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(above) A portrait of Pope Benedict XVI faced mourners at the memorial Mass, Jan. 5, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.

(above right) Bishop John Iffert was the celebrant.

(below) Bishop Iffert processes past a black draped catafalque and a replica of the Papal tiara.

(below right) Benedictine Sister Aileen Bankemper, prioress, and Notre Dame Sister Shauna Bankemper present the gifts.

Keener photos



Celebrating memorial Mass of Pope Benedict XVI

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 dio-

cese concelebrating and Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys 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,"

(Continued on page 14)

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)



CNS photo/Paul Haring

Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kium, retired bishop of Hong Kong, attends the funeral Mass of Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Jan. 5, 2023.

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 *Panzercardinal* 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



(above left) Pope Benedict XVI and Bishop Foys.

(above right) Parishioners at St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, place a black bunting at the entryway to church to signify a Church in mourning.



Diocese in particular. I cherish the pectoral cross he gave to the bishops on the occasion of that ad limina and remember him in prayer each time I wear it.

Even in his retirement Pope Benedict served as an example for those of us who are retired from administrative duties. His retirement itself shows a depth of humility and self-knowledge not common these days. His contem-

plative life of prayer for the Church serves as an example and a challenge.

In summary, I found Pope Benedict XVI to be a dedicated churchman who loved the Church with all his heart and whose ministry reflected that love. I imagine it will be some time before we see another theologian as erudite as

(Continued on page 10)

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; Theresa Gray, night coordinator and Ron 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 grandfather 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.

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(above left) Arriving for a Holy Hour, Jan. 6, Rosie Miller genuflects before the Blessed Sacrament at Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel at St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright. The dedicated 24/7 adoration chapel was the first to be established in the Diocese of Covington in 1998.

(above right) The Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel is in the former convent on Sleepy Hollow Rd., Ft. Wright, behind St. Agnes Parish and School.

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 Roch, 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.

Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children

January 23, 2023

In parishes

- Churches will remain open to allow the faithful time to pray for the protection of the unborn.
- Pastors will set aside time for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, concluding with Benediction.
- Recitation of the Holy Rosary by the faithful for the protection and dignity of every human life from conception to natural death using the Joyful Mysteries, is encouraged, as are acts of penance.

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.



Gillespie photos

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: Casper, 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.

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
Jamie N. Schroeder, Chancellor



Bishop's Schedule

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jan. 14
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 4:30 p.m. | Jan. 19
Priest Holy Hour, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 3 p.m. |
| Jan. 16
Diocesan Curia offices closed in observance of the Martin Luther King holiday | Jan. 20
Diocesan Day of Prayer and Penance for Life |
| Confirmation, Holy Cross Parish, Latonia, 7 p.m. | Jan. 22
Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 5:30 p.m. |
| Jan. 17
Advisory Council meeting, 9:30 a.m. | Jan. 23
Confirmation, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, 7 p.m. |



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

Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament
Help us to spread the glory of Your Son through Perpetual Adoration.

Farewell to Pope Benedict

One of the most consequential churchmen of the last hundred years has died. Pope Benedict XVI (formerly Joseph Ratzinger) leaves a remarkable legacy in both the

WORD ON FIRE



Bishop Robert Barron

Church he served and in the wider society. Often pilloried by his opponents as a fire-breathing conservative, he was in fact one of the most balanced, nuanced and stabilizing figures within the Catholic ambit. The defining event of his life was the Second Vatican Council, the gathering of bishops and theologians from 1962 to 1965 that placed the Catholic Church in a renewed conversation with the contemporary world. Though only thirty-five when he was tapped to be theological advisor to one of the leading German cardinals, Ratzinger proved to be a consequential player at Vatican II, contributing to the composition of many of its major documents and explaining its teaching to the wider culture. At the council itself, he proved adversarial to those conservative forces who were resisting the renewal which the majority of bishops favored. One of the ironies of his life is that, in the wake of Vatican II, he found himself standing athwart progressives who wanted to push beyond the council documents and compromise the integrity of Catholicism. Thus, the “liberal” of the Council became the “conservative” of the post-conciliar years, even as, in his own judgment, his views never changed. Someone of like mind was the Cardinal Archbishop of

