

February 24, 2023

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MESSENGER

Serving the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky since 1926

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Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the *Messenger* are available online at covidio.org/messenger.

‘A Wired Family’ presentation helps adults navigate social media for teens

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

In an age where technology is becoming increasingly prevalent, teens have more access to online content than ever before.

Around 2009, Stephen J. Smith recognized how children and families were adapting to the ever-changing technology, and what he thought it was ultimately leading to.

"As far as initially, their mental health, but just as important, how their privacy was being invaded, how they were being judged by people that will never meet them," said Mr. Smith.

Apps like many popular social medias have a business model that entices all people, not just children, to stay on as long as possible, Mr. Smith reports, having spent much of his retired life dedicated to education on social media and how it affects children and teens through his LLC, A Wired Family.

“What that’s doing is it’s creating these surges of dopamine and cortisol, which is playing with the brain chemistry. Now for an adult, that’s one thing, but for children ... while the brain is just being developed, it’s creating issues,” he said.

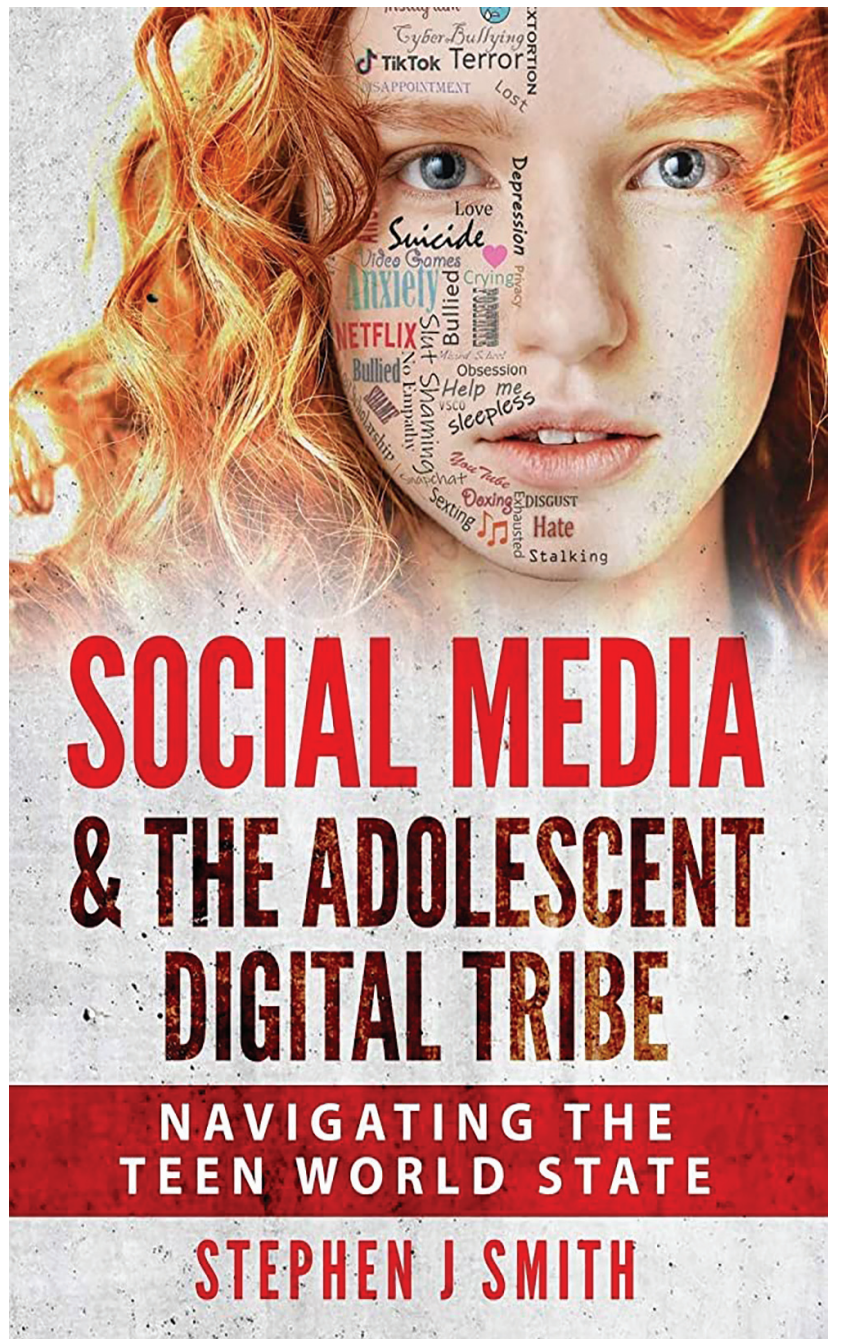
The Safe Environment Office of the Diocese of Covington, responsible for training such as VIRTUS, will be sponsoring Mr. Smith for two presentations for adults in the upcoming weeks. The first will occur at 7 p.m. at St. Henry District High School, Erlanger, on Feb. 27, and the second will occur at 7 p.m. at Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, on March 7. Both talks are expected to continue until around 9 p.m. Presentations are free and require no reservations, but these specific presentations will be adult only.

The presentations, titled “Social Media & the Adolescent Digital Tribe: Navigating the Teen World State,” are based on a book of the same name authored by Mr. Smith himself.

“Stephen Smith has been doing this work for decades in our area,” said Julie Feinauer, director of the Safe Environment Office. “We’ve heard from all of our schools and have noticed a pretty big problem with social media and the kids.”

The goal is to “pack people in” for the presentation, said Ms. Feinauer, selecting St. Henry and Bishop Brossart as locations to try and reach people in both the Northern and Southern reaches of the Diocese.

"It's mainly for parents, to foresee what's upcoming with kids, as



younger ones and then into their teen years, how to monitor what's out there and what to be looking for," she said.

While Mr. Smith has presented in the past to various schools in the Diocese, with programs for both adults and students alike, Ms. Feinauer says that “we’re trying to bring the whole community together because we know that there are parishes and schools who might not be able to afford to have him come. We believe it is important to have equity as far as getting this information out.”



WITH ONE HEART

EMPOWERING PRIESTS. IGNITING PARISHES. ENLIVENING THE FAITHFUL.

Disciple Maker Index opens February 22

Take the Disciple Maker Index (DMI) survey

As Lent is underway, the Disciple Maker Index survey opens in the Diocese of Covington, lasting through March 27. The Disciple Maker Index is a 75-question, multiple choice answer, survey that allows parishioners of the diocese to “reflect on their journey of discipleship and their parish’s effectiveness in supporting that journey.” The survey is available online at covidio.org/withoneheart.

Sample Question

"Which of the following best describes where you are on your Catholic journey?"

- A. I consider myself Catholic, though faith is not a significant part of my life
B. I practice my Catholic faith, but do not know Jesus personally like a friend
C. I have personally encountered Jesus Christ and am growing as a disciple
D. My relationship with Jesus Christ is the most important relationship in my life"

Eucharistic meditation 1: The Journey Home

USCCB/Eucharistic Revival Team

This Eucharistic meditation is designed to help you spend 30 minutes to an hour in meditation and silent prayer with Jesus during Eucharistic adoration. Even if you cannot be physically present in a church or adoration chapel with the Blessed Sacrament, you can unite yourself spiritually to the Eucharist as you spend this time in prayer.

The grace I seek: to believe that Jesus will guide me to heaven, my true home

Pray: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Jesus, the Lord of Life, has given himself to you in the Eucharist. He is gazing upon you, his beloved child, with great love at this very moment. Pause for a few moments and wonder at his gift for you. Allow yourself to rest in his loving gaze. Thank Jesus for the gift of himself in the Eucharist.

Ask for the grace: Jesus, help me to believe you will show me the way home to heaven.

Scripture Meditation

“Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment.” (Joel 2:12-13)

Reflection Questions

What are the burdens you are carrying that Jesus is



inviting you to lay down today? How can you allow Jesus to help you lighten your load so that you can journey more freely with him through this Lenten season?

Scripture Meditation

“When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.” (Matthew 6:6)

Reflection Questions

The inner room of our hearts is the place where Our Lord desires to cultivate deep intimacy and friendship

with us. Gazing upon the Eucharist, ask Jesus to help you open your heart to this closeness with him. Ask him to help you believe that you belong, that you are called to have a home with him!

