‘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.”

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 covdio.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 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)

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Lent at the Cathedral

Stations of the Cross — Fridays, Feb 24-March 31, 5:30 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.

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

Teens invited to joinNCYC — ‘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 Isaiah A. Isaak at (859) 392-1529 or iisaak@covdio.org.
TMU Institute for Religious Liberty — defending religious liberty is an all or none proposition

Laura Keener

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. Brmerton School District, determining the school baseball coach Kennedy’s First Amendment rights were violated after he lost his job for praying at the 53-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 we have two groups. Each 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. “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 easier 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 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 religious liberty,” said Dr. Madges.

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 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 1995 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, with 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 differ. ‘False imposition imposes itself solely by the force of its own truth. To deny an individual 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 aggra- vates 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 tackled.”

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 recog- nize, guarantee and protect religious freedom, which is an inalienable 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.”
Alession 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 whining, complaining family, she is shot, the unhappy elderly woman, fearing for 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. I don’t want to think everything is predicable 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 theological 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 importantly 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 love, 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 a giving community knows how difficult it is to maintain loving, communal relationships. Every life form demands that we be together in loving relationships and yet there is just one God. In the process of many the-}

Amystery 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 that are a simple solution to all disagreements, all problems? I respond “It’s a mystery” troubles me when I am looking back at mystery and uncertainty. It would be nice to know some things.

Here’s the ambiguity. Relationships and life would be more than a half century ago, Flannery O’Connor published the week after Easter and two weeks at Christmas/New Year’s. Subscription rate: $59.00 per year (foreign). Periodical postage paid at Covington, KY 41012 and additional mailing offices. Copyright © 2023 by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, Ky.; 44 issues a year. CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AMERICA. All rights reserved. tostring MESSENGER Official newspaper of the Diocese of Covington

In Exile

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In Exile

February 24, 2023

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That is both attractive and challenging. Anyone who has attempted to live in loving relationships, to live in a giving community knows how difficult it is to maintain loving, communal relationships. Every life form demands that we be together in loving relationships and yet there is just one God. In the process of many the-
Lent: Give us back the joy of our salvation

The readings for the first Sunday of Lent — Cycle A — are: Genesis 27:8-9; 3:1-7; Romans 12:1-2 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, stream by stream or feed by feed, into something we inhabit. In the metaverse, the prom- ise goes, we will finally be able to do what science fic- tion 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 “meta- verse” is, we all 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 pref- erences 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 frenzied. 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 termi- nate 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 anachronis- tic, silly and even psychologically harmful. That is because a technological civilization embeds within it its every output a materialistic understanding of the human person that tends to seal us off from God and others, 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 contempo- rary 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 striv- ings. 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 techno- logical 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 simplicity, 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 contempo- rary world on offer to us in myriad ways every single day.

The wisdom of the week is a materialistic, technologi- cal 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)

Divine interruptions (the suddenness God)

I was born to a nomadic family in East Africa, Kriitea. 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 had happened in my life. I was 10 years old when the Comboni Missionaries came to where we were living and asked my par- ents if they could take me with them to seminary for- mation.

I was reluctant. I had reservations. I was hesitant, my parents agreed with the idea. Like many par- ents, my parents did not understand divine Interuptions or the suddenness of God. They were and are simple nomadic people with rou- tine lives. I traveled with the Comboni Missionaries to many African and European countries and then to the Americas for postu- lancy, 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 interrup- tions, 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 interrup- tions.

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 sur- prise people, as he did by the calling of his disciples. Since they were simple fishermen, they probably felt un- ready to serve him. 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 us as his 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 2:9. They received the good news about a newborn king and fol- lowed 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 move- ments because we don’t make the time to look for God moving in our lives. 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 10 a.m. or 210 a.m. in the morning? Are you will- ing to listen to him?
Abrahamic Family House opens in Abu Dhabi as a fruit of Pope Francis visit in 2019

Judith Sudilovsky
OSV News

A unique multi-faith 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 leaders, the idea of the center began to take shape in August 2019 when Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, 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. Yoann 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 spirit that is future-looking toward acceptance, inclusion and non-believers, and 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 1397-1450 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 late. 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 hopeful — by its programs — highlight the shared religious 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 Diocarsis for Interreligious Dialogue, Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, called the center a “beacon of mutual understanding.”

Muhammad Khalifa Al Muharriak, 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.
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. Still Robinson III ’73 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 significant 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.

