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(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 crozier 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.

Baker photos

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

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

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.”

“And, so every one of the schools that is sponsored by our Church is just that same thing, first and foremost — a school for charity, of growing to love God... and growing to love one another.”



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The DMI online portal opens Ash Wednesday, Feb. 22 and closes March 27. Visit www.covdio.org/withoneheart.

DPAA luncheon thanks solicitors for their dedication to the diocese

Laura Keener
Editor

Linda Rawe, leadership gifts chair for the 2023 Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal (DPAA), welcomed leadership gift solicitors to the annual Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal



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



DPAA important dates

- Feb. 28 and March 2**
Kick-off dinners, Cynthiana and Hebron
- Feb. 25–26**
Pre-announcement weekend
- March 4–5**
Announcement weekend
- March 11–12**
Commitment weekend

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 priest,” Mrs. Rawe said. “I just recently had

the privilege of attending the Priest Appreciation Dinner, and when Msgr. (Albert) Ruschman 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 Announcement 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, Gods presence traveling with us is revealed in the cloud,” said Bishop Iffert, reminding those present of the cloud hovering over Jesus and his apostles hearing 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

Laura Keener
Editor

Stability. Balance. Hospitality. Welcoming God’s grace. If these words fill you with peace and a yearning for more in your life, then mark your calendar for Feb. 25.

Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys and Father Jordan Hainsey are hosting a “Come and See” gathering for anyone interested in learning about the now forming St. Cosmas Deanery Oblates of St. Benedict. The gathering will be held Saturday, Feb. 25, 10 a.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Once established, members and discerners of St. Cosmas Deanery will meet monthly for Mass at the Cathedral with special events held throughout the year.

“It’s a way of life following the Benedictine spirituality of prayer and contemplation and balance in life,” said

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, insofar 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

OBLATES OF
ST. BENEDICT

ST. COSMAS DEANERY
COVINGTON, KENTUCKY

a period of formation, usually one year. Oblates are not consecrated religious and can be priests, lay men or women, Catholic or even non-Catholic. They cannot be already attached to another religious community.

“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 Benedictines 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)

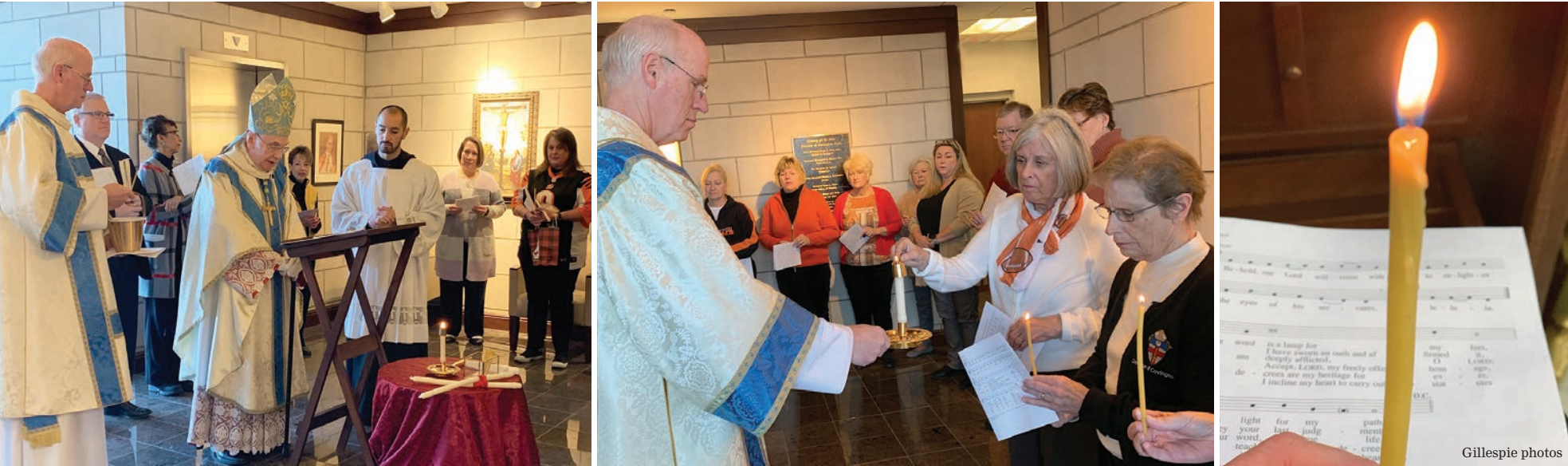
Brother Cosmas Wolf

St. Cosmas Oblate Deanery

The St. Cosmas Oblate Deanery continues the legacy of St. Vincent Archabbey’s role in the early life of the Diocese of Covington. The Deanery is dedicated to the patronage of St. Cosmas, the twin brother of St. Damian, 3rd century physicians martyred in Rome. The name also recalls Brother Cosmas Wolf, the prolific artisan-monk who built and decorated many of Covington’s altars in the 19th century. Together, a patron of healing and the memory of a monastic dedicated to building, remind us all of the prayer and work needed to heal a broken world and build up God’s Kingdom.

Benedictine narthex window, 1925, St. Benedict Church, Carrolltown, Penn.

Curia celebrates Candlemas – the light of Christ entering the world



Curia staff celebrated “Candlemas,” Feb. 2, at the Oratory of St. Paul, Covington. The Mass, which was celebrated by Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys, commemorates the presentation of Jesus at the Temple as described in the Gospel of Luke. During the Mass, Bishop Foys blessed candles representing Jesus as the light of the world. Additionally, candles to be used for the Blessing of the Throat on the feast of St. Blaise, Feb. 3, were blessed as well.

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

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 remem-

ber 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.



(above, left) Grant Brannen, principal, St. Henry District High School, present Father AJ 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.



Official Appointments

Effective Nov. 3, 2022

Juan Aviles
To: Board of Directors, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington
Term: Three years

Effective Feb. 1, 2023

Very Rev. Baiju Kidaagen, V.C., V.F.
To: Vicar Forane (Dean), Northern Kenton County Deanery
Term: Three years
Continues other duties

Appointed by the Most Rev. John C. Iffert
Bishop of Covington

Jamie N. Schroeder
Jamie N. Schroeder
Chancellor



Bishop’s Schedule

- | | |
|--|---|
| Feb. 11
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m. | Feb. 18
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 4:30 p.m. |
| Feb. 16
Directors meeting, 9:30 a.m.
Priest Holy Hour, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 3 p.m. | Feb. 19
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 10 a.m. |
| Confirmation, All Saints Parish, Walton, 7 p.m. | Feb. 20
Presidents Day — Diocesan Curia offices closed |
| Feb. 17
Religious Superiors meeting, 10 a.m. | Confirmation, St. Joseph Parish and St. Edward Mission, Owenton, at St. Joseph Parish, Warsaw, 7 p.m. |

Pope repeats calls, prayers for peace and justice in Africa, following visit

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 Felix 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



CNS photo/Paul Haring

Women wear shirts with an image of Pope Francis during the pope’s celebration of Mass at the John Garang Mausoleum in Juba, South Sudan, Feb. 5, 2023.

