deacon Joseph Cleves, spiritual director; Ray Dickerson, morning coordinator; Lou Dickerson, afternoon coordinator; Blaine Comfort, evening coordinator; Teresa Gray, night coordinator and Ben Hamm, treasurer.

Today, adorers from surrounding parishes have also signed up making sure that Jesus would never be alone.

Since the opening of the Divine Mercy Chapel at St. Agnes Parish, five other designated Eucharistic Adoration Chapels have opened in the Diocese: All Saints Parish, Walton; St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger; St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs; St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill; and St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas.

Pat Bethel said that the death-bed conversion of her grandmother changed the spiritual trajectory of the entire family which led to a deep devotion to the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Both she and her mother was among the first to sign up as adorers at Divine Mercy Chapel and became a devotion they cherished together. Fridays at 9 a.m. was their hour and continues to be Mrs. Bethel’s weekly Holy Hour with the Lord. Mrs. Bethel said that as her mother’s physical health deteriorated, she would bring her to the chapel in a wheelchair.

Diocesan Bishops are

Diocesan Bishops are
Catholics invited to pray for a future that protects the unborn

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

On January 22, 1973, abortion was legalized throughout the United States through the Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton decisions.

On June 24, 2022, the decision of Roe v. Wade was overturned by the decision of Dobbs v. Jackson, returning the decision of the right of abortion to the states and granting greater opportunity for legislators to protect unborn lives.

In the United States, January 22 (or January 23 when January 22 occurs on a Sunday, like this year) is designated the “Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children,” and is a particular day of prayer and penance.

“In Kentucky, a very pro-life state, we are facing many challenges in protecting the unborn, and we also are working on creating awareness in supporting those women and families who choose life,” said Faye Hoch, director, Pro-Life Office for the Diocese of Covington.

Families across the diocese are encouraged to pray on this day for the continued protection of the unborn and families. On Monday, Jan. 23, parish priests will keep Churches open to allow the faithful time to pray, and time will be set aside for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Acts of penance and the reciting of the rosary are encouraged, with schools setting aside time to pray the rosary as a community.

In schools
— Every school (elementary, secondary, post-secondary) in the Diocese of Covington will be asked to set aside time to pray the rosary as a community.

Prayer for the Spread of Perpetual Adoration

Heavenly Father, increase our faith in the Real Presence of Your Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.

We are obliged to adore Him, to give Him thanks and to make reparation for sins.

We need your peace in our hearts and among nations. We need conversion from our sins and the mercy of Your forgiveness.

May we obtain this through prayer and our union with the Eucharistic Lord.

Please send down the Holy Spirit upon all peoples to give them the love, courage, strength and willingness to respond to the invitation to Eucharistic Adoration.

We beseech You to spread Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament in parishes around the world.

We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen

Official Appointments

Effective January 1, 2023

Dinah Marron
To: Catholic Charities Advisory Board
Term: Three years

Randy Rawe
To: Catholic Charities Advisory Board
Term: Three years

By order of
the Most Rev. John C. Iffert
Bishop of the Diocese of Covington

Jamie N. Schroeder, Chancellor

An Epiphany blessing

(left) Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys ascended a step ladder, Jan. 10, to mark the traditional Epiphany blessing 20+C+M+B+23 this year — above the doorway of the St. Paul Oratory at the Curia. The initials — C+M+B — represent the Magi: Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar. They also represent the Latin blessing Christus mansionem benedicat, which means “May Christ bless this house.” The numbers at the beginning and end mark the year — 2023. This tradition is done at the beginning of each year so that you can invite God into your homes and place your family under his protection.

Following the marking of the doorway, Bishop Foys blessed each office of the Curia with holy water. The Curia staff were also welcome to take blessed chalk home to mark their doorway with the Epiphany blessing.

Bishop’s Schedule

Jan. 14 Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 4:30 p.m.
Jan. 16 Diocesan Curia offices closed in observance of the Martin Luther King holiday.
Confimation, Holy Cross Parish, Latonia, 7 p.m.
Jan. 17 Advisory Council meeting, 9:30 a.m.

Jan. 19 Priest Holy Hour, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 3 p.m.
Jan. 20 Diocesan Day of Prayer and Penance for Life
Jan. 22 Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 5:30 p.m.
Jan. 23 Confirmation, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, 7 p.m.
The anthropological function of gossip

In his novel, “Oscar and Lucinda,” Peter Carey offers this colorful image of gossip. The setting is a small town where there are rumors about the priest and a particular young woman. Here’s his metaphor: “The voice of gossip was like the girl who took her shopping and society, always feeling shopping to be a role contrived and necessity was pleased to feel the steam pressure rising in itself as it got ready to be properly scandalized — its pipes groaned and stretched, you could hear the noises in its walls and ceilings. They imagined he paid for her finery. When they heard this was not so, that the girl had sovereigns they had heard this was not so, that the girl had sovereigns in her purse — enough, — so, so, so, they fired in, to buy the priest a pair of onyx cufflinks — the pressure did not fall, it’s important. For most of our lives, we form community against something and why it’s easier to form community around it. How so?

Imagine going out for dinner with a group of colleagues. While there isn’t overt hostility among you, there are clear differences and tensions. You wouldn’t naturally choose to go out to dinner together, but you have been thrown together by circumstance and are making the best of it.

You have dinner together and things go along quite pleasantly. There’s harmony, banter and humor at the table. You know you and your colleagues will all get along. Alternatively, we talk about shared indignations. We end up having a harmonious time together because we talk about someone or something else whose difference from us is greater than our differences from each other. Of course, you are afraid to leave the table because you already suspect whom they will be talking about then. Your fear is well founded.

Until we reach a certain level of maturity, we form community largely around scapegoating, that is, we over come our differences and tensions by focusing on some one or something about whom or which we share a common distancing, indignation, ridicule, anger or jealousy. That is, the anthropological function of gossip — and it is a very important one. We overcome our differences and tensions by scapegoating someone or something. That’s why we use the term scapegoat. We break away from something rather than around something and why it’s easier to define ourselves more by what we are against than by what we are for.

Ancient cultures knew this and designed certain rituals to take tension out of the community by scapegoating. For example, at the time of Jesus within the Jewish community a ritual existed that essentially worked this way. At regular intervals, the community would take a goat and symbolically adorn it with the tensions and divisions of the community. Among other things, they would drape it with a purple cloth to symbolize that it represented them and push a crown of thorns onto its head to make it feel the pain of their tensions. (Notice how Jesus is draped in these exact symbols when Pilate shows him to the crowd before the crucifixion: Ecce homo … Behold your scapegoat!) The goat was then chased off to die in the desert. It leaving the community was understood as taking away and transferring their problems. Leaving the community free of tension by its banishment.

Jesus is our scapegoat. He takes away our sin and division, though not by banishment from the community. He takes away our sins by taking in them, carrying them and transferring them so as not to give them back in kind. Jesus takes away sin in the same way as a water filter purifies, by holding the impurities within itself and giving back only what is pure.

When we say Jesus died for our sins, we need to understand it with a purple cloth to symbolize that it represented them and push a crown of thorns onto its head to make it feel the pain of their tensions. (Notice how Jesus is draped in these exact symbols when Pilate shows him to the crowd before the crucifixion: Ecce homo … Behold your scapegoat!) The goat was then chased off to die in the desert. It leaving the community was understood as taking away and transferring their problems. Leaving the community free of tension by its banishment.

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But that’s Jesus’ invitation to us: As adults, we are invited to step up and do what Jesus did, namely, take in the differences and jealousies around us, hold them and transform them so as not to give them back in kind. Then we won’t need scapegoats anymore, and the steampipes of gossip will cease hissing and the low groel of that smallish dog inside us will finally be silent.
Catholic roots of the Mayo Clinic

Last Thanksgiving my wife, Lindsay, and I journeyed to Rochester, Minnesota, to visit the world-renowned Mayo Clinic. When our fourth child, Vera, was born in 2016 we found out that Lindsay had an undiagnosed genetic heart condition. It’s a rare heart rhythm disorder, called long QT Syndrome, that can potentially cause fast, chaotic heartbeats. Unfortunately, our four children have it as well.

This past summer, Lindsay went into cardiac arrest — thank God her life was saved, and she now has a device implant that helps keep her safe. That experience led us to the experts at Mayo. Looking back now, I’m not sure what I was expecting to find up there in Rochester, but when I came home, I was both humbled and inspired.

Upon arrival at the Mayo Clinic, I noticed a couple things right away: It was very different than any other hospital or clinic that I had experienced before. Even though this place was filled with sejours of all ages seeking help with terrible burdens and trials, there was an undeniable sense of hope and joy all around.