Krakow, Karol Wojtyla, who, upon being elected Pope John Paul II, chose Ratzinger to be his chief doctrinal officer. As head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Ratzinger spent 25 years articulating the teaching of Vatican II and defending it against its critics on both the left and the right. His election as Pope Benedict XVI in 2005, following the death of John Paul II, was largely a function of his being perceived as a balanced man of the Council. It is obvious that Ratzinger, as priest, bishop, theologian and pope, was a man of faith. But it is perhaps equally important to point out that he was one of the great defenders of reason on the world stage. At a time when many of the representatives of the secular culture were questioning our capacity to know anything as true, Ratzinger resisted what he termed “the dictatorship of relativism.” He claimed, in line with the great Catholic tradition, that certain truths — moral, intellectual and aesthetic — can be known and that this knowledge in fact serves to unite people across religious and cultural divides. This was precisely the point of his controversial Regensburg Address in 2006. The Christian belief that Jesus is “Logos” or word effectively builds a bridge between Christianity and any religion, philosophy or science that deals in truth and makes “logical” assertions. In line with this instinct, Ratzinger happily engaged some of the leading atheist and skeptical philosophers of his day. I alluded above to his reputation in some circles as Panzerkardinal (the tank-Cardinal), an uncompromising, even cruel, reactionary. Those who knew Joseph Ratzinger personally could only shake their heads at such a characterization. For he was, in fact, a gentle, very kind, soft-spoken academic, whose particular gift was the finding of common ground. The thousands of bishops who

came to Rome for their ad limina visits during Ratzinger’s years as prefect were typically impressed by the man’s extraordinary capacity to listen to all perspectives and then to find an illuminating synthesis. His friends say that after a long day of work during the John Paul II years, Ratzinger most liked to visit one of the bookstores near the Vatican, find the latest book of theology, and make his way to a quiet corner of a nearby restaurant and dine alone (his favorite dish was cacio e pepe) while absorbing the text. I cannot help but think that the last 10 years, spent in quiet retreat in the Vatican gardens, represented the way he really wanted to live all of his life. When I was a visiting scholar in Rome in the spring of 2007, I made it a point to attend Pope Benedict’s Wednesday general audiences in St. Peter’s Square. Before a sizable crowd, the Pope would lecture on some aspect of the faith or on one of the great theologians of the Catholic tradition. His extraordinary learning, erudition and command of languages were on clear display. But what always impressed me the most about him was his evident love for Christ. Pope Benedict said that Christianity is not an ideology or a philosophy, but rather a relationship to a person, to the living Jesus Christ. In his bearing, his gaze, the tone of his voice, and his manner, I could sense that he believed this, more to the point, that he lived it. Thank you, Pope Benedict, for the thousand ways that you have blessed the Church. And may God grant you peace. *Bishop Robert Barron is bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota. Article originally published at WordOnFire.org.*

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 vicar of

IN EXILE



Father Ron Rolheiser

Woolahra then took her shopping and society, always feeling shopping to be the most intimate activity, 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 cellars. They imagined he paid for her finery. When they heard this was not so, that the girl had sovereigns in her purse — enough, it was reported, to buy the priest a pair of onyx cufflinks — the pressure did not fall, but stayed constant, so that while it did not reach the stage where the outrage was hissing out through the open valves, it maintained a good rumble, a lower note which sounded like a growl in the throat of a smallish dog.” What an apt image. Gossip does resemble steam hissing from a radiator or the growl of a small dog, and yet it’s important. For most of our lives, we 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. How do you manage to get on so well despite and beyond differences? By talking about somebody else. Much of the time is spent talking about others on whose faults, eccentricities and shortcomings we all agree. 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 overcome our differences and tensions by focusing on someone or something about whom or which we share a common distancing, indignation, ridicule, anger or jealousy. That’s the anthropological function of gossip — and it’s a very important one. We overcome our differences and tensions by scapegoating someone or something. That’s why it’s easier to form community against 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 into 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 the community’s sin and tension away, 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 them in, carrying them and transforming 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 this way: He took in hatred and gave back love; he took in curses and gave back blessing; he took in bitterness and gave back graciousness; he took in jealousy and gave back affirmation; and he took in murder and gave back forgiveness. By absorbing our sin, differences and jealousies he did for us what we, in a less mature and less effective way, try to do when we crucify each other through gossip. And 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 growl of that smallish dog inside us will finally be silent. *Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author.*