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)

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Upcoming Retreats

February 17 - 19 | Men's Retreat with Fr. Peter Bernardi, SJ
February 24 - 26 | Men & Women's Retreat with Fr. Jim Kubicki, SJ
March 3 - 5 | Men's Retreat with Fr. Jim Shea, SJ
March 10 - 12 | Women's Retreat with Fr. Michael Sparough, SJ
March 17 - 19 | Men & Women's Retreat with Fr. Patrick Fairbanks, SJ
March 31 - April 2 | Men's Retreat with Fr. Jeff Putthoff, SJ
April 21 - 23, 2023 | Married Couples Retreat with Tom & GERALYN Sparough
April 21 - 23, 2023 | Women's Journey with Stacy Hennessy & Jess Hirzel



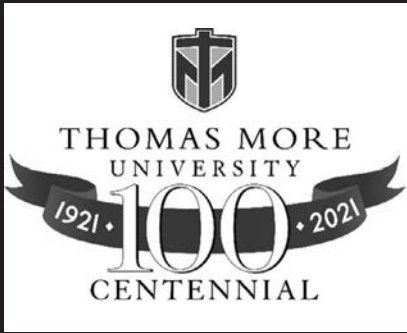
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For more information about Thomas More University, visit www.thomasmore.edu.

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 Vezina (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.



(from left) Thomas More University alum Colonel Jon McClain '19 serves the city of Bellevue as the Chief of Police, where he is joined by several fellow alums including Pierce Turner '21, assistant to the city administrator and alcohol beverage control administrator.

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.

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/awardsvp.

COMMENTARY

Why Catholic schools matter

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

WORD ON FIRE



Bishop Robert Barron

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 character, my sense of values, my entire way of looking at the world. I am convinced that, especially now, when a secularist, 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 bit 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 famous parable of the cave, Plato showed that the first step away from a purely materialist vision of the world is mathematics. When someone grasps the truth of even the

simplest equation, or the nature of a number, or a complex arithmetical formula, he has, in a very real sense, left the realm of passing things and has entered a universe of spiritual reality.

The theologian David Tracy has remarked that the commonest experience of the invisible today is through the understanding of the pure abstractions of mathematics and geometry. Properly taught, mathematics, therefore, opens the door to the higher spiritual experiences offered by religion, to the invisible realm of God.

Similarly, there is no peculiarly “Catholic” physics or biology, but there is indeed a Catholic approach to those sciences. No scientist could ever get her work off the ground unless she believed in the radical intelligibility of the world — that is to say, the fact that every aspect of physical reality is marked by an understandable pattern. This is true of any astronomer, chemist, astrophysicist, psychologist or geologist. But this leads rather naturally to the question: Where did these intelligible patterns come from? Why should the world be so marked by order, harmony and rational patterning?

There is a marvelous article composed by the twentieth-century physicist Eugene Wigner entitled “The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Mathematics in the Natural Sciences.” Wigner’s argument was that it cannot be mere chance that the most complex mathematics successfully describes the physical world. The answer of the great Catholic tradition is that this intelligibility comes, in fact, from a great creative intelligence that stands behind the world. People who practice the sciences, therefore, should have no problem believing that “in the beginning was the Word.”

There is no “Catholic” history either, though there is most certainly a Catholic way of looking at history. Typically, historians do not simply recount the events of

the past. Rather, they look for certain overarching themes and trajectories within history. Most of us probably don’t even realize this because we came of age within a liberal democratic culture, but we rather 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 pivot point was on a squalid hill 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.

In his controversial Regensburg address from 2006, the late Pope Benedict argued that Christianity can enter into a vibrant conversation with the culture precisely because of the doctrine of the Incarnation. We Christians do not claim that Jesus was one interesting teacher among many, but rather the Logos, the mind or reason of God, made flesh.

Accordingly, whatever is marked by logos or rationality is a natural cousin to Christianity. The sciences, philosophy, literature, history, psychology — all of it — find in the Christian faith, therefore, a natural dialogue (there is that word again!) partner. It is this basic idea, so dear to Papa Ratzinger, that informs Catholic schools at their best. And this is why the flourishing of those schools is important, not simply for the Church, but for our whole society.

Bishop Robert Barron is bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota. Article originally published at WordOnFire.org.

Tomorrow and tomorrow

In his “Confessions,” St. Augustine describes how his conversion to Christianity involved two separate

IN EXILE



Father Ron Rolheiser

moments of grace, the first that convinced him intellectually that Christianity was correct, and the second that empowered him to live out what he believed. There were nearly nine years between these two conversions and it was during those nine years that he said his famous prayer: “Lord make me a good and chaste Christian — but not yet.”

Interestingly, a contemporary of his, also a saint, Ephraim the Syrian (306-

373 A.D.) wrote a similar prayer: “O my beloved, how daily I default and daily do repent. I build up for an hour and an hour overthrows what I have built. At evening I say, tomorrow I will repent, but when morning comes, joyous I waste the day. Again, at evening I say, I shall keep vigil all night and I shall entreat the Lord to have mercy on my sins. But when the night is come, I am full of sleep.”

What Augustine and Ephraim describe with such clarity (and not without a touch of humor) is one of the real difficulties we face in our struggle to grow in faith and human maturity, namely, the tendency to go through life saying: “Yes, I need to do better. I need to bear down and work at overcoming my bad habits, but now is not the time!”

It’s consoling to know that a number of saints struggled for years with mediocrity, laziness and bad habits, and that they, like us, could for years give in to those things with the shrug: “Tomorrow, I will make a new start!” For a few years, one of Augustine’s expressions was, “tomorrow and tomorrow!”

“Yes, but not yet!” How often does this describe us? I want to be a good Christian and a good person. I want to live more by faith, be less lazy, less selfish, more gracious to others, more contemplative, less given over to anger; bitterness, paranoia and judgment of others. I want to stop giving in to gossip and slander. I want to be more realistically involved in justice. I want a better prayer life. I want to take time for things, spend more time with my family, smell the flowers, drive slower, be more patient, and be less hurried. I have a number of bad habits that I need to change, there are still areas of bitterness in me, I am defaulting on so many things, I really need to change, but now is not the time.

