In celebration of Catholic Schools Week 2023, held Jan. 29—Feb. 4 this year, students, faculty staff and friends of the Diocese of Covington’s Catholic schools gathered for Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, Feb. 1. Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Covington, welcomed the congregation before the Mass. “Every person present in this Church today has been touched in some way by our schools. Catholic schools exist to bring the message of Jesus Christ to our students and their families.”

The Mass was attended by delegations from schools across the Diocese, both elementary and secondary schools. Busses transported groups of students and their teachers to this very special Mass. In addition to this, priests and deacons from the across the diocese, including many school chaplains attended, as well.

Diocesan students and faculty also participated in the Mass’s liturgy— as altar servers, lectors and even the choir. The petitions were read by a handful of elementary students, and school administrators presented the gifts to the Mass’s celebrant, Bishop John Iffert.

“Do not disdain the discipline of the Lord; do not disdain the education you have been offered. Don’t count it too cheaply,” Bishop Iffert said during his homily. “But, the opposite is true, as well. Do not lose heart, do not be broken by the tests and trials that you face.”

“We don’t want to go too far in one direction, or too far the other, but to engage with seriousness in education, with trust in our own abilities, in the way of life and its sufferings, with trust in God and God’s enduring love. Never disdaining, never losing heart, but always keeping our eyes on Christ,” he said.

Bishop Iffert likened the Church as a whole to a school, “a school for coming to love God and one another.”

“The Church is a ‘school for charity,’ said Bishop Iffert at Catholic Schools Week Mass

(above left) Elementary students attend Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, for Catholic Schools Week.

(above right) Bishop Iffert shares his homily from the Cathedral pulpit.

(left) Pontifical servers from Covington Latin School carry Bishop Iffert’s crosier and miter.

(right) Kendra, superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Covington, welcomes students, faculty, staff and supporters prior to the 2023 Catholic Schools Week Mass.

What’s on your heart? Take the Disciple Maker Index (DMI) survey

The DMI invites parishioners to reflect on where they are on their journey of discipleship and enables parish leadership to make data-driven decisions to help parishioners grow in their faith.

The DMI online portal opens Ash Wednesday, Feb. 22 and closes March 27. Visit www.covdio.org/withoneheart.
You're invited to introductory gathering of now-forming St. Cosmas Deanery, Oblates of St. Benedict

Bishop John Iffert and Linda Rawe, leadership gifts chair, thank solicitors for their participation in the 2023 Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal.

We gather as a community of prayer and contemplation and balance in life,” said Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys.

Linda Rawe, leadership gifts chair for the 2023 Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal (DPAA), welcomed leadership gifts solicitors to the annual Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal luncheon, Jan. 31. The annual luncheon is hosted by Bishop John Iffert and organized by Mike Murray and the staff of the diocesan Office of Stewardship and Mission Services.

“Young dedication to the diocese and to the annual appeal are really the key to its success and we just want to sincerely thank you,” Mrs. Rawe told the leadership gifts solicitors. “It’s a real honor to serve as the leadership gifts chair for the DPAA. I’m so appreciative for the gift if each of you.”

During the leadership gifts phase of the DPAA, 200 of the diocese’s top donors are contacted directly and are invited to participate at the same or higher level as they did last year. This first phase sets the tone and establishes the momentum for the DPAA. The success of the leadership gifts phase and the work of the leadership gifts solicitors is announced at the DPAA kick-off dinners Feb. 28 and March 2 in Cynthiana and Hebron, respectively.

Mrs. Rawe encouraged the solicitors to look at the ministries supported by the DPAA, “we just see the reason why we are doing the appeal — our gifts are touching the lives of thousands,” and to not be shy about sharing with others the ministry or ministries that most touch their heart.

“One of the special ones that really touches me is the care for retired priests,” Mrs. Rawe said. “I just recently had the privilege of attending the Priest Appreciation Dinner, and when Msgr. (Albert) Bashman walked in, I just teared up because he was my parish priest when I was a young adult … we want to take care of our retired priests — they dedicated their lives (to us).”

As the solicitors prepare to make their calls beginning Feb. 8 and concluding Feb. 23, Mrs. Rawe encouraged them to pray: “Pray for the success of the appeal, pray for those serving in the ministries and pray for the people who are served by those ministries.”

Bishop Iffert also thanked the solicitors for their participation with the DPAA.

“I remind myself that the most difficult thing to ask for is not a person’s money but is their time … all of you who have agreed to serve as chairs and as solicitors of this campaign, I thank you for giving that most important gift that anyone can give — your time,” he said.

Bishop Iffert also introduced the theme for the 2023 DPAA, “Rise, Do Not Be Afraid,” taken from the Gospel reading that will be preached on Annunciation Weekend, March 4 and 5.

It’s the story of the Transfiguration of the Lord.

In Old Testament times and again at the story of the Transfiguration, God presents travel with us is revealed in the cloud,” said Bishop Iffert, reminding those present of the cloud hovering over Jesus and his apostles a voice say, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

“Today the glory of God is still made apparent by a cloud, this time in the age of the Church, it’s the cloud of witnesses … thank you for being part of that cloud of witnesses that allows the Church to do its beautiful ministry,” Bishop Iffert said. “That’s really what this campaign is about. It’s about Catholics coming together to do the corporal and spiritual works of mercy together. That’s what these funds help support.”

You’re invited to introductory gathering of now-forming St. Cosmas Deanery, Oblates of St. Benedict

The Transfiguration, God’s presence traveling with us is revealed in the cloud,” said Bishop Iffert, reminding those present of the cloud hovering over Jesus and his apostles.

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OBLATES OF ST. BENEDICT

Bishop Foys. “It’s a way for the laity or priests to live out the Benedictine Rule and Benedictine spirituality and to be associated with something greater than oneself.”

A Benedictine Oblate is similar to what other religious orders — Carmelite, Dominican, Franciscan and Augustinian — would call Third Orders. But unlike members of Third Orders, Oblates do not adhere to a distinct rule of their own, nor are they bound to a specific set of religious practices. Instead, they promise to “dedicate themselves to the service of God and neighbor according to the Rule of St. Benedict, insular as their state in life permits” (Benedictine Rite of Final Oblation).

Before making an oblation — presenting themselves as an offering to God — Oblates participate in the Benedictine Rule and Benedictine spirituality of prayer and contemplation and balance in life,” said Bishop Foys.

They just have to be practicing within their religion,” said Father Hainsey, noting that families are encouraged to discern together. The minimum age for an Oblate of the St. Cosmas Deanery is 14 years old.

Bishop Foys was received as a Benedictine Oblate in 2019, at St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn. He and Father Hainsey are both Oblates connected to the Benedectines of St. Vincent. Likewise, St. Cosmas Deanery will be a connected to the St. Vincent Archabbey.

“They have about 23 deaneries — little offshoots from the (Continued on page 20)
Laura Keener
Editor
As Catholic Schools Week came to a close, Feb. 3, students, faculty and staff at St. Henry District High School gathered in the school auditorium for Mass celebrated by Bishop John Iffert. Concelebrating were Father Jason Bertke, chaplain, and Father A.J. Gedney, an alumnus who was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Covington in June 2022. Deacon Eric Ritchie assisted.

Feb. 3 was also the feast of St. Blaise—bishop, physician and martyr. In keeping with tradition, Bishop Iffert, Father Bertke, Father Gedney and Deacon Ritchie blessed the throats of all the students, saying “may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness.”

In his homily, Bishop Iffert encapsulated the Gospel reading of Herod ordering the beheading of John the Baptist, the story of St. Blaise and his jail-cell miracle of relieving a young man from choking on a fishbone and St. Ansgar—“the apostle of the north”—a Benedictine missionary devoted to the poor and sick whose feast is also Feb. 3, into a lesson on hospitality, authentic freedom and brotherly love.