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 2018 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.

VIEWPOINT



David Cooley

This past summer, Lindsay went into cardiac arrest — thank God her life was saved, and she now has a device implanted 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 sojourners 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 gave myself two tasks: first, 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 Moes, 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 nonreligious 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. There were no hospitals in Rochester at that time, which wasn't necessarily a bad thing since hospitals were usually terrible places, full of neglect, corruption and incompetence. A hospital was simply somewhere you went to die. But that was all about to change. In 1883 a large tornado devastated the tiny town of Rochester, killing many and wounding and destroying the homes of many others. Dr. Mayo was overwhelmed and needed help. He asked Mother Alfred if her school could be used as a clinic. She not only handed over the school, but she and the sisters became the most dedicated and loving of nurses that anyone could ever hope for. After all this, Mother Alfred was sure that God wanted

a hospital built in Rochester, and not just any hospital — a hospital that would serve the whole world. She told Dr. Mayo that she would have it built, and he and his two apprentices (his sons) would staff it. Not believing she could really raise that kind of money, Dr. Mayo shook her hand. In September 1889 St. Mary's Hospital opened, and Dr. Mayo was true to his word. That hospital and the Mayo Clinic are forever linked and partners to this day. Of course, Dr. William Worrall and the Brothers Mayo are, deservedly-so, world-renowned, but reading about everything the sisters who lived and worked at St. Mary's Hospital did, left me speechless. They did everything — the nursing, the laundry, the cooking, the cleaning. They got up at two in the morning, worked through the day, the night, and then the next night. They often gave up their beds so that they could take in more patients. They treated everyone who entered as if it was Christ himself. And, of course, they prayed ... and prayed ... and prayed some more. They had very little, but they made the most of everything they had. It was their faith and charism that truly built 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 that hope and joy that people were radiating comes from. Yes, science is a part of it too, but we must remember that our hope is not in science alone; our hope is in God, and our minds and talents are gifts from him. I spent some time just walking around, taking it all in. Everything was state-of-the-art and even beautiful. Everything is designed to help the patients feel comfortable and safe. All the different buildings are connected by underground tunnels, so no one has to go out in the cold. There are comfortable chairs, music and artwork everywhere. People were very friendly to one another. 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 faith like Mother Alfred and those Franciscan sisters who followed in her footsteps. We have so much more than they ever had, and I sometimes believe that's why our faith can be so weak. It is so important for us to learn these 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 co-director and office manager of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization in the Diocese of Covington.*

enthusiasm. I want to go back to the radiance of Christmas, and I look forward to the next great feast (and spring)! But a daily meditation I prayed recently helped me appreciate his perspective. The meditation was based on a Scripture passage from Hebrews, chapter 1, verses 1-6. The reflection began, "Christmas is over now, and we peer blearily through the gray to see what might lie ahead after all that celebration." It went on to say that the task now is to discover more fully who Jesus is ... to enter the mystery. The line of the Scripture passage that stood out for me was, "... (Jesus) is the refulgence of his (God's) glory, the very imprint of his being..." My attention was drawn to the word "glory" in contrast to the fact that Jesus appeared to be an ordinary person, at least for the first 30 years of his earthly life. His glory was largely hidden as he lived with Mary and Joseph, until it began to be revealed when he took up his public ministry. He was a regular baby, boy, teenager, young adult and adult. Yet, the glory was always there. Now that is a mystery to be entered into. This may be the very point of my priest-friend's preference for Ordinary Time. It's in the living of day-to-day

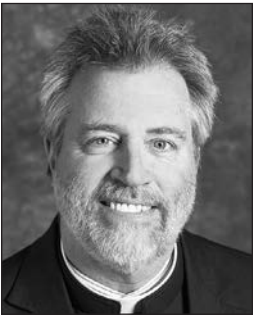
What do you say?