Closing Prayer

Grant, O Lord, that we may begin with holy fasting this campaign of Christian service, so that, as we take up battle against spiritual evils, we may be armed with weapons of self-restraint. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever (Collect, Ash Wednesday)



Teens invited to join NCYC — ‘Fully Alive’

The Office of Catechesis and Evangelization invites teens to join the 2023 NCYC: “Fully Alive” conference, Nov. 16-18, at the Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis. Parish and other groups are now forming. Regular registration with a deposit of \$280 and total package of \$560 per person is now being accepted until March 28. The price increases after that date. For additional information, contact Isaak A. Isaak at (859) 392-1529 or iisaak@covdio.org.



Lent at the Cathedral

Stations of the Cross — Fridays, Feb. 24–March 31, 6:30 p.m.
No Stations March 10

Rite of Election — Sunday, Feb. 26, 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.
No 5:30 p.m. Mass

24 Hours with the Lord — Twelve consecutive hours of Eucharistic Adoration and confessions

March 10, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, noon–midnight

March 17, Holy Cross Church, Latonia, noon–midnight



Benedictines in Covington

An exhibit honoring the Benedictine legacy, brings together important artifacts from the history of Immaculate Conception Church at Stepstone in California, Ky.

The exhibit is on view now to March 31, 2023, in the Maes Crypt Chapel, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

The Cathedral’s open hours are Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m–4:30 p.m.

Mass, and Sunday, 11:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Mass.

For information on the Benedictine Oblates or the exhibit visit CovOblates.org.

TMU Institute for Religious Liberty — defending religious liberty is an all or none proposition

Laura Keener
Editor

Dr. Ray Hebert, executive director, Thomas More University’s William T. Robinson III Institute for Religious Liberty, welcomed students and guests, Feb. 16, to Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel for a discussion on “Political Partisanship and Its Impact on the Future of Religious Liberty.”

Asma Uddin, a religious liberty lawyer and scholar, was the keynote speaker, with Dr. William Madges, chair of Theology Department, Xavier University, as commentator. Dr. Catherine Sherron, chair of TMU’s Philosophy, Political Science & Interdisciplinary Studies, was the moderator.

Ms. Uddin introduced herself as “an American Muslim and I fight for the rights of Christians.” Among the high-profile cases that Ms. Uddin has argued include: *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, a case asserting Hobby Lobby’s religious exemption against the Affordable Care Act’s contraception mandate; *Carson v. Makin* requiring the state of Maine to fund religious education at private religious schools as part of its tuition assistance program; and *Kennedy v. Bremerton School District*, determining that high school football Coach Kennedy’s First Amendment rights were violated after he lost his job for praying at the 50-yard line after games.

“I have defended the rights of Christians across the world ... I have been motivated by a single principle: that religious liberty for some is religious liberty for none,” Ms. Uddin said.

Addressing the evening’s topic, Ms. Uddin said that to understand political polarization, it’s good to understand polarization in general and group identity.

“The idea is very simple. Each of us has our group. Our group is the ‘in group,’ and those outside our group are the ‘out group.’ Our attachment to our group is so significant that loyalty boosts self-esteem. On the flip side, studies have shown that if we are isolated from our group, the stigma acts on us psychologically and, also, triggers a physical assault on our bodies. What this means in practice is that, on an evolutionary level, humans are programmed to signal their allegiance to their tribe as a way of avoiding the loneliness and stress that comes with being cast out.”

Out groups, she said, can be seen as threatening and may elicit fear and hostile reactions, especially when the status gap begins to close between the in group — the group that is larger in numbers and holds the majority of power — and the out group.

“In America today, many of us have allegiance to our political tribes in a way that’s not very different from the usual intergroup interaction or competition,” she said. “Tribalism affects how we interpret and respond to information. Our desire for our group to win makes us less interested in finding the right answer to a particular question or debate and more interested in locating and shaping the information that will help us win the argument.”

Political tribalism, she said, is having an impact not only on political campaigns but among members of society. “Unfortunately, in today’s tribalized political environment it is becoming harder and harder to be civil,” she said. Defining civility as “clinging and caring for one’s identity, means and beliefs without degrading someone else’s in the process. It is about disagreeing without disrespect.”

Studies on intergroup bias show that an in group will react with hostility towards an out group when it finds the out group threatening. “Solving that problem requires us to lower the temperature to lower perception of the threat,” she said. Working together on shared goals, no matter how small, is a place to start.

In his commentary, Dr. Madges focused on the Catholic understanding of religious liberty by a quick historical look at the evolution of Catholic teachings. “In this exposition three interrelated concepts are extremely important — human dignity, conscience and then religious liberty,” said Dr. Madges.



(above left, from left) Dr. Catherine Sherron, moderator, takes notes as Asma Uddin makes her keynote presentation, Feb. 16, at the William T. Robinson II Institute for Religious Liberty event.



(above right, from left) Dr. Sherron, Dr. Joseph Chillo, president, TMU; Dr. William Madges, commentator from Xavier University; Dr. Ray Hebert and Ms. Uddin, gather for a group photo before the presentation.

The medieval and early modern Church for centuries held the idea of “extra Ecclesia nulla salus,” or “outside the Church there is no salvation.”

“The Church claimed that it alone possesses the truth necessary for human wellbeing and salvation,” said Dr. Madges.

The 19th century, he said, “was the century of revolutionary upheavals.” Intellectual revolutions — Immanuel Kant, “think for yourself”; scientific revolutions — Darwin’s theory of evolution; political revolutions – the French Revolution and Marx Revolution.

It is in this context on Dec. 8, 1864, that Pope Pius IX issues his encyclical “Quanta cura” (“With how great care”), where he spoke out against the erroneous ideas that were gaining currency in the modern world. “In short, Pius was asserting the notion that error and falsehood have no rights. Only truth should be promoted and the Catholic Church had the truth.”

Fast forward 100 years, after the Second Vatican Council pope’s have continued to affirm the principle of religious liberty very different from the 19th century, said Dr. Madges quoting extensively from Pope John Paul II 1991 World Peace Day message: “No human authority has the right to interfere with a person’s conscience. Conscience bears witness to the transcendence of the person, also in regard to society at large, and, as such, is inviolable. Conscience, however, is not an absolute placed above truth and error. Rather, by its very nature, it implies a relation to objective truth, a truth which is universal, the same for all, which all can and must seek. It is in this relation to objective truth that freedom of conscience finds its justification, in as much as it is a necessary condition for seeking the truth worthy of man, and for adhering to that truth once it is sufficiently known. This in turn necessarily requires that each individual’s conscience be respected by everyone else; people must not attempt to impose their own ‘truth’ on others. The right to profess the truth must always be upheld, but not in a way which involves contempt for those who may think differently. Truth imposes itself solely by the force of its own truth. To deny an individual complete freedom of conscience — and in particular the freedom to seek the truth — or to attempt to impose a particular way of seeing the truth, constitutes a violation of that individual’s most personal rights. This also aggravates animosities and tensions, which can easily lead to strained and hostile relations within society or even to open conflict. In the end, it is on the level of conscience that the difficult task of ensuring a firm and lasting peace is most effectively confronted.”

From Pope Francis address at the “2014 International Conference on Religious Freedom and the Global Clash of Values,” Dr. Madges quotes, “Legal systems, therefore,

whether state or international, are called upon to recognize, guarantee and protect religious freedom, which is an intrinsic right inherent to human nature, to the dignity of being free, and is also a sign of a healthy democracy and one of the principal sources of the legitimacy of the State. Religious freedom, acknowledged in constitutions and laws and expressed in consistent conduct, promotes the development of relationships of mutual respect among the diverse Confessions and their healthy collaboration with the State and political society, without confusion of roles and without antagonism. In place of the global clash of values, it thus becomes possible to start from a nucleus of universally shared values, of global cooperation in view of the common good.”

In closing, Dr. Madges quipped that, “coming from a Jesuit institution, I cannot stop myself from making a Jesuit reference.” Quoting Ignatius of Loyola’s Presupposition:

“... it should be presupposed that every good Christian ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it.

Further, if one cannot interpret it favorably, one should ask how the other means it.

If the meaning is wrong, one should correct the person with love;

If this is not enough, one should search out every appropriate means through which, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved.”



Bishop’s Schedule

Feb. 25–26 DPAA pre-announcement weekend Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington 4:30 p.m.	March 2 Thomas More University, Board of Trustees meeting, 1:30 p.m. DPAA kick-off dinner, Airport Marriott, Hebron, 6 p.m.
Feb. 26 Rite of Election, Cathedral Basilica, 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.	March 4–5 DPAA announcement weekend
Feb. 28 Advisory Council meeting, 9:30 a.m. DPAA kick-off dinner, Cynthiana, 6 p.m.	March 7 Advisory Council meeting, 9:30 a.m.