For the next few days, I (and still two tasks: first, to be at my wife’s side every moment that I could; and second, during the times that I couldn’t be with her, find out as much as I could about the Mayo Clinic and its history. In the late 1800s divine providence brought Dr. William Worrall Mayo and Mother Alfred Moe, a superior of a congregation of Franciscan sisters, to Rochester, Minnesota. Dr. Mayo was, in every sense of the term, a man of science. He was a religious and a firm disciple of Darwin. However, he had a profound compassion for people and was determined to transform the medical profession into a respectable establishment, accountable to the proper care of patients. The local Franciscan sisters were teachers and women of unstoppable faith.

This is where that hope and joy that people were radiating was born. It was their faith and charism that truly made the Mayo Clinic and continues to shape the mission to this day.

At St. Mary’s and the Mayo Clinic the patient comes first. They treat the whole person — mind, body, and soul, recognizing the dignity of everyone, as a child of God. This is where their hope and joy that people were radiating was born. It was their faith and charism that truly made the Mayo Clinic and continues to shape the mission to this day.

The slogan for the Mayo Clinic is “Faith, Hope, and Science.” Notice how faith comes first. It was faith in God that begins this story and it was rewarded with countless miraculous stories, unprecedented medical advancements, and a place where people can go to find hope, inspiration and healing.

Now, imagine if all of us in the Catholic Church had that same hope and faith. What would the world be like? We wouldn’t be as surprised or shocked by the news stories from history, so that we can remember how we got this far, and so that we can begin again to dream about how far we can go when we put God first in our lives.

David Cooley is a priest and office manager of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization in the Diocese of Covington.

What do you say?

The readings for the second Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; and John 1:29-34.

With this Sunday we return to Ordinary Time (techni- cally, it began last Tuesday), but a quick look back at the readings we have heard the last few weeks might give us insight into what is coming up.

The Gospel readings we heard in Advent and Christmas belong to what we call the ‘infancy narra- tives’ (chapters 1 and 2 of Luke and the same of Matthew) to be prologues to their Gospel, scholars today seem instead to con- sider them “mini-Gospels” (Raymond Brown, for example, but others, also).

In other words, in their stories of Jesus’ birth and the events surrounding it, Luke and Matthew present to us the constitutive elements of the Gospels: the impending fulfillment of God’s promise to save his people, Christ’s manifestation of his coming (both to us and to the nations) and the revelation of who he is, and finally people’s acceptance or rejection of him.

This year we return to Year A of the lectionary cycle, and so begin the longer version, so to speak, of Matthew’s Gospel. It is interesting, though, that this first Sunday we hear a reading, not from Matthew’s Gospel but from John’s, an account of John the Baptist’s testi- mony regarding Jesus. Why might we choose to begin there? Why not simply pick up where we left off, and begin with chapter three of Matthew? One liturgist I consulted gave me a plausible answer — the Christmas season ends with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, and today’s reading serves as a kind of transition into Matthew’s account of Jesus’ ministry. Whatever the actu- al reason, I see a connection between Matthew’s infancy “mini-Gospel,” today’s reading, and the rest of Matthew’s Gospel we will hear this year.

There are two critical questions in Matthew’s Gospel. The first is the question Jesus asks his disciples in chap- ter 11: “But who do you say that I am?” Is Jesus a prophet, a miracle worker, a great teacher or preacher, or the one promised from of old, the Messiah? Simon Peter’s answer shows his insight from God: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” In today’s Gospel, John the Baptist also declares the revelation he has received: “Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.” It is this line that makes today’s Gospel, for me, the link between what we heard during the Christmas season and what we will hear in the coming year.

The second critical question is the one that is posed in one way or another by each of the Gospels — do you accept or reject Jesus? Not as a great teacher, creative and effective preacher, powerful and popular, but as the Son of God, the Lord? Matthew in his infancy narratives and the rest of his Gospel, and John in today’s reading, emphatically testify to his Sonship and Lordship. To believe and accept their testimony is up to us.

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

Making Ordinary Time extraordinary

This is my least favorite time of year. The weather is cold, often gray and dreary, and for far too many hours of the day, it is dark. The feast of the Baptism of the Lord is the only holy day of obligation until the end of the Christmas season. The bright, beauti- ful decorations have been taken down, and the cele- brations are over. In fact, our office staff once gave him a Tshirt that says, “Ordinary Time Extraordinary.”

According to him, it is in the ordinary time of our lives that we put faith into practice, recognizing Christ present day in and day out. I haven’t yet managed to adopt his life that we develop spiritual sight to see the Divine, to increase our faith and grow in our relationship with Christ despite the “gray” of ordinariness.

Where can I catch glimpses of God’s glory amid life that can seem unremarkable and mundane?

The Eucharist immediately comes to mind, particu- larly attending Mass and receiving Holy Communion or making a Holy Hour. In these years of Eucharistic Revival in the United States, we endeavor to more fully understand and believe that Jesus, the one promised from of old, is really present in the Eucharist. That helps keep her loved ones close, and it also allows her to continue her work as a nurse.

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(Continued on page 18)
Cardinal Pell dies at 81; he kept the faith even amid tribulation

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

Pope Francis praised the late Australian Cardinal George Pell as a faithful servant of God and of the Catholic Church, who steadfastly followed the Lord even “in the hour of trial” when he was jailed for sexual abuse before his conviction was overturned by Australia’s highest court.

Cardinal Pell died in Rome Jan. 10 at the age of 81 after suffering a heart attack following hip replacement surgery. The cardinal’s funeral was expected to be celebrated in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican with burial to take place in St. Mary’s Cathedral in Sydney, but the Vatican did not offer details immediately.

In an interview with Italy’s Mediaset broadcast Dec. 18, Pope Francis was asked what part of his job he would have preferred not having to deal with, and he responded, the Vatican’s financial chaos and scandals.

The need for a thorough clean up “was clearly seen by Cardinal Pell, who is the one who started” making progress, the pope said, but then he was required to return to Australia “because of this calumny” of being accused of sexual abuse.

“He was innocent,” Pope Francis said in the December interview. “He is a great man, and we owe him so much.”

The pope made the same points in a telegram addressed Jan. 11 to Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals.

Offering his condolences also to Cardinal Pell’s brother and family members, Pope Francis said the Australian prelate would be remembered for “his consistent and committed witness, his dedication to the Gospel and the church, and particularly his diligent cooperation with the Holy See in its recent economic reform, for which he laid the foundations with determination and wisdom.”

He prayed that the cardinal, “who without wavering followed his Lord with perseverance even in the hour of trial,” would be “received into the joy of heaven and the reward of eternal peace.”

Australian Archbishop Timothy Costelloe of Perth, former president of the conference, said, Cardinal Pell “became the victim of an outrageous injustice as he was convicted and jailed for 13 months before a final vindication,” Archbishop Coleridge said, referring to the cardinal’s conviction in late 2018 on five counts of sexual abuse. The cardinal had served more than 400 days of a six-year sentence when the judges of the High Court of Australia overturned the conviction, concluding there was “a significant possibility that an innocent person has been convicted because the evidence did not establish guilt to the requisite standard of proof.”

“The spiritual poise and strength he showed through all of this was extraordinary,” Archbishop Coleridge said. “It revealed a depth to George Pell that often went unrecognized.”

“Through his legal troubles,” the archbishop said, “he was identified wholly with the Catholic Church and vice versa. Pell was the church, and the church was Pell — big, powerful and heartless in the eyes of many.”

Yet, he continued, “if George Pell had anything they were a good heart and a sense of humor. It was a pity that more of this didn’t show in his media appearances.”

Born June 8, 1941, in Ballarat, Australia, he was a star football player in high school and college, but left that behind to enter the seminary, studying first in Australia and then at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1966 at St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican.


Soon after his election, Pope Francis named Cardinal Pell to his international Council of Cardinals to advise him on the reform of the Roman Curia and, in 2014, Pope Francis named him prefect of the new Council for the Economy.

Cardinal Pell’s death leaves the College of Cardinals with 233 members, 125 of whom are under the age of 80 and eligible to vote in a conclave.

CNS photo/L’Osservatore Romano via Reuters

Pope Francis signs a cricket bat of a Canterbury cricket team received from Australian Cardinal George Pell at the Vatican in this Oct. 28, 2015, file photo. Cardinal Pell, former prefect of the Vatican’s Secretariat for the Economy, died Jan. 10 in Rome at the age of 81.

Senior Resource Center
Established by the St. Charles Community

(859) 261-0746
3705 Winston Avenue,
Latonia, KY 41015

Call, email, or stop by today!