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 (technically, 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 narratives' of Luke and Matthew. While some have considered these narratives (chapters 1 and 2 of Luke and the same of Matthew) to be prologues to their Gospels, scholars today seem instead to consider 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 coming, the announcement of his coming (both to Israel and to the nations) and the revelation of who he is, and finally, people's acceptance or rejection of Jesus. 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 testimony regarding Jesus. Why did the Church 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 actual 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 chapter 16: "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; promoter of justice, etc., 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 Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Ky*

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, particularly 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, though hidden, is

(Continued on page 18)

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Stephen Bankemper

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 this past Monday marked the end of the Christmas season. The bright, beautiful decorations have been taken down, and the celebrations are over. Life has returned to its regular routine, and we are back in the liturgical season of Ordinary Time. Blah! On the contrary, I know a priest whose favorite season is Ordinary Time. In fact, our office staff once gave him a T-shirt that says, "Ordinary Time Is Still 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

VIEWPOINT



Jamie Schroeder

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 had 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 receive the reward of eternal peace.”

Australian Archbishop Timothy Costelloe of Perth, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, said, “Cardinal Pell’s impact on the life of the church in Australia and around the world will continue to be felt for



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. 29, 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.

many years. As we remember him and reflect on his legacy, I invite all Catholics and other people of goodwill to join in praying for Cardinal Pell, a man of deep and abiding faith, and for the repose of his soul.”

Australian Archbishop Mark Coleridge of Brisbane,

former president of the conference, said, Cardinal Pell “didn’t claim to be a saint; he knew he was flawed. But he did claim — and rightly — to be a man of faith and a man of the church.”

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.

St. John Paul II appointed him an auxiliary bishop of Melbourne in 1987, archbishop of Melbourne in 1996, archbishop of Sydney in 2001 and gave him the cardinal’s red hat in 2003.

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 223 members, 125 of whom are under the age of 80 and eligible to vote in a conclave.



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Catholic Schools — Following Christ



Catholic Schools – Following Christ



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

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) 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.

Former superintendent sworn-in as Representative for Ky’s 68th District

Laura Keener
Editor

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.



(left) Mike Clines of Alexandria raises his right hand as he recites the Oath of Office, Jan. 3, before House Speaker David Osborne in Frankfort, Ky. Mr. Clines was elected in November to represent Kentucky’s 68th District.

(above) Rep. Clines takes his seat on the House floor surrounded by his sons, wife and father (from left) Mick, Ryan, Tammy, Joel and Bob.

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A collage of several photographs showing students and staff at St. Joseph School. The photos depict children in classrooms, on a playground, and participating in activities. At the bottom of the collage are icons representing various school subjects and a circular seal.

The logo for St. Paul Catholic School, featuring a shield with a cross and the letters 'S' and 'P'.

St. Paul Catholic School

Open House

Sunday, January 29
1:00-4:00 p.m. by appointment

For new families interested in Preschool to 8th Grade for the 2023-24 school year

A photograph of a teacher and several young students standing together outdoors in front of a brick building.

Tour the school, meet the teachers and learn about each grade level!

Registration for specific times required with appointments beginning at 1:00 p.m.

Register by January 26 at 859-647-4070 or go to stpaulnky.org/school.

PEOPLE AND EVENTS



A visit to the North Pole

Kindergarten students at St. Anthony School, Taylor Mill, visited the North Pole before leaving for Christmas Break. The trip was complete with a Polar Express engine, made by students, tickets to board, hot chocolate, and pajamas. The children compared and contrasted the characters and the plot from the original storybook, with those in the movie. They discovered that every word and idea in the book is included in the movie. The children also learned a little about life in the Polar Regions.