“Part of the rule that St. Benedict gave is this command to receive every guest as if you are receiving Christ. That’s how we exercise brotherly love. That’s how we exercise Christian hospitality. To be able, through Christ, to overcome our sense of guilt and shame and fear and pettiness. To put aside self-interest and to actively practice seeing in every person we encounter, everyone we meet, the glory of Christ Jesus, Lord,” Bishop Iffert said. “That’s the path to brotherly love. That’s the path to Christian hospitality. That’s the path to real freedom. That’s the path to perfect love. It is what it means to be a friend of God. So today, on the Feast of St. Blaise, on the feast of St. Ansgar, we remember that we need Christ and His forgiveness to be free and to stand strong — to see in one another the image of Jesus Christ and to love each person that we meet as if that person were Christ himself.”

After Mass, Grant Brannen, principal, introduced Father Gedney to the students, honoring him with an alumni award.

The path to true hospitality, true freedom, true brotherly love is through Christ

(above, left) Grant Brannen, principal, St. Henry District High School, present Father A.J. Gedney, an alumnus, with an alumni award, Feb. 3, following the all-school Catholic Schools Week Mass celebrated by Bishop John Iffert.

(above, right) Bishop Iffert offered throat blessings as is tradition on the feast of St. Blaise.

(below, left) The student choir led the singing and (below, right) two students brought up the gifts for the celebration of the Eucharist.
OSV News

On the feast of Sudan-born St. Josephine Bakhita, Pope Francis prayed for “a future of justice and peace for our brothers and sisters in Africa.”

As is customary after a papal trip, the pope dedicated the main portion of his general audience Feb. 8 to sharing with visitors and pilgrims the highlights of his visit Jan. 31-Feb. 3 to Congo and his ecumenical pilgrimage to South Sudan Feb. 3-5 with Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

“We went together to bear witness that it is possible and a duty to collaborate in diversity especially if one shares faith in Jesus Christ,” the pope told more than 5,000 visitors and pilgrims gathered in the Vatican audience hall.

“Together we listened to the Word of God, together we raised prayers of praise, supplication and intercession,” the pope said. “In a reality as highly conflictual as that of South Sudan, this sign is fundamental, and not to be taken for granted, because unfortunately there are those who abuse the name of God to justify violence and oppression.”

“This is why it is so important to bear witness that religion is fraternity, it is peace, it is communion; that God is the Father and always wants only life and the good of his children,” Pope Francis said.

Here is his trip in briefs.

Pope preaches peace, cooperation, resilience to a Congo ‘gasping for breath’

KINSHASA, Congo — The people of Congo are more precious than any of the gems or minerals found in the earth beneath their feet, yet they have been slaughtered by warmongers and exploited by prospectors, Pope Francis said. “This country, so immense and full of life, this diaphragm of Africa, struck by violence like a blow to the stomach, has seemed for some time to be gasping for breath,” the pope said Jan. 31 at a meeting with Congo’s President Félix Tshisekedi, other government and political leaders, diplomats and representatives of civil society.

Poverty, internal displacement, crime and violence plague the Congolese people. The United Nations and human rights organizations say more than 100 armed groups are operating in the country, sowing terror particularly in the east. Tens of thousands of people lined the streets from the airport to the city center, cheering as the pope passed by in the popemobile. Many children and teens were dressed in their school uniforms, parishioners proudly held banners welcoming the pope in the name of their communities and many of the women wore brightly colored cotton dresses with images of the pope. Speaking to several hundred leaders in the garden of the Palais de la Nation, his official residence, President Tshisekedi told the pope that the welcome and harmony that had characterized Congo for centuries has, in the past 30 years, “been undermined by the enemies of peace as well as terrorist groups, mainly from neighboring countries.”

Displaced persons meeting pope underscore South Sudan’s overlapping crises

ROME — Africa’s largest displacement crisis has seen nearly 4.5 million people flee their homes due to deadly civil conflicts and environmental disasters in South Sudan. Pope Francis was scheduled to meet with some of them Feb. 4 during his three-day “ecumenical pilgrimage” to the country with Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Church of Scotland. Since 2013, violence ranging from concentrated attacks between rivaling ethnic groups to full-on civil war has gripped the world’s youngest nation.

(Continued on page 9)
Personalized experience at Thomas More leads alumni to careers in local government

Contributed by Thomas More University

Officials at the City of Bellevue in Kentucky are very familiar with what graduates from Thomas More University have to offer. “We were joking in the office about how Thomas More grads are taking over the City of Bellevue,” said Colonel Jon McClain ’19, Bellevue chief of police, “the top-notch talent from Thomas More is represented here!”

Col. McClain is a graduate of Thomas More’s criminal justice program, a field that gained his interest after departing from the U.S. Navy. “My time at Thomas More was great,” recalls McClain, “I used my military benefits and the Veterans Affairs (VA) rep, Michelle Veczina (also Thomas More’s registrar), was outstanding in helping navigate any paperwork.”

The personalized experience Col. McClain found at Thomas More did not stop at VA services, he credits the small class sizes and the ability to connect with professors in strengthening his education and career readiness. “Thomas More helped me prepare for my current role by teaching me to look at the bigger picture,” said Col. McClain. “Classes in criminal justice research gave me the ability to take alternate views other than that of a law enforcement officer.”

Col. McClain was appointed as chief of police in January 2022, after serving on the force for 12 years. He is also a member of the Campbell County Fire Investigation Team and the Campbell County Special Investigations Team.

Upcoming events

Feb. 16
Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III ’67 Institute for Religious Liberty Spring Event
7-9 p.m., Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, “Political Partisanship and Its Impact on the Future of Religious Liberty” Featuring keynote speaker Asma Uddin and commentator Dr. William Madges

March 29
Bishop William A. Hughes Award Dinner
6 p.m., Drees Pavilion, Covington
Honoring those who have made significant contributions to Catholic higher education.
Visit tmuky.us/awardrsvp.

The City of Bellevue has also welcomed interns from the University over the years. It was an internship that paved the way for Pierce Turner ’21, assistant to the city administrator and alcohol beverage control administrator, to find a permanent role with the city. The opportunity was introduced to him through John T. Spence, Ph.D., AICP, Thomas More professor of philosophy. “I initially had no intention of going into local government or public administration, but once I went through the internship, I had built an admiration for it,” explains Mr. Turner. “The City of Bellevue asked me to stay after my internship had ended, and I have been rising through the ranks to get to where I am now.”

Mr. Turner’s educational experience did not begin at Thomas More; he was drawn to the University for its small class sizes and opportunities to make connections with faculty and staff. “My academic advisor and I were very close,” said Mr. Turner, as he describes his relationship with his faculty advisor. “I was in a few of his classes, and I was able to progress in my academic career exponentially faster than I would have been able to at a larger school.”

Further, he credits the smaller class sizes in building an invaluable sense of camaraderie with classmates, which strengthened his team building skills. “Students could rely on others and work together to reach a common goal,” said Mr. Turner. “That is what it’s all about in local government. With limited resources, having a group that can work together cohesively is essential.”

Thomas More University students will no doubt continue to find career opportunities with the City of Bellevue. Whenever the City is in need of personnel for small projects, I always look to Thomas More to give a potential intern some experience in the workforce and to invite them into our community at the City of Bellevue,” said Mr. Turner.

For information about Thomas More University, visit www.thomasmore.edu.
At the beginning of February the Church in the United States celebrates Catholic Schools Week. I would like to take this opportunity to sing the praises of Catholic schools and to invite everyone — Catholic and non-Catholic alike — to support them. I attended Church-affiliated educational institutions from first grade through graduate school, from Holy Name Elementary School in Birmingham, Michigan, to the Institut Catholique in Paris. That years-long immersion massively shaped my notion of some values, my entire way of looking at the world. I am convinced that, especially now, when a secular, materialist philosophy largely holds sway in our culture, the Catholic ethos needs to be inculcated.

Certainly distinctive marks of the Catholic schools I attended were the opportunity for Mass and other sacraments, religion classes, the presence of priests and nuns (a lot more common in the early years of my formation), and the prevalence of Catholic symbols and images of saints. But what was perhaps most important was the manner in which those schools showed the integration of faith and reason. To be sure, there is no “Catholic” mathematics, but there is indeed a Catholic way to teach math. In his controversial Regensburg address from 2006, the late Pope Benedict argued that in our liberal democratic culture, but we naturally see the Enlightenment as the turning point of history the time of the great revolutions in science and politics that defined the modern world.