COMMENTARY

A lesson from the Misfit

More than a half century ago, Flannery O'Connor wrote a short story, "A Good Man is Hard to Find." One of the main characters in the story is an elderly woman who is difficult, stubborn and not a particularly happy person.



Traveling to Florida with her family, she is constantly whining and complaining. Then, thanks to some carelessness on her part, they get in a traffic accident and while their car is stalled, an escaped convict (the Misfit) chances on them and executes the whole family. Just before she is shot, the unhappy elderly woman, fearing for her life, reaches out and

touches the Misfit and has a gentle moment with him. After killing her, he says, she would have been a good woman, if there had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life.

I suspect we would all be better persons if there were someone there to shoot us every minute of our lives. At least I know that I would, because I once had someone there to shoot me and it made me a better person — at least during the time when the threat was there. Here's my story.

Twelve years ago, I was diagnosed with cancer. The initial prognosis was good (surgery and chemotherapy and the cancer should be stopped). For a while it was. However, three years later it again made an unwelcome reappearance.

This time the prognosis was not good. My oncologist, whom I trust, shared that the situation was grave. Chemotherapy would be tried again; but he assured me, that barring the exceptional, this treatment would not be effective for long and would be more for palliative purposes than for any real hope of remission or cure. He felt it his duty to deliver that message clearly. I was facing the shooter. You have about 30 months to live.

As you can guess, this wasn't easy to accept and process. I struggled mightily to make peace with it. Eventually, through prayer, I wrote a creed for myself as to how I would try to live out those two years. Here's the creed:

I am going to strive to be as healthy as I can for as long as I can.

I am going to strive to be as productive for as long as I can.

I am going to make every day and every activity as precious and enjoyable as possible.

I am going to strive to be as gracious, warm and charitable as possible.

I am going to strive to accept others' love in a deeper way than I have up to now.

I am going to strive to live a more-fully "reconciled life." No room for past hurts anymore.

I am going to strive to keep my sense of humor intact.

I am going to strive to be as courageous and brave as I can.

I am going to strive, always, to never look on what I am losing, but rather to look at how wonderful and full my life has been and is.

And, I am going to, daily, lay all of this at God's feet through prayer.

For some months I prayed that creed intensely every day, trying to live out its every tenet. However, the

chemotherapy treatments were, surprisingly, very effective. After five months of treatment, all the indications of cancer were gone. I was healthy again and my oncologist was optimistic that, perhaps, his diagnosis had been too dire and that with some maintenance chemo, I might enjoy many more years of life. And, indeed I did for the next seven years.

However, during those seven years of remission, feeling healthy and optimistic, with no one there to shoot me every day, I now prayed my creed less frequently and with less intensity. And even though its challenges were now more ingrained in me, my old habits of taking life for granted, of praying St. Augustine's prayer (Make me a better Christian, Lord, but not yet!), of losing perspective, of impatience, of self-pity, of nursing grievances, and of not appreciating fully the richness of life, began to seep back into my life.

The "shooter" reappeared two years ago with another reoccurrence of the cancer. Initially the prognosis was dire (30 months and chemotherapy for the rest of my life) and the creed again took a central place in my life. However, a new treatment unexpectedly offered a much longer future and, with no one there to shoot me every day, the creed again began to lose its power and my old habits of impatience, ingratitude and self-pity began again to mark my days.

I am deeply grateful for all the post-cancer years that God and modern medicine have given me. Cancer has been a gift that has taught me a lot. Having my life parceled out in six-month chunks has me appreciating life, others, health, nature, the simple joys of life, and my work like never before. I'm a better person when there is someone there to shoot me every day.

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

A mystery that needs to be lived

I am a bit ambiguous about mystery. I can't deny that I enjoy a good detective show on television — the ones which do not display much violence and which feature a dash of humor.



Reading mystery stories is also a favorite pastime. My background in math and science leads me to enjoy solving problems or investigating processes. These activities all end in solutions. Basically, I like to think everything is solvable.

Machinery that is simple is delightful since it can be figured out and fixed when it breaks. I am compulsive about fixing what breaks or making things work. Like a dog

with a bone, I cannot let go, just keep tugging on and shaking the thing until I have a problem solved.

Life, on the other hand, is a bit different. Sometimes I balk at mystery and uncertainty. It would be nice to know precisely what the future holds to be prepared. The response "It's a mystery" troubles me when I am looking for solutions to life's complex issues. Shouldn't all messes be able to be cleaned up? Wouldn't life be grand if there were a simple solution to all disagreements, all problems?

Here's the ambiguity. Relationships and life would be quite boring if there were no surprises involved and no

complexity. There could be no growth, no fun, nothing in which to revel if friendship and life and knowledge were just static. If there were nothing new to learn about life or friends, if there were no surprises, life would be quite dull.

Thank God for mystery. Which brings me to the Trinity. I really would like to be able to explain that mystery, how God can be three persons, and each is fully God and yet there is just one God. In the process of many theology courses, I learned a plethora of Greek terms that tried to explain the mystery of it all. Each explanation seemed clear; each used the special language to explain how this could be. But each explanation, while clever and clear, left me a bit cold since none of the explanations touched my heart or led me to love God more.

When all is said and done, maybe it would be better to ponder the mystery without trying to solve it. Trinity — three persons, one God. What am I invited into when I am invited to share the life of this trinitarian God? Most emphatically it reveals that the heart of what it means to be in God is to be in relationship. Relationship defines our God — loving relationships, unbreakable relationships that continually reveal, create and give life. These relationships declare that God is community. When we abide in loving, self-giving relationships, when we abide in community, we abide in God.

That is both attractive and challenging. Anyone who has attempted to live in loving relationships, to live in life-giving community knows how difficult it is to maintain loving, communal relationships. Every life form demands living in community with neighbors, co-workers, family, friends. And in each incidence that is both rewarding and

challenging.

Pondering the Trinity reveals that the oneness of our God does not mean that God is an enclosed, impenetrable entity, like a tightly knit sphere or a ball bearing. God is three, open, self-giving relationships. Participation in the life of God means openness. To be in God, to share God's life demands that we be together in loving relationships that open out to the world beyond. Any community that closes itself off to the world and others does not reveal the mystery of life in our trinitarian God.

Each person of the Trinity shares all with each other person. None of the three withholds anything from the others. If that happened the others would not be God. What a challenge — to be in God is to hold on to nothing that another needs for wholeness.

The loving relationships of our trinitarian God result in an absolute explosion of creativity. There is nothing static in this activity of loving relationships. There is the sending of the spirit of life to all, no holding back. Love is creative. The perfect love of the three persons we call God results in the creation of all that is, it results in life and beauty.

Our interactions with the persons in our lives and in all the various parts of creation we touch will be life giving and affirming of all that is good when we live in harmony with our trinitarian God. Our God shows us how to live and to create, how to be love, what it means to be community. What a beautiful mystery that needs to be lived rather than solved.

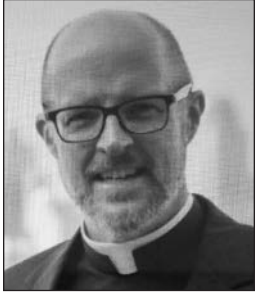
Divine Providence Sister Fidelis Tracy is a retired theology professor at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky

Lent: Give us back the joy of our salvation

The readings for the first Sunday of Lent — Cycle A — are: Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19 and Matthew 4:1-11

I was recently reading a thought-provoking article in *The Atlantic* where the author explores the idea that the “goal (of modern tech) is ... to transform entertainment from something we choose, channel by channel or stream by stream or feed by feed, into something we inhabit. In

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

the metaverse, the promise goes, we will finally be able to do what science fiction foretold: live within our illusions.”

Not only do I think this idea provocative, but I also think it is true. Whether or not we even know what the “metaverse” is, we all now live under its influence. And that influence hobbles our imitation of Christ.

What I mean by this is that we are now more capable than ever, without knowing it, of living within our illusions. This is because patterns of contemporary life surround us with the impulses, impositions and preferences of a technological civilization — not a Godly society. Such a civilization tends to obscure the reality and the question of God.

First, it relegates God to the background. Then, it makes the question and reality of God a non-question. Finally, it disappears God altogether, making God a non-reality for our lives largely by distracting us and keeping us frenetic. This is what the theologian, Dr. Larry Chapp, refers to as the “nullification of God in contemporary society.” A civilization that does this will always terminate in being an anti-human civilization, carrying within very anti-human ways of living.