Santa helpers

School children at St. Patrick School, Taylor Mill, get in the spirit giving by helping to bring the gifts from the Giving Tree to the distribution area.

Newsworthy

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 Hansbauer, Emily Kirst, Alex Muench, Ella Myers**;

St. Henry School, Elsmere: **Logan Purcell**;

St. Joseph School, Cold Spring: **Maura Franzen**;

St. Therese 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 or 517; and DirectTV 25.

A faith-based support group, **New Beginnings** provides separated and divorced individuals the opportunity for healing and growth. In this group, participants find new understanding of themselves and their relationships and gain courage to discover new life. Next session: consecutive Tuesdays, Jan. 17, 24, 31 and Feb. 7, 14, 21, 28. Time: 7-8:30 p.m. Location: Holy Trinity Elementary, Bellevue. Registration is required. Visit <https://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/> or call (859) 392-1592.

Pray for world peace and conversion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary with the Two Hearts Prayer Group, bi-monthly, on the 3rd at 12:30 p.m. and 16th at 6:30 p.m., at The Grotto of the Two Hearts (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, 8-9:30 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.europe-cincinnati.com> and click on Events.

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 transformational importance of education. The event is outdoors. Visit EducateKY.com.

St. Peter’s Catholic Order of Foresters Court #1492 annual Men’s Stag, Jan. 27, 7-11 p.m., Sts. 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 composer’s synesthesia, seeing colors in the mind when hearing sounds. Free and open to the public. Visit stellaoneillmusic.com.

24th annual Jack and Pat McGarr Euchre Tournament, Feb. 4, Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria. Register online, McGarrEuchre23.givesmart.com. Contact jackmcgarr-euchre@gmail.com or text/call (859) 250- 4924.

Thinking about separation or divorce? Is your marriage or that of a relative or friend heading for divorce? Do you know how to save that marriage? Or do you feel helpless? **Retrouvaille is designed to help troubled marriages** regain its health by helping spouses uncover or re-awaken love, trust and commitment. The program is highly successful in saving hurting marriages, even bringing reconciliation to couples who have already separated or divorced. Confidential information or to register for the Jan. 7 weekend call (513) 486-6222 or visit www.HelpOurMarriage.com.

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 Bonhaus ’01, Whitney Cundiff Smith ’08, April Gibson Gilespie ’08, Brian Haigis ’87, Brady Hightchew ’12, Steve Pangallo ’91 and Jerry Turner ’79. The 2010 Girls All A State Champion Basketball Team will be named if “Team of

Distinction;” Rob Detzel will receive the Coach Jim Connor Award and Jerry Schneider ’52 the Fr. John Hegenauer Community Service Award. Cost \$30. Visit ncchs.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 KHEAA 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-10 for its Homework PLUS program from 3-5 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Come and make a difference in the life of a child. Call NDUEC at 261-4487, or e-mail Sister Maria Therese at smtherese@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 bsmaracko@fuse.net.

The Madonna House of NKY is looking for Thursday evening babysitters from 6-8 pm., 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 (DCCH) Center from 8:30 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 DCCH 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 Wednesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at Catholic Charities, Covington. PAL provides continuing education and support, at no charge and no judgement. Just come! For information call 760-0954 or e-mail hope4kypals@gmail.com.

Continuing to remember Pope Benedict XVI

(Continued from page 2)

he was and who is willing to endure unfair and unjust criticism 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 Mario, and so many were the times I attended papal audiences and gatherings 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 there 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 counselor 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 gathered in St. Peter's Square for the weekly Wednesday audiences 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 participated 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.



Attentive 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 popemo-



(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.

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 certainly 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 commitment to Jesus was evidenced 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 1:39-45), 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 was with Jesus, many people misunderstood and resisted Pope Benedict's message, yet he was an enormous-



ly powerful man, and changed my life with his message of joy and love of Jesus Christ.