We will listen, we will help.

mvolpenhein@stcharlescommunity.org
In the Gospel of John 8:12, we hear Jesus say, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Each day our Catholic schools are teaching students how to be followers of Christ. We do this not only through the lessons in the classroom but also through our words and actions.

In today’s world, the culture is telling us and our children to follow all sorts of people and groups — especially online and on social media. But we are called to follow Jesus first and to be wary of others who may lead us astray.

This school year, we invite you to journey with our students and staff to see all the ways we are following Christ. And we encourage you to join with us in following Jesus each day through your words, actions, and prayers.

Kendra McGuire
Superintendent of Catholic Schools,
Diocese of Covington

(above) Student buddies at St. Cecilia School, Independence, provide opportunities for older students to develop leadership skills and provide younger students with mentors.

(above) Holy Family School, Covington, is in the midst of its annual Canned Food Drive for the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry. The 1st and 2nd graders collect canned goods from each homeroom every morning, count them, then add them to the previous day’s totals on the chart in the front hallway to let everyone know how close they are to their goal. Once all items are collected, they will work with their 7th and 8th grade buddies to carry everything to the food pantry at church.

(right) This fall, St. Paul School students decorated the hallways with grateful garlands as a display of how to follow Christ with a thankful heart. A message of thanks was written on each link of the chain and included family, pets, school and teachers.

(above) The Notre Dame Academy community comes together each year for their Common Reader Day, a shared experience for all members of the NDA community. Through reading Before We Were Yours this year, they learned about families — those they were born into and those they were lucky enough to become part of. Through following Christ in meaningful discussions, the community learned firsthand that each of their stories is important and that they can truly make a difference in the world.

For more information about the Department of Catholic Schools, call (859) 392-1500 or e-mail asmoney@covdio.org.
Former superintendent sworn-in as Representative for Ky’s 68th District

Laura Keener

Mike Clines, former superintendent for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Covington, was sworn, Jan. 3, as Representative for Kentucky’s District 68. He and his family live in Alexandria, Ky and are parishioners at St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring.

House Speaker David Osborne announced that Rep. Clines will serve on the Agriculture, Family and Children, and Licensing, Occupations, and Intergovernmental Affairs committees. The Kentucky General Assembly convened Jan. 3 for its regular session.

“It is an honor to serve on these three committees my first year as a state legislator and I look forward to the legislation and conversations we will have within them. With my background in education, I am excited to work on the Family and Children Committee which will look at ways to improve programs for Kentucky’s children across the state,” said Rep. Clines.

The new Family and Children Committee will focus on child welfare, adult protective services, guardianship, childcare and other social service programs and public assistance programs such as TANF, CCAP and SNAP. This new standing committee will also include the work formerly performed by the Child Welfare Oversight Committee.

The separation of these two important issue areas symbolizes the legislature’s commitment to the children and families of Kentucky and improving their quality of life.

“Skills such as listening, speaking, empathy, flexibility, patience, negotiation, humor and valuing the individual were utilized practically every day throughout my career,” Rep. Clines said. “In addition, my service-driven positions of influence, decision making and leadership impacted thousands of students and families. These experiences have prepared me well to serve my constituents and the Commonwealth,” he said.

In his first year as representative, Rep. Clines said that he wants “to maintain an office of presence” as he cultivates relationships throughout the district and state. Issues he feels are important to his district include infrastructure, workforce development, education from preschool through post-secondary schooling, including trade skills and mental health care.

“Overall, I want to focus on good policy regardless of special interests,” said Rep. Clines.
Newsworthly

Newport Central Catholic is proud to announce the following eighth grade students obtained the top 10 scores on the High School Placement Test (HSPT) taken at NCC and have earned scholarships.

- St. Anthony School, Taylor Mill: Peyton Niehaus;
- St. Catherine of Siena School, Ft. Thomas: Otto Hansbauser, Emily Kirt, Alex Muench, Ella Myers;
- St. Henry School, Elsmere: Logan Purcell;
- St. Joseph School, Cold Spring: Maura Franzan;
- St. Thomas School, Southgate: Alex Bacon, Thomas Ruschman, Christopher Seabrooks;
- St. Thomas School, Ft. Thomas: Kyle DeMann

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays, noon to 1 p.m. Viewers can tune-in on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 and 18; Comcast 172 and 174; Channel 36; and Spectrum 10.1. Viewers can find more information at sttherese.org.

Pray for world peace and conversion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary with the Two Hearts Prayer Group, 6 months from the 3rd at 12:30 p.m. and 15th at 6:30 p.m., at St. Joseph, Crescent Springs (or inside church in the case of bad weather), Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington.

Thomas More University Alumni Art Exhibit, Jan. 12–9, at the Eva G. Farris Art Gallery. Closing reception Feb. 9, 4-7 p.m. Alums who took an art class may submit artwork until Jan. 6. Visit thomasmore.edu/art/gallery for details.

European American Chamber Cincinnati Coffee & Commerce at Thomas More University, Jan. 18, 8:30 a.m., Centennial Hall, North Campus, Crestview Hills. This series creates a networking space combined with guest speakers on a broad range of relevant topics with a focus on workforce development. Speakers include Thomas More President Joseph Chillo and Thomas More Psychology Department Chair Professor Caitlin Powell. Visit https://www.europecincinnati.com and click on Events.

New National School Choice Week education choice celebration, Jan. 24, 10 a.m., Ky State Capitol, Frankfort. EdChoice Kentucky hosts the annual event with parents, students, educators and public officials joining together to recognize the transformative importance of education. The event is outdoors. Visit EducateKy.com.

St. Peter’s Catholic Order of Foresters Court #1452 annu-
al Men’s Stag, Jan. 27, 7-11 p.m., St. Peter & Paul Social Center, California. Proceeds benefit the COF Scholarship Awards program. Contact 803-3782.

"Meditations on the Nativity: A Concert of Art, Music, and Light," Jan. 28, 8 p.m., pre-concert talk, 7 p.m., Christ Church Cathedral, Cincinnati. This event aims to both reveal the beauty of Olivier Messiaen’s music and to create art that brings people closer to the faith. In Messiaen’s composition for the organ, “La Nativité du Seigneur,” scenes from the Nativity are brought to life in music. A gallery of watercolors inspired by select movements will be displayed during the recital. The concert’s dynamic lighting will reflect the concert’s symposium, with the organist in the mind when hearing sounds. Free and open to the public. Visit stlaseillimusic.com.

24th annual Jack and Pat McGratt Euchre Tournament, Feb. 4, Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria. Register online: McGrattEuchreGroup.com. Contact jackmcgratt.euchre@gmail.com or text/call (859) 258-9924.


Newport Central Catholic High School’s twenty-second class Athletic Hall of Fame induction ceremony will be held Feb. 18, Newport Central Catholic gymnasium, social hour: 6 p.m., dinner and ceremony: 7 p.m. Inductees are: Vince Renahan ’11, Whitney Cumfield, Smith ’11, Apryl Gibson Gilespie ’88, Brian Haigis ’87, Brady Hightchew ’12, Steve Pangallo ’81 and Jerry Turner ’79. The 2010 Girls All A State Champion Basketball Team will be named “Team of Distinction.” Bob Dotret will receive the Coach Jim Comer Award and Jerry Schneider ’72 the Fr. John Hegeman Community Service Award. Cost $30. Visit ncchsm.com.

Diocese of Covington Regional Dual-Credit Information Night presented by James Catchen, Feb 23, 6-7:30 p.m., Thomas More University, Steigerwald Hall, Saints Center, Crestview Hills, for high school students (and their guardians), who would benefit from dual credit courses. During the presentation, attendees will hear from KHAA on scholarship opportunities to pay for dual-credit courses as well as how dual-credit courses can impact students after high school. You’ll also hear from dual credit representatives from Thomas More, Gateway, and NKU on available dual-credit opportunities. Visit thomasmore.edu/preview.

Notre Dame Urban Education Center (NDUEC) is seeking adult and high school volunteers to tutor children in grades K-12 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 NDUEC at 859-601-7869 or e-mail Sister Maria Therese at stmarthens@nduec.org. Volunteers 18 and older must be VIRTUS compliant.

The St. Joseph Padre Pio Prayer Group meets on the 4th Thursday of each month, 7 p.m., St. Joseph Church, Crescent Springs, for the recitation of the rosary and discussion. To be added to the Padre Pio Prayer Group e-mail distribution list, e-mail a request to bsmarcalos@fuse.net.

The Madonna House of NKY is looking for Thursday evening babysitters from 8 p.m., all four Thursdays in a month or just one Thursday a month, whatever works for you. Call 344-1191.

