

- 2 DPAA kickoff dinner
- 2 A Wired Family
- 3 Eucharistic Revival
Lenten meditation
- 3 Lent at the Cathedral
- 3 Memorial Mass for
the Loss of a Child
- 3 Take the Disciple Maker
Index
- 7 TMU ‘Media Day’



**Daylight Savings Time
begins March 12**

Messenger readers are reminded to set their clocks ahead one hour before going to bed this Saturday. Your local fire department also reminds you to change the batteries in your smoke detectors.

Bishop’s Schedule	3
Commentary	4
People and Events	9
Classifieds	14
Shopper’s Guide	16
VIRTUS	16
News Briefs	17

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



(above) A bucket attached to 250-foot crane suspends architects from SHP as they painstakingly scan every inch of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption mapping out every crack and crevice in need of repair.
(top, right) A photo of a chimera atop the Cathedral illustrates the need for complete replacement.
(center, right) Toward the middle of the Cathedral’s façade are a series of balustrades and colonnades whose metal pins have rusted requiring complete restoration and replacement.
(bottom, right) Facing stones and carved details of the Cathedral are constructed from Indiana limestone. Many have cracked or shatter due to water damage.

See you soon gargoyles — Cathedral prepares for ‘Restored in Christ’ maintenance and safety project

Laura Keener
Editor

The Covington skyline will soon be void of some familiar faces. Beginning around March 14, the gargoyles — as they are popularly referred to; chimera is the more accurate term — adorning the parapet atop the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption will be removed for replacement. Their removal is the first project of a \$6 million “Restored In Christ” campaign to preserve and restore the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.

“After more than a century, the Cathedral Basilica’s masonry and stonework, lovingly built and fashioned by early immigrants and master craftsmen, is in desperate need of repair to preserve it for future generations,” said Bishop John Iffert.

Bishop Iffert has referred to the “Restored

In Christ” project as a major maintenance project to the outside of the Cathedral. No accoutrements for liturgical services and no renovations to the Cathedral interior are a part of this project. In 2001, the Cathedral underwent major restorations and refurbishments to its interior, with the exterior receiving a good cleaning and new glass shields to protect the stained-glass windows. The singular goal of the “Restored In Christ” project is to prevent water from further damaging the Cathedral.

The project coincides with the 170th anniversary of the Diocese of Covington and the 130th anniversary of the inception of St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, which began with a simple drawing by architect Leon Coquard in 1893 at

(Continued on page 16)





(above) Bishop John Iffert addresses guests at the second DPAA kick-off dinner.

(above right) Diocesan leaders and DPAA chairs sit together for dinner.

(right) Diocesan ministries introduce themselves to DPAA supporters and guests before dinner with a “ministry fair.”



‘The Church is the living mission of Jesus Christ,’ Bishop Iffert tells guests at the second DPAA kickoff dinner

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal season is under way, with the second DPAA kickoff dinner held at the Marriott in Hebron, March 2.

Bishop John Iffert, Matt Hollenkamp, general chair and Linda Rawe, leadership gifts chair, welcomed guests to the dinner in preparation for the appeal’s next phase. The theme for this year’s DPAA is “Rise, Do Not Be Afraid.”

The DPAA is a key fundraising endeavor within the Diocese of Covington, with the money raised going to support diocesan ministries such as care for retired priests, vocations, pro-life, Catholic Charities, religious education, campus ministry, Cristo Rey Parish and Thomas More University. Ten percent of the appeal is also awarded to ministries serving the poor and vulnerable in diocesan communities as grants. This year, the goal for the DPAA is \$2.65 million. Like in years past, amounts raised past that total will go back to benefit the parishes that collect more than their individual parish goals.

The results of Phase 1 of the leadership gifts phase were announced at the dinners, where a record breaking \$544,280 was raised for the appeal thanks to solicitors reaching out to select donors across the diocese. The guests at the first kick-off dinner in Cynthiana, Feb. 28, donated or pledged an additional \$27,000, while guests at the March 2 event donated or pledged a total \$85,658.

“I love our diocese,” said Matt Hollenkamp, general chair for the 2023 DPAA, “Such a special place we have, our community here ... I just feel very fortunate to be a part of

this, and I can’t thank you all enough for all that you do as part of this campaign.”