As we read his writings, especially the "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 very 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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Pope Benedict XVI (1927-2022)

(Continued from page 1)

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 Petrine 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.”

Those who knew him well said there was 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 tributes, the retired pope was especially praised for his theological contributions, beginning as a young priest-professor teaching at German universities and adviser 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:



CNS photo/Vatican Media

The tomb of Pope Benedict XVI is pictured in the crypt of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican Jan. 8, 2023. Pope Benedict died Dec. 31, 2022, at his residence at the Vatican at the age of 95.

The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI,” published in 2008 by Oxford University Press, told OSV News that she thinks 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.

“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 of “liberal,” “progressive,” “conservative” or “restorative” he’s seen applied to Pope Benedict in the wake of his death 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, be it simple or sophisticated, 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 2000 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 on, but that our entire lives are meant to be liturgical, and that what we’re most ultimately 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 195,000 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 “rogito.”

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



CNS photo/L'Osservatore Romano

Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley of Boston exchanges greetings with Pope Benedict XVI as the pope meets for the last time with the College of Cardinals at the Vatican in this Feb. 28, 2013, file photo.

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 kneeled 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 50,000 people filled St. Peter’s Square for the 90-minute, live streamed Mass. A few banners made it past security checks, with one reading “Santo Subito” (“Sainthood Now”) and another, “Thank you, Pope Benedict” in German.

Pope Francis’ homily focused on Christ’s love and witness as an invitation to holiness, rather than Pope Benedict’s life or accomplishments. However, Pope

Francis said that the church desired to follow in Pope Benedict’s steps and commended him to God, concluding the homily with, “Benedict, faithful friend of the Bridegroom, may your joy be complete as you hear his voice, now and forever!”

Following the funeral, Pope Benedict was buried in a triple coffin — the first cypress, the second of zinc and the third of oak — and interred in the same crypt where St. John Paul was initially buried, and prior to him, St. John XXIII. The crypt opened to visitors Jan. 8.

On Dec. 31, as many admirers reflected on his writings, Pope Benedict left the faithful with another final word: his own reflection in a spiritual testament written in 2006 but released for the first time 10 hours after his death. In the short document — in English, about 700 words — he asked for forgiveness from those he wronged, honored his parents and siblings, and urged Christians to “stand firm in the faith” and resist confusion, especially where science appears to contradict faith.

“If at this late hour of my life I look back over the decades I have been living, I first see how many reasons I have to give thanks,” he wrote at age 79. “First of all, I thank God himself, the giver of every good gift, who gave me life and guided me through various moments of confusion; always picking me up whenever I began to slip and always giving me the light of his countenance again. In retrospect, I see and understand that even the dark and tiring stretches of this path were for my salvation and that it was in them that he guided me well.”

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 generations 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.”



CNS photo

A miter tops the coat of arms of Pope Benedict XVI. Inside the shield is a Moor’s head and the bear of St. Corbinian, symbols from the pope’s Bavarian heritage, and a scallop shell, a traditional mark of pilgrims. At the bottom of the emblem is a pallium, a liturgical insignia that calls to mind the pope’s responsibility as pastor of the flock entrusted to him by Christ. The keys are a symbol of the power Christ bestowed on St. Peter and his successors.

Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel

(Continued from page 2)

“She never wanted to miss,” Mrs. Bethel said. Being an adorer, she said, “you are part of a 24/7 glorification to God and gratitude and thanksgiving. Really, an hour isn’t enough ... 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 wasn’t doing 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., originally 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 multiplied,” 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’ll talk outloud, I just talk, and have a casual conversation,” with the Lord, she said. And when she doesn’t feel like talking or reading or listening to podcasts, she said “I just close my eyes and let it soak in ... there’s no rules or formula, it’s what do you need?”

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.”

Rosie 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 she talks, the memory of that love squeezes her heart until her eyes begin to water. “Every night we would talk. When I realized that Jesus is the bridegroom 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 Thiessen, 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. Thiessen makes his way to the Adoration Chapel to engage in “spiritual warfare.” A time he was able to commit to after his retirement 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. Thiessen said.