First, I need to work through a particular relationship, grow older, change jobs, get married, get rested, get healthy, finish school, have a needed vacation, let some wounds heal, get the kids out of the house, retire, move to a new parish and get away from this situation — then I will get serious about changing all this. “Lord, make me a more mature person and Christian, but not yet!”

In the end, that’s not a good prayer. Augustine tells us that, for years, as he said this prayer he was able to rationalize his own mediocrity. However, a cataclysm began building inside him. God is infinitely patient with us, but our own patience with ourselves eventually wears out and, at a point, we can no longer continue as before.

In “Book 8” of the “Confessions,” Augustine shares how one day, sitting in a garden, he was overwhelmed

with his own immaturity and mediocrity and “a great storm broke within me, bringing with it a great deluge of tears ... I flung myself down beneath a fig tree and gave way to the tears which now streamed from my eyes ... in my misery I kept crying, ‘How long shall I go on saying, tomorrow, tomorrow. Why not now?’” When he got up from the ground, his life had changed; he never again finished a prayer with that little nuance, “but not yet.”

We all have certain habits in our lives which we know are bad, but which for a variety of reasons (laziness, addiction, lack of moral strength, fatigue, anger, paranoia, jealousy, or the pressure of family or friends) we are reluctant to break. We sense our mediocrity, but take consolation in our humanity, knowing that everyone (save full-blown saints) often have this spoken or unspoken caveat in their prayers, “Yes, Lord, but not yet!”

Indeed, there is in fact a valid consolation in this prayer in that it recognizes something important inside the infinite understanding and mercy of God. God, I suspect, copes better with our faults than we cope with them and others cope with us. However, like Augustine, even as we say, “tomorrow and tomorrow” a storm steadily continues to build within us and, sooner or later, our own mediocrity will sicken us enough to cause us to say, “Why not now?”

When the Psalmist says, “Sing to the Lord a new song,” we might ask ourselves, what is the old song? It’s the one that ends with us praying, “Yes, Lord, but not yet!”

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

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Max! Max! Max!

The readings for the sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: Sirach 15:15-20; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; and Matthew 5:17-37.

Recently I was able to spend some time with my niece and nephew who are twins. They are getting ready to turn the ripe old age of 5. They are adorable and I enjoyed watching them play hard, watch videos and play games.

My nephew, Max, is 100 percent boy who enjoys Spiderman and cutting me with his sword and shooting me with a Nerf gun. One thing I noticed about Max was that, to get his attention when he is playing, you have to say his name three times. It is as if it takes three times to rise above the noise of whatever activity he is doing. Sounds familiar, huh?

We know the 10 Commandments; we learned them early on in our life. Maybe we can't recite them if we are put on the spot, but we know the Commandments. I would say a little Catholic guilt may enter our life when we break one of the Commandments. We all sin and sometimes sin just sneaks up on us and we forget what we have learned. The voice of God comes to us and at times God has to speak to us three times to get our attention.

From the Book of Sirach, this Sunday, we hear the words, "If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you."

We try as best as we can to listen, to pay heed to the voice of God who calls us to live in the light. The Commandments are like GPS or a road map that shows us where to go and what to avoid if we are to stay on the right path God has planned for us. "Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!"

Max! Max! Max! Sometimes it takes a while to get our attention. May we have the grace to rise above the noise of our daily life so that we can clearly hear the voice of God.

Father Gregory Bach is assistant director of seminarians for the Diocese of Covington and pastor, St. Benedict Parish, Covington, Ky

Time for Ky. to put 'Students First'

This past week, Rep. Josh Calloway filed the Students First Amendment (House Bill 174) which would put a pro-educational choice constitutional amendment on the bal-

lot 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.

This legislation was filed in response to a Kentucky Supreme Court decision issued in December that struck down the 2021 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

Getting my granddaughter to sleep

As I write this I can say with pride that my 17 month-old granddaughter is asleep and that I am the one who put her to sleep quite against her will. I won't go into detail as to how I accomplished this feat; except to say that I did not use methods outlined by my wife or my daughter as being "the only way."

This is a wave of success that I will ride for some time when I tell the story again and again at family gatherings, meetings at church or in casual conversation with strangers at the grocery store. This achievement is likely to win me the admiration of many fathers and grandfathers who've experienced humiliating defeat on this same battlefield with their children and grandchildren.

I'm joking, of course. I'm happy that my granddaughter is asleep and getting her there wasn't easy, but it isn't a triumph worthy of an article in the local paper. Still, it reminds me of lesser 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, for us as Christians, our destination is heaven. We must be cautious to stay on task. There's nothing wrong with feeling satisfied with

ourselves for a job well-done once in a while, so long as we remember that there is no greater satisfaction than that which is found in the work we do for the Lord. Likewise, it's understandable that we might want to bask in the warm and fuzzy of the congratulations of others from time to time so long as we recall that we are not here to impress any man or woman of this present generation.

In John's Gospel we hear Jesus speaking of his Apostles being "in the world" but not "of the world." That is, we are to live our lives in the world, but by a standard that is entirely "other" than that of the world. A standard that is entirely holy.

The problem is that the world presents us with success that is like "low hanging fruit" — easier to acquire and therefor, preferable. We should try to reject the fruit (or the success) that's easier to get and reach for one that is higher. Maybe what British singer and songwriter, Steve Winwood, sang about in his 1986 hit "Higher Love"?

"Bring me a higher love..." Higher love is not 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 in her life. And if these things come to her by living according to my example — Praise God! That's success!

Deacon Timothy Britt is assigned to St. Mary Parish, Alexandria, Ky

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. But it seems many are forgetting children are not adults. In the school setting, children are being taught in the areas of faith and academics, but they are also learning how to communicate and treat one another with kindness and respect.

These life lessons are ongoing. Just like math and read-

ing takes practice, so does learning social cues, managing emotions, expressing empathy, and how to problem solve. We call this social-emotional learning or, in our Catholic communities, treating others as Christ would.


There are a variety of reasons why some children may take more time to learn appropriate interactions than others. These can include personality and temperament, disabilities, childhood trauma, limited interaction with peers or communication challenges. While there may be times where placement in a certain school isn't successful, the majority of the time students just need time to improve with teaching, discipline and the use of behavior interventions to learn these social emotional skills.

In our schools, the students we work with are like family. We are all on the life journey together learning how to work, pray and play in harmony with each other. If you have children or remember growing up with siblings, there were surely times when the interactions didn't go well. In those times, we didn't respond by getting rid of our brother or sister; instead we learned to forgive, practiced patience and humility, and looked at how we could do better in the future.

This is perhaps the greatest lesson for us in these situations — to remember that we are all brothers and sisters in God's family. If we truly treated one another as family, then we would not gossip and rush to judge and condemn each other. Instead, we would work to grow in love. If we can respond to situations in our communities in this Christ-like way, then we would bear witness to Christ's message to love your neighbor as yourself. And for children, our actions as adults often teach louder than our words.