Year-Round Flea Market, the Diocesan Catholic Children’s Home (DCC) Center, 6 a.m. - noon, Mondays, Thursdays and every third Saturday through the winter months. Open to the public, 50 percent off the first Thursday of each month. Proceeds benefit children living at DCC Center. Donation box available anytime. 75 Orphanage Road, Fort Mitchell.

PAL “Parents of Addicted Loved Ones,” a free support group for families of adult children dealing with substance addiction, meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of every month at 6:30 p.m. at Catholic Charities, Covington. PAL provides continuing education and support, at no charge and no judgment. Just come! For information call 859-606-0444 or e-mail hopeflypsal@gmail.com.
Continuing to remember Pope Benedict XVI
(Continued from page 2)

be was and who is willing to endure unfair and unjust criti-
cism for simply adhering to the tenets of the Faith with
the courage to preach and teach whether convenient or
inconvenient. (2Tim 4:2-5)

To know and love Christ
Notre Dame Sister Mary Margaret Agnes Hemmerle

My home base for
many years was at our
Generalate in Rome on
Monte Maro, and so many
were the times I attended
papal audiences and gath-
erings in St. Peter’s
Square. Many also were
the times that I watched
the black smoke pour out
high from above the
Sistine chapel where a
papal conclave of
Cardinals was gathered to elect a successor to the papacy.
When that smoke turned white a group of us Sisters would
run out the front gate to catch the bus to St. Peter’s. On
April 2, 2005, several of us quickly made our way to St.
Peter’s only to see the Square so packed that we could only
find a place outside the colonnade. From there we heard
the name Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict
XVI, and the explosion of the crowd. From then we heard
his voice and received his first blessing as pope. It did not
seem a surprise since he was already well known from his
participation in Vatican Council II, and as a trusted coun-
selor and friend to his predecessor, Pope John Paul II.

Pope Benedict impressed me with his great desire to
encourage everyone, all of us, to delve into reading Sacred
Scripture. This was the way to know Christ, to love him
and grow in a deep relationship with him. Pope Benedict
did this through his homilies, his talks to the crowds gath-
ered in St. Peter’s Square for the weekly Wednesday audi-
ences and Sunday noon meetings with the faithful. His
words were filled with his love for Sacred Scripture. In our
Generalate in Rome it was our custom to listen to Pope
Benedict’s televised message to the people gathered in
the Square.

In his third year as pope, in October 2008, Benedict par-
ticipated in a six-day marathon of continuous reading of
Scripture, day and night, broadcasted by the Italian RAI
television. Benedict himself was the first reader, and he
began with reading from the Vatican the first chapter of
Genesis in Italian. Others who participated, over a thousand
readers from all walks of life, different cultures, religions
and languages were televised from Rome’s Basilica of the
Holy Cross. For me it was a faith-filled experience which
captured my heart and made me fall even more in love with
the Word of God.

(above, center, left in the photo) St. Joseph the Worker Mother Christina Murray in the
crowd to see Pope Benedict XVI, after his papal audience.

Attention to individuals
St. Joseph the Worker Mother Christina Murray

When I heard about the death of Pope Emeritus
Benedict XVI, my thoughts went back to 2006 when I had
the privilege to be in Rome. During that trip, Sister
Patricia Jean and I were able to attend one of Pope
Benedict’s general audiences in St. Peter’s Square.

In order to get a good seat for the general audience, we
had to get up very early and walk to St. Peter’s. Then we
stood in line for what seemed to be hours, waiting to be let
into the Square by the Papal Guards. We managed to get
seats up front on the right side of the Square. Everyone
was in a festive mood, waiting to hear the Pope’s words.

What stays with me is not what Pope Benedict said but
what he did that morning. After his remarks, the pope-

bile began to slowly drive around the crowd. Sister and I
were both eager to see the Pope up close. We were in the
second row and hoped to have the opportunity to shake his
hand.

As the Pope neared us, Sister Patricia Jean reached out
and was able to reach Pope Benedict’s hand for a quick
handshake. I stretched out my hand as far as I could but
despite my best effort, I was an inch away from the Pope’s
outstretched hand. I was a bit disappointed to come up an
inch short. At that moment, Pope Benedict leaned down,
grabbed my hand and gave me a gentle handshake.

I have frequently thought about that special handshake
and have often shared the story. The Pope was surrounded
by people reaching out to him, and yet he was kind enough
to bridge that little extra inch to shake the hand of a Sister
from a small community in Kentucky. He obviously paid
attention to individual people in that audience. He noticed
one single nun from Kentucky trying her best to reach out
to him. His innate kindness showed through that simple,
gentle handshake. He became an example to me to be
aware of the people around me who might need a smile, a handshake
or a kind word.

Courage and humility
Divine Providence Sister Barbara Rohe, provincial

Pope Benedict certain-
ly influenced the Sisters of Divine Providence in the
years before, during and after his Papacy. Many of us read and reflected on
his theological works. His great love and commit-
tment to Jesus was evi-
denced in his writings, as was his depth of spirituality and
his love for the Church. We recognized his courage and

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humility as he graciously realized his limitations and took leave of the throne of Peter. May he intercede for us now at the throne of the Almighty God he served so faithfully.

Disciplined, Christocentric theologian
Isaak A. Isaak

As Vicar of Christ on earth, Benedict XVI was full of Jesus’ joy. He passed away to eternal life during the season of joy, between Christmas and New Year. I attended three World Youth Days during Benedict’s pontificate. The first one was held in Cologne, Germany, from August 16-21, 2005. He was a brand new Pope at the time. The WYD attendees were excited to welcome. The second one was held in Sydney, Australia, from July 15-20, 2008. The event was held around the Sydney harbor. The last one was held in Madrid, Spain, from Aug. 16-21, 2011.

I especially remember vividly Benedict’s address in Germany encouraging us to find the joy that is offered in Sunday Mass. For Benedict, the source of joy was Jesus and this joy was his strength. This is what I genuinely love about him. He was the Pope that was full of joy. I learned from him that the world seeks to obtain joy from people, places and things, but the source of our joy is Jesus Christ who lives in us with abundant supply.

Benedict, in his address, made sure that we understood that we can live in this joy of the Lord for the rest of our lives, by attending what God makes available to us on Sunday Mass — that is God’s life and love. He said that when we receive Jesus in the precious Body and precious Blood at Sunday Mass, God fills us with overflowing and overwhelming joy that causes us to go walking and leaping like John the Baptist (Luke 1:38-45), and praising God like Simeon and Anna, the daughter of Phanuel (Luke 2:25-40).

If we allow Jesus to fill us with his Body and Blood, his unspeakable joy and supernatural love will manifest in our lives.

As with Jesus, many people misunderstood and resisted Pope Benedict’s message, yet he was an enormous, powerful man, and changed my life with his message of joy and love of Jesus Christ. As we read his writings, especially his “Jesus of Nazareth” series, and listen to his teachings, and preaching, we find out that he was a very disciplined, Christocentric theologian. That is why he was so enthusiastic about Jesus Christ in all his writings, teachings and preaching. He was an amazingly simple and humble man of God. He quietly suffered a lot of health issues. This tells us that he clearly understood the meaning of Christian suffering just as it is described in The First Letter of Peter. He truly internalized the redemptive suffering of Jesus Christ in his life. May his soul rest in Christ’s eternal peace.

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

(left) Isaak Isaak at World Youth Day

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Eight days passed from the time the world received notice that the retired pope’s health was failing and his funeral at St. Peter’s Basilica. During his weekly general audience Dec. 28, Pope Francis asked the faithful for prayers for Pope Benedict, calling him “very ill” and petitioning “the Lord to console him and sustain him in his witness of love for the church until the very end.”

Following that audience, Pope Francis visited Pope Benedict at his residence — a former monastery in the Vatican gardens where he had lived since his 2013 resignation from the Petroine ministry — according to Matteo Bruni, Vatican press office director. Pope Benedict also received the sacrament of anointing of the sick that day.

The Vatican press office provided updates on the 95-year-old retired pope’s condition Dec. 29 and 30, noting that he was declining, but on Dec. 29, was “absolutely lucid and alert.” Then, on New Year’s Eve at 9:34 a.m. Rome time, Pope Benedict died in his residence.

Pope Francis was reported to have gone immediately to his predecessor’s bedside for prayer. At vespers that evening, Pope Francis recalled Pope Benedict with gratitude: “gratitude to God for having given him to the church and to the world; gratitude to him for all the good he accomplished, and above all, for his witness of faith and prayer, especially in these last years of his recollected life. Only God knows the value and the power of his intercession, of the sacrifices he offered for the good of the church.”