Mr. Thiessen 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 Sinu 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 human Eucharistic love to an hour 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 liberation 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 put me on fire,” he said. “It’s really been good for me and has put me on fire for the Lord.”

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Pope Benedict XVI memorial Mass

(Continued from page 1)

Bishop Iffert said. “Yes, I thought, and the blood of the martyrs always calls to mind, and has significance because of, the blood of Jesus Christ the Lord shed for us.” 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 love. 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,” Bishop Iffert said. “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. I pray to God that generations of men and women will encounter those writings and know the love of God through him and open themselves to that agape love, that true and pure eros love, that God has in desiring us ... and to let that change us so profoundly that we become witnesses, reflections of that love for one another in the world.”

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 throw-

away 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. 9, four people have been executed in connection to nationwide protests that the pope characterized as “demanding greater respect for the dignity of women.” 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.

Pope Francis had entered the long Hall of Blessings above St. Peter’s Basilica walking with a cane, a sign that the knee pain that had previously put him in a wheelchair may be improving. The Vatican has diplomatic relations with 183 nations, plus the European Union and the Sovereign Order of Malta. The pope told the ambassadors that “just once” it would be nice to meet them at the beginning of the year “simply to thank the Almighty Lord for his constant blessings, without having to list all the tragic events plaguing our world.” Instead, he said, it was time for a “call for peace in a world that is witnessing heightened divisions and wars.” Throughout his speech, he cited the encyclical “Pacem in Terris” written by St. John XXIII in 1963 after the Cuban missile crisis, which called for a ban on nuclear weapons. “Sadly, today, too, the nuclear threat is raised, and the world once more feels fear and anguish,” the pope said, referring to the statements of Russian officials in connection with the country’s war on Ukraine. The mere possession of atomic weapons is “immoral,” he said, repeating a statement he made during a visit to Hiroshima, Japan, in November 2019, shifting the church’s line which previously had only defined as immoral the use of atomic weapons. “There is a need to change the way of thinking and move toward an integral disarmament, since no peace is possible where instruments of death are proliferating,” he told the ambassadors. In recalling the various ongoing conflicts in the world, Pope Francis condemned the “third world war” fought in pieces around the world, which “involve only certain areas of the planet directly, but in fact involve them all.” The pope specifically discussed the war in Ukraine and called for an “immediate end” to the “senseless conflict.” Pope Francis said the war in Ukraine demonstrates that the current system of multilateral diplomacy “needs a profound rethinking” to “avoid procedures that give greater weight to some (nations) to the detriment of others.” The pope also called for greater international cooperation in addressing three areas of public policy: migration, the economy and work, and care of the environment.

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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,” Orionine 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 Orionine 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 200 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 Podles 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 Orionine 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 money that will allow the house to run for the next few months.

“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 farther east,” Dominican Sister Mateusza 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 Mateusza 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.

Some returned to Ukraine after a few months when the children missed their homeland too much.

In the orphanage of the Sisters of the Angels in Zhytomyr, several children make their home. The nuns make sure that the little ones do not feel the effects of the war, providing not only a roof over their heads but also psychological support. “We just want them to feel safe,” Sister of the Angels, Sister Irena Wlasowa, a Sister of the Angels, told OSV News.

The Sisters of St. Joseph near Lviv and the Sisters Servants of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Immaculate Conception of Horodok in western Ukraine run centers for the sick and the elderly. They also decided not to leave after the Russian invasion.

“Our people cannot be evacuated. They would not survive the move,” Servant of the Blessed Virgin Mary Sister Adrianna Kis told OSV News. “We do not leave them even



OSV News photo/Agata Puscikowska

Polish Orionine Sister Renata Jurczak, who runs a home for single mothers in Kharkiv, Ukraine, is seen Dec. 22, 2022, during a trip to Poland to collect supplies and drive them back to Ukraine.

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, they fulfill their vocation.

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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, EdChoice 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 already possessing several programs, Mr. Vandiver states that this ruling puts Kentucky students at a major disadvantage.