“It is wonderful to be here with you, and thank you all for accepting the invitation to come out and join us,” Bishop Iffert said to the dinner guests. “The Church is the living mission of Jesus Christ. That’s who we are. And so everyone who is baptized under the body of Christ has some unique contribution to make. And so, for everyone here, just look around you for a moment and think about the diversity of the gifts that God has entrusted to this

Church. Every one of you, as a part of that, I want to thank. Thank you all so much.”

Last weekend, pastors in all parishes of the Diocese of Covington played the DPAA video at Mass. This weekend, March 11–12, is Commitment Weekend. Parishioners will have the opportunity at Mass to make their donation or pledge. The DPAA video can also be viewed and donations and pledges made online at www.covdio.org.

Children and teens need adults to moderate, monitor and discipline their digital world

Laura Keener
Editor

Stephen Smith, author and founder of A Wired Family, made two presentations in the Diocese of Covington for parents, grandparents, teachers and pastors — anyone who has responsibility for the health and wellbeing of a child or children. The first presentation was held at St. Henry District High School, Erlanger, Feb. 27 and the second at Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, March 7. Over 100 people attended the presentations, which were hosted by the diocese’s Safe Environment Office.

At Bishop Brossart High School, Julie Feinauer, director for the Safe Environment Office, introduced Mr. Smith and his presentation “Social Media & The Adolescent

Digital Tribe: Navigating the Teen World State.” The heart of the presentation was to demonstrate to adults the depth and breadth social media has on the life and mental health of children and teens so that they can better help the children they love navigate the digital world.

Mr. Smith illustrated the dangers of social media by sharing quotes from top executives — like Steve Jobs, co-founder of Apple; Sean Parker, co-founder of Napster and first president of Facebook; and Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft — who do not allow or strictly limit their own child’s use of the devices and apps they themselves have created.

(Continued on page 6)

Eucharistic meditation 3: I thirst

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 quench my thirst for eternal life.

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 believe that you will quench my thirst for eternal life.

Scripture Meditation

“In those days, in their thirst for water, the people grumbled against Moses, saying, ‘Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children and our livestock?’” (Exodus 17:3)

Reflection Questions

Are there any ways you find yourself thirsting for healing, conversion or belonging, and doubting the Lord wants to satisfy your thirst? Do you feel like God has let you down when you sought his help? Honestly share that experience of unmet desire or disappointment with the Lord.

Scripture Meditation

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’ The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.’” (John 4:13-15)

Reflection Questions

Jesus has a gift like none other — he offers living water. This is the water that washes our wounds, cleanses our sins and draws us into new life as a beloved child of God. It was first offered to us through the waters of baptism, welling up from Jesus and flowing from his side on the cross. Gazing upon Jesus in the Eucharist, ask him to help you open your heart to this life-giving water.

Closing Prayer

O God, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin, look graciously on this confession of our lowliness, that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy. 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, Third Sunday of Lent)

Lent at the Cathedral

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

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

Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child

A Memorial Mass for any person who is grieving the loss of a child **will be held 7 p.m., Wednesday, March 15, at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Burlington.**

The Mass is for parents, grandparents, family members and friends of those who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, abortion, early infant death, illness, suicide, accident or any other reason.

The Pro-Life Office of the Diocese of Covington is sponsoring this service and wishes to emphasize that all people, not just Catholics, are invited to attend this Mass. Information on local support groups will be available at a reception following the Mass.

What’s on your heart?

Take the Disciple Maker Index (DMI) survey

The Disciple Maker Index survey is open in the Diocese of Covington 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

Please select the phrase that best describes the relationship between your regional elementary/middle school and the parish from your perspective?

- ☐ **Of one mind and heart!** I think our parish families and school families consider themselves one in the same and there is excellent integration between the two.
- ☐ **Of one heart!** There are some distinct “school families” and “parish families” but everyone believes in the importance of the school.
- ☐ **Of one mind!** We share space and resources but as our parish changes, there seems to be a need to build a stronger bridge between the school families and the parish families.
- ☐ **Of one space!** Most of the families in the school don’t belong to the parish and they really are two different communities.