Remembrances of Pope Benedict’s life and analysis of his papacy immediately flooded the media, some glowing, some critical. These painted contradictory portraits of the man who pastored the Catholic Church from 2005 to 2013, and who, as pope, first introduced himself as “a simple, humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord.”

“Theology,” Father Emery de Gaál said, “is nothing contradictory about the man himself.”

Peter Seewald, a German journalist who collaborated with Pope Benedict on several books and authored a biography of the pope, told OSV News that the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was someone “who is what he says and what he preaches,” and predicted he “will be canonized some day.”

In death, the retired pope was especially praised for his theological contributions, beginning as a young priest-professor teaching at German universities and advisor at the Second Vatican Council; then 23 years as prefect of the Congregation (now Dicastery) for the Doctrine of the Faith; and finally as pope, an office to which he was elected following the death of his longtime collaborator St. John Paul II.

Tracey Rowland, a theologian at the University of Notre Dame Australia and author of “Ratzinger’s Faith: Theology of Pope Benedict XVI,” published in 2008 by Oxford University Press, told OSV News that she thanks Pope Benedict will one day be a doctor of the church, a special designation for saints who have made outstanding contributions to how the Catholic Church understands the teaching given it by Jesus Christ.

“In a hundred years’ time, (Pope Benedict) will be seen to have laid the foundation for a theological renewal,” she said.

Father Emery de Gaál, chairman and professor of dogmatic theology at University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois, described Pope Benedict as a scholar who surrendered his whole life to academic work. He authored “no less than 1,600 theological titles, books, articles, essays, book reviews,” Father de Gaál said.

Among those works is the 1968 book “Introduction to Christianity,” which has been widely translated and called a “masterpiece.” Pope Benedict also oversaw the compilation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1992, under St. John Paul II.

“He stands in a singular position as a theologian pope. No pope has written that much and so much in an original and decisive way,” Father de Gaál said.

In death as in life, Pope Benedict was frequently cast as a hero to Catholic “conservatives” and a foil to “progressives.” However, Father de Gaál said the political categories are inaccurate descriptors. Because of divine revelation, “to speak of ‘conservative’ or ‘liberal’ is really a caricature... You really have to go into the nitty gritty of theology of the Catechism, of Scripture to discover that men and women of all faith, he is simple or sophisticated, are inaccurate, rise above such categories,” he said.

As prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith from 1981 until his papal election in 2005, then-Cardinal Ratzinger had the job of defending Church doctrine, a role that earned him the moniker “God’s Rottweiler.”

Because of that public perception, Christopher Ruddy, associate professor of systematic theology at The Catholic University of America in Washington, said he was pleasantly surprised when he began reading Ratzinger’s writings, including his memoir “Milestones,” in the late 1990s, “I found that this was the theologian who was speaking to my heart,” he said. “I’m like, ‘This is a very different person than I’ve been led to believe that he is.’

Ruddy, who teaches a course on Pope Benedict, said then-Cardinal Ratzinger’s 2006 book “The Spirit of the Liturgy” will likely prove to be his most influential. It presents the liturgy as “not something that we do once a week or once a day or so, but that our entire lives are meant to be liturgical, and that what we’ve lastly made for is to worship God, to praise him, and in doing that, to become fully human and fully alive,” Ruddy said.

Even in death, Pope Benedict invited the world into worship and ritual. Dioceses around the world memorialized the retired pope with special Masses. On Jan. 2, his body was brought on a stretcher via a van from his residence to St. Peter’s Basilica, where it lay in state through Jan. 4.

According to the Vatican, some 150,000 people visited his body in those three days. Special accommodations were made for cardinals, bishops and dignitaries, including Italian President Sergio Mattarella, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who visited Pope Benedict’s body.

Popes are typically buried in red, and Pope Benedict’s body had been dressed in the red vestments he wore in Sydney at World Youth Day in 2008 — a nod, some observers noted, to his esteem for World Youth Day gatherings. After the viewing ended Jan. 4, his body was placed in a cypress casket along with a text describing his life and contributions known as a “regula.”

Because Pope Benedict had retired from the papal office, preparations for the Jan. 5 funeral liturgy did not include all elements typical of a pope’s funeral Mass — a fact that some Catholics found confusing or even troubling. Bruni of the Vatican press office emphasized that there were no official protocols in place for the death of a retired pope, and some of the rituals associated with a
pope’s death, such as the ringing of St. Peter’s bells or the destruction of his papal ring, had taken place at the time of Pope Benedict’s retirement in 2013.

Ultimately, the funeral rites were expected to be “more than for a cardinal, less than for a pope in office,” Catholic News Service Rome reported.

Pope Benedict had also requested that his funeral Mass be simple, according to the Vatican press office, and only government delegations from Italy and Germany were officially invited. Other dignitaries announced plans to attend in informal capacities. Among them were Poland’s President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

In a gesture of respect and reverence, Duda knelted in front of Pope Benedict’s casket as it was carried past him following the funeral.

In the United States, President Joe Biden, a Catholic, paid respects by visiting the Vatican’s apostolic nunciature in Washington, where the public could sign a book of condolences Jan. 3 and 4.

Pope Francis presided at the funeral Mass — a rare situation in church history where a seated pope was present at his predecessor’s funeral. In 1802, Pope Pius VII celebrated the funeral of Pius VI, whose remains had been returned to Rome after he died in exile in France in 1799 after being imprisoned by Napoleon.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, was the main celebrant at the altar. Concelebrating were about 120 cardinals, 400 bishops and 3,700 priests. An estimated 90,000 people filled St. Peter’s Basilica, with one reading “Santo Subito” (“Sainthood Now”) and another, “Thank you, Pope Benedict.”

An estimated 50,000 people filled St. Peter’s Basilica for Benedict’s funeral. In 1802, Pope Pius VII celebrated the funeral of Pius VI, whose remains had been returned to Rome after he died in exile in France in 1799 after being imprisoned by Napoleon.

George Weigel, author and St. John Paul biographer, told OSV News that Pope Benedict was “one of the most consequential Christian figures of modern times,” and that his legacy will be a part of the universal Church for decades to come. "There are not many authors today who can be sure that their books will be read several hundred years from now," Weigel said. “He is one of them.”

Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel

(Continued from page 2)

“… This place, I don’t want to say spiritual because that seems shallow, has been a piece of me.”

Janis Vogelpohl, another 25-year-adorer, signed up because she knew she needed a scheduled, committed prayer time “because I won’t do that at home,” she said. "Like everyone else, she said, when things get busy often it’s a person’s commitment to their spiritual life that gets put on the back burner. Her time now is Friday from 8 to 9 a.m., original-ly it was Saturday at 6 a.m. and jumped around a few times."

“My understanding of the Catholic faith has grown and even my personal need and connection to my faith has multi-plicated,” Mrs. Vogelpohl said.

Mrs. Vogelpohl said that she spends some of her time in Adoration reading spiritual books or listening to Catholic podcasts. Most of the time, especially when she is in the chapel alone, she talks.

“I tell God about all that I need to share. With Him, she said. ‘It’s really been good to talk to Him about things. He’s always present and listens, and it just puts me on fire. It’s really been good for me.’”

What has sustained her dedication to her Holy Hour, she said, is “I need this space. I need this quiet space. I need to see the body of Christ there. It always brings me back when my mind starts wandering. It focuses me.”

Rose Miller became an adorer when she moved to Ft. Wright after her husband passed away six years ago. She missed the love and companionship of her husband, whom she had known since she was 14 years old. As a substitute, the memory of that love squeezes her heart until her eyes begin to water. “Every night I would talk. When I realized that Jesus is the bridgehead of my soul, I thought this is great and I would run over to the chapel to say my night prayers. ‘That love is there, and I feel very connected with my husband and all of heaven and earth.’”

Her hour at the chapel is Monday from 9 to 10 a.m., but she is always ready to sub when needed and will often come at 3 p.m. to say the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

“I’m right here,” she said, noting that her home is just a block or so from the parish. “I’m retired now, and I have all the time in the world to come and spend time with Jesus. This is where I get fed and I feel the love so that I can hopefully share the love that I receive here for Jesus.”

John Thiesen, a parishioner of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, has the graveyard shift. Three nights a week, starting at 2 a.m., or 3 a.m. or 4 a.m., Mr. Thiesen makes his way to the Adoration Chapel to engage in “spiritual warfare.” A time he was able to commit to after his retire-ment a year ago.