In such a civilization the idea of the spiritual or of spiritual striving is largely understood to be anachronistic, silly and even psychologically harmful. That is because a technological civilization encodes within it its every output a materialistic understanding of the human person that tends to seal us off within ourselves, seeking to satisfy our material wants and needs. Not only does this impoverished conception of self and society seal us up within ourselves, but it also seals us off from others, and most problematically, from the living God — his way, his truth, and his life. This plunges us into existential despair. We might describe this reality as the contemporary experience of the desert.

Yet, it is precisely in the experience of the desert that we are called to realize and to recover our spiritual strivings. The devil tempted Christ to live according to the total satisfaction of material needs, which is very much the temptation offered to us by an overweening technological society and the self-referential, self-enclosed “self” it tends to create. Jesus confronts the temptation with the proclamation to recognize the reality of God and his truth: “One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.”

We see how the devil tempted Jesus — tempts us — to spectacle and worldly satisfaction, and away from the path of humility, truth and holiness. In other words, the devil was offering to Jesus all the benefits of a totalizing worldly existence. All he had to do was live according to a lie. To live according to a reduced, illusory reality. This is very much the temptation and the lie of the contemporary world on offer to us in myriad ways every single day.

The wisdom of the world is a materialistic, technological civilization that perpetually distracts us from what is most important, true, essential, truly human, Godly and eternal. The wisdom and way of God is prayer, fasting and almsgiving with the aim of being perfected and transformed in divine love. The way of authentic wisdom

(Continued on page 14)

True love — a cross to cherish.

Several years ago, I was listening to a Catholic radio program on marriage. The topic was marriage and how divorce in the United States is alarmingly on the rise. Is this because couples do not realize or don’t know that marriage is a vocation — a call from God — and that even

VIEWPOINT



Faye Roch

the strongest marriages experience times of brokenness — a heavy cross to carry?

The host then went on to mention a small town in Bosnia, Siroki-Brijeg, where not one single divorce has been recorded. In this small, primarily Catholic town (the population is comparable to the number of Catholics in the Diocese of Covington) they have a rich Croatian marriage tradition. When the bride and bridegroom go to the church to be married, they carry a Crucifix with them. The priest blesses the Crucifix and instead of saying that they have found the ideal partner with whom to share their lives, he exclaims, “You have found your cross! It is a cross to love, to carry with you, a cross that is not to be thrown off, but rather cherished.”

This cross becomes the center of their marriage, from the beginning their family is united to the cross of Christ. Through their commitment and strong faith, the couple believes deeply that the family is born of the cross and understands that all human relationships experience suffering and times of difficulty and misunderstanding. At these times they do not turn immediately to a lawyer or psychologist, they turn to the cross. They implore the Lord’s help, asking for grace, begging for strength to forgive each other and open their hearts to sacrificial love. I recalled this tradition of carrying the cross as I

browsed through the marriage supplement in the *Messenger*. The memories of my wedding almost 38 years ago and the planning for it came to mind. As a young woman raised in the Catholic faith, I do recall how important my Catholic faith was going to be in marriage and having a Catholic Mass was important and, in my heart, truly meaningful. But I also was caught up in all the other details that encompassed a “perfect” day — the perfect dress, beautiful flowers and a fun reception surrounded by those we love.

Being Catholic provided us with a path to start our journey into marriage. My future husband and I attended the pre-requisite marriage prep classes and met with the priest who would preside over our marriage. We were ready to live happily ever after, just like in the Hallmark movies where true love is always perfect, beautiful and easy?

The vows we took, “to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until parted by death,” provided us with a journey that has led us through many peaks and valleys. Through it all, it is our faith that carries us.

For myself, I have shown to those that I most love my brokenness and many faults and true imperfections. In trying to be the best version of myself, I come up short, exhibiting the very worst version of myself. It has been through my faith that I have found myself at the foot of the cross asking for the grace and strength to love sacrificially.


Over these almost 38 years I’ve learned that true love is not always perfect and that true love is not about my own wants, needs and desires. As a married couple, we do carry a cross, a cross that not only shows suffering but also hope and forgiveness. This hope and forgiveness can lift our hearts and give us the grace to live out our vocation of marriage.

Faye Roch is director of the Pro-Life Office, Diocese of Covington, Ky.S

Divine interruptions (the suddenness God)

I was born to a nomadic family in East Africa, Eritrea. Like the rest of my four brothers and four sisters, I was happily tending my parents’ cows, goats, sheep and camels. Then, suddenly the divine interruption moment happened in my life. I was 10 years old when the

VIEWPOINT



Isaak A. Isaak

Comboni Missionaries came to where we were living and asked my parents if they could take me with them to seminary formation.

Though I was hesitant, my parents agreed with the idea. Like many parents, my parents did not understand divine Interruptions or the suddenness of God. They were and are simple nomadic people with routine lives. I traveled with

the Comboni Missionaries to many African and European countries and then to the Americas for postulancy, novitiate and scholasticate formation stages. In all my travels for missionary formation, I have witnessed God’s sudden interruptions in my life.

Though people aren’t always aware of divine interruptions, they certainly do happen to many people, especially priests and religious throughout centuries. The Holy Spirit’s breaking into people’s lives happens all the time. The Old and New Testaments are full of divine interruptions.

For example, Moses’ divine interruption happened at the site of the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:3-4). While he was hiding from Egyptian authorities in the Midian Mountains, God visited him at the Burning Bush and his

life changed forever. What can be said of a simple nomadic man like Moses, can also be said of the great patriarchs, prophets and the Apostles down the line to the present day. Jesus is always waiting to suddenly surprise people, as he did by the calling of his disciples. Since they were simple fishermen, they probably felt unworthy of his call.

A story of divine interruption (or the suddenness of God), “the woman of Samaria” comes to mind. This woman’s story relates to my simple nomadic life. She was an ordinary person, doing her routine work fetching water from Jacob’s well. We know from the story that she was not a perfect person. However, I believe Jesus was not looking for perfect people, otherwise, he wouldn’t have chosen the disciples. He was looking for people who were open to his divine interruption, yielding to the Holy Spirit, and ready to serve him. The Samaritan woman’s life was changed forever due to her personal encounter with Jesus.

Another fascinating biblical divine interruption occurred to “the simple shepherds” in Luke 2:8-9. They received the good news about a newborn king and followed a star leading to Bethlehem.

To get your attention, many times God moves very strongly. But most of the time, we don’t see God’s movements because we don’t make the time to look for God moving in our life. When we allow God to have his way, great and mighty things will be made manifest. Moses, the Samaritan Woman, and the shepherds allowed God to work in them and through them.

What would you do if God suddenly interrupted your life at 1:00 a.m. or 2:00 a.m. in the morning? Are you willing to listen to him?

Isaak A. Isaak is co-director of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, Diocese of Covington, Ky

Abrahamic Family House opens in Abu Dhabi as a fruit of Pope Francis visit in 2019

Judith Sudilovsky
OSV News

A unique multifaith center of worship encompassing a church, a synagogue and a mosque was inaugurated Feb. 16-19 in Abu Dhabi as an affirmation of the principles declared in the Document on Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb in Abu Dhabi in February 2019.

Abrahamic Family House (AFH) will be opened to the public March 1. Visitors will be able to come to worship as well as tour the site.

Inspired by the meeting between the two religious lead-

ers, the idea of the center began to take shape in August 2019 when Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahayn, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, allocated a plot of land on Saadiyat Island for construction. Abu Dhabi is the capital of the Gulf nation of United Arab Emirates (UAE).



OSV News photo/courtesy Adjaye Associates

Abrahamic Family House on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi includes a mosque, from left, church and synagogue. In this aerial night view St. Francis church is pictured in the center. The church of St. Francis is under the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Vicariate of South Arabia, and one or more priests will be designated to serve the Catholic faithful and to manage the day-to-day operations of the church.

ers, the idea of the center began to take shape in August 2019 when Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahayn, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, allocated a plot of land on Saadiyat Island for construction. Abu Dhabi is the capital of the Gulf nation of United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Named after the patriarch Abraham who is revered by Islam, Christianity and Judaism, the official inauguration of the center began Feb. 16, with opening ceremonies taking place at each house of worship. It ended with the opening of St. Francis Church Feb. 19.