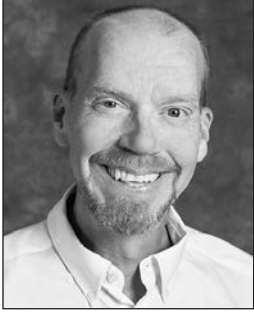
Kendra McGuire is superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Covington, Ky

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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

PLEDGE COORDINATOR

The Diocese of Covington's Stewardship and Mission Services Office invites qualified individuals to apply for the support position of Pledge Coordinator. This role requires an individual who takes pride in performing detailed work with an absolute minimum of errors. Primary responsibilities include recording financial pledges, gifts, payments, etc. for the Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal, and also fund-raising campaign reporting, implementation, monitoring, and follow-up. Ideally, we are seeking Catholic candidates who relate well to others, are extremely detail- and confidentiality-oriented, are comfortable with a team approach to projects, and can manage deadlines under a steady workload. Interested individuals may send a resume with a cover letter, compensation history, and at least three references with contact email addresses to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR by email to skoplyay@covdio.org , or by fax to 859/392-1589.

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St. Stephen Catholic Cemetery in Ft. Thomas, KY, has an immediate need for a full-time Groundskeeper. Primary responsibilities include labor-intensive tasks associated with interments, maintenance, repair, construction, cleaning, and operation of the Cemetery's facilities and grounds. Experience operating backhoe equipment would be helpful. Interested individuals should contact Stephen Koplyay, SPHR, by email or by fax at skoplyay@covdio.org or 859-392-1589.

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Pope Francis shares a laugh with Anglican Archbishop Justin Welby, right, while answering questions from journalists aboard the flight from Juba, South Sudan, to Rome Feb. 5, 2023.

and proclaim the Gospel to everyone and in 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

(Continued from page 4)

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

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.

INTERNAL AUDITOR

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 licensure is preferred. Submit cover letter, resume, salary history, and five references with email address to: Stephen Kopyay by email or fax. SKopyay@CovDio.org or 859-392-1589. EOE

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19th century No-Nothings and anti-Catholicism

Stephen Enzweiler
Cathedral Historian

Part 4 in a series

On Aug. 6, 1855, a large mob descended upon the election polls in Louisville, Ky., and made a show of force to block Irish and German Catholics of the city from voting in the day’s election. What transpired was a day-long series of beatings, lootings, acts of arson and murder. German breweries were burned, immigrant homes and businesses were looted, Catholic churches were vandalized and the Eucharist desecrated. Loaded cannons were rolled up in front of and pointed at St. Martin’s Church, ready for firing. Of the more than 1,000 Catholics eligible to vote that day, only 20 were able to cast a ballot. As evening fell and the mobs dispersed, 22 people were dead and parts of the city lay in ashes. History would remember it as “Bloody Monday.”

Bloody Monday was just one incident among many resulting from a growing mid-19th century anti-Catholic sentiment called nativism.

Nativism was a political position derived from the policy of protecting the interests of native-born or established American inhabitants against the interests of immigrants. For 156 years before the American Revolution, the religious, cultural and political landscape had been dominated by generations of mostly English Protestants. As the flow of Catholic immigrants increased in the early 19th century, this dominance was weakened as immigrants began playing greater roles in determining the cultural identity and political direction of the country.

Anti-Catholic prejudice was first brought to colonial America by Protestant Europeans, predominantly English Pilgrims who were themselves victims of religious persecution by the Church of England. They shunned its traditions and rubrics of worship which they believed were rooted in Roman Catholicism. As a result, early American religious culture evolved with a deeply Protestant emphasis. Thus, being English meant being “anti-Catholic.” British colonies like Virginia enacted laws prohibiting Catholics from owning land, marrying, having businesses, or becoming lawyers. Maryland double taxed Catholics and enacted laws that outlawed the Mass, the Sacraments, and Catholic education.

In the first two centuries of the colonial period, there were basically two varieties of anti-Catholic prejudice. The first was of the biblical variety, a theological byproduct of the Protestant Reformation and the European wars of religion. Early American religious identity was largely either Anglican or Puritan. Clashes between the two gave birth to new movements, such as the Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, Unitarians and others. But the colonial worldview did not include Catholics; it accused the pope of being the Anti-Christ and Rome of being “Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of the earth’s abominations” [Rev 17:5].

The second variety evolved in the early 19th century

from a xenophobic and ethnocentric distrust of the increasing numbers of Roman Catholic immigrants coming into the country. These foreigners were said to be under the influence of Rome and under the direction of the pope who wanted to infiltrate the country and replace democracy with obedience to the papacy. This threatened the long-standing Anglo-Protestant dominance that had prevailed in America since the time of the Mayflower; and it gave rise to the use of derogatory, anti-Catholic pejoratives such as *Romanism*, *papism*, and *popery*.

Know Nothingism is perhaps the most infamous of the anti-Catholic movements to come out of the 19th century.



Louisville Herald woodcut depicting Bloody Monday, Louisville, Ky., Aug. 6, 1855.

Founded in 1849 as the “Order of the Star-Spangled Banner,” it viewed Catholics as foreigners under the control of the Pope in Rome. Later known as the American Party, Know Nothingism evolved into a secret political movement formed to organize native-born Protestants in opposition to the growing numbers of Catholic immigrants from Europe. They were called “Know Nothings” because members were required to answer “I know nothing” whenever asked about details of their organization. The secrecy was understandable, considering Know Nothing members were known to engage in almost every kind of violence to achieve their anti-Catholic objectives.

By 1852, the Know Nothings were achieving phenomenal national growth, largely due to the intellectual and financial contributions of none other than Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, an eminently respected American — and a rabid anti-Catholic. Morse accused the Vatican of subverting traditional Protestant values and ideals. He wrote prolifically and published pamphlets against the Catholics, charging that “Popery” is a political as well as a religious system, and he called Catholicism the “cloven foot of foreign heresy.” Morse remained vigorously anti-Catholic for the rest of his life.

In the same year the Know Nothings were formed, the first group of Franciscans came to Cincinnati. In his journal in 1844, Father William Unterthiner described the reaction of city residents who saw Franciscans walking the streets in their brown habits. “Some people threw wooden sticks at us,” he wrote, “and cursed us as we walked down the street. It is certainly true that a person is free to choose

one, or even no religion, but one would still be very mistaken if he believed that Catholics are allowed to live unhindered.”