Bishop’s Schedule

<p>March 11–12 DPAA Commitment Weekend</p> <p>March 13–16 St. Vincent Seminary visit</p> <p>March 18 St. Vincent de Paul centennial Mass, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, 4 p.m.</p> <p>March 19 Mass and installation of the Deacon candidates to Lector, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 10 a.m.</p>	<p>March 19 (continued) Serra Club Server Awards/Vespers, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 2 p.m.</p> <p>March 20 Pro Life Essay Banquet, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington, 6 p.m.</p>
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COMMENTARY

Don’t give up on the Liberal Arts

It has just come to my attention that Marymount University, a Catholic institution in Arlington, Virginia, has announced its intention to cut ten traditional majors from its program, including philosophy, religious studies, theology, art, history and sociology. It will also apparently eliminate a master’s degree in English literature. The president of the university has explained that this move is designed to make her school more competitive: “Students have more choices than ever for where to earn a college degree and MU must respond wisely to the demand.”

Well, okay, but one wonders why she bothers remaining competitive, for she has effectively undermined the purpose of her university. What is especially tragic is that this is far from an isolated case, for a number of religiously affiliated liberal arts schools are, anomalously, eliminating religion and the liberal arts. And this should get the attention of the entire society, for the loss of the liberal arts is tantamount to a loss of soul.

Why do we refer to religion, philosophy, history, literature and art as “liberal”? We do so because they are free (<<liber>> in Latin) precisely from utility. And this is to say that they are the highest sort of disciplines, for they are subordinated to nothing outside of themselves. They exist for their own sake, endowed with intrinsic value.

In this, they are to be differentiated from the practical arts and sciences, which exist for the sake of something else. So, one studies engineering in order to construct machines that accomplish some useful purpose; or one studies architecture in order to erect buildings; or one

studies mechanics in order to get a car to run; etc.

But one reads Shakespeare because it is beautiful so to do, and one watches a baseball game because baseball is good, and one gazes at the Sistine Chapel ceiling because it elevates the soul. Our machines and computers and cars and iPhones are great, but they are designed ultimately to make the experience of intrinsic value more readily available. One should never, of course, denigrate the practical sciences, but one should have the sense to subordinate them to those disciplines that are properly liberal. Much of our culture is suffering from the effects of turning this hierarchy on its head.

In light of these clarifications, I hope it is clear why so many Catholic colleges and universities were dedicated to the liberal arts. Though Catholic institutions of higher learning have always been willing to offer the practical subjects, they stressed the liberal arts precisely because their founders were in the meaning business.

The liberal arts are situated above the practical sciences, but among the liberal arts themselves, there is a sort of hierarchy, for all of them are reflective of and finally serve the supreme good, who is God. The most useless and therefore highest discipline of all is that which speaks of the source of meaning, that which treats of God.

Do you see why it is so regrettable, therefore, that Catholic institutions are turning themselves voluntarily into STEM academies and marginalizing the very subjects that touch upon purpose and meaning?

Yes, science, technology, engineering and mathematics will facilitate our movement and give us nicer homes to live in and generally make our lives easier — but they won’t tell us what to do when we get to our destinations or how to live in our comfortable houses or how to fill up the time that ease of life provides. To find answers to those questions, we read Plato, Jeremiah, St. Paul, Shakespeare, Dante and Eliot; we look at Michelangelo, Picasso and Rembrandt; and we listen to Mozart, Bach

and Stravinsky. In a word, we do the liberal arts.

I don’t want to overstate this case, but I wouldn’t want to understate it either. I believe there is a correlation between the disappearance of the liberal arts and the demonstrable rise in anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts — especially among the young today.

When we push the subjects that treat of meaning to the side, are we surprised that people are finding life less and less meaningful?

When we put a hyper-stress on technology, are we surprised that we have a generation of youngsters spending large parts of their days staring listlessly and sadly at screens?

One reason for the attack on the liberal arts is wokeism, which tends to sully whatever it touches. The reduction of society to the simplistic binary of oppressor and oppressed, the habit of thinking in broad generalities, the adoption of an antagonistic social theory — all of the baleful signs of wokeism — have led us to demonize many of the heroes of the liberal arts that I just referenced.

It is beyond tragic to admit this, but all that many younger students know about Shakespeare is that he is a dead white male, all that they know about Thomas Jefferson is that he owned slaves, and all that they know about T.S. Eliot is that he entertained some anti-Semitic opinions. But have they begun to notice that, despite their personal flaws, these people shed intense light on the themes of love, purpose, justice, right government, God and eternal life? What an impoverishment if we permit the woke mob to rob us of these purveyors of value.