The inauguration of the center was the “realization of a dream and the first fruit of the Document (on) Human Fraternity,” said Msgr. Yoannis Lahzi Gaid, a Catholic Coptic priest who formerly served as second personal secretary to Pope Francis and is a member of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity meant to implement the Abu Dhabi declaration.

“The inauguration means continuing to hope for a better future among believers of different religions,” he told OSV News in an email. “It means acknowledging the courage of the four signatories of the first stone who inaugurated a new page in the relationship between the three religions. It means that the project was conceived and carried forward not to unify the three religions, but to testify that we can and must find in our faith a reason for meeting and not for confrontation, for dialogue and never for rejection, for peace and never for war.”

In addition to the multi denominational church — which though inaugurated as a Catholic church will be

overcome.”

The church of St. Francis is under the jurisdiction of the Apostolic Vicariate of South Arabia, and one or more priests will be designated to serve the Catholic faithful and to manage the day-to-day operations of the church. Msgr. Lahzi Gaid said he will be tasked with helping the various parties achieve the objectives of the Abrahamic House, namely to “live human fraternity” and apply the principles of the Abu Dhabi Document.

“Fundamentalism is often the result of ignorance. Knowing the other is the best way to stop seeing him as an enemy to annihilate,” he said. “In the Middle East religion, it is considered a fundamental element of daily life and finding in Abraham the figure who unites a difficult and torn environment is the way to recovery.”

He said that seeing the three nearby places of worship leads him to “kneel down to thank the Lord who has guided this path of Human Fraternity which is bearing concrete fruits of coexistence, tolerance, friendship and reconciliation.”

“It was very exciting to see the believers of the three religions together in the same place, each one living his faith in mutual respect,” he said.

The three structures, similar in their cubic design but unique in their details, are meant to represent diverse communities of worshippers while evoking a traditional spirit that is future-looking toward acceptance, inclusion and peace, according to the AFH website.

“They each express themselves differently but share

equal external dimensions, with a unifying roof at a shared datum height, ensuring that none of the buildings from the three is more dominant than its counterparts,” the website explains.

A Hindu temple also is scheduled to be opened soon in Abu Dhabi.

Though now a Muslim country, with the Christian community consisting of expats and foreign workers, two pre-Islamic Christian monasteries have been discovered by archaeologists in the UAE in the past two decades, attesting to a historical Christian presence in the area. Jewish expats also live in the UAE, and a Jewish tombstone belonging to “David son of Moses” dating back to the period between 1507-1650 was discovered a few years ago in the area.

The AFH aims to spread knowledge among believers and non-believers, and importance will be given to the education center which will welcome everyone and answer questions especially among young people, Msgr. Lahzi Gaid said.

“We have seen the results of hate. Now we work to show the light of love and respect and dialogue,” he said.

Rabbi David Rosen, the international director of interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee who spoke at the opening conference, said in response to a query from OSV News that the AFH was an “expression of the integrity of each of the three Abrahamic faiths.”

“At the same time the very complex — and hopefully its programs — highlight the shared religio-ethical values of the three religious traditions and their universal message for the welfare of humanity at large,” Rosen

stressed.

At the conference, he also noted the synagogue in particular “offers an amazing opportunity to educate the world about the beauty and true values of Jewish tradition ... for a people that has suffered and still suffers from prejudice and bigotry born out of ignorance and misrepresentations.”

At the AFH inauguration, the prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, called the center a “beacon of mutual understanding.”

Muhammad Khalifa Al Mubarak, president of the AFH, said the establishment of the Abrahamic Family House was “the legacy of the founding father; the deceased Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, as well as the legacy of the values on which he built our state, his vision of peace, understanding and mutual respect in a country that today embraces more than 200 nationalities from all over the world.”

His hope was that “this building will be a source of hope for future generations and a beacon that unites them forever, in mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence.”

Though the UAE has come under attack by human rights activists for anti-democratic and human rights violations, it has at the same time been active in the past years promoting tolerance in the region. Together with Bahrain, it signed the Abraham Accords in September 2020, which worked toward normalization of relations with Israel.

Thomas More University Bishop Hughes Award returns

Staff report

After a four-year hiatus, Thomas More University is set to honor outstanding community members at the 25th Bishop William A. Hughes Award Dinner on Wednesday, March 29, sponsored by DBL Law. Three distinct awards will be presented to individuals who have shown leadership in the community and made significant impact on Catholic education.

Honorees at this year's dinner include Alan Pickett, executive director of Catholic Charities, Raymond G. Hebert, Ph.D., executive director of the Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III '67 Institute for Religious Liberty (IRL), and Wilbert Ziegler '53, J.D., honorary chair of the Thomas More University Second Century Campaign Steering Committee.

Mr. Pickett receives the Bishop William A. Hughes Award — for whom the dinner is named. This award was established in 1996 to honor those who have made significant contributions to Catholic higher education. Mr. Pickett joined Catholic Charities in September 2014 as the ninth executive director after 36 years in professional service as a practicing CPA, holding various administrative and leadership roles in several professional service firms. Mr. Pickett completed a Master of Arts in lay pastoral ministry from the Athenaeum of Ohio in 2010. In addition, he has spent much of his adult life actively participating in numerous ministries at his parish and volunteering in a variety of programs in the community including the Diocese of Covington Pro Life Commission, Tender Mercies, and Exodus Jail Listening Ministry of Northern Kentucky.

While the Bishop Hughes award is designed to honor external community members who have made significant contributions to Catholic education, the newly created Dr. Raymond Hebert Distinguished Service Award honors those who have made a signification contribution within the University. The inaugural award is being presented to Dr. Hebert, who has more than 47 years of service to the University. He currently serves the University as a dean emeritus and executive director of the IRL. Dr. Hebert's tremendous legacy began when he joined Thomas More in 1975 as a faculty member. Since then, Dr. Hebert has filled many roles including dean of summer session, chairperson of both history and the expanded history, international students, and political science departments, interim dean of student affairs, vice president of academic affairs/dean of the college, director of James Graham Brown Honors program, director of the dual credit program, as well as coordinator of many study abroad programs.

The Thomas More Medallion, being presented to Mr. Ziegler, is the highest dedicated service award granted to a member of the Thomas More community, recognizing that individual's extraordinary service to the University and to the larger community which the University serves. After

graduating from Thomas More, Ziegler went on to have a paramount impact on not only the University, but Catholic education in the region as a whole, serving on several boards in the community, including as honorary chair of the Second Century Campaign Steering Committee and the Advancement and Outreach committee at Thomas More University. He has also created several scholarships in support of students at Covington Latin School, Thomas More, and the University of Cincinnati which serve to continue his legacy.



Alan Pickett



Raymond G. Hebert, Ph.D.



Wilbert Ziegler

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS



Catholic Schools — a grateful community
On Monday of Catholic Schools Week St. Pius X School, Edgewood, celebrated how Catholic schools impact the community. The students made thank you cards for the volunteers in our community, and some officers from the Edgewood Police Department joined us for lunch.



Day of Prayer and Penance
Students at St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs, gathered to pray the Joyful Mysteries of the rosary on the Day of Prayer and Penance for Life, Jan. 23.

The next **Marriage Encounter Weekend for spouses** will be held March 3–5, Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center, Cincinnati. For information contact Andy and Melanie Reindersman, (859) 653-8464, application@esharing.org, or visit esharing.org.

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.

The Bishop Brossart Softball and Volleyball teams will host its 2nd annual Euchre Tournament, March 10, Hegenaur Hall, Alexandria. Doors open at 5:30 p.m.; tournament begins 7 p.m. Top prize is \$500. Cost \$25 per player (includes food, water and pop). Beer and wine will be available for purchase. Contact ckremer11@icloud.com to register or for more information.

Morning of Reflection on Lectio Divina, March 11, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, a mini retreat for anyone wanting to know more about their spiritual lives or the process of discernment. Presentation/discussion, 9 a.m.; Mass 10 a.m.; Holy Hour; confession 11 a.m. Everybody is welcome.

Sacred Heart Dinners, an opportunity for those discerning a call to the priesthood to meet with Father Conor Kunath and other clergy to ask questions. Parents and family members are encouraged to attend as well. The next dinner is March 12, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, beginning at 5 p.m. with Sunday Vespers, after which dinner is provided. To be included, contact the Vocations Office, (859) 392-1500 or your parish priest.

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

Fish Frys

Our Savior Parish, Covington,
March 31, noon–6 p.m.

St. Benedict Parish, Covington,
March 3, 17 and 31, 5–7 p.m.