In 1853, Pope Pius IX sent Archbishop Gaetano Bedini to the U.S. to report on the state of the Catholic Church in America. During his visit to Cincinnati, hundreds of protesters marched on St. Peter’s Cathedral with a scaffold from which an effigy of the archbishop was hanging along with signs that read “Down with Bedini!,” “No Priests, No Kings,” “Down with the Butchers of Rome!” and “Down with the Papacy!” The riot that resulted became known as the Cincinnati Riot of 1853, and claimed the life of one pro-

tester, with 15 wounded, and 63 arrested. Bedini’s visit to other cities fared no better, as violent demonstrations erupted against his visit in Louisville, Cleveland, Baltimore, and Boston. In New York, the threat of violence was expected, and Bedini was secreted by rowboat to a waiting steamship in the harbor on which he immediately departed for Europe.

In the same year as the Cincinnati riot (1853), Pope Pius IX carved a new see out of the eastern Kentucky landscape and appointed a quiet academic named Father George Aloysius Carrell as the first Bishop of Covington. The episcopate of Bishop Carrell would be a difficult one to say the least. From the very beginning, he had to endure persistent nativist aggression and the anti-Catholic threats of Know Nothings. There were outdoor rallies, threats and protest marches against the Church. In response, a number of priests printed pamphlets and periodicals in defense of the new diocese and Roman Catholicism. Editors of the “Catholic Advocate” reminded its Bardstown readership that “persecution is wisely permitted to try the fidelity of God’s servants, to purify and disengage them from this earth; and to prove that God can preserve his Church against all human opposition.”

Bishop Carrell was no doubt reminded of Jesus’ own words, “If the world hates you, understand that it hated me first” [Jn 15:18]. But the new bishop and his small band of just six priests faced the dangers with Christlike courage. “In courthouses and community halls,” penned Father Paul Ryan in his 1954 *History of the Diocese of Covington*, “where others who denounced that un-American activity had pistols primed for defense on the desk before them, Bishop Carrell fearlessly stood unprotected, explaining



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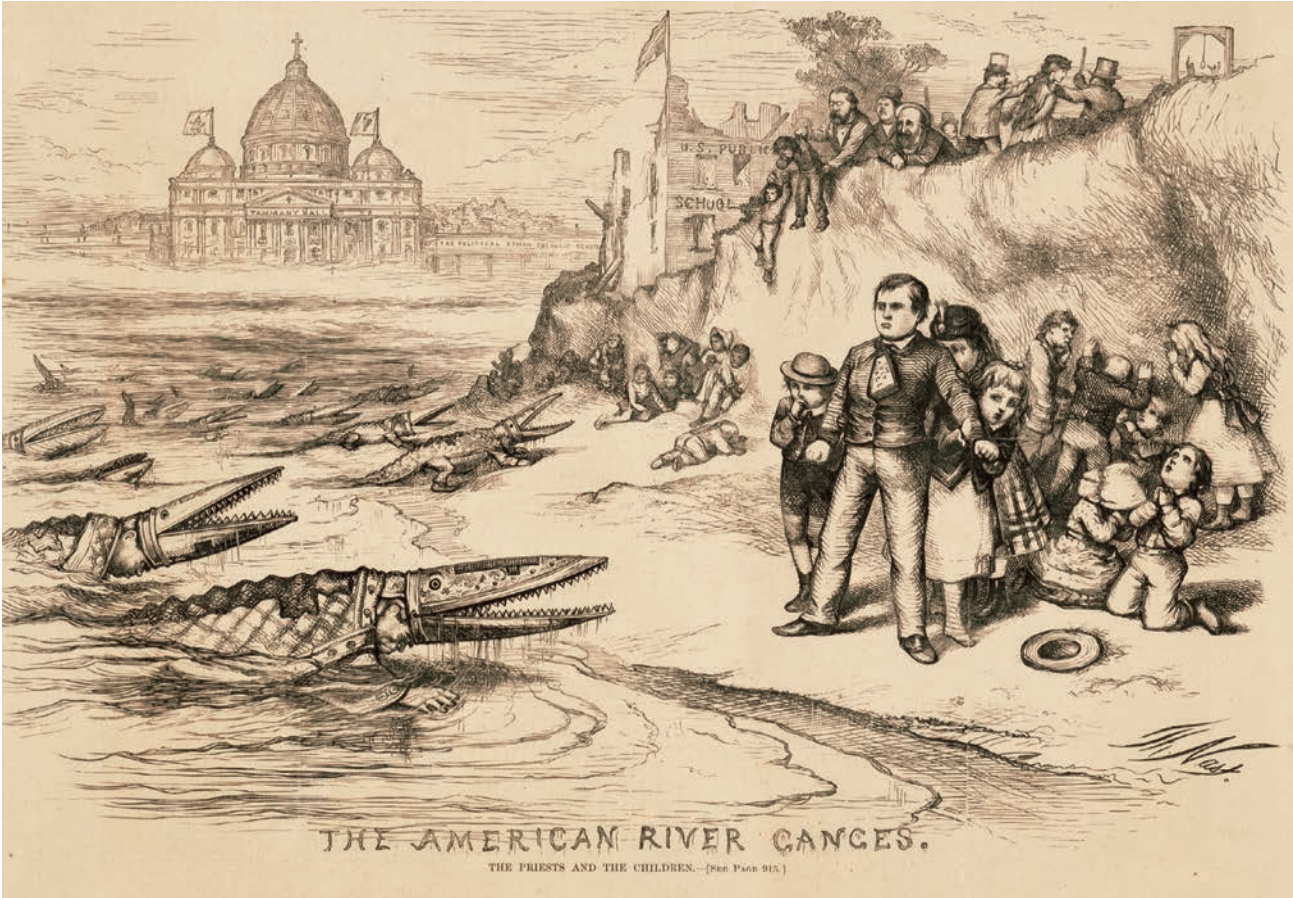


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(above) Famous 1875 editorial cartoon “The American Ganges” by Thomas Nast depicting Roman Catholic bishops as crocodiles attacking public schools. Nast was a German-American and ex-Catholic.

the Catholic teaching with a natural eloquence.”

It should be noted that the vast majority of anti-Catholic agitation across America was non-violent. Yet every priest, as they went about their ordinary duties, knew that danger was never very far away. Still vivid in their memory was the unhappy story of one of their own — Father Charles F. Broeswald. Father Broeswald had been a well-known figure in Northern Kentucky in the 1840’s. Assigned here by Bishop Flaget in 1844, he founded Corpus Christi Church in Newport and served as its first pastor until being reassigned to Louisville in 1846. There, he founded St. Mary Church, where he remained its pastor for the next nine years. On the night of Nov. 2, 1855, Father Boeswald was returning home from a routine sick call when he was killed by a mob of Know Nothings.