So may I utter a <<cri de coeur>> to the professors and administrators at Catholic institutions of higher learning: for the sake of our young people and indeed of the entire society, don’t give up on the liberal arts!

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

Frequent deposits are the key to happiness

Somewhere along the way, I read a little story about a remarkable 92-year-old gentleman who knew the true meaning of a bank account, something worthwhile for all of us to remember.

As it goes, our elderly gent was small in stature — petite, one might say — well poised and proud. He was fully dressed every morning by eight o’clock, his hair neatly combed and his face clean-shaven. He was legally blind.

Shortly after his wife of 70 years passed away, it became necessary for him to move into a nursing home. On the day of the move, he had to wait patiently in the nursing home lobby for several hours.

When he was told that his room was ready, he smiled sweetly, got up and maneuvered his walker to the elevator with the help of the assistant who would take him to his room. When they got to his room, the assistant gave him a visual description of the tiny room, including the bathroom and various furnishings, even including the eyelet sheets that had been hung on the only window in his room.

When the room introduction was done he said, “I love

it,” with the enthusiasm of a child who had just been presented with a new puppy. The assistant said, “But Mr. Jones, you haven’t seen the room. Just wait.”

“That doesn’t have anything to do with it,” he replied. “Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time,” he continued.

The new nursing home resident went on to say that whether he liked his room or not did not depend upon how the furniture was arranged, but rather, how he arranged his mind. Then, gems of wisdom flowed from him like a gentle stream on a calm and bright sunny day.

“I already decided to love it,” he said, “and it’s a decision I make every morning when I wake up.” He went on to say that he can choose to be miserable and spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty he has with parts of his body that hurt or no longer work, or he can get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do.

The assistant had no difficulty understanding that, to Mr. Jones, each day was a gift when he heard that wise old gentleman put it this way; “As long as my eyes open, I will focus on the new day and all the happy memories I have stored away, just for this time in my life. Old age is like a bank account. You withdraw from what you’ve put in.”

With that, Mr. Jones said; “My advice to you would be to deposit a lot of happiness in the bank account of memories!” Then, he thanked the assistant for his part that day in filling his Memory Bank, into which he was still depositing.

This story is not about my dear friend, Paul, but it sure could be, except that he is not blind and needed no nursing home. He passed away a few years ago.

In the short time we were blessed with our friendship, he shared generously from his “bank account” of happy memories and reflected the same healthy attitude of our unknown “Mr. Jones.” He was the youngest, most pleasant 92-year-old man I’ve ever met. He had a way of making those around him feel younger and happier. It’s a gift he eagerly shared and I give thanks daily for it and for him.

As for happiness, Dr. Wayne Dyer might have said it best, “Everything you need to have total happiness, fulfillment, and love in your life you already have right now, whoever you are, wherever you are.”

Sometimes, when I read my “Jesus Calling” book, Sarah Young’s masterpiece of daily meditations, I ignore the date at hand and imitate a piano player by just running my finger across the pages filled with 365 days of wisdom, as I did today while writing this piece. That exercise produced a true “Oh my!” experience because I have been trying to “let go and let God” take the wheel during these Lenten days and beyond.

The front and center lesson garnered from today’s random page-picking floored me and then quickly picked me up: “Stop judging and evaluating yourself, for this is not your role. Above all, stop comparing yourself with other people. This produces feelings of pride or inferiority,

(Continued on page 15)

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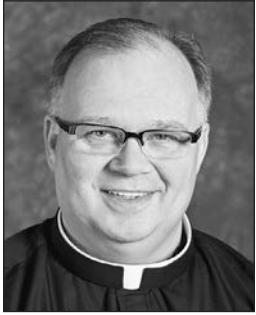
Maura BakerStaff Writer

The greatest actor on her favorite stage

The readings for the Third Sunday of Lent — Cycle A — are: Exodus 17:3-7; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 and John 4:5-42.

I had the privilege of seeing a wonderful actor whose name was Ruth. Ruth was in a nursing home and had been there for several years. I dropped into her life one day when I was visiting some parishioners.

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Gregory Bach

As I sat close to the lobby checking my phone, Ruth took the stage. It was a one woman show about her life. The first day I saw her she was telling me, and whoever was listening, about her childhood and growing up poor. She talked about how difficult it was for her parents to provide for her and her four siblings. She spoke at length about the struggles she had in school and growing up. I had to leave before her show concluded. I knew I would be back and

hoping that Ruth would be on stage again. I repeated my usual pattern of visiting parishioners from one room to the next. As I finished up, I was once again checking my phone in the lobby. There she appeared. Ruth was continuing her performance.