Here to lend a hand.
Charlie’s Club,
Adult Day Health Program
Monday - Friday
8am - 5:30pm
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noon to 1 p.m.
Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays,
22 and 29, 7–8 p.m. Each evening Msgr . Cleves will focus on a
, St. Agnes Church, Ft. Wright, March 1, 8, 15,
$15, includes wild game dishes and craft beers.
Night,“ St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, Men’s “Brews and Wild Game
www .hcmulch.com or call (859) 392-8999.
home, business or rental property anywhere in Kenton,
Holy Cross High School 25th annual Mulch Sale
T
February 24, 2023                                                                                                         ...                                                                                                                 Messenger
Memorial Day.
Spelling Bee in Washington D.C. the week of
the winner will compete at the Scripps National
regional bee will compete against other students
KY/IN Regional Spelling Bee, March 11. Spellers at the
competition, which is an online test where spellers
These students will move on to the next level of
Adam Tarvin
Aarya Mehendale
St. Mary Parish, Alexandria;
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 $60. Reserve your space at uma/exmrc.
The Bishop Brossart Softball and Volleyball teams will
host its 2nd annual Euchre Tournament. March 10.
Hegnau Hall, Alexandria. Doors open at 5:30 p.m.; tournament
begins 7 p.m. Top prize is $100. Cost $25 per player
includes food, water and pop. Beer and wine will be available
for purchase. Contact clever11@icloud.com to register
or for more information.
Morning of Reflection on Lecitio 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 mem-
ers 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,
Mother of God offers Mass at noon. An informational book-
let will be available at the church where you start your jour-
ney. 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’ foot-
steps. 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) 678-6685 or e-mail pamnrezck@yahoo.com.

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, 4-8:30 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, Cynthia, 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) 921-9733
St. Joseph Academy, Walton, 4:30–6:30 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., Dive-in 5-7:30 p.m.
St. William Parish, Williamsport,
drive-thru only, 4:30–7 p.m.

$35. Register online https://covdio.org/oec/catholic-bible-study/ or call (859) 392-1329.
The St. Cecilia Altar Society annual Spring Craft Bazaar,
March 19, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Table rental, (859) 396-8325.
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 4.6-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 book-
let will be available at the church where you start your jour-
ney. RSVP CovLentenPilgrimage@gmail.com.

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays,
ono to 1 p.m. Viewers can tune in at 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 any-
where on your property, starting April 1. Order online at
www.hcmulch.com or call (859) 882-9999.
St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, Men’s “Brevs 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.

The monthly Spelling Bee in the school’s auditorium is
hosted by the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization and presented by
Father Timothy Scherl, March 19 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


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.
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 outcome. 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 making the decision to seek an abortion.

“Our parishes, archdiocesan 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 internal efforts, which quietly take place every day in our communities, must be accompanied by public policy that allows 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.

“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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If you are dining in, please park at SDDHS and ride the shuttle bus to MQPI.
Let Them Live has helped over 550 moms choose life for their baby

Laura Berning

“Let’s say it’s a timid mother starting to choose life, and she’s starting to call us, and she says, ‘I have no one to turn to. ‘I have to do this alone. I’m scared. What do I do?’ So that’s kind of the response that we’re going for,” Mrs. Berning said.

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 parish 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 this to the past or may 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’re there for them 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 believe.”

The mom that the Franciscan Daughters of Mary was helping with the support of Let Them Live began having contractions at 21 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 and her through this very difficult situation,” said Mother Seraphina.

“Thank you to all of God’s servants who helped us and her through this very difficult situation,” said Mother Seraphina.
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.

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, he served in the 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 “parish 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.

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.

“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 the late bishop and those investigating his death.”

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GROUNDKEEPER
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 Koplay, SPHR, by email to skoplay@stjoeschool.net or 859-392-1589.

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, lhatfield@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 Koplay, SPHR by email to skoplay@stjoeschool.net or by fax to 859-392-1589.

Moore’s Painting

STAFF WRITER
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 Koplay by e-mail: skoplay@covdio.org. (859) 392-1500. EOE

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 require- ments include a degree in Accounting with at least two years of experience, including auditing. CPA license is preferred. Submit cover letter, resume, salary history, and five references with email address to Stephen Koplay by email of fax. skoplay@covdio.org or 859-392-1589. EOE

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

Our family dental practice is seeking an assistant to join our team. Full time Mon-Thurs. No experience necessary but preferred. Benefits available. 401K. Please email resume to drdansheridan2@gmail.com or call 859-635-1756.

CEMETERY PLOTS

2 Floral Hills Cemetery plots and 2 vaults. In the popular Gethsmane section of the Cemetery or any available plots of your choosing. The plots and vaults together are selling for $3,500. A $9600 value if purchased directly from Floral Hills.