The power and influence of the Know Nothings came to an unceremonious end after the 1856 election, and by 1860 they had become largely irrelevant as an effective social and political movement. But it was the Civil War that



became the principal cause of decline in 19th century anti-Catholicism. Irish and German immigrants had rushed by the tens of thousands to enlist in the fight in the nation’s struggle to put down the rebellion. Their great number of enlistments in the Union Army — and their heavy losses in battle — would go on to dispel any lingering notions about Catholics and immigrant disloyalty.

But just below the surface, the smoldering embers of anti-Catholic prejudice and discontent would continue to linger ... and wait ... for a new opportunity and another time to emerge.

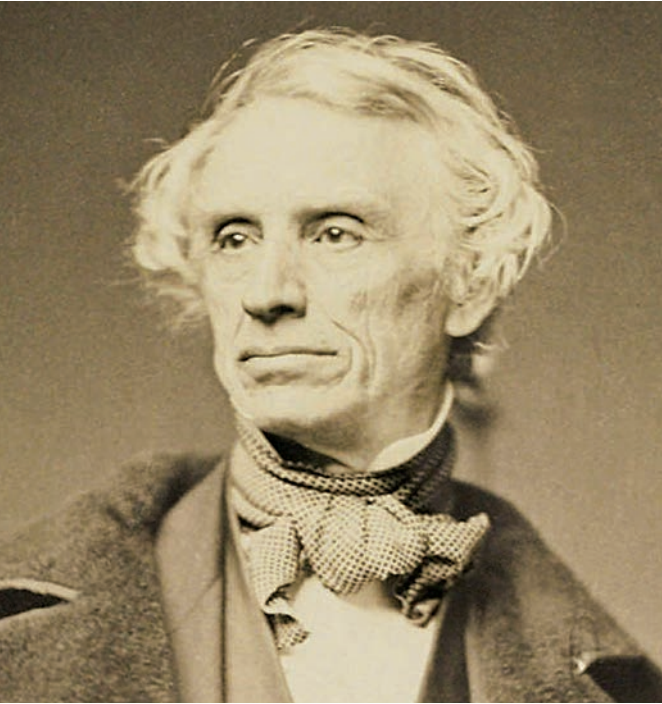
Coming in Part 5: The Lightning that came from the East.



(above) Archbishop Gaetano Bedini. He found himself at the center of Cincinnati’s riot of 1853. [National Portrait Gallery]

(below) Samuel B. Morse (1791-1872) helped found and fund the Know Nothings. Many prominent Americans like Morse were among those who believed in the Catholic threat. [Library of Congress]

(bottom left) The Know Nothing flag said it all.



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PEOPLE AND EVENTS



Third-grade students receive scapulars

Msgr. Gerry Reinersman, pastor, presented the third-grade students at St. Joseph School, Cold Spring, with scapulars at Mass this month. After receiving their scapular and a blessing from Monsignor, the children were absolutely glowing as they returned to their classrooms.

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) 392-8999.

Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III '67 Institute for Religious Liberty Spring Event, Feb. 16, 7-9 p.m., Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Thomas More University, Crestview Hills. **The IRL presents "Political Partisanship and Its Impact on the Future of Religious Liberty"** featuring keynote speaker Asma Uddin and commentator Dr. William Madges. 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/religiousliberty for details.

Thomas More University art exhibit "Ibon is Bird" by local artist John Lanzador, Feb. 16-March 9, Eva G. Farris Art Gallery. Gallery talk, 3:30-4 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. John Paul II, Feb. 17, 7-9 p.m. and Feb. 18, 9 a.m.-3 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 Bonhaus '01, Whitney Cundiff Smith '08, April Gibson Gillespie '08, Brian Haigis '87, Brady Hightchew '12, Steve



Knights support library

Bishop Flaget Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus recently made a donation to St. Therese School's library fund. Shown here is Deacon Bill Theis (right) presenting a check to Katie Boruske, principal. Looking on is Past State Master Carl Biery and librarian Ellen Lonneman.

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.

32nd annual Mardi Gras for Homeless Children, Feb. 21, 6-9 p.m., NKY Convention Center, Covington. All you can eat food and drinks 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 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. 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 more within their careers. The Conference explores the topic of "Women Who Innovate" within different industries. This conference is geared for alumni, college students, faculty/staff, parents, high school students, and community members. Cost \$50. Reserve your space at tmukyus/tmwc.

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) 392-1545.

"The Book of Wisdom" a workshop hosted by the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization and presented by Father Timothy Schehr, March 18 and April 22, 9-11:30 a.m., at the Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington. Father Schehr is a retired biblical scholar and former professor at Mount St. Mary's School of Theology at the Athenaeum of Ohio. This book encourages readers to seek wisdom. But where do we begin such a search? Cost \$35. Register online <https://covdio.org/oce/catholic-bible-study/> or call (859) 392-1529.

Have you ever considered going on a pilgrimage? **"Journey to Egypt, a special part of the Holy Land**, where Abraham, Joseph, Moses and the Holy Family walked. Make your way through the Holy Land to follow in Jesus' footsteps. Celebrate votive Masses in the very places where miraculous gifts became pages in the Gospel. If interested in learning more, please contact St. Henry parishioner Michael Portwood, (859) 878-6905 or e-mail pamarinedad@yahoo.com.

Fish Frys

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 22

St. Mary Parish, Alexandria, Feb. 24, March 3, 10, 17, 4-7:30 p.m.

Fridays, Feb. 24-March 31

St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, 4:30-7:30 p.m.

St. Joseph Academy, Walton, 4:30-8 p.m.



Prayer in motion

Kindergarten and First Graders at St. Patrick School, Taylor Mill, have been learning the Our Father with motions and are now teaching it to the Preschoolers.

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MARRIAGE and WEDDINGS

SPECIAL SECTION OF THE MESSENGER
FEBRUARY 10, 2023



Leanne Hunley Photography
Colin and Katy (Keener)
O'Connell at George
Rogers Clark Park,
Covington, before their
wedding Oct. 29, 2022,
at the Cathedral Basilica
of the Assumption.

"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.

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MARRIAGE AND WEDDINGS

Congratulations on your engagement!

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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.

Dates: June 10 and Oct. 21, 2023

Time: 9:00 a.m.– 3:00 p.m.

Cost per couple is \$100.

For more dates and registration for Living Marriage as Sacrament visit: <https://marriedoc.org/>

For any questions, please contact Eric and Lauri Nienaber at: register@marriedoc.org

Directions: St. Timothy Church

10272 Highway 42

Union, KY 41091

(859) 384-1100

I-75 to Florence/Union Exit (180). South on US 42 approximately 4.4 miles. St. Timothy is on the left, across from Ryle High School.