“The only way Kentucky families can get choice in Kentucky is to put the issue on the ballot for a ballot 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 initiative is just really tone deaf as to the challenges families are facing right now.”

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 stopping 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.”



Obituary

Sister Maria Grace Reis C.P., who was also known as Sister Benita O.S.B., passed away at St. Walburg Infirmary Dec. 19, 2022. At the age of 90, she died peacefully and went to be with the Lord.

She was born into the family of Martha (who had previously been married to Faulhaber) and Lawrence Reis. She attended Sts. 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 herself to the service of others 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), psychology (at Xavier University), and theology (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 tremendous 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



Sister Maria Grace Reis C.P.

survived him) Reis all passed away before her. She is survived by her sisters Frances Verst (whom her husband Leo predeceased), Rhea Rauch (whom her husband Michael predeceased), and Leah Carmack (whom her husband Gary predeceased); and in addition, 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 Iffert with interment immediately following at Passionist Nuns cemetery.

Her family, friends, and community will miss her tremendously because she was a soul of peace. Sister Maria Grace will not be forgotten.

The Passionist Nuns wish to express deepest gratitude to the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg for making the last days of Sister Grace’s life such a beautiful experience by inviting her to St. Walburg Infirmary and for their loving care.

How Vatican II encouraged the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Julie Asher
OSV 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 53 years as a priest — and even before that — Father James Gardiner, director of special projects at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in Washington, has had something to do with promoting the annual Week of Prayer: The week was first celebrated Jan. 18-25, 1908, by Father Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White, Episcopal co-founders of the Franciscan friars and sisters of the Atonement, who entered into full communion with the Catholic Church the following year.

Father Gardiner highlighted a number of documents promulgated by the Catholic Church since Vatican II, which created a “great ecumenical ferment as we trooped and snooped through one another’s sacristies and sanctuaries,” he said.

Among the Catholic Church’s many documents on ecumenism and interfaith relations is Vatican II’s Decree on Ecumenism (“Unitatis Redintegratio”), promulgated

Nov. 21, 1964, which taught that ecumenism — the restoration of unity among all Christians — should be everyone’s concern. It stated genuine ecumenism involves a continual personal and institutional renewal.

The following year, the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (“Nostra Aetate”) was issued, defining the church’s position on interreligious dialogue.

In 1999, 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 constitution that created the personal ordinariates enabling Anglicans and Episcopalians to enter the Catholic Church and have a permanent home for their Anglican heritage, which the late pope called a “treasure to be shared.”

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

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 (Candlemas) on February 2 and the feast of St. Blaise on February 3 are two such feasts. Both involve blessed candles. The ordinary candle is a symbol of Christ because it sacrifices 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 day — the people we’ve encountered, the events that have happened, and our reactions to these — to discover God’s presence and action in our lives.

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://angelicoproject.org>.

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 peeks 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.

Jamie Schroeder is chancellor for the Diocese of Covington, Ky

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 Koplyay, SPHR, at skoplyay@covdio.org or by fax to (859) 392-1589.

NEWS BRIEFS

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 Zelinsky, 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 behind his recent reform and reorganization of the Roman Curia, Pope Francis, as Bishop of Rome, has overhauled 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 bodies: an office dedicated to safeguarding minors and vulner-

able 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. 31, were released Jan. 6 in the new apostolic constitution, “In Ecclesiarum Communionem” (“In the Communion of Churches”). It replaces the previous constitution, “Ecclesia in Urbe” (“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, 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. 10. 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 evensong 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 J. Cordileone of San Francisco and Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Gerasimos will lead solemn vespers 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 “heal 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.



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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.”

Pope Francis also shared a story about a group of Korean women religious who came to Buenos Aires, Argentina, to run a hospital. Although the women did not speak Spanish, the hospital patients were pleased with them because their gaze “communicated Jesus.”

“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



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis embraces a newly married woman during his general audience in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican Jan. 11, 2023.

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 some-

how 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.

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