No one could doubt that the Enlightenment was a pivotal moment, but Catholics certainly don’t see it as the climax of history. Instead, we hold that the pivotal point was on a squalid full of outside of Jerusalem around the year 30 AD when a young rabbi was being tortured to death by the Romans. We interpret everything — politics, the arts, culture, etc. — from the standpoint of the sacrifice of the Son of God.

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Let forgiveness go viral

In recent years it seems that the latest news stories are driven by what’s trending on social media. Too many times we’ve seen a story go viral with very little information. When this occurs, people are quick to judge, choose sides, and participate in the destruction of another human being. Unfortunately, this type of behavior also seems to be playing out in our local communities. Too often I have seen members in our communities hear something and move quickly to pass on the hearsay and gossip to others. Just as the national viral stories, these local level stories do just as much damage. I have seen first-hand the damage this response causes and it is clear that we, as followers of Christ, need to look at our actions and work on returning to a Christ-like response to one another.

One of the most challenging aspects to this problem is when children are the ones targeted. More and more administrators hear from parents who want other children removed from school. This often occurs after a child did not respond to a situation appropriately that we as a community here have experienced humiliating defeat on this same battle field with our children and grandchildren.

I’m joking, of course. I’m happy that my grandchildren are asleep and braving the storm for me. I’m thankful that it isn’t a triumph worthy of an article in the local paper. Still, it reminds me of less exalted things that I’ve done in my life that I saw at the time as being greater, more significant. Maybe things that I’ve done have caused others to celebrate my skill or wisdom.

It’s something that is worthy of our consideration simply because life is a journey, and as for us Christians, our destination is heaven. We must be cautious to stay on task. There’s nothing wrong with feeling satisfied with what we’ve accomplished, but I think the old saying “God is easy to please, but hard to satisfy.” In the same way, I can be pleased with myself for getting my 17-year-old granddaughter to sleep, but I should not be satisfied until she comes to know Jesus, love him and serve him all the days of his life. And if she is to serve him, she had better be prepared to defeat the enemy of evil. I believe that’s God’s plan for Kentucky voters to decide. If passed, it would allow the General Assembly to support all Kentucky students, regardless of whether they attend a public or a non-public school.

However, this legislation was filed in response to a Kentucky Supreme Court decision issued in December that struck down the 2011 Education Opportunity Account Act (“EOA Act”). The EOA Act was designed to provide need-based financial assistance to families to help cover a variety of education related expenses for public and non-public school students. In the short term, this decision creates a major hardship for families at a time when students are struggling more than ever before.

The scope of the decision was breathtaking and broke with all existing legal precedent on similar educational choice programs. The ruling effectively banned the Kentucky General Assembly from passing an educational choice program that covers K-12 expenses outside of public schools without first holding a statewide referendum. It’s something that will be brought to us on a silver platter; it won’t be laid in our lap. Higher love is something that we, as Christians, live to seek and find, to strive for, fight for and often sacrifice for. We succeed when we experience this love in our life and bring God’s love to the world.

A great Christian writer, George MacDonald, wrote that, “God is easy to please, but hard to satisfy.” In the same way, I can be pleased with myself for getting my 17-month-old granddaughter to sleep, but I should not be satisfied until she comes to know Jesus, love him and serve him all the days of his life. And if she is to serve him, she had better be prepared to defeat the enemy of evil. I believe that’s God’s plan for Kentucky voters to decide. If passed, it would allow the General Assembly to support all Kentucky students, regardless of whether they attend a public or a non-public school.

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

ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL, COLD SPRING
AFTERCARE DIRECTOR
St. Joseph School in Cold Spring is looking for an aftercare director, Monday through Friday from 3:00pm-6:00pm. During the aftercare program students have a snack, complete their homework, play games, and participate in any other activities planned by aftercare staff. The director is also responsible for keeping records of attendance, payment and communicating with parents and aftercare workers.
If interested please contact principal, Emily Urelage at eurlage@stjoeschool.net or 859-441-2025.

PART-TIME ADVANCEMENT DIRECTOR
The Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery seek a part-time advancement director to head our ongoing fundraising and operational needs. Reporting to the executive director (prioress), this professional must have an established background in coordinating nonprofit donation strategies and staff/volunteer leadership. Applications will be accepted through February 15. Please send application materials (resume, cover letter, references and salary requirements) to hybenedtimes@gmail.com.

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which declared its independence in 2011. A peace agreement was signed between the two largest warring parties in 2015 only to fall apart a year later. A revitalized peace agreement was signed in 2018. “There is a peace agreement, but there is still active subnational violence,” Charlotte Hallqvist, an officer of the U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, in South Sudan, told Catholic News Service Feb. 2. “Ethnic conflicts are on the rise.”

Consecrated persons have ‘special role’ in fulfilling church’s mission, pope says

VATICAN CITY — While Pope Francis was “on mission” in Africa he urged consecrated persons to embody the church’s missionary spirit in spreading the Gospel. In his message read out to consecrated persons gathered for Mass on World Day for Consecrated Life in Rome’s Basilica of St. Mary Major Feb. 2, the pope said that consecrated persons have a “special role” to be examples among God’s people derived from their “total dedication to God and his kingdom, in poverty, chastity and obedience.” The theme for World Day for Consecrated Life 2023 is “Brothers and Sisters on Mission.” “If each person in the church is a mission, each and every one of you is so with your own grace as a consecrated person,” the pope said in his written message. He also praised the “stupendous variety” of charisms which consecrated persons offer to build the church and its mission, “so that the church can witness and proclaim the Gospel to everyone in and every situation.”

Arms trade is a ‘plague,’ pope says on flight back from Africa

ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT FROM AFRICA — At the end of six days in African countries bloodied by war and conflict, Pope Francis said that “the biggest plague” afflicting the world today is the weapons trade. Tribalism with its ancient rivalries is a problem, he told reporters Feb. 5, “but it is also true that the violence is provoked” by the ready supply of weapons and that making it easier for people to kill each other just to make money “is diabolical — I have no other word for it.” Pope Francis told reporters returning to Rome with him from South Sudan that since the visit was an ecumenical one, Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby of Canterbury and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, would join him for the airborne news conference. The pope had visited Congo Jan. 31-Feb. 3 before joining the other church leaders in South Sudan Feb. 3-5 to press the government to implement peace agreements, to console victims of the conflict and to encourage the country’s Christians to do their part. Over the course of almost one hour, the three made opening remarks and responded to questions on topics ranging from violence in Africa to the criminalization of homosexuality and from the war in Ukraine to future papal travel, including the possibility of other ecumenical trips.

The Diocese of Covington invites individuals with a degree and background in Accounting to apply for the position of Internal Auditor. This position reports directly to the Chief Financial Officer. This position updates/maintains the existing Parish and High School audit programs, schedules and performs parish/high school audits, writes audit reports, as well as other duties in the Finance Office. Minimal requirements include a degree in Accounting with at least two years of experience, including auditing. CPA license is preferred. Submit cover letter, resume, salary history, and five references with email address to: Stephen Koplyay by email or fax. SKoplyay@Covdio.org or 859-392-1589. EOE
第19世纪的无信者和反天主教主义

Stephan Enzweiler
Cathedral Historian

第4篇 系列文章

在8月6日，一场大规模的群众集会，之后警察使用武力来镇压。为了平息混乱，警察使用警棍和警犬，造成多人受伤。

19世纪的无信者和反天主教主义

部分从一个充满绝望和反教义的反对数目的罗马天主教移民来

于这时期的天主教徒来说，这是一场语言和文化的斗争。

一位不知名的天主教徒在文章中提到：“我是一个无宗教的人，但我仍然相信天主教。”

在1853年，教皇庇护九世派的加塔诺·贝蒂尼主教来美国调查教会的状态。他的报告引起了天主教徒的愤怒，他们抗议和示威，导致了教会和国家的紧张。

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贝蒂尼主教的报告使许多天主教徒感到愤怒，他们抗议和示威，导致了教会和国家的紧张。
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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.

Holy Cross High School 25th annual Mulch Sale, selling 3 kinds of mulch and pine straw, includes delivery to your home, business or rental property anywhere in Kenton, Boone and Campbell Counties and students will put it anywhere on your property starting April 1. Order online at www.hcmulch.com or call (859) 382-6899.