Call Daniel Dunn 859-630-6266

J O B O P P O R T U N I T I E S AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES

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, 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. 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 areas 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

St. Benedict Church, Covington, is looking for a Volunteer Driver for their Festival Shuttle Bus. Dates are September 22nd & 23rd from 4 until 11 PM. Please call Greg for more information 859-743-0223.

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Weller Full Proof 500 tickets
Weller Special Reserve 500 tickets

Third Prize
Pappy Van Winkle (15 year) 500 tickets
Weller Single Barrel 500 tickets
Weller Full Proof 500 tickets
Weller Special Reserve 500 tickets

Fourth Prize
None

Purchase Tickets Online
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Draws two to be held March 18 at 6:30 p.m. (EST) at our Centennial Celebration event at Blessed Sacrament Undercroft, 2407 Dixie Highway, Fort Mitchell, KY 41017. Live on our Facebook page @CDDPNorthernKentucky.

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The joy of our salvation
(Continued from page 5)

passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. After all, the nature of God’s truth, which is to say the nature of God’s holiness and love, is cruciform: Cross shaped, self-emptying and self-sacrificing.

The diabolic illusion is always one of personal and material self-sufficiency and that of personal aggrandizement. In the face of that primal temptation, we take up with the Lord the tools of the Spirit — prayer, fasting and almsgiving — in order crack open the carapace of our self-enclosed selves to learn anew to worship the Lord our God and him alone, with undivided hearts.

In these 40 days of intensely seeking the face of Jesus, of deepening our imitation of Christ, of having our vision purified and our souls fortified, we will be released from living inside our illusions. In that, the Lord will have given us back the joy of our salvation.

Father Phillip W. DelBlass is pastor of St. Charles Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose Parish, May’s Lick.

USCCB President praises Nicaraguans’ ‘courageous hope’ amid country’s ‘dark hour’

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Amid the “dark hour” besetting Nicaragua — with the imprisonment of a bishop, the expulsion of over 200 political prisoners and ongoing human rights violations — Nicaraguans’ “courageous hope, charity and solidarity are bearing witness” to their enduring faith, said the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, who heads the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, issued a statement Feb. 21 in response to several recent developments in Nicaragua, including the deportation of 222 political prisoners to the United States Feb. 9 by President Daniel Ortega’s regime.

The deported group included five priests, a deacon, two seminarians and two media professionals employed by the Diocese of Matagalpa. Ortega stripped them all of their citizenship permanently bar their return.

Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa, who was arrested in August by the Ortega regime and put under house arrest, was on the list to leave with the group, but he refused. On Feb. 10, he was convicted and sentenced by a Nicaraguan court to 26 years in prison. He also was stripped of his Nicaraguan citizenship.

Archbishop Broglio called on the U.S. government and other partners “to continue to pursue the release of Bishop Álvarez and the restoration of human rights in Nicaragua.”

The archbishop said he was “proud and grateful that the Catholic community of the United States — from dioceses and local Catholic Charities agencies to Catholic Charities USA and the USCCB — was among those that mobilized quickly to welcome the Nicaraguan exiles as they were stripped of their citizenship before boarding the plane.”

The archbishop noted the exiles “are being assisted by U.S. government authorities and partners.”

The Archdiocese of Miami and the Diocese of Charlotte, North Carolina, have both welcomed priests in the group of exiles to their respective dioceses. Miami also welcomed the seminarians.

“I join our Holy Father, Pope Francis, in his exhortation to those responsible in Nicaragua, that ‘through an open and sincere dialogue, the basis for a respectful and peaceful coexistence might still be found,’” Archbishop Broglio said.

Regarding Bishop Álvarez, Archbishop Broglio said his sentencing “marks yet another escalated human rights violation in the ongoing ordeal the Catholic Church faces in Nicaragua.”
North America, along with the contributions of the six other CELAM. The final document for the continental stage from process the Mexican bishops will complete through their long-weeklong retreat in Orlando, Florida, to synthesize the results written over the next six weeks and submitted to the Vatican Synodality is coming to a close, with a final document to be do we get caught up in our own wants and needs, lose sight of 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 hypocricies 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. 3, 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 CRLAM. 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 750 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 — 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 humanitarian 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 Stanislaw Brynyk of Odesa-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 46 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. 16. The new members include 34 cardinals, 16 bishops and three laymen: Paolo Ruffini, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication; Francesco Tornella, director of the ethics chair at Spain’s Ramon Llull University in Barcelona; and Rafael Virués, 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.
"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.