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

All Fridays of Lent — Feb 24-Mar 31

Holy Cross District High School,
Covington, 5–8 p.m.

Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish,
Erlanger, 4–8 p.m.

St. Augustine Parish, Covington, 4–7 p.m.

St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger,
4:30–8 p.m.

St. Bernard Parish, Dayton, 5–7 p.m.

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

St. Edward Parish, Cynthiana,
11 a.m.–1 p.m.; 5–7 p.m., (859)-298-5932

St. Francis Xavier Parish, Falmouth,
Knights of Columbus, 4–7:30 p.m.,
(859) 321-9733

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

St. Joseph Parish, Camp Springs, 4–7:30 p.m.

St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill, 4:30–7:30 p.m.

St. Timothy, Union, drive-thru, credit card only,
4:30–7 p.m., Dine-in 5-7:30 p.m.

St. William Parish, Williamstown,
drive-thru only, 4:30–7 p.m.

\$35. Register online <https://covdio.org/oce/catholic-bible-study/> or call (859) 392-1529.

The St. Cecilia Altar Society annual Spring Craft Bazaar, March 19, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Table rental, call (859) 356-8235. Tables are \$35 for a 9’x9’ space, which includes a table and electricity (first come, first served).

Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, Art Gallery will host the Elementary School Art Show, March 19, noon-4; March 24 and 25, before, during and after the Senior Play; and March 26, noon-4.

A personal Lenten Pilgrimage of five historic churches of the Diocese of Covington, April 1, rain or shine. Walk (or drive) any part of the 4.3-mile pilgrimage route. Start at any church on the route, any time. The churches: Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Mother of God, St. Augustine, St. Benedict and St. John the Evangelist — open at 9 a.m. for Eucharistic Adoration, with closing Benediction, 2 p.m. Mother of God offers Mass at noon. An informational booklet will be available at the church where you start your journey. RSVP CovLentenPilgrimage@gmail.com.

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.

NEWSWORTHY



Congratulations to the following students for earning the title School Spelling Bee Champion in the 2023 Scripps National Spelling Bee program:

Noah Baker, St. Henry Elementary School, Elsmere;

Anthony Fender, St. Pius X Elementary School, Edgewood;

Ethan Hagedorn, St. Cecilia School, Independence;

Aarya Mehendale, St. Paul School, Florence;

Adam Tarvin, St. Joseph School, Cold Spring;

These students will move on to the next level of competition, which is an online test where spellers with the top 20 scores will advance to the WCPO KY/IN Regional Spelling Bee, March 11. Spellers at the regional bee will compete against other students from Northern Kentucky and Southeast Indiana, and the winner will compete at the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington D.C. the week of Memorial Day.

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.

St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, Men’s “Brews and Wild Game Night,” Feb. 25, after 4 p.m. Mass, in school cafeteria. Cost \$15, includes wild game dishes and craft beers.

“Put Out Into the Deep,” Lenten Mission with Msgr. William Cleves, St. Agnes Church, Ft. Wright, March 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, 7–8 p.m. Each evening Msgr. Cleves will focus on a Scripture passage, followed by Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction. Confessions will be offered during Adoration.

Ky. Supreme Court returns question of abortion back to Circuit Court — ban remains in effect

Staff report

The Kentucky Supreme Court issued a long-awaited opinion in the Cameron v. EMW abortion case, Feb. 16. The ruling focused on a technical “matter of standing,” leaving the merits of the case, especially the question of whether there is a right to abortion in the Kentucky State Constitution, unresolved. Meanwhile, Kentucky’s Human Life Protection Act, which prohibits abortions except for when preventing the death or permanent impairment of the mother, and the Heartbeat Law, which bans most abortions once a fetal heartbeat is detected, remains in effect until the case is settled. The case will now go back to Jefferson Circuit Court for further proceedings.

Upon learning of the Ky. Supreme Court’s decision, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky, on behalf of Kentucky’s four bishops, issued the following statement:

“Following today’s decision by the Kentucky Supreme Court in Cameron v. EMW, we are grateful that the Commonwealth’s laws protecting unborn children remain in effect. As the litigation continues, we pray for a just out-

come. We also wish to reiterate our statement in response to the Dobbs decision last June:

“We affirm that every child is a sacred gift. We know that families may need help in welcoming this gift, through programs and policies that will address the challenges and mitigate the pressure that women may feel in

internal efforts, which quietly take place every day in our communities, must be accompanied by public policy that allow families in all circumstances to thrive. These include, but are not limited to:

— Increasing access to affordable housing and other material assistance.

— Support and resources for programs that promote welcoming children through birth, adoption, or fostering.

— Offering greater access to mental health resources, healthcare, domestic violence assistance, childcare assistance, educational and employment opportunities, and paid leave for parents.



making the decision to seek an abortion.

“Our parishes, (arch)diocesan agencies, such as Catholic Charities, healthcare institutions, and pro-life shelters and centers are dedicated to supporting women and unborn children in difficult circumstances. These

“As we advocate for these pro-family policies so vital to the common good, we also call upon all Catholics to walk with moms and their children in need and to reflect God’s mercy and love to all caught up in these fraught issues surrounding abortion, including those who choose abortion.”

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Let Them Live has helped over 550 moms choose life for their baby

Laura Keener
Editor

“I don’t want to end this little boy’s life, but by continuing thru with life for him I will be neglecting the needs of my others and possibly making us homeless.” These are the words of a distressed mother spoken to the Franciscan Daughters of Mary when following up to a desperate e-mail for prayers and guidance received at the Rose Garden Home Mission. The writer was a single mother of five, going through a divorce, receiving no financial help from the father.

Her situation went from difficult to desperate when doctors determined her pregnancy to be high risk and she was ordered to bed rest, drastically reducing her work hours. The woman lived in Central Kentucky and the Franciscan Daughters could not physically tend to her needs. They provided her a New Baby Welcome Basket and sent out an urgent request for prayers. Those prayers were answered when one of the prayer warriors told her about the organization Let Them Live.

Let Them Live is a pro-life organization based in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, but whose scope extends all over the United States and is even spanning into Canada, England, Mexico and Peru. The organization “envision[s] a culture where women never feel like abortion is their only option simply because of their financial situation.”

The organization began simply, yet courageously, when Nathan Berning learned in a late night, online chat room that a pregnant woman had recently lost her job, was evicted from her residence and was now living in a car and preparing to abort her child.

“It was December. It was freezing. Nathan just knew that that’s not okay for a pregnant woman to be living like that,” Emily Berning said. Nathan and Emily, founders of Let Them Live, were newlyweds at the time. While his wife slept, Mr. Berning contemplated about how they might be able to help this woman and by extension save the life of her child.

“He kind of nudged me awake and said, ‘Hey, do you want to save a life from abortion?’ And I was like, yeah, of course, yeah, anything,” Mrs. Berning said. The plan was for the couple to empty their bank account, a total of about



Emily and Nathan Berning hold one of the first babies saved from abortion by Let Them Live. Since its founding in 2019, Let Them Live has helped over 550 moms choose life for their baby through financial and emotional support.

\$1,200, and use it to find a place for the pregnant mom to live while she developed a plan to keep her baby.

“We gave her everything we had — she chose life. That was the moment, that was the experience that we had,” Mrs. Berning said, when God revealed what would be their life work. “We were living in a fifth-wheel trailer at that time. We both quit our jobs to do Let Them Live,” she said.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, a pro-abortion research and policy organization, 73 percent of women have abortions due to financial burden. Let Them Live offers women financial support so that they can choose life instead. That financial support not only addresses the most immediate needs — paying for rent, utilities, gas and food — but also future needs and a chance at financial stability — counseling, financial literacy and help finding employment.

While many of the problems women experience may sound the same, the details and the solutions are as varied as the women themselves. Each woman works with a Let Them Live counselor to develop a plan that will best help them. Some moms might not have any friends or family to support them and need most of their financial support during their pregnancy.

“Some women are having abortions because they can’t afford childcare after the baby’s born, so maybe a financial plan will start after the baby’s born,” said Mrs. Berning. “We like to taper our support because we don’t want it to stop all at once. We’ll do, like, nine months of rent and six months of utilities and four months of groceries and three months of car payments, something like that. Once a mom signs off on the plan, we get all the information to pay her bills.”