She was telling us how she fell in love with her husband and about their courtship. She talked about her wedding and from her description it must have been magnificent — full of love, family and friends. Again, I was impressed by Ruth, a great actor on her favorite stage.

The next time I went to visit the nursing home I couldn't find her; I wanted to hear about some other part of her life. I never found her that day or in the weeks to come. I wasn't for sure if she moved to another nursing home or had died. I was able to witness someone who made an impression on my life. It was as if I was dropped into her life.

So, the woman at the well was dropped into the life of Jesus Christ. She had no idea who he was, but she was intrigued by Jesus. They spoke to each other; even though they shouldn't have. That didn't stop either one from continuing.

As she sat there Jesus was talking about the life-giving water that can save. Jesus says, "go get your husband." She admits her previous marriages and she can see how wonderful it was to be dropped into the life of Jesus. "Go tell the others." She runs off and leaves her water jug behind.

She came to the well seeking water to quench her thirst. Oh, but she found something more important, Jesus and his life-giving water. She runs and tells everyone about her experience. She was so convincing that many people followed her back to the well.

All the towns people came and they too were dropped into the life of Jesus. They heard his words and believed in him. "Stay with us," they said for they were convinced that Jesus was the one, the Messiah, the long awaited one. Jesus moves on from there to continue his mission to bring life and love to others who dropped into his life.

This Lenten season drops us, or pushes us, into the life of Jesus Christ. He calls us to repent, believe and to follow in his footsteps. Jesus drops in on us, into our life and calls us to draw near to him by listening to the words of Scripture, availing ourselves of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, and by challenging us to do more for those in need.


As Jesus dropped in on us so we can do the same by finding those moments in the day when we can, through prayer, drop in on Jesus and ask for the strength and the grace to make this Lenten season fruitful.

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

Waiting for the angel to come

The night before he died, Jesus struggled mightily to accept his Father's will. The Gospels describe him in the Garden of Gethsemane, prostrate on the ground — "sweating blood" — and begging his Father to save him from the brutal death that awaited him. Then, after he

IN EXILE



Father Ron Rolheiser

angry resistance and began to receive death threats. He was courageous, but he was also human. At a point, those threats got to him. Here is one of his diary entries.

"One night towards the end of January, I settled into bed late, after a strenuous day. Coretta had already fallen asleep and just as I was about to doze off the telephone rang. An angry voice said, 'Listen, nig..., we've taken all we want from you; before next week you'll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery.' I hung up, but I couldn't sleep. It seemed that all of my fears had come down on me at once. I had reached a saturation point.

"I got out of bed and began to walk the floor. Finally, I went to the kitchen and heated a pot of coffee. I was ready to give up. With my cup of coffee sitting untouched before me, I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing a coward.

"In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my problem to God. With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud. The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory.

"I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. Now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I've come to the point where I can't face it alone.' At that moment I experienced the pres-

finally surrenders his will to his Father; an angel comes and strengthens him.

This begs a question: where was the angel when, seemingly, he most needed it? Why didn't the angel come earlier to strengthen him?

Two stories, I believe, can be helpful in answering this.

The first comes from Martin Luther King Jr. In the days leading up to his assassination, he met

ence of the Divine as I had never experienced Him before." (Strive Toward Freedom)

Notice at what point in his struggle the angel appears. In her autobiography, "The Long Loneliness," Dorothy Day shares this story. As a young woman, along with the man she loved, she had been somewhat militant in her unbelief. Indeed, their reluctance to enter the institution of marriage was meant as a statement of their non-acceptance of traditional Christian values.

Then she conceived a child and its birth was the beginning of a radical conversion for her. The joy she felt holding her baby convinced her that there was a God and that life had a loving purpose. She became a Roman Catholic, much to the chagrin of the man she loved, the father of her child. He gave her an ultimatum: if you have this child baptized, our relationship is ended. She had the child baptized and lost that relationship (though they continued as friends). However, she now found herself a single mother with no job and no real vision or plan as to where to go now in life.