Win. T. Ellis Robinson III ’97 Institute for Religious Liberty Spring Event, Feb. 16, 7-9 p.m., Mary Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Thomas More University Crestview Hills. The IIRL presents “Political Partisanship and its Impact on the Future of Religious Liberty” featuring keynote speaker Asma Jiwani and moderator Dr. William Maddox. Ms. Uddin is a religious liberty lawyer and scholar working for the protection of religious expression for people of all faiths in the U.S. and abroad. All are welcome, RSVP not required. Visit thomasmore.edu/religion liberté for details.

Thomas More University art exhibit “I am Bird” by local artist John Lanzader, Feb. 16–March 9, Kea G. Ferris Art Gallery Gallery talk, 3-6 p.m. and opening reception, 4-7 p.m., Feb. 16. Free to the public; gallery is located in the Benedictine Library. Visit thomasmore.edu/artgallery.

“Discovering the Essential Role of the Lay Person in God’s Plan” retreat based on the teachings of Pope St. Paul II, Feb. 17, 7-9 p.m. and Feb. 18, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., St. Philip the Apostle Church, Morrow, Ohio. Visit www.PresentationMinistries.com or call (513) 373-2397. Lunch provided to all who pre-register.

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 Benenati ’91, Whitney Cundiff Smith ’08, April Gibson Gaspere ’08, Brian Haigis ‘87, Brady Hightchew ’12, Steve Pangillo ’91 and Jerry Turner ’79. The 2010 Girls All A State Champion Basketball Team will be named if “Team of Distinction.” Bob Detelis will receive the Coach Jim Conner Award and Jerry Schneider ’10 the Fr. John Hegenauer Community Service Award. Cost $80. Visit nchs.org.

32nd annual Mardi Gras for Homeless Children, Feb. 21, 4-6 p.m., NKY Convention Center, Covington. All you can eat and drink from dozens of local restaurants and vendors, live music, parade, local celebrities, live and silent auction prizes, and more. Tickets: $100, VIP tickets $120.

Diocese of Covington Regional Dual-Credit Information Night presented by James Catches, 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. Dual-credit representatives from Thomas More, Gateway, and NKU on available dual-credit opportunities. Visit thomasmore.edu/preview.

The Thomas More University Women’s Conference, March 3, 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m., Steigerwald Hall, Saints Center, Crestview Hills. This one-day, interactive conference is designed to enlighten, engage and challenge women to seek new ways of learning more, please contact St. Henry parishioner Michael Pertwood, (859) 578-0686 or email pomarican@zoho.com.

Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child, March 15, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington. This Mass is being offered for parents and family members who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, early infant death, abortion, suicide or any other reason. All are welcome. For information, contact the Diocese of Covington Pro Life Office at (859) 382-1547.
“In your journey towards marriage, always trust in God’s providence.”

-Pope Francis
Faithful families begin with ‘purposeful, persuasive, encouraging’ marriage preparation

David Cooley
Contributor

At the request of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life in Rome has prepared a document called “Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life,” which was recently translated into English. This document is an important step for the universal Church in moving toward a marriage preparation process that rises to the challenge of equipping couples with the tools they need to maneuver through modern trials. Additionally, this new approach comes with a recommendation for a process where members of the local Church and parish community continue to walk with newlyweds as they build their life together during the early years of their marriage.

Currently, many young couples spend far more time and effort preparing for their wedding day than they do preparing for their marriage. The consequences of that are often painful and can be disastrous. We can see that today’s “hedonistic mentality, which distorts the beauty and depth of human sexuality; a self-centeredness which makes it difficult to espouse the commitments of married life; a limited understanding of the gift of the Sacrament of Marriage, the meaning of spousal love, and its essence as an authentic vocation” has created a fragile state for marriages in society as a whole, “which puts at stake the personal fulfillment and happiness of a great many lay faithful around the world” (CPMF #3).

A loving response from the Church is to recognize all of this, instruct young couples properly, provide the means for a more thorough and Christ-centered preparation for the sacrament marriage, and accompany them as they begin to live out their life-long vocation.

While it is exciting that the Holy Father is asking dioceses all over the world to develop their own pastoral approach to marriage preparation — an approach that is “purposeful, persuasive, encouraging, and fully oriented toward emphasizing the good and beautiful aspects of married life” (#20) — the development and implementation of such a robust catechumenal model will take some time and a great deal of effort.

One of the first challenges will be changing the hearts and minds of young adults about the importance of the sacrament of marriage and recognizing it as a vocation — a path to holiness that encompasses a person’s entire life. If the prospect of marriage is taken seriously, we can help couples invest the proper amount of time, consider what they need to consider, and reflect on what they need to reflect on before taking sacred vows. I have witnessed too many couples and their families simply looking for the quickest and easiest way of satisfying “bureaucratic” requirements to get married “in the Church.”

Another challenge will be the flexibility needed to allow at least a full 12 months for the catechumenate model. More time will need to be invested in the spiritual preparation for marriage and the building up of the couple’s relationship with Christ. While this will certainly be difficult — asking couples to consider a longer engagement period — it is necessary if we want to see any real change in how people live out married life. Couples coming to the Catholic Church to be married are always coming from many different places on their spiritual journey and we have to meet them wherever they are; but we must challenge them to move closer to Christ and remind them of Bishop Fulton Sheen’s words: “It takes three to get married.”

Before the release of “Catechumenal Pathways,” at the June 2021 Plenary Assembly, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) approved and published a document “Called to the Joy of Love,” which lays out a national pastoral framework for dioceses to start moving forward to better serve and assist couples discerning the sacrament of marriage. These two documents complement and reinforce each other.

Marriage preparation is an issue that should matter to all of us. The future of the family is the future of the Church. We need strong marriages to have strong families. We need strong families to spread the faith. We need families to spread the Gospel and build up the Church if we are going to be any help to the world. Pope John Paul II said, “The future of humanity passes by the way of the family.” It is time to double down on the importance of family life ministry and marriage preparation.

David Cooley is co-director and office manager of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization in the Diocese of Covington.
Congratulations on your engagement!

The Catholic Church and your diocesan community are here to support couples and help them stay centered on Christ to form strong, lasting marriages. There are three requirements for all engaged couples wishing to marry in the Diocese of Covington:

1. Contact the parish priest at least nine to 12 months before your wedding to set an initial appointment and to start your marriage preparations.

2. Attend one of the following marriage preparation programs at least three to six months prior to your wedding. Since marriage preparation programs often fill quickly, it is best to register two to three months before the program date. Program options:

**Living Marriage as a Sacrament**
This program is held at St. Timothy Parish, Union, on two consecutive Saturdays with large group presentation, private couple interaction, and small group discussion. The focus is on a couple’s relationship and the beauty and importance of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

- **Date:** June 10 and Oct. 21, 2023
- **Time:** 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- **Cost per couple:** $100.
- **For more dates and registration:** visit https://marriagedoc.org/
- **For any questions:** please contact Eric and Lauri Nenaber at register@marriagedoc.org.

**Cincinnati-Covington Catholic Engaged Encounter**
The weekend retreat offered by the Cincinnati-Covington Catholic Engaged Encounter (CCE) ministry offers couples a unique opportunity to look at their commitment to each other in a deeper way as they prepare for marriage. Free from the pressure and distractions of the outside world, couples are given 30-plus hours to dialogue honestly and intensively about their prospective lives together.

- **Two married couples make up the presenting team and share brief stories about their marriages and the impact of the Sacrament of Matrimony on their lives, with the goal of encouraging participants to explore their own attitudes and expectations.**
- **The team also offers couples ideas on how to continue to love each other, even amid the pressures of the world.**
- **Engaged couples should anticipate discussing each other’s strengths and weaknesses, desires, and ambitions, as well as their attitudes about money, sex, children, family and the role of the Church and society in their future marriages.**
- **Our motto is: “A wedding is a day; a marriage is a lifetime.” Most people spend huge amounts of money and many months planning for their wedding. CCE is about preparing for what most hope will last 50 or 60 years — your marriage.**

**Two-day retreats begin on:**
- **April 29, May 6, Oct. 5, 2023**
- **Location:** Holy Spirit Center 5440 Moeller Ave Cincinnati, Ohio 45212

For more information, e-mail the Cincinnati-Covington CCE Local Community at Covington@engagedcounter.com or call Ashley Altenau at (513) 479-1700.