That late at night, “the world shuts down, there’s no noise and that’s what makes it awesome. … when I get there, I like to turn the lights off and there’s just a little bit of light to show off the monstrance — for me, it feels like He’s more alive. For me it just feels a little more sacred,” Mr. Thiesen said.

Mr. Thiesen offers his Holy Hour for all those who are in deep struggles with the devil — those who are oppressed and those caught in addiction of any kind. He gets his inspiration from a Benedictine Monk who chronicled revelations he received during Adoration in a book entitled, “In Sanu Jesu: When Heart Speaks to Heart.” The Journal of a Priest at Prayer.” A particular paragraph about Adoration in the late of the night helps direct his prayers: “It is no little thing for a poor human creature to prefer my Eucharistic love to poorer sleep in the night. Only in heaven we know the worth of an hour so spent. Come to me then, visit me and remain with me by night and I will work with you and through you by day. By nocturnal adoration you obtain from my heart things which cannot be obtained for me in any other way. Especially the lib-eration of souls from the influence of oppression and the powers of darkness. More souls are saved and liberated by adoration made during the night than by any other form of prayer.”

“Somebody showed me that paragraph a couple years ago and it just stuck me on fire,” he said. “It’s really been good for me and has put me on fire for the Lord.”

To participate in the Divine Mercy Chapel contact St. Agnes Parish at (859) 413-1802.
Bishop Iffert said that when he was a young man, when he first began to take his faith seriously, one of the first books recommended to him was “Introduction to Christianity” by Joseph Ratzinger.

“Everything is about Christ, that’s what I learned from him,” Bishop Iffert said about Pope Benedict. “A relationship with Christ Jesus through loving, desiring, being amazed by the gift of Christ and letting Him love us — this is the Christian life. This is the reason for religion. This is what everything is about. It is the center of discipleship. Without that focus on our relationship with Christ, without letting him love us and then letting that love transform us so that we go out into the world to share that love with others in the name of Christ, with His glory, without that — we are nothing.”

Bishop Iffert said that Pope Benedict, in his writings and teachings, talked about the love of God as both agape and eros.

“We’re used to speaking about agape love in a church setting,” Bishop Iffert said. “Agape is that self-emptying, completely selfless, offered for the love of another. The kind of love that we see in the cross of Jesus. When we speak of eros, so often we’re talking about something sexual. But of course, Pope Benedict used eros in that more philosophical and ancient sense, of a love that seeks to find its fulfillment in loving the other. He would speak of the Cross as the event that revealed God’s eros for us. God’s desire to reach out to us. In fact, Benedict would speak of the cross of Jesus, of this salvific event, as the place where agape love and eros love came to their fullness and their fulfillment.”

Having experienced that love, one is compelled to share that love with others, said Bishop Iffert.

“Pope Benedict said that the fullest expression of love in the history of all that is, is the moment of Jesus offering Himself on the cross. There we come to the love in its pure essence. We come to know that we are loved. And we come to know the joy of living a life of self-emptying in imitation of the one who has first loved us.”

“Pope Benedict called for an ‘immediate end’ to the ‘senseless conflict.’”

Bishop Iffert said that Pope Benedict, in his writings and teachings, talked about the love of God as both agape and eros. “The one who loved us to the fullness gives himself over in trust to the Father so that our human nature may never again be lost, may never again be outside of the life of God; may never again be eternally separated, never again be without hope of salvation … Receiving that great love and giving us the opportunity to respond, that’s what I learned from the man we mourn today and I will be eternally grateful for him. Eternally grateful because in my life it has made all the difference.”

Pope Francis called for an “immediate end” to the “senseless conflict.”

The pope specifically discussed the war in Ukraine and called for an “immediate end” to the “senseless conflict.”

“Peace requires a ‘defense of life,’ pope tells ambassadors.”

Justin McLellan
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — “Peace requires before all else the defense of life,” which is threatened by the “alleged ‘right to abortion.’” Pope Francis told ambassadors accredited to the Holy See.

“The defense of life is ‘jeopardized not only by conflicts, hunger and disease, but all too often even in the mother’s womb,’” the pope told the ambassadors Jan. 9 during his annual meeting with them to mark the start of the new year.

No one, he said, “can claim rights over the life of another human being, especially one who is powerless and thus completely defenseless.”

Pope Francis called on political leaders to “safeguard the rights of those are weakest and to combat the throwaway culture that also, tragically affects the sick, the disabled and the elderly,” and insisted governments have a “primary responsibility to ensure that citizens are assisted in every phase of human life until natural death.”

“The right to life, Pope Francis said, also is put at risk in places where the death penalty is still used. He cited as an example Iran where, as of Jan. 8, four people have been executed in connection to nationwide protests that the pope characterized as “demanding greater respect for the dignity of the person.”

“The death penalty, the pope said, is “always inadmissible, since it attacks the inviolability and the dignity of the person.”

“We cannot overlook the fact that, up until his or her very last moment, a person can repent and change,” he added.

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Looking for a great school? Visit an Open House

St. Augustine School, Covington
Jan. 29, 12 – 1 p.m.

Holy Trinity School, Bellevue
Jan. 29, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs
Jan. 29, 12 – 1:30 p.m.

St. Cecilia School, Independence
Jan. 29, 12 – 2 p.m. Call 859-363-4214 to schedule a visit.

Prince of Peace School, Covington
Jan. 29, 12 – 2 p.m.

St. Mary School, Alexandria
Jan. 29, 12:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Mary, Queen of Heaven Erlanger
Jan. 29, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

St. Joseph School, Cold Spring
Jan. 29, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

St. Catherine of Siena School, Ft. Thomas
Jan. 29, 12:45 – 3 p.m.

St. Paul School, Florence
Jan. 29, 1 – 4 p.m. Register for an appointment at 859-647-4070 or go to stpauljnk.org/school

St. Henry School, Erlanger
Jan. 29, 1 – 3 p.m.

Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Burlington
Jan. 29, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

St. Theresa School, Southgate
Feb. 2, 6 – 7:30 p.m.

Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills
Feb. 3, 1 p.m. Register for the Open House at villamadonna.org

St. Agnes School, Ft. Wright
Contact the school office at 859-261-0543 to schedule a tour.

St. Joseph Academy, Walton
Contact the school office at 859-485-6444 to schedule a tour.

St. Patrick School, Maysville
Contact Principal Dr. Rachel Noll at rnoll@stpatschool.com to schedule a tour.

St. Philip School, Melbourne
Contact Principal Jennifer Twehues at jsowehus3@stphilipky.com for information or to schedule a tour.

St. Joseph School, Camp Springs
Contact Ms. Lisa Roetting to schedule a tour. 859-409-9185 or lroetting@Saint-Joseph-School.org

St. Patrick School, Taylor Mill
Feb. 5, 12 – 2 p.m.

Covington Latin School, Covington
7th and 8th grade Prep Feb. 9, 5:30 p.m.

Holy Cross School, Latonia
Contact the school office at 859-581-6599 to schedule a tour.

Holy Family School, Covington
Contact the school office at 859-581-0290 to schedule a tour.

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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.

Pledge Coordinator

The Diocese of Covington’s Stewardship and Mission Services Office invites qualified individuals to apply for the support position of Pledge Coordinator. This role requires an individual who takes pride in performing detailed work with an absolute minimum of errors. Primary responsibilities include recording financial pledges, gifts, payments, etc. for the Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal, and also fund-raising campaign reporting, implementation, monitoring, and follow-up. Ideally, we are seeking Catholic candidates who relate well to others, are extremely detail- and confidentiality-oriented, are comfortable with a team approach to projects, and can manage deadlines under a steady workload. Interested individuals may send a resume, references, and writing samples to Stephen Koplyay by e-mail: skoplyay@covdio.org, (859) 392-1500. EOE

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‘If we die, we will die together’: Women religious are pillars of peace in war-torn Ukraine

Agata Puscikowska
OSV News

While war in Ukraine continues with no end in sight, one group in particular is contributing to a more peaceful world amid the turmoil of Russian invasion — the Catholic religious sisters of Ukraine.

From feeding and sheltering displaced refugees, to evacuating orphanages and providing spiritual and psychological support, to hiding the artistic treasures of their monasteries, these women religious are mirroring what many congregations did during World War II in neighboring Poland. The rule they operate under? “It’s our vocation.”

Before the war, about a thousand religious sisters lived and worked in several dozen female congregations in Ukraine. After the Russian invasion that began Feb. 24, 2022, most of the sisters decided to stay in the war-torn country to support the local population.

“We couldn’t leave those poor people alone,” Orinoinse Sister Renata Jurczak told OSV News. “We had to help them.” Most of the Latin-rite Catholic sisters working in Ukraine are Polish, but some are Ukrainian and Slovak, and some come from Moldova and Armenia.