Covington-Cincinnati Catholic Engaged Encounter

The weekend retreat offered by the Cincinnati-Covington Catholic Engaged Encounter (CEE) 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.

The 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. CEE 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. 2, 2023

Location:

Holy Spirit Center

5440 Moeller Ave

Cincinnati, Ohio 45212

Registration: visit <https://cincinnati-covington.engagedencounter.com/>



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

For more information: e-mail the

Cincinnati-Covington CEE Local Community at Cincinnati-Covington@engagedencounter.com or call Ashley Altenau at (513) 479-1700

3. **Attend a certified Natural Family Planning (NFP) course.** It is preferable to attend this course after attending your marriage preparation program, if possible. Natural Family Planning courses fill up quickly, so register early.

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. NFP methods are based on the observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. Since the methods of NFP respect the love-giving and life-giving nature of the

conjugal act, they support God's design for married love. Engaged couples are required to select a method of NFP that works best for them and obtain a certificate from one of the instructors listed below. For more information about NFP, call the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization at (859) 392-1500.

Sympto-Thermal Method

Couple to Couple League

(513) 471-2000

En español: (513) 471-2000, ext.1031

Website: ccli.org

(Please note: CCL offers a self-paced online course that is not approved for couples getting married in the Diocese of Covington.)

Boston Cross Check Method

Jessica Grace, RN

(443) 824-8285 (text or call)

E-mail: jessicagracefertility@gmail.com

Creighton Method

Rita Johnson

+1 (517) 775-7229

Website: <https://naturalfertilitycare.org/>

Marquette Method

Jenna Bernardo, RN

(513) 658-0444

E-mail: jennamarquettern@gmail.com

Website: <https://jenna-the-fertility-rn.square.site/>

For more information about NFP, visit <https://covdio.org/oce/natural-family-planning/>

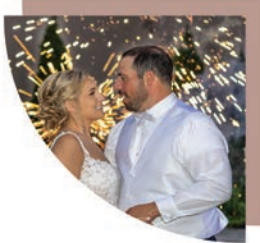


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MARRIAGE AND WEDDINGS

Husband and wife, He created them

Rev. Raymond N. Enzweiler
Contributor

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 unconditionally 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 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 chit 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 diocesan 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 the Couple to Couple League, utilizes body temperature and other signs to determine when a woman

may be ovulating. Other methods may use other natural body factors, or may even involve the use of technology to identify biomarkers, such as in the Marquette Method, 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://coudio.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.

MARRIAGE AND WEDDINGS

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.

Iris Murdoch once wrote that the world can change in 15 seconds because that’s how quickly you can fall in love with someone. She’s right and falling in love emotionally can literally paralyze us with a grip so strong that even death seems preferable to losing the one with whom we have fallen in love.

Countless heartaches, broken hearts, depressions, clinical 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 feelings? The archetype of femininity the woman is carrying? 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 is an initiatory stage in love (albeit a delightful one) that needs to be understood exactly for what it is, an initiatory stage, nothing more, one that invites us into something deeper.

Emotional infatuation is not yet a mature stage in love. Unless one dies in its grip, as did Romeo and Juliet, it will one day lose its hold on us and leave us disillusioned. When Iris Murdoch said that we can fall in love in 15 seconds, she might also have added that, sadly, we can also fall out of love in 15 seconds. Emotional infatuation can be that ephemeral, both in its birth and in its dying.

So, 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 let go, 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 until they rest in you.” Hence, nothing in life can ever really be enough for us. We are always restless, always yearn-

ing 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.

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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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 Christ 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 examples of strong marriages in their life.

#2: Collaborate with Catholic Educators and Catechists

Leaders noted the importance of ensuring that all 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, 316). 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 program can attract others by word of mouth. Marriage prep can also be an important place of evangelization and

catechesis for the engaged couple, as well as a “refresher” on the sacrament.

In addition, surveys reported, high-quality and engaging programs 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 convalidation 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 convalidations 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 form 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 necessary, then, to answer questions about Church teaching on marriage, the declaration of nullity process, and convalidation. 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.

These sessions can be accompanied by healing Masses, Holy Hours, or short retreats to offer support for people in a difficult situation.

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 joyous 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 of 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 continually seeking to deepen the understanding and appreciation of marriage by all Catholics, marriages – and the Church – are strengthened.

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Catholic marriage prep: We want the whole feast, please!

Ava Lalor
OSV News

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 know. 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 fur-

thered 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



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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.

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Time for Ky. to put ‘Students First’

(Continued from page 7)

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 183, 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 “defund 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 1-800-372-7181. 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

(Continued from page 2)

umbrella of St. Vincent — all around the country. They have priories in Taiwan and Brazil — they’re very extensive and far-reaching,” said Father Hainsey. “They’re always wishing 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 1858, when Bishop George Carrell, Covington’s first bishop, invited Abbot Boniface 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 Peaselburg neighborhood, where they produced altar wine.

Abbot Wimmer must have thought highly of Covington because he sent some of his top monks — Father Oswald Moosemueller, who was the first historian of St. Vincent Archabbey; Father Emmeran Bliemel, 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.

“We were getting the best of the best,” said Father Hainsey.

As an artist, Father Hainsey shares a common appreciation with the Benedictine community as they, too, promote and support religious art.

“The Benedictines have been the biggest patrons of the arts, whether that’s the visual arts, from painting to sculpture, mosaics, and everything in between, to sacred music, poetry and writing. They’ve been the contributors to this great patrimony of the Church,” Father Hainsey said. “So, for me, that’s obviously very important.”

Father Hainsey said that Benedictine monks take vows of obedience, stability and *conversatio morum*, or “ongoing conversion.” Similarly, Oblates will promise to live by these three values:

Obedience — to listen to God always and everywhere with the help of Sacred Scripture, the Rule of St. Benedict and meditation.

Stability — practice perseverance in daily obligations, especially amidst trials, aware of Christ’s redeeming presence in all things.

Conversatio morum — to engage in daily conversion by welcoming God’s grace to purify and transform one’s life and will.

“I enjoy embracing the Benedictine Rule and that spirituality, especially in my retirement,” said Bishop Foys. “And having an association with the monks of St. Vincent.”

For information visit www.CovOblates.org.

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

A Safe Haven allows women who can’t care for their newborn to safely drop off baby; program offers hope for adoption

MULBERRY, Fla. — Only an hour old and weighing 6 and a half pounds, Angel Grace LNU announced her arrival at approximately 1 a.m. Jan. 28 on a 50-degree night in a wooded area in Mulberry, Florida. She was wrapped in a blanket, placenta 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 responded immediately with drones, air surveillance and bloodhounds. They have taken DNA samplings, 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 mother 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.