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**Carrier:**

Andrew Headman proposes to Elizabeth Roch, Sept. 4, 2022, at Manchester By The Sea, Mass.

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**For more information about NFP, visit https://covidio.org/occ/natural-family-planning/**
Husband and wife, He created them

Rev. Raymond N. Enzweiler
Contribute

Pope St. John Paul II gave 129 talks known as “Theology of the Body.” These talks help us understand who we are and who we are created to be. He begins by doing what Jesus did, drawing on the creation accounts in Genesis 1-2. We will briefly reflect on three of his observations: original solitude, original unity and original nakedness.

Original solitude is revealed when Adam names the animals (Gen 2:18-20). Adam learns that he is above the creatures and beneath God. He has relationships with all of them, but none are like him. He is alone, in solitude. Only seeing God face to face will end his solitude. Until then, he is “stuck” in the middle, in a relationship with God but longing for more. Another way to say this is that he is unique and special before God. No one has a relationship with God like he does.

What does original solitude mean for my marriage? Each of us is unique and loved by God as no one else is. I am that special. My spouse is that special, too. Think about what this means: someone uniquely special chooses to love me! This affirmation of my uniqueness before a God feeds directly into the depths of marriage.

Indeed, it is with the marriage of Adam and Eve that creation becomes very good (Gen 1:26-31). No longer stuck in solitude, they are equals in the relationship, both made in the image and likeness of our Triune God. Original nakedness and original unity are central to this amazing relationship.

Original nakedness is revealed when Adam and Eve meet (Gen 2:23). They don’t need time to get to know each other. Just seeing each other is enough. Both totally reveal who they are at the encounter; nothing is held back. This complete openness is original nakedness.

Original unity flows from their response to this total self-revelation. Each one recognizes someone else who is unique and loved by God. Then, each one unconditionally gives themselves to the other person while uncondition-ally accepting the self-gift from the other person. Together, they learn more about who they are and who God is. This mutual sharing is so complete that they are one. This is original unity.

What do original unity and nakedness mean for my marriage? First, I need to unconditionally give myself to my spouse out of love, holding nothing back. It means my spouse comes first. My goal is to help my spouse get to heaven. This total dedication to my spouse is ok because my spouse is totally dedicated to my good. We have each other’s back. We are one and better because of it. A way to think of it for us Christians: I need to be like Christ for my spouse, even Christ on the cross. I also need to see Christ in my spouse, helping me. Through that intimate experience of Christ, we spend a lifetime growing into the persons God desires us to be and becoming bright lights of Christ for all those around us.

From a practical standpoint, this spousal relationship is your center in life. It is the foundation of your family and every other relationship. From work to recreation, your marriage plays an integral role. It is important, then, for you to keep your relationship strong and growing. Recommit yourself to the relationship every day. Recognize the goodness of your spouse and acknowledge it with words, deeds and gifts. Pray together. Put the interests of your spouse first. Celebrate blessings and solve problems together. Have date nights. Sit and talk. Enjoy each other’s presence. You don’t need big undertakings. One couple I know simply cleaned the dishes after dinner. The children knew that was mom and dad’s time. They might just chat or talk about an issue or even be quiet, but it was time for them and no one else. The realities of children and everyday life may keep you busy, but don’t let it stop you from spending time celebrating this great gift God has given you.

Lastly, we need to remember we don’t live in the garden anymore. Show each other mercy, compassion and patience. There will be challenges. When they come, turn to your wider family and friends for support and help. Let Christ guide you through them. After all, we are journeying to heaven together; united in Christ.

Father Ray Enzweiler is professor of Theology and chair of the Theology Department of Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky.

Diocese of Covington urges couples to pursue the Natural Family Planning that’s right for them

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

To get married in the Diocese of Covington, couples are asked to participate in Natural Family Planning courses. Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the general title for the scientific, natural and moral methods of family planning that can help married couples either achieve or postpone pregnancies. No drugs, devices or surgical procedures are used to prevent pregnancy with NFP methods.

NFP methods respect the “love giving and life giving” nature of the conjugal act, supporting God’s design for married love, said David Cooley, co-director of the diocese’s Office of Catechesis and Evangelization.

“The big difference between the Catholic Church and the secular world is it’s utilizing God’s plan for marriage and life,” Mr. Cooley said.

In the past, the diocese worked exclusively with the Couple to Couple League, an international provider of NFP training. However, the League teaches only one method of NFP—so, now, the diocese has introduced multiple NFP options for couples to explore on their road to marriage.

Each method uses natural signs to interpret fertility— the Sympto-Thermal method, for example, which is taught by Jenna Bernardo, RN.

According to Mr. Cooley, couples are encouraged to learn a bit about each method before choosing one to learn about more intensively, the one that’s ultimately right for them.

Information on Natural Family Planning courses can be found online at https://covdio.org/oce/engaged/.

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Pope Francis blesses a pregnant woman during his general audience in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican Oct. 12, 2022.
To fall in love

To fall in love! We use the expression to cover many things. You can fall in love with a baby, a sports team, a city, a job or another person. However, we reserve the prime analogate for this expression for one thing — emotional infatuation, that intoxicating feeling we first get when we meet someone who we sense as a soulmate. 

Emotional infatuation can be a deadly addictive breakdowns, suicides, murders and murder-suicides, for a time the other is enough for us. That’s why Romeo and Juliet could die happy. At this stage of love, they were enough for each other. However, the hard truth is that infatuation does not last. The other person, no matter how wonderful he or she might actually be, is not God and can never be enough (and we are unfair to him or her when we unconsciously expect them to be enough).

For a while, they are able to carry that godliness for us, but that illusion of godliness will eventually break and we will realize that this is just a person, one person, wonderful perhaps, but finite, limited, and not divine. That realization (which is ultimately meant to be the ground for mature love) can, if not understood, jeopardize or sour a relationship.

God invented falling in love! In it, we get a little foretaste of heaven, though, as experience tells us, that is not without its dangers.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author.

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Emotional infatuation can be a deadly addictive breakdowns, suicides, murders and murder-suicides, testify to this. Emotional infatuation can be a deadly addiction, the most powerful cocaine on the planet. Where does it come from? Heaven or hell? And, what’s its meaning?

Ultimately, God and nature are its author and that tells us that it is a good thing. We are built for this to happen to us. Moreover, it is a healthy thing, if properly understood, both in its intoxicating power and in its innate failure to be a sustaining power in love.

What happens when we fall in love so powerfully with someone? Are we really in love with that person or are we more in love with being in love and the feelings this brings us? As well, are we really in love with that person or are we in love with an image of him or her we have created for ourselves, one that projects a certain godliness on to that other?

Let me risk some answers. Imagine a man falling deeply in love with a woman. Initially, the feelings can be overpowering and literally paralyze him emotionally. However, inside of all this, a certain question begs to be asked: with whom or with what is he really in love? His image of her? She herself?

In reality, he is in love with all of these: his feelings, his image of her, she herself, and the divine feminine she is carrying. All of that is of one piece inside of his experience. As well, all of this can be healthy at this stage of love.

God invented emotional infatuation, just as God invented honeymoons. We are not meant to be drawn to each other by cold analytics alone. But, this kind of falling in love (in this emotional way) comes fraught with certain dangers. First, there is the adolescent proclivity to identify this with deep love itself. Consequently, when the powerful emotional and psychosexual feelings subside, the person easily concludes that he or she is no longer in love and moves on.

Next, more subtly, there is this danger. When we are in this initial gripping stage of love, our image of the other carries with it a certain godliness. What’s meant by that?

St. Augustine coined this timeless dictum: “You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless unless they rest in you.” Hence, nothing in life can ever really be enough for us. We are always restless, always yearning for something more. However, in this initial phase of love, when we have fallen into the grip of emotional infatuation, for a time the other is enough for us. That’s why Romeo and Juliet could die happy. At this stage of love, they were enough for each other.