Shortly after the outbreak of the war, the Orinoinse sisters from Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine decided to evacuate “Hope,” their home for single mothers.

“We knew that if the Russians entered the city, those young mothers would be threatened with violence,” Sister Renata Jurczak told OSV News. In the space of an hour, the sisters packed and escaped Kharkiv together with mothers and their children — a total of 20 people. After journeying for several days, they arrived at the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Yazlovets in western Ukraine.

“We opened our monastery because there was a need. And this help continues today,” said Sister Julia Pedles from Yazlovets, adding: “It would be impossible to stay for so long without help coming from Poland — food, diapers, clothes from associations, parishes or (charity organizations like) Caritas.”

After months of war, several Orinoinse sisters decided to return to Kharkiv to support those who had remained there.

“Despite the war, children are born there, including unwanted children. Women are left alone, without help,” said Sister Renata, who along with two other sisters resumed operations of the Hope shelter.

Accompanied by explosions and rocket attacks, the sisters welcome not only single mothers and their children but also those simply left homeless. In December, a dozen women and children lived with them. “The youngest single mother is 16 and gave birth to twins in November,” Sister Renata said.

To provide food for the women and babies, Sister Renata regularly travels from Kharkiv to Poland, 1,200 miles one way, for supplies. Just before Christmas, she managed to collect two vans of food and an amount of clothes from associations, parishes or (charity organizations like) Caritas.

“Sometimes I am afraid of both travel and rockets,” Sister Renata told OSV News. “But I know that God is with me.”

Even though the town of Zhovkva, 70 miles east of the Polish border, looks akin to something out of a fairy tale, it is at the moment far from a winter wonderland. In the midst of the hardest winter in Ukraine since World War II, Dominican sisters based there have been accepting displaced people and relocating them — and they have done so since the beginning of the war. “The proximity of the border allowed them to organize a large aid station, which has received European supplies throughout the war.”

“We sort it and send it further east,” Dominican Sister Mateusz Trynda told OSV News. “Winter is the worst.”

In many places at the moment, there is no electricity, houses are damaged by rockets and there are food shortages. “That is why we must continue to organize concrete help,” Sister Mateusz said.

Catholic religious women in Ukraine also look after orphaned children. At the beginning of the armed conflict, many orphanages were evacuated to neighboring Poland, during a missile alert so that they feel safe. If we die, we will die together.”

The elderly people who are their charges remember the Second World War — and the current conflict is yet another trauma for them. If not for the support of the sisters, many patients would be doomed to loneliness and, as a result, to death.

Many religious convents in Ukraine also support the local soldiers fighting for freedom. The sisters collect food for them, but above all, provide spiritual support. For their safety, they ask for anonymity.

“We meet with soldiers to talk about God, give rosaries and pray together,” one of the sisters said. “We want to bring them hope. Ukrainian soldiers are grateful to us, they are willing to pray even though they have not attended church services before the war.”

The sisters also take care of the widows and children left behind by fallen soldiers. They work in silence, without publicity. They are not heroes, they say Rather, what they do is an expression of their love for God and neighbor, and, in this way, during a missile alert so that they feel safe. If we die, we will die together.”
Kentucky Supreme Court issues ruling against School Choice in a ‘decision that will hold back thousands of Kentucky students’

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The Kentucky Supreme Court ruled against the Education Opportunity Account Act, Dec. 15, 2022, which would have allowed funding for low-income families wishing to send their children to private schools.

In a statement released the same day, E.D. Choice Kentucky President Andrew Vandiver said that the decision “will hold back thousands of Kentucky students from reaching their full potential.” With over 30 states in the United States having similar programs, Vandiver states that this ruling puts Kentucky students at a major disadvantage.

“The only way Kentucky families can get their kids in Kentucky is to put the issue on the ballot for a referendum,” Mr. Vandiver stated in an interview with the Messenger. “From a practical standpoint, telling low-income families that they now have to go out and pass a statewide ballot proposal for the ballot referendum will be too expensive for them. We’ll never see the $100 million referred.”

For families with struggling children who need a different option, they don’t have a year or two to campaign and just hope to get the result they want. But, according to Mr. Vandiver, this may be the path that we have to go down to make Education Opportunity Accounts happen for Kentucky families.

For the time being, Mr. Vandiver encourages families to “stay engaged” and to continue following the Catholic Conference of Kentucky and EdChoice Kentucky as they release updates in the upcoming weeks. “I’d also say there’s nothing wrong with them from reaching out to their legislators and letting them know they are dissatisfied with this decision,” he said.

According to Mr. Vandiver, as well, a proposal for the ballot referendum will be ready in February, and then we’ll be ready to “talk more specifically about what that means and what folks can do to support it.”

How Vatican II encouraged the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Julie Asher
OISV News

WASHINGTON — The annual observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity began as an octave of prayer, sermons and conferences encouraged by Pope Leo XIII and Anglican leaders. But the celebration picked up steam following the Second Vatican Council committing the Catholic Church to this path.

During his papacy, as early as 1964, Pope St. Paul VI was instrumental in launching the Week of Prayer as a means to reinforce the efforts of “Unitatis Redintegratio,” promulgated in November 1965, which initiated an ecumenical dialogue between Catholic and Protestant leaders.

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Ordinary Time

Ordinary Time (Continued from page 5) truly present under the appearance of ordinary bread and wine.

Learning about and observing liturgical feasts can light up dark days and help us enter the mystery of who Jesus is. The Presentation of the Lord (Candelmass) on February 2 and the feast of St. Blaise on February 3 are two such feasts. Both involve blessed candles. The other handle is a symbol of Christ because it sacrifies itself to give light.

Too, I think of ordinary situations and interactions with others where we realize God is at work. A great way to develop spiritual sight in this regard is to pray an Examen each day. This prayer asks the Holy Spirit’s guidance in reviewing the spiritual sight in this regard is to pray an Examen each day. This prayer asks the Holy Spirit’s guidance in reviewing the day — the people we’ve encountered, the events that have happened, and our reactions to those — to discover God’s presence and action in our lives.

YOUTH MINISTRY COORDINATOR

The Diocese of Covington’s Office of Catechesis and Evangelization is adding the new full-time position of Youth Ministry Coordinator, whose primary purpose will be to launch, support, and coordinate vibrant youth ministry programs in our parishes and in our nine high schools. We seek faith-filled, energetic, dynamic candidates with the communication and organizational skills to jump-start this venture. Knowledge of the Faith and previous experience in ministry. A minimum of a bachelor’s degree in Theology or Pastoral Ministry is preferred. Interested individuals may send a cover letter and resume, including compensation history and references with contact e-mail addresses, to Stephen Kopolya, S.H.R., at skopolya@covdio.org or by fax to (859) 392-1589.

Another place I find the glory of God is through beauty ordinarily found in nature, in architecture, in music and in art. Beauty has the power to uplift and point us toward God. The Angelico Project, a Catholic initiative with the mission to transform the culture through beauty, offers opportunities to experience the beauty of the Divine “hidden” in the arts. Check it out at https://angelico.org project.

Ordinary Time is not gray dreary and dark as the winter season might lead us to believe. It is an opportunity to live out our faith every day, enjoying glimpses of the hidden eternal glory that is heaven. As we journey through this portion of the liturgical year, may we ask the Lord to open our eyes to the glimpses of glory that signal “God with us,” and for the grace to see that Ordinary Time is still extraordinary.

Sister Maria Grace Reis C.P., who was also known as Sister Benita O.S.B., passed away at St. Walburg Infirmary Dec. 15, 2022. At the age of 90, she died peacefully and went to be with the Lord.

She is survived by the family of Martha (who had previously been married to Lawrence Reis. She attended St. Peter and Paul School, California, Ky., as well as Campbell County High School graduating from both. She answered the call of God on her life to devote her- self to the service of oth- ers by becoming a nun and joining the Benedictines of St. Walburg Monastery Villa Hills, where she was given the name Sister Benita, O.S.B.

It was there that she started her journey toward obtaining a higher education in order to prepare for service in the fields of nursing (at the St. Elizabeth Hospital School of Nursing), psy- chology (at Xavier University), and theo- logy (at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minnesota).

She joined the Passionist Nuns in the late 1960s. The education that she obtained while she was a Benedictine was of tremen- dous value to the Passionist Congregation.

Her parents and her brothers Arthur and Theresa (nee Kramer) Reis, as well as Ronald (whose sister Helen nee Kramer survived him) Reis all passed away before her. She is survived by her sis- ters Frances Verst (whom her husband Leo prede- ceded), Rheta Rauch (whom her husband Michael predeceased), and Leah Carmack (who her husband Gary predeceased); and in addi- tion, a large number of nieces and nephews.