Indianapolis Black Catholic parish receives recognition for its historical, cultural impact

INDIANAPOLIS — St. Rita Parish on Indianapolis’ east side is a community of firsts and of unique contributions – starting with its founding in 1919 as the first designated Black Catholic parish in Indiana. It was the first archdiocesan parish to offer kindergarten and accredited day care. It sponsored Indianapolis’ first interracial, parochial versus public high school football game. Its boxing club produced three-time light heavyweight world champion Marvin Johnson. “Nationally

recognized architectural and artistic significance” can now be added to that list. The parish’s church stands not only as an important example of Mid-Century Modern architecture, but also as what is possibly the world’s largest collection of art works by Peter Recker, a globally renowned Catholic artist of the mid-1900s. “We’re a hidden gem,” said Caleb Legg, a historian, architecture expert and member of St. Rita. He is not the only one who thinks so. Recently, the parish was selected to apply for – and received — several elite preservation grants and is under consideration to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

‘Wonder’ film series shows faith, science not at war, says Bishop Barron

WASHINGTON — “Wonder,” a five-part documentary series from Word on Fire set for release Feb.13-17, shows that “the war between faith and science is untrue,” said Word on Fire founder Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota. Narrated by actor Jonathan Roumie, the episodes explore the nature of light, Trinitarian traces in the cosmos, human and animal language, St. Augustine and evolution, and even theology of salvation suggested by the geometry of Chartres Cathedral’s North Rose Window in Chartres, France. Director Manny Marquez, who said his own faith was deepened by the project, told OSV News the films are “an opportunity to make a difference in the conversation” between faith and science.

Diplomats, faith leaders gathered at U.N. urged to advance religious tolerance, harmony around world

UNITED NATIONS — A combination of U.N. ambassadors, religious leaders, diplomats, academics, representatives of nongovernmental agencies and several musicians gathered Feb. 3 in a vast conference hall at the United Nations headquarters in New York City to mark World Interfaith Harmony Week. The special week, observed this year Feb. 1-7, is a product of a 2010 U.N. resolution, first conceived by Jordan’s King Abdullah II, known for his commitment to religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue. The week stresses the need to advance mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue as a way to promote harmony among all people. “We all need each other to open doors for one another,” said one speaker, Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, executive vice president of the New York Board of Rabbis. “We can’t allow harmony week to be just one week. It has to continue throughout the year and throughout our lives.”

‘Hand of the Lord’ spared Ohio town amid train derailment, says priest

EAST PALESTINE, Ohio — An Ohio priest said “the hand of the Lord” prevented a Feb. 3 freight train derailment from

turning deadly. Some 50 cars, 20 of which were carrying hazardous materials, caught fire after the crash in the town of East Palestine, Ohio, near the Pennsylvania border. No injuries were reported, although officials evacuated those within a one-mile radius, while issuing shelter in place orders for the rest of the area. Local faithful are offering prayers of gratitude that “there was no loss of life,” said Father David Misbrenner, pastor of the Our Lady of Lourdes and St. Jude Parish Communities, located in East Palestine and Colombiana, Ohio. “If you’re a person of faith, you have to believe that the hand of the Lord is in something like this.”

Hope ‘is central to faith’ and needed more than ever amid today’s challenges

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Bishop Richard G. Henning, Providence’s new coadjutor, began his homily Jan. 26 by marveling at the magnificence of Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul in Providence. “It’s even more beautiful to see it filled with the people of God, offering praise and worship to our Creator and Savior,” he said during the diocese’s Mass of Reception welcoming him as coadjutor. He will assist Providence Bishop Thomas J. Tobin, who has headed been Providence’s bishop for 18 years. the diocese. In his remarks, Bishop Tobin said the diocese welcomed its new coadjutor bishop with “open arms and a grateful heart.” “We pledge to you friendship and support and prayers as you begin your new ministry here, in the state of Rhode Island in the Diocese of Providence,” he said. On April 1, Bishop Tobin will turn 75, the age when canon law requires bishops to submit their resignation to the pope. Whenever the pope accepts his resignation and he officially retires, Bishop Tobin will be immediately succeeded by Bishop Henning.

Pre-med society at Navajo Catholic school creates future healing

ST. MICHAELS, Ariz. (OSV News) — St. Michael Indian School, a preK-12 Catholic school which serves students from the Navajo Nation and other Native American nations in the Southwest, launched a new pre-med society to help create a new generation of Indigenous health care professionals and healers. Through the school’s long partnership with Xavier University of Louisiana (which like St. Michael was founded by St. Katharine Drexel) and Harvard University’s Front Line Indigenous Partnership Program, students are sitting down face-to-face in the classroom with medical specialists to discover new career paths, while drawing on their own culture to sensitively address disparities in Native American health care. “Once they’re really immersed (in society projects), I’ll see a light bulb going off,” said instructor and St. Michael alumnus Dr. Aaron Price, who is Navajo and blends what he calls a “trifecta” of perspectives — Navajo, Catholic and modern medical — in his own work.

Protecting God’s Children for Adults Safe Environment Trainings

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

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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

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Bulletins: ■ February bulletin: posted Sunday, Feb. 5; due Tuesday, March 7.

www.virtusonline.org, enter user id and password to access your bulletins. If your Virtus account is inactivated please contact your primary location for assistance.

Note: If your Training Tab is missing or you cannot access your account, contact your parish, school or institution.

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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 outreaches 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 outreaches 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.

“Compassionate 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 outreaches 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.



Above: Fr. Meaux’s Mission has always aspired to address all the needs of the poor in Kobonal, and that goal has led him to build schools to provide poor children in that area of Haiti with a quality Catholic education and a lunch feeding program.

Below: The school system run by the Kobonal Haiti Mission includes classes for a range of grade levels and even offers a scholarship program for those students interested in pursuing higher education through college classes or technical training.



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 your life and actions 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 houses 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

“A quality education can end this downward spiral and turn everything around.”

Jim Cavnar
Cross Catholic Outreach

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 saw that families were starving for spiritual guidance. Entrenched 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

Above: The Kobonal Haiti Mission provides students with everything they need to succeed, including uniforms and supplies. The teachers at the school are committed to helping ensure children who enter the program late are not left behind.

Left: Life in Kobonal is hard and many families still live in poverty, so the Mission continues to seek support from compassionate Catholic donors in the U.S.

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. AC02364, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.



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



CNS photo/Courtesy Aid to the Church in Need, Xavier Stephen Bisits

A man cleans up outside a partially destroyed building in Aleppo, Syria, Feb. 7, 2023, one day after two powerful earthquakes destroyed buildings and killed thousands in the region along the border of Turkey and Syria.

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 Aziziyé 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.

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