However, the hard truth is that infatuation does not last. The other person, no matter how wonderful he or she might actually be, is not God and can never be enough (and we are unfair to him or her when we unconsciously expect them to be enough).

For a while, they are able to carry that godliness for us, but that illusion of godliness will eventually break and we will realize that this is just a person, one person, wonderful perhaps, but finite, limited, and not divine. That realization (which is ultimately meant to be the ground for mature love) can, if not understood, jeopardize or sour a relationship.

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Strategies for promoting marriage in the Church

USCCB

The most cited reasons by leaders for why Catholics do not get married in the Church were a lack of knowledge about the faith and a lack of connection to Church and the Church. Respondents reported that many couples do not see the value of marrying in the Church or understand the difference between a sacramental and civil marriage. Respondents also frequently noted a negative perception of the Church’s marriage preparation process (and declaration of nullity process in some cases) as being restrictive, cumbersome, and expensive.

In Amoris Laetitia, Pope Francis reminds the Church of the need to reach out, evangelize, accompany and support marriages and families. In this vein, the best practices and strategies proposed by the leaders who were surveyed demonstrate a creative and enthusiastic response to encouraging and strengthening marriage in the Church. Their suggestions and ideas can help all Catholic leaders who work with youth, young adults, engaged couples, and those married outside of the Church.

Strategy #1: Strengthen Youth and Young Adult Ministry

Practically speaking, youth and young adult ministers suggested that programming should include the implicit and explicit promotion of marriage. Ministry events for youth and young adults should actively work to include married role models as leaders and mentors. These couples stand as witnesses to the Sacrament of Matrimony and can offer a healthy ideal for individuals without example of strong marriages in their life.

Strategy #2: Collaborate with Catholic Educators and Catechists

Leaders noted the importance of ensuring that educational and catechetical leaders are well-formed and well-versed in the Church’s teaching on marriage. One diocese hosts an in-service day for leaders to deepen their understanding of marriage and encourage Catholic education as a way of guiding youth toward marriage.

Strategy #3: Raise Awareness of the Vocation of Marriage

Pope Francis reminds us that “marriage is a vocation” and that family life is “a true path to daily sanctification and mystical growth, a means for deeper union with God” (AL, nos. 72, 336). Many survey respondents noted that they promote marriage as the vocation it is, but that this understanding is not widespread. By emphasizing marriage as a beautiful sacrament with its own spirituality and mission in the Church and society, more young people and couples may fully realize their call to marriage in the Church.

Strategy #4: Make Marriage Prep Supportive, Engaging, and Accessible

The leaders who were surveyed point out that although couples who attend marriage preparation programs have already decided to be married in the Church, a high-quality and engaging preparation process can challenge the pervasive view that marriage prep in the Church is simply a series of boxes to check and hoops to jump through. Many respondents cited the need for Theology of the Body and Natural Family Planning courses in marriage prep to awaken the faith and change hearts. Many also suggested making marriage prep more relational by including sponsor couples or mentor priests.

Strategy #5: Support Couples Regularizing their Marriage

Leaders shared that couples going through the consolation process (to bring a civil marriage into the Church) or the declaration of nullity process need extra support and accompaniment. Some suggested strategies included providing language options for non-English speakers going through these processes and offering specialized marriage preparation classes for couples regularizing their marriage, in some places called “Cana II.” Another increasingly common approach is to celebrate regularized unions with group weddings (recognizing numerous consolations in one celebration), which can also lessen the financial burden for couples. Other leaders suggested, similarly to Pope Francis, that if possible, fees associated with the declaration of nullity process be reduced or even eliminated.

Strategy #6: Reach out

Respondents noted that one such time to be a missionary is when couples return to the parish for sacraments or religious education for their children. One diocese trains parish leaders to identify couples in irregular marital situations and then has the pastor reach out in person or with a personalized letter to invite them to regularize their union. Having an identifiable point person in the parish who couples can reach out to is another way of approaching this.

Strategy #7: Make Information Accessible

Many respondents noted that young couples are likely to do internet research before calling a parish or diocese about marriage preparation. A strong web presence is then necessary, to answer questions about Church teaching on marriage, the declaration of nullity process, and consolations. When couples do call about getting married at a parish, the parish staff should be prepared to warmly welcome and congratulate them as they begin marriage preparation.

It was suggested that information about Catholic marriage should also be easily accessible at the parish level. Many dioceses have started offering information sessions on the declaration of nullity, some including witness talks from couples or individuals who went through the process.

Strategy #8: Remove Financial Barriers

A number of respondents indicated that for many couples, the cost of a wedding can be prohibitive to getting married. While a bare minimum celebration can be affordable, sometimes even that is too much for people struggling financially. One suggestion on this point is for parishes and dioceses to re-examine the cost of marriage preparation programs, renting Church facilities, and other related services. Another suggestion is to work with couples who are struggling financially so that a lack of resources does not impede a truly joyful celebration. One parish reported a creative approach: hosting group weddings with parish-sponsored receptions.

Strategy #9: Celebrate Marriage!

As the saying goes, “a wedding is for a day, but a marriage is for life.” Happily, many parish and diocesan leaders reported that they have taken on the challenge of supporting marriage in all its stages. Many dioceses host an annual wedding anniversary Mass at the cathedral to honor and celebrate couples who continue to live out the Sacrament of Matrimony. This can be done at a parish or diocesan level or incorporated into weekly Mass by inviting couples to receive a blessing from the priest on the occasion of their anniversary. Other dioceses offer marriage enrichment retreats throughout the year, in different lengths and locations to accommodate as many people as possible.

Strategy #10: Continue Promoting Marriage to All Catholics

To come full circle, a final suggestion offered by leaders was that strengthening and promoting marriage in the Church needs to include outreach to the entire Church, not only engaged couples and young people. This outreach could include a well-developed web presence, multimedia campaigns and diocesan and parish level ministry by continuing to seek the understanding and appreciation of marriage by all Catholics, marriages – and the Church – are strengthened.
Even before my husband and I were engaged, we both looked forward to marriage preparation within the Church. For context, my husband and I both come from strong Catholic families and were both grounded in Catholic education. By the time we met (at our parish young adult group), we knew and believed what the Church taught about marriage and were hungry to learn more.

That hunger manifested in a mutual eagerness to invest in resources to help our relationship and our faith lives grow and mature. We quickly embraced the "Ask Christopher West" podcast, which dove into theology of the body and answered real-life questions from Catholics of all walks of life and vocations.

In our marriage prep, we were hoping to go deeper. We didn’t want the airy cotton candy offered by our culture when we understood that the Catholic Church had the full feast!

Sadly, while we did find what we were looking for, most of it did not come from our parish program.

Our parish uses a book-based program that, while true to the faith, didn’t offer much that we already knew. The videos accompanying the book were helpful; they offered the same information but introduced real couples sharing their experiences. This brought new perspective to the already-familiar material and inspired some good conversations, but — as marriage prep — it was a pretty thin broth.

Luckily, our parish paired us with a mentoring married couple as well. They’d had eight children in 15 years, and being around the kids was a true grace for my husband who, as an only child, needed to see what a large family can look like. The conversations with this couple were a gift, but (for me) they were bound to focus on the preparation book — checking off all the main points — while I often wished for the more practical “real-life” lessons that came when they shared their own stories and experiences.

At the suggestion of a few trusted couples, we bought two books to read during our engagement: “Three to Get Married” by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, now venerable, and “Holy Sex” by Gregory Popcak. Fulton Sheen’s masterpiece guided us through reflections on the sanctity of marriage: how men and women bring unique gifts to a marriage; the importance of both motherhood and fatherhood; how marriage is an image of the Trinity. This fed our souls deeply when we weren’t finding much to chew on elsewhere. The book provided by the parish could be skimmed through in mere minutes, so we intentionally read one chapter a week of “Three to Get Married,” knowing that it deserved time to settle into our hearts. Popcak’s book furthered what we learned from Christopher and Wendy West, deepening our understanding of the theology of the body and what the Church offers married couples.

In short, the best marriage prep we received came from trusted experts that we sought out ourselves. Purposely looking for what we knew we wanted and needed from our marriage preparation turned out to be crucially important, for us.