Visitation was held on Dec. 26 and 27 at the Passionist Nuns’ Chapel. Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Dec. 27 by Bishop John Littell with interment immediately following at Passionist Nuns cemetery.

Second Vatican Council committing the Catholic Church to this path.

The following year, the Catholic Church’s “Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification” with the Lutheran World Federation provided a common basis for understanding how people are justified and saved.

Ten years later came Pope Benedict’s “Anglicanorum Coetibus,” the papal constitu- tion that created the personal ordinari- ates enabling Anglicans and Episcopalians to enter the Catholic Church and have a permanent home for their Anglican her- itage, which the late pope called a “treasure to God.”

Pope Francis later authorized all the ordinate liturgical books known collec- tively as “Divine Worship,” marking the first time the Catholic Church had oficially adopted into its public worship liturgical elements that had developed within a Reformation church context.
National/World

Under Russian missiles, U.S. military archbishop visits Ukraine's military chaplains, sees 'catalysts for rebuilding' war-torn nation

WASHINGTON — Ukraine’s Catholic military chaplains will eventually be “catalysts for the rebuilding” of their war-torn nation, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and head of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, told OSV News. During a Dec. 27-29 visit to Lviv and Kyiv, the archbishop met with chaplains as well as Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, and leaders of Ukraine’s military chaplaincy, including Jesuit Father Andriy Zelinskyy, coordinator of chaplains for the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Archbishop Broglio also concelebrated at a funeral for three Ukrainian soldiers killed in action, extending gratitude for their sacrifice. The archbishop also told OSV News he hopes Ukraine’s military chaplains will have a role in advising the commanders and political leaders in their nation’s “reconstruction and rebuilding,” and urged Catholics to continue to pray for Ukraine.

Pope reorganizes Rome vicariate to be more collegial, accountable

VATICAN CITY — With the same spirit and aims that Pope Francis, as Bishop of Rome, has overshielded the Vicariate of Rome, the vicariate, too, is called “to become more suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation” and to be at the service of a church that reaches out to everyone, evangelizing “in word and deed, embracing human life and ‘touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others,’” the pope wrote in a new papal instruction. Of the many changes, the pope created two new shepherd offices: an office dedicated to safeguarding minors and vulnerable people; and an independent supervisory commission of papally appointed experts who monitor the work and administrative and economic affairs of the vicariate. The changes, which go into effect Jan. 1, were released Jan. 6 in the new apostolic constitution, “In Ecclesiaram Communioneus (“In the Communion of Churches”), It replaces the previous constitution, “Ecclesiae in Udere (“The Church in the City”),” issued by St. John Paul II in 1988. The new document aims to revitalize the vicariate’s mission by giving “primacy” to charity and the proclamation of divine mercy, synodality with the faithful and promoting greater collegiality, particularly between the pope and his auxiliary bishops of Rome.

Service of a church that reaches out to everyone, evangelizing "in word and deed, embracing human life and "touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others," the pope wrote in a new papal instruction. Of the many changes, the pope created two new shepherd offices: an office dedicated to safeguarding minors and vulnerable people; and an independent supervisory commission of papally appointed experts who monitor the work and administrative and economic affairs of the vicariate. The changes, which go into effect Jan. 1, were released Jan. 6 in the new apostolic constitution, “In Ecclesiaram Communioneus (“In the Communion of Churches”), It replaces the previous constitution, “Ecclesiae in Udere (“The Church in the City”),” issued by St. John Paul II in 1988. The new document aims to revitalize the vicariate’s mission by giving “primacy” to charity and the proclamation of divine mercy, synodality with the faithful and promoting greater collegiality, particularly between the pope and his auxiliary bishops of Rome.

‘Prayer is real’: Buffalo Bills’ Damar Hamlin recovers from near-fatal hit

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Critically injured NFL player Damar Hamlin, now recovering at a Buffalo medical center, has become a testament to the power of prayer, said participants at a Jan. 9 vigil in the athlete’s home town of McKees Rocks, Pennsylvania. Calls to “pray for Damar” have echoed across the nation, taken up by NFL teams, players and fans alike. Hamlin is now making significant strides following his on-field cardiac arrest Jan. 2, where his heart stopped for 10 minutes.

“Prayer works,” said Brian Cook, communications and marketing director at Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which held a “healing service” for Hamlin, who is a 2016 graduate. Hamlin himself tweeted Jan. 7 that “the love is felt, & extremely real. No matter race or religion everybody coming together in prayer.” As Hamlin journeys through his recovery, Cook said the Central Catholic community will “do everything we can to lift up Damar and his family in prayer.”

Church’s mission is seen in care for the sick, pope says in message

VATICAN CITY — The way individual Catholics and their parishes care for the sick offers a precise measure of just how much they either are part of or are fighting the “throwaway culture” that ignores or discards anyone seen as flawed or weak, Pope Francis said in his message for the World Day of the Sick. The care of those who are ill shows “whether we are truly companions on the journey or merely individuals on the same path, looking after our own interests and leaving others to ‘make do,’” the pope said in the message, which was released by the Vatican Jan. 16. The Catholic Church celebrates the world day Feb. 11, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. “Experiences of bewilderment, sickness and weakness are part of the human journey;” the 86-year-old pope wrote. But, he said, the Bible makes clear that “far from excluding us from God’s people,” those situations of vulnerability “bring us to the center of the Lord’s attention, for he is our Father and does not want to lose even one of his children along the way.” Those who profess belief in God, he said, should do likewise, placing the sick at the center of their attention.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity takes on ‘even greater significance’ in 2023

WASHINGTON — The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is taking place Jan. 18-25 with coast-to-coast ecumenical observances. In Baltimore, Catholics belonging to the Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, a Roman Catholic diocese with Anglican traditions established by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, are celebrating with a solemn eucharist where Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori will give the sermon. Other events planned around the U.S. include a Jan. 18 ecumenical service and concert at the Interchurch Center chapel in New York, hosted by the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute. In California, for the 17th year, Archbishop Salvatore F. Cordileone of San Francisco and Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Gerasimos will lead solemn vigils together Jan. 23 at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Redwood City, California. The Ecumenical Institute for Ministry in New Mexico has organized a pilgrimage that week for participants from “diverse Christian traditions” to “hail and build up the body of Christ... as they walk, talk, worship, pray and sing and listen together.” The theme for 2023’s upcoming Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Jan. 18-25 is “Do Good; Seek Justice,” taken from the first chapter of Isaiah.
Evangelization is the ‘oxygen’ of Christian life, pope says

Justine McLellan
Catholic News Service

Sharing the faith is the “oxygen” that “invigorates and purifies” Christian life, Pope Francis said.

Beginning a new series of catechesis focused on evangelization and apostolic zeal, the pope said that when Christian life loses its aim of proclaiming the Gospel, it becomes “self-referential” and “atrophied.”

“Without apostolic zeal, faith withers,” he told people gathered Jan. 11 in the Vatican audience hall.

The pope specified, however, that “to be a missionary, to be apostolic, to evangelize, is not the same thing as proselytizing,” or actively seeking to convert someone.

Quoting the late Pope Benedict XVI, who died Dec. 31, Pope Francis said that “the church does not proselytize, but rather she grows by ‘attraction’ to the beauty of God’s love.

Evangelization “does not begin by seeking to convince others, but by bearing witness each day to the love that has watched over us and lifted us back up,” he said.

“Communicate this beauty to convince people,” Pope Francis said. “We are the ones who announce the Lord, we do not announce ourselves, nor a political party or an ideology. Put people in contact with Jesus without convincing them. Let the Lord convince them.”

The pope mentioned his predecessor again while greeting German pilgrims, some wearing traditional Bavarian outfits at the audience. He said that Pope Benedict taught Christians “to look with faith at Jesus Christ, the savior.”

“This is attraction, which is the opposite of proselytism,” the pope said.

Pointing to the Gospel episode in which Jesus calls Matthew to follow him even though Matthew is a widely disliked tax collector, the pope said that Christians must look beyond people’s labels.

“Jesus does not stop at adjectives, he always looks for the substance,” he said, encouraging people to think about how they look at others. “So often we label people for what they do or think.”

“Christians are called to do like Christ,” reaching out especially to those who seem far off, the pope said.

And, he said, it is “fundamental” for Christians to go out and seek others rather than waiting for people to somehow find them.

Pope Francis ended the audience by inviting those present to pray with him in silence for peace in Belarus; he had placed on stage a Marian icon he said was venerated in the country.