At one point, she became desperate. She left the child in the care of others and took a train from New York City to the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. In her autobiography, she describes how she prayed that day, how desperate her prayer was. Like Jesus in Gethsemane and Martin Luther King in Montgomery, her prayer was one of raw need and helplessness, of an admission that she no longer had the strength to go on. Essentially, she said this to God: *I have given up everything for you and now I am alone and afraid. I don't know what to do and am lacking strength to carry on in this commitment.*

She prayed this prayer of helplessness, took the train back to New York, and not long after found Peter Maurin sitting on her doorstep, telling her that he had heard about her and that he had a vision of what she should now do, namely, to start the "Catholic Worker." That set the path for the rest of her life. The angel had come and strengthened her.

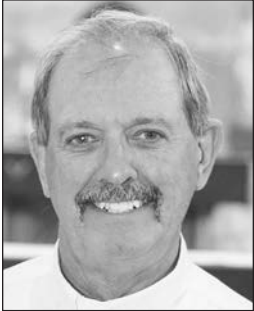
Notice at what point in these stories the angel makes its appearance — when human strength is fully exhausted. Why not earlier? Because up to the point of exhaustion, we don't really let the angel in, relying instead on our own strength. But, as Trevor Herriot says, "Only after we have let the desert do its full work in us will angels finally come and minister to us."

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

The good life

Sometime before 300 BC, Aristotle wrote about the good life. Since that time people have strived to live "the good life." We all want to live the good life and we all have an idea what that is for us.

BELIEVE, TEACH, PRACTICE



Deacon Michael Keller

don't equate to true happiness.

I suggest that for us Christians if we aspire to live the good life, we first need to see ourselves and all people as children of God. Children of our heavenly Father who loves us all totally and unconditionally, a father who will always forgive our sins and take us back when we stray, as we see in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

When we accept this total and unconditional love it is

Maybe for some it is a successful career. For some it may be retirement and a big investment portfolio, maybe a winter home in Florida. The good life may mean owning a lot of toys such as sports cars, etc.

The good life represents a happy life. But what really makes us happy? We know that wealth and possessions

easy to see the many undeserved good things and blessings the Father bestows upon us. And when we face stormy times in our lives, we can trust that the Father is watching over us.

As a result, we then imitate Jesus who when he walked among us showed us the love of the Father by doing good works — by healing the sick, blind, deaf and lame, by feeding the hungry with loaves and fish, by showing love and acceptance to sinners, tax collectors and Gentiles, and mostly by giving his life for us.

We, too, show the Father's love by the way we live our lives. By the good works we do we spread that love to all we meet. Doing not what benefits only ourselves but what benefits others too. By performing as many good works as possible.

I think we can all agree that Jesus lived the good life because he changed the world. There are 2.54 billion Christians in the world today, and Jesus started with 12. We can't change the world like he did, but we can change our part of the world one person at a time when we follow Jesus and live the good life.

Living the good life in this way opens us to the real "Good Life" when we will be born into eternal life with God, his angels and saints, and our loved ones who lived good lives and have gone before us.

Deacon Michael Keller is assigned to St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton, and Transfiguration Mission, Perry Park.

Teens in a digital world

(Continued from page 2)

“If it’s (an app) free, then you or your child are the product,” Mr. Smith said about how applications track not only a person’s likes and clicks while using the app but also the places visited, the games played and the purchases made — both in the physical and virtual world — to understand how to engage and manipulate adults and children.

“They know how the brain works to the absolute core. These apps have been developed by psychologists and behaviorist to keep your child or you on that app as long as possible,” he said.

In his nearly two-hour presentation, Mr. Smith covered six ways social media apps are having a “disturbing” impact on children. The two most concerning for him as a father and grandfather are its effects on brain chemistry and the loss of academic and career opportunities on otherwise healthy and talented teens.

Apps, Mr. Smith said, are developed to continuously provide dopamine producing stimuli — scrolling videos, likes, suggestions, notifications. Dopamine is the brain chemical that makes a person feel good. The constant production of dopamine — whether through drugs or stimuli — can cause addiction.

“With all the dopamine in particular, the brain is constantly on alert,” Mr. Smith said.

Sleep deprivation in children and teenagers is on the rise. Mr. Smith said it is “incredibly important” that parents keep phones and devices out of a child’s bedroom at night because the temptation to constantly be on social media is just too great.