This isn’t a full-out rejection of our parish marriage prep program, which gave the essential truths about the Church and marriage. Many couples who are Catholic but largely unschooled in the faith, could certainly come to a fuller and more beautiful understanding of the sacrament through it. But most couples don’t really know what they don’t know, as it were, or what they might really need in their marriage prep.

And most parish programs don’t offer much to couples who already have a foundation in faith, and an idea of what part of the feast they would like to learn more about — all the richer recipes, so to speak.

Pope Francis has called for a revamping of Catholic marriage preparation, suggesting that a lengthier, year-long “marriage catechumenate” be drafted by the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life. That all needs to be hashed out — for better and for worse, like marriage itself — but as the Church reimagines marriage prep, I would love for parishes to offer different levels of catechesis depending upon a couple’s background, age and life experience. Most couples need to be ushered into the feast. But others, like us, have had to seek out its delicacies for ourselves, instead of being fed directly by our mother, the Church.

Ava Lalor is associate editor for Our Sunday Visitor and editor for Radiant magazine.
Time for Ky. to put ‘Students First’

Amendment would give Kentucky voters an opportunity to decide the issue. If passed, it would change the state constitution so that the General Assembly can directly support the educational needs of all families. Polling suggests that Kentucky voters are ready to pass such a proposal. A recent poll from EdChoice Kentucky found that 54 percent of registered voters support a constitutional amendment allowing educational choice with only 35 percent opposing such a proposal.

The language of the Students First Amendment is simple and can be found below:

The General Assembly may provide for the educational costs of students outside of the system of common schools. Sections 181, 184, 186, and 189 of this Constitution shall not prevent any provision for educational costs of students outside of the system of common schools, nor require a referendum for any such provision for educational costs so long as no funds are used from the common school fund.

Contrary to what the opponents will argue, this amendment does not “define public schools.” The General Assembly has increased public school funding by billions of dollars in recent years while also passing educational choice legislation. We can and should support both public and non-public school students. The amendment simply opens up the door for the General Assembly to invest in more students and relieve the heavy burden carried by thousands of Kentucky parents.

If you believe that all families in Kentucky deserve support when it comes to educating their children, contact your state representative and leave a message asking him or her to pass House Bill 174. You can leave a message by phone Monday through Friday by calling 1-800-327-1044. The operator on the line will assist you in getting the message to your state representative. You can also e-mail your state representative by visiting www.votervoice.net/CCKY/Home.

Andrew Vandiver is associate director, Catholic Conference of Kentucky and president of EdChoice Kentucky.

St. Cosmas Deanery, Oblates of St. Benedict

“...all around the country. They have priories in Taiwan and Brazil — they’re very extensive and far-reaching,” said Father Hainsey. “They’re always willing to cultivate these little deaneries in other places to hand on that Benedictine tradition. I think they’re very excited about its coming to Covington since they have roots here and a rich history.”

“The roots and history of Benedictine monks from St. Vincent date back to 1808, when Bishop George Carroll, Covington’s first bishop, invited Abbot Honiface Wimmer to send Benedictines to his new missionary diocese. The Benedictines established a priory in Covington and Benedictine monks were assigned to several parishes — St. Joseph Parish, Covington; St. Benedict Parish, Covington; St. Augustine Parish, Augusta. The Benedictines also established Monte Cassino Vineyard near Covington’s Pendelburg neighborhood, where they produced altar wine.

Abbot Wimmer must have thought highly of Covington because he sent some of his top monks — Father Oswald Mossemausser, who was the first historian of St. Vincent Archabbey; Father Emmenan Hillem, the first chaplain killed in the Civil War while giving absolution to a dying Colonel; Father Luke Wimmer, his own nephew; and Brother Cosmas Wolf, a prolific artisan who built and decorated many of Covington’s altars in the 19th century.

Contrary to what the opponents will argue, this amendment does not require a referendum for any such provision for educational costs so long as no funds are used from the common school fund.”
A Safe Haven allows women who can’t care for their newborn to safely drop off their baby; program offers hope for adoption

Mulberry, Fla. — Only an hour or two and weighing 6 and a half pounds, Angel Grace LNU announced her arrival at approximately 1 a.m. Jan. 30 at a roadside motel in a wooded area in Mulberry, Florida. She was wrapped in a blanket, placed still attached and placed next to the chain link fence of the adjacent mobile home park. The Polk County Sheriff’s Office responded to the call and Angel Grace LNU was transported to a hospital. She is in the care of the Florida Department of Children and Families. The Sheriff’s Office is making every effort to locate the baby’s mother. They respond to calls immediately with drones, air surveillance and bloodhounds. They have taken DNA samples, gone door-to-door and are using other undisclosed methods. Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd named the baby Angel Grace LNU because “she’s as beautiful as an angel. It’s by the grace of God she is not dead and LNU is last name unknown.” Florida’s Safe Haven law allows a woman who can’t take care of her baby to go to a fire or police station, a hospital — wherever the Safe Haven sign is posted — and drop off her baby to a staff person and there are no questions asked.

For all employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Covington who in any way provide a safe environment for children.

Step 1: Contact parish/school institution leader to receive the Policies and Procedures to the Application and Acceptance Forms.

Step 2: Go to www.virtus.org and click on Registration. Follow the prompts to create an account and request a background check. Selection.com is a secure site; the background check is posted on your account and you receive a copy if you request it during the registration process. You will sign up for a VIRTUS training class during the registration.

Step 3: Your account becomes active when your background check, VIRTUS session and Acceptance Form are posted on your account. You will receive 12 bulletins per year. You will receive an email notice at pub.virtus.org whenever your computer program blocks them.

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American Catholics Make Difference in Haiti Through Support of Kobonal School

When Catholic donors give to a charity — particularly to support mission work in a country like Haiti — they often ask, “Is this really going to make a difference?” “Is this really going to have a lasting impact on the poor?”

It may surprise you, but according to Jim Cavnar, CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach, the answer to those questions is a resounding “Yes!” Cavnar has been working with Catholic missions around the globe for more than 20 years, and the case studies his team has compiled clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of outreach programs run by priests, religious sisters and Catholic lay leaders.

One of the Catholic missions he often praises is the Kobonal Haiti Mission, founded by Father Glenn Meaux. [See related story on opposite page.]

“The Kobonal Haiti Mission has a variety of effective ministries to help the poor, and one of their most successful outreachs is the school they operate for needy children in the Diocese of Hinche,” Cavnar said. “Children in that area of Haiti had been growing up illiterate prior to the Mission’s founding, and many became trapped in a cycle of poverty that virtually assured they would remain poor for the rest of their lives. When the school opened its doors, everything changed for those kids. They got a quality education, and that blessing opened up doors of opportunity for them.”

Cavnar also credited American Catholics for the role they have played in supporting the Mission’s many programs. They have been particularly supportive of Fr. Meaux’s school and have helped it grow over the years.

“Consistent Catholics in the U.S. provided the financial support Fr. Meaux needed to fund construction of classrooms, hire staff and maintain the school’s operation,” he explained. “Their donations continue to support the great things he is doing, and he is deeply grateful for the help they are providing. His success depends on it.”

When asked why donors are so eager to support ministries like Fr. Meaux’s Mission in Kobonal, Cavnar suggested it is because American Catholics have a high level of trust in missionary-run programs, and they want a tangible connection to the families being helped. When they give to the Kobonal Haiti Mission, they are satisfied their gift will have a direct and meaningful impact.

“For example, when someone contributes to the Kobonal Haiti Mission’s educational programs, they know they are changing a child’s life for the better,” Cavnar said. “In those cases, their gift becomes something like a scholarship. It educates a child who might otherwise have remained illiterate. The impact that it has is dramatic. In time, as those children grow up and can pursue better jobs, many are even able to lift their entire family out of poverty.”

So the question “Will my charitable gift really make a difference in Haiti?” has been answered. Yes, it will!

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach education programs and other outreachs to the poor can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02364, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission Partner, or write “Monthly Mission Partner” on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.

Legacy Giving Provides Catholics With Unique Opportunity to Bless Others

If you are like many Catholics born in the 1950’s or before, you have probably begun to think about the spiritual legacy you and family members represent. What did we care about? What did we value? These are some of the things we hope will be remembered.