Cash is never given directly to the women, instead Let Them Live pays her bills on her behalf. Since its founding four years ago, over 550 women have abandoned their abortion plan and instead have chosen life for their baby with

the financial and emotional support of Let Them Live. One of those moms made an adoption plan and currently Mr. and Mrs. Berning are caring for a newborn while the mom considers an adoption plan. The rest of the moms have chosen to keep her child.

The financial support each woman needs goes beyond pocket money. The Let Them Live website shares the plight of each woman they are helping along with a fundraising goal for her. Most goals start in \$20,000 range, while others are nearing \$50,000.

“We’ve never had to say no, to an abortion-minded woman. We’ve never had to turn anyone away. God really has provided,” said Mrs. Berning. “We’re just constantly looking for more funding sources because we know that raising money is directly related to saving lives.”

In addition to website fundraisers for individual women, Let Them Live offers two other ways to financially support their mission. Members of the Heartbeat Club make automatic monthly donations and the Adopt-a-Mom program matches parishes and other organizations to sponsor a specific mom. Sponsors receive pregnancy milestone updates, ultrasound images and any photos the mom shares of her baby after he or she is born.

But before the fundraising and financial support, Let Them Live must gain the trust and change the mind and heart of a woman who feels desperate and who, in many cases, has been conditioned by life experiences to not trust anyone.

“We like to hire counselors who have been in situations like that in the past or maybe have considered abortion or had an abortion, because they can speak to that directly,” said Mrs. Berning. Let Them Live has 14 counselors on the front line, taking calls and inviting woman to trust that they can choose life for their baby.

“It’s a matter of telling them that their concerns are valid, that we understand where they’re coming from, and that their circumstances are temporary, but abortion is permanent,” said Mrs. Berning. “The biggest thing that is so important that we tell women is that they have time to make a decision. The abortion clinics, our culture, tell women that they have to decide right now; if they’re going to have that abortion, do it, do it right now. We’re saying look, just give us an opportunity. Let us share with you what we can do for you.”

The mom that the Franciscan Daughters of Mary was helping with the support of Let Them Live began having contractions at 28 weeks and was admitted to the hospital. After three days and with prayers to St. Gerard — the patron saint of expectant mothers — her labor stopped. At 37 weeks she gave birth to healthy baby boy.

“Thank you, St. Gerard! And thank you to all of God’s servants who helped us see her through this very difficult situation,” said Mother Seraphina.



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Emotional LA sheriff details arrest of suspect in shooting death of Bishop O’Connell; motive remains unclear

Pablo Kay, Tom Hoffarth
OSV News

A 65-year-old Hispanic man was taken into custody the morning of Feb. 20 by Los Angeles County Sheriff’s deputies as the prime suspect in the murder of Auxiliary Bishop David G. O’Connell of Los Angeles.

LA County Sheriff Robert G. Luna announced at a news conference Monday afternoon local time at the Los Angeles County Hall of Justice in downtown LA that citizen tips led to the 8:15 a.m. arrest of Carlos Medina, the husband of a housekeeper who had worked at Bishop O’Connell’s home in Hacienda Heights, after an all-night search.

Bishop O’Connell, a native of Ireland who spent most of his 43 years as a priest serving in LA’s inner city, was found dead in his home on the afternoon of Feb. 18.

The next day, the LA Sheriff’s department announced that Bishop O’Connell’s death was being investigated as a homicide.

Luna established a timeline based on the work of detectives that indicated that at 7 p.m. Feb. 19 a tip was received linking Medina to the murder.

“They were concerned he was acting strange (and) irrational, and made comments about the bishop owing him money,” Luna said of the tip from the informant.

The tipster also said Medina had left his residence in Torrance and was headed for the Central California area.

After obtaining an arrest warrant, police began a search of Medina’s home. Another tip at 2 a.m. Feb. 20 indicated that Medina had returned home, and LA Sheriff’s Carson Station deputies were dispatched to the scene. Medina refused to come out of his residence when asked to surrender, Luna said.

The original search warrant was amended so Medina’s house could again be searched. A tactical team dispatched again called for Medina’s surrender, and he was then taken into custody around 8:15 a.m. without further incident.

Luna said two firearms were recovered and are being tested to see if they were used in the murder.

In an emotional press conference, Luna said “my heart grieves” for the death of Bishop O’Connell, based on all the



Bishop David G. O’Connell is pictured speaking with parishioners outside St. Frances X. Cabrini Church in Los Angeles July 19, 2015. According to local news reports, Los Angeles County sheriffs found him dead of a gunshot wound at his home Feb. 18, 2023, and his death has been ruled a homicide.

calls of support he received in the investigation over the last 48 hours.

“This man, this bishop, made a huge difference in our community,” said Luna. “He was loved. It is very sad that we are gathered here today about this murder.”

Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, one of the speakers at the press conference, stopped several times during his remarks to collect himself. At one point, Luna put his arm around his shoulder to comfort him.

“On behalf of our entire community, I want to share thanks for your professionalism and sensitivity,” Archbishop Gomez said of the investigation. “It is a sad and painful moment for all of us. Let us keep praying for Bishop Dave and his family, just as he prayed for law enforcement officials.”

Archbishop Gomez Feb. 19 called on Catholics to pray for the late bishop and those investigating his death.

“We continue to pray for Bishop Dave, and for his family in Ireland, and we pray for law enforcement officials as they continue their investigation into this terrible crime,” he said at a Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels that morning.

Sheriff Luna confirmed a deacon who worked with Bishop O’Connell was the first to find him in his home. The deacon went to check on the bishop after he didn’t show up to a meeting that morning, then dialed 911. Bishop

O’Connell was found in his bed with at least one gunshot wound. No firearm was recovered at the home, nor was there a sign of forced entry, Luna said.

After interviewing neighbors, Luna said surveillance video showed a vehicle had pulled into Bishop O’Connell’s driveway — a dark-colored compact SUV — which was later linked to the car his housekeeper had used.

Luna emphasized their investigation has not confirmed anything about a financial dispute between Medina and Bishop O’Connell, only that that information came from a witness.

“Our investigation continues ... to get a better picture of what happened here,” said Luna. “The detectives will go out and validate.”

Luna added that not all information from the investigation will be revealed yet, as “keeping the integrity of the investigation is a priority,” he said. “The next step is to present all of the evidence and try to get a criminal prosecution (filed against) Medina.”

Bishop O’Connell was originally from Brooklodge, Glanmire, in County Cork, the largest county in Ireland. He studied for the priesthood at the former All Hallows College in Dublin and was ordained to serve in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles in 1979.

Bishop O’Connell was named an auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles by Pope Francis in July 2015. Since then, he had served as episcopal vicar for the San Gabriel Pastoral Region, one of the LA archdiocese’s five regions.

During his time as auxiliary bishop in Los Angeles, evangelization, pastoral care for immigrants, and ensuring the future of his region’s Catholic schools were all top priorities for Bishop O’Connell, who believed that “parishes and schools are powerful instruments of transformation of people’s lives and of neighborhoods.”

Before being named a bishop, he was well-known for his pastoral work in south LA — where he served as pastor of four different parishes — in the years before and after the 1992 Rodney King riots. He played a key role, along with other local faith leaders, in bringing together communities already suffering from gang violence, poverty and drugs, while working to restore trust between community members and law enforcement.

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February 24, March 3, 10 and 17

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St. Mary is located at 8246 East Main Street in Alexandria. The Parish office phone number is 859-635-4188.

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The Messenger, the Diocese of Covington's official weekly newspaper, is seeking a full-time Staff Writer to join its editorial team. This position requires a broad range of abilities including excellent writing, proof-reading and digital content development. Must be a practicing Roman Catholic. If you enjoy meeting people and desire to draw others to the Catholic faith through your creative work submit a resume, references, and writing samples to **Stephen Koplyay** by e-mail: skoplyay@covdio.org, (859) 392-1500. EOE

PART-TIME DISHWASHER

St. Joe's, Cold Spring, cafeteria is searching for an energetic and optimistic team member to fill the role of a part-time dishwasher. The responsibility would be to make sure all lunch trays are washed, cooking equipment, utensils and dishwasher area remains clean. The hours would be 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM Monday, Thursday and Friday. Some flexibility is desired if a full time team member would need to be off. This individual must be Virtus trained.
If interested, please contact Laura Hatfield, director of Food Services, lhathfield@covdio.org.

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.

ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL, COLD SPRING AFTERCARE DIRECTOR

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

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St. Dominic Church
Attn: Principal Search Committee
303 West Main Street
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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 Koplyay** by email or fax.
SKoplyay@CovDio.org or 859-392-1589. EOE

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Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington is adding services and growing, and this is an exciting time to serve in our local Church. If you have a desire to work in an environment where you can truly make a difference by serving others, Catholic Charities seeks candidates to fill the following positions:

Accounting Associate
Catholic Charities is seeking to hire a part time Accounting Associate. This is a non-exempt, part-time, hourly position, 20 hours a week. Under the general direction of the Controller, assists with all activities in connection with financial and business matters, including budgeting, accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, financial reporting, external audit, policies, and procedures for transacting financial business.

Administrative Assistant to Marketing and Fund Development.
Catholic Charities is seeking to hire a part time Administrative Assistant to the Marketing and Fund Development staff. This is a non-exempt, part time, hourly position, 24 hours a week. Under the direction of the Institutional Advancement Manager assists with ensuring accuracy of donor database by entering and updating information, sending acknowledgements, providing reports, assist with event implementation and in the production of print and electronic marketing materials.

Parish Kitchen, Weekend Staff
Parish Kitchen is a special ministry that serves a free lunch daily in Covington to anyone hungry. We are looking for one or more individuals to work part-time on weekends who feel a call to serve within the context of this ministry, and who are capable of working with the population we do. This is a paid position, working selected Saturdays and Sundays from 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.to help prepare a meal, supervise volunteers who assist serving between 11:30 – 1:30 and clean up after closing. Ideally, two Weekend staff work together to oversee all aspects of this operation. Prior experience in one or more would be a strong plus: food service, ministry, and social work. You may be scheduled as few as once a month, or up to 4 or 5 times per month, depending on your availability and need.

To learn more details about any of these job opportunities, please visit our website at <https://www.covingtoncharities.org/news-events/job-opportunities>.



VOLUNTEER DRIVER

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Pope says Lent is time to let go of the frivolous, to choose truth, love

ROME — What matters is the truth and the love that God sees, not what is superficial, showy and self-centered, Pope Francis said during a Mass to mark the beginning of Lent. Lent is the time, he said, “to proclaim that God alone is Lord, to drop the pretense of being self-sufficient and the need to put ourselves at the center of things, to be the top of the class, to think that by our own abilities we can succeed in life and transform the world around us.” “How many distractions and trifles distract us from the things that really count! How often do we get caught up in our own wants and needs, lose sight of the heart of the matter, and fail to embrace the true meaning of our lives in this world!” he said. “Lent is a time of truth, a time to drop the masks we put on each day to appear perfect in the eyes of the world,” he said, and to “reject lies and hypocrisy. Not the lies and hypocrisies of others, but our own.” Pope Francis, dressed in the purple vestments of the Lenten season, celebrated an Ash Wednesday Mass Feb. 22 at Rome’s Basilica of Santa Sabina.

Synod process in North America coming to close, shows ‘deep love for Jesus Christ and Church,’ says bishop

WASHINGTON — The latest phase of the 2021-24 Synod on Synodality is coming to a close, with a final document to be written over the next six weeks and submitted to the Vatican by March 31. On Feb. 17, the North American Synod Team, led by bishops from Canada and the United States, wrapped up a weeklong retreat in Orlando, Florida, to synthesize the results of synod listening sessions throughout the two countries, a process the Mexican bishops will complete through their long-time partnership with the Latin American bishops’ council, or CELAM. The final document for the continental stage from North America, along with the contributions of the six other

continental assemblies, will form the basis of the “instrumentum laboris,” or working document, to be released by the general secretariat of the synod in June 2023. The synod itself has been “a tremendous grace,” showing “a deep love for Jesus Christ and the church,” said Bishop Daniel E. Flores of Brownsville, Texas, chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Doctrine and head of the synod process in the U.S., in a Feb. 21 statement issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Chef turned priest raises funds, builds community with king cakes

MEMPHIS — When it comes to raising money for his parish, Father Ben Bradshaw of Memphis really knows how to make the dough. The Catholic priest takes the concept of feeding his flock seriously, and is passionate about pastry, having been a chef trained in France. As this Lent approaches, Father Bradshaw spends a week, sacrificing some sleep, and heading over to the kitchen at St. Michael Church in Memphis, where he is pastor, to prepare nearly 700 king cakes. King cakes are a Mardi Gras tradition, where a baby figurine is hidden in the cake. That person who finds it is said to have good luck in the coming year, and that person must also bring a king cake to the Mardi Gras party the next year. The money raised from the sale of king cakes will go directly to fund the many ministries at the Tennessee parish. In the end, the priest says warmly, “it’s not really about the king cakes. Food is a vehicle to build community and to connect with each other. We need other people — even more than we think we need them.”

On war’s anniversary, Ukraine’s Catholics reflect on a year of suffering

KYIV, Ukraine — When the anniversary of Russia’s invasion falls on Feb. 24, it will be a moment to take stock of the resilience shown by Ukrainians. But it also puts a spotlight on a key role played by the Catholic Church in channeling human-

itarian aid and sustaining morale. “As a church, we’ll remain aware of people’s constant needs — but we’ll also be encouraging people everywhere to fight against this evil with prayer,” Bishop Stanislav Szyrokoradiuk of Odessa-Simferopol told OSV News. Meanwhile, another Catholic bishop said the anniversary would be marked in a tense atmosphere because of damage to Ukraine’s infrastructure and expectations of fresh Russian strikes, but added that Ukrainians had revealed their determination to press on to victory. As Ukraine’s civilian population bears the brunt of the war, with 40% now needing assistance and protection, Britton Buckner, European outreach manager for Catholic Relief Services, is confident the massive humanitarian response will hold up as the world’s biggest armed conflict since World War II enters its second year. “Much contingency planning has been needed for various scenarios — for recovery and rebuilding if the war ends, and for even larger displacements if it drags on,” Buckner told OSV News.

Pope names members of Dicastery for Culture and Education

VATICAN CITY — After uniting two offices in June to form the Dicastery for Culture and Education, Pope Francis named a full slate of 34 members and 40 consultants for the office which promotes human values in culture and education and works with Catholic schools and universities around the world. The appointments were announced by the Vatican Feb. 18. The new members include 15 cardinals, 16 bishops and three laymen: Paolo Ruffini, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication; Francesc Torralba, director of the ethics chair at Spain’s Ramon Llull University in Barcelona; and Rafael Vicuña, a professor of molecular biology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile in Santiago. Canadian Cardinal Gerald Lacroix of Quebec and U.S. Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, N.J., were among the cardinals named members.



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The Spirit helps the church avoid ‘ideological divisions,’ pope says

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

“It is very sad to see the church as if it were a parliament,” which is what happens when Catholics rely more on their personal opinions than on the Holy Spirit, Pope Francis said.

“The church is something else; it is a community of men and women who believe in and proclaim Jesus Christ, moved by the Holy Spirit and not by their own ideas,” he said Feb. 22 at his weekly general audience.

Continuing a series of talks about evangelization and mission, the pope said it is natural for Catholics to have different opinions on all sorts of things, which is why, when making decisions about the life of the church, they must do like the early disciples did and seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The Acts of the Apostles recounts how the disciples were divided over the question of whether pagans who came to Christianity were required to follow Jewish law.

“They could have sought a good compromise between tradition and innovation: some rules are observed, others are left out,” the pope said. “Yet the apostles do not follow this human wisdom, but adapt themselves to the work of the Spirit, who had anticipated them by descending upon the pagans just as on them.”

“Despite having different sensitivities and opinions, they listen to the Spirit,” he said. The Spirit taught the disciples something, “which is also valid today: every religious tradition is useful if it facilitates the encounter with Jesus.”

Without listening together to the Spirit, he said, the church runs the risk of falling prey to “ideological divisions” and arguments based on whether one considers oneself a “conservative” or “progressive,” he said. “But where is the Holy Spirit? Watch out, the Gospel is not an idea or an ideology; it is a proclamation that touches and changes your heart. But if you hide in an idea, whether it’s

of right or left or center, you are making the Gospel a political party, an ideology or a social club.”

Pope Francis asked the thousands of pilgrims and visitors in the audience hall, “How many of us pray to the Holy Spirit? ‘No, father, I pray to Mary, I pray to the saints,

I pray to Jesus, sometimes I say the Lord’s Prayer so I pray to the Father,’” he imagined some of them responding.

But it is the Holy Spirit “who moves your heart, who carries you forward, gives you consolation and the desire to evangelize and be a missionary,” he said.



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis blesses a woman at the end of his weekly general audience Feb. 22, 2023, in the Vatican audience hall.



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