“For a growing number of Catholics, this introspection has led to the exploration of ‘legacy giving’ — the use of one’s will, trust, life insurance policy or retirement to leave behind an echo of one’s beliefs, deeds and values — a blessing of others that will reverberate beyond our own lifetime, hopefully influencing our family and others we cherish,” explained Jim Cavnar, CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach, an official Catholic relief and development charity with a staff dedicated to such estate planning.

According to Cavnar, Cross Catholic Outreach has helped many Catholics establish these “legacy gifts” and expects them to play a significant role in future ministry missions.

“A will or trust can also reflect a person’s special heart for a country or for an area of need. It can be used to build homes for poor families or to build classrooms to educate children, for example,” Cavnar said. “Others simply want to help the poorest of the poor and make their legacy gift for that purpose. It’s their way of saying, ‘As a Catholic, I value life and support works of mercy. I want my family to understand that calling and believe in it too.’ And because legacy gifts can be quite large, they often achieve incredible things. A single one might build an entire school or fund the construction of hundreds of homes. It’s producing an amazing impact and serves as an incredible testament to the faith of the giver.”

In addition to this service, Cross Catholic Outreach’s staff can also support donors seeking to establish a charitable gift annuity, charitable remainder trust or special endowment. Financial planners can also obtain information to help those who seek professional counsel or have donor-advised funds.

To learn more about these services, the charity recommends readers visit its special online portal at CrossCatholicLegacy.org.
Cross Catholic Outreach: “We Can Lift Families Out Of Extreme Poverty By Focusing On Education”

Ask most Catholic missionaries how they would eliminate poverty in a developing country like Haiti, and they will usually begin by talking about the value of an education. Poverty, they will often say, is born out of illiteracy and is perpetuated by the hardships and lost opportunities the uneducated must endure.

“They will also explain that in one generation, a quality education can end this downward spiral and turn everything around. That is why so many Catholic missions make it a priority to send needy children to school. They know the value of teaching children to read, write and do arithmetic - that we can lift families out of extreme poverty by focusing on education,” explained Jim Cavnar, CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach, one of the leading Catholic ministries working to educate poor boys and girls in the developing countries of the world. “Once children break free from poverty, they tend to lift up their whole family and continue to make education a priority when their own children are born.”

When Father Glenn Meaux and his missionary team arrived in Kobonal, Haiti, in 1989, he was deeply disturbed by the magnitude of poverty he saw there. Very few employment opportunities existed for the unskilled, uneducated population, so very few families were able to earn money to buy food.

Access to safe water was also a serious problem. Many families were traveling long distances to collect contaminated water from ponds or streams because no other options existed. In addition to suffering caused by hunger and thirst, Fr. Meaux said that families were starving for spiritual guidance. Enraptured in superstition and occult practices, few had ever heard the name of Christ.

“There was no agriculture; there was no irrigation system; there was literally no hope at the time,” Fr. Meaux recalled. “With this sense of hopelessness, it is easy to see how Kobonal earned its reputation as the ‘darkest corner of the Diocese of Hinche.’”

Realizing that creating real and lasting improvement in Kobonal would require local children to be educated, Fr. Meaux included the launch of a school in his plans to revitalize the community, and that decision is now credited with starting the incredible turnaround the area has experienced.

“The Kobonal school became the centerpiece of the entire community's transformation,” agreed Cavnar, who has helped the Mission develop its educational programs over the years. “Fr. Meaux also used the school to bring down cases of malnutrition in the area by serving breakfast and lunch to the attending children. In every project he pursues, he keeps his focus on improving lives, and the Kobonal school plays an important role in that objective. It started as a way of educating the youngest kids in the area, but as children have moved through the program, it has evolved to include support for those seeking a higher education as well. As a result, it really does have the potential to break the cycle of poverty in Kobonal, ending poverty for individuals and families once and for all.”

According to Cavnar, many American Catholics share Fr. Meaux’s enthusiasm for educational programs that benefit the poor, and Cross Catholic Outreach regularly receives donations to support Catholic missions educating children in Haiti, Central and South America, and the developing countries of Africa.

“There are three types of people who regularly support education. One group has been blessed by God, have children who were educated, and want that same blessing provided to others,” Cavnar said. “The second group is interested in giving to programs that break the cycle of poverty — to teach a man to fish, as the saying goes. They love educational ministries because they have that kind of life-transforming impact. The third group is drawn to our educational programs because they want to change a life and bless a poor child in a very direct and personal way. They are effectively giving a scholarship to a child and can celebrate that their act of mercy will forever change a boy’s or girl’s life for the better. All of those are great reasons to support Catholic missions that educate the poor. All of them will make a world of difference.”

How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach’s effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper, or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02564, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20099-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you already an an apostle, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. Mission, if need is issued for the project than needed, funds will be redirected to other apostles needs in the minority.
Pope Francis calls for solidarity with Turkey, Syria after earthquakes

Justin McLellan
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis urged all people to be in solidarity with the regions of Turkey and Syria struck by two powerful earthquakes early Feb. 6 and that are “in part already martyred by a long war.”

The two earthquakes, which both measured above 7.0 magnitude according to the United States Geological Survey, struck southern Turkey and impacted large swaths of neighboring Syria. As of midday Feb. 8 local time, the death toll had climbed over 11,200 and the number of dead was expected to climb further as rescue teams continued to search through the rubble of toppled buildings.

Pope Francis prayed for the thousands of dead and wounded at his general audience Feb. 8 and expressed his closeness to the victims, their families “and all who suffer from this devastating calamity.” The pope also thanked aid workers responding to the crisis.

Hundreds of foreign engineers, medical personnel and rescue workers have been sent to Turkey and Syria to search for people trapped under wreckage and aid the thousands without shelter in freezing winter conditions.

“Let us pray together so that these our brothers and sisters can go forth in the face of this tragedy and let us ask Our Lady to protect them,” Pope Francis said. He then led the recitation of the Hail Mary with the thousands of visitors and pilgrims gathered for his general audience.

Hours after the earthquake Feb. 6, Pope Francis sent two telegrams to Turkey and Syria to express his spiritual closeness to those affected.

A variety of Catholic charitable and aid organizations are part of the relief efforts. Caritas Internationalis, the umbrella organization of national Catholic charities, immediately launched a fundraising campaign and a request for donations of winter clothing especially for infants and young children. The charity has been active in Turkey since 1991 and in Syria since 2011, primarily providing aid to refugees.

Speaking to the L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican newspaper, Bishop Paolo Bizzeti, apostolic vicar of Anatolia, said that the earthquakes were “a tragedy within a tragedy,” since the region is already “full of refugees from various countries who have fled terrible situations.”

While aid is being sent through Caritas Turkey, he said, “it is difficult to receive the aid necessary given the state of the roads.” Bishop Bizzeti added that the aid must be properly “spaced out” to ensure it lasts the duration of the relief efforts.

Aid to the Church in Need, a pontifical foundation that provides aid to Catholic communities worldwide, is supporting reparation projects in Aleppo, Syria, to allow people to return to their homes. The charity said an estimated 7,500 people slept in Aleppo’s churches, convents and other locations the night of Feb. 7. The Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States has also created a fund to support Catholic dioceses and partner organizations in Turkey and Syria.

Jesuit Father Tony O’Riordan arrived in Aleppo, Syria, Feb. 7 to lead Jesuit Refugee Service’s response to the crisis. In a statement, he said JRS’ priority is to reopen its health clinic in Aleppo and help protect people against the cold. The Jesuits have also opened their building in Azaziyeh to host people without shelter.

The Middle East Council of Churches is calling for aid to be sent to the region, and for sanctions to be lifted on Syria to allow for access of relief materials. The Catholic Near East Welfare Association launched an emergency campaign to shelter survivors and provide bedding, food, medicines, nursing formula, diapers and clothing to more than 2,000 families for three months in the Aleppo and Hama areas of northern Syria.

Catholic Relief Services, the overseas aid agency of the Catholic Church in the United States, was collecting funds to assist its local partners, Caritas Turkey and Caritas Syria, particularly in Aleppo and Lattakia, Syria, where extensive damage has been reported.