Mr. Smith gave several examples of how sexting and sextortion has caused much embarrassment for teenagers. “But embarrassment isn’t the worst of it,” he said. Through his work, he has seen very talented athletes and others not even be offered college scholarships or careers because of what they have posted or shared on their social media site and liked or commented on a friends social media account. And isn’t just sexual in nature. Posting or liking photos of guns or violence or misogynistic comments or racist content are equally damaging.

“This is the first generation whose character is being judged by people who they have never met personally but who do have some authority over them,” he said.

It is the responsibility of parents and adults to take a cue from tech executives and strictly limit and monitor the use of technology of the children and teens in their care, Mr. Smith said. This is done by reducing screen time — turning off notifications, turning off autoplay videos, taking an electronic fast — and filling that time with something creative or athletic that doesn’t require a device.

Based on a government study, children, teens and adults spend an average of seven to nine hours on social and digital media each day. The recommended usage is two hours per day. Surveys have also reported that parents in the United States, on average, spend about 34 to 37 minutes a day in meaningful time with their children.

“Meaningful time meaning having conversations with one another and going out and doing something fun with one another,” Mr. Smith said.

Developing a healthy relationship with social and digi-

tal media is no small task. Children and teens cannot be expected to do it alone. Yet it is imperative to mental well-being. “We wouldn’t let our children eat three bowls of ice cream every day and expect them to be physically healthy,”

Mr. Smith said. The same is true about social and digital media and mental health. It requires moderation, monitoring and discipline from the adults in a child’s life.



Keener photo

Stephen Smith, author and founder of A Wired Family, speaks to parents, grandparents and teachers at Bishop Brossart High School, March 7, about child and teen safety in the digital world. He made an identical presentation Feb. 27 at St. Henry District High School. Over 100 people attended the presentations, which were hosted by the diocese’s Safe Environment Office.



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Thomas More University holds ‘Media Day’ highlighting Second Century Campaign successes

Baker photos

Staff Report

Thomas More University welcomed local media to campus, March 2, for a celebration of the success seen in the first 24 months of the Second Century Campaign: It’s time for More, the funding mechanism for the University’s strategic plan: Lighting the Way. Representatives from media outlets across Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky joined Thomas More students, faculty and staff for lunch as University President Joseph L. Chillo updated the community on landmarks of the capital campaign and what lies in the future.

“There is no doubt that higher education has experienced a changing landscape over the past several years,” said Mr. Chillo. “Steady stories of deficits, increase in costs, inflation, a broken business model have been regular news stories both nationally and regionally. The challenges faced by other universities have not presented the same constraints at Thomas More University because of our focus on mission, a value-based, and personalized educational experience, and making certain that our institution is student-ready and financially responsible.”

Mr. Chillo alluded to coming initiatives stemming from the strategic plan. An innovative education model will soon be unveiled to address the need for more highly qualified teachers in PreK-12 classrooms throughout the Commonwealth. The University launches the Center for Faith, Mission, and Catholic Education in summer 2023, leaning into the Catholic values that have been a cornerstone of the institution. Mr. Chillo also shared that on Friday, March 24, a ceremony is planned celebrating the official name the College of Business, one of the first gifts to the Second Century Campaign and a vision to shape the ethical business leaders of tomorrow.

“Founded in 1921 as Northern Kentucky’s first college, we continue to be the regional leader of a quality Catholic liberal arts education, providing students an experience that develops character; a sense of purpose, and an understanding of responsibility to others,” said Mr. Chillo.



Thomas More University president Joseph L. Chillo and Judith A. Marlowe, Board of Trustees chair, speak at the March 2 media luncheon.

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To be Christian is to share God’s love, pope says at audience

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

The mission to spread the Gospel message of God’s love and of salvation in Christ is entrusted to all the baptized who are called to work together and never set out alone, Pope Francis said.

The “ecclesial” dimension of evangelization “is binding and guarantees the authenticity of Christian proclamation,” the pope said at his weekly general audience March 8 in St. Peter’s Square, the first audience held outdoors in 2023.
At the end of the audience, Pope Francis noted the day’s

celebration of International Women’s Day, thanking women “for their commitment to building a more humane society through their ability to grasp reality with a creative gaze and tender heart. This is a privilege only of women.”

The pope not only offered “a special blessing for all the women in the square,” but asked the crowd to join him in “a round of applause for women. They deserve it!”

Continuing his series of audience talks about evangelization, Pope Francis said the support and confirmation of the church in mission work is necessary “because the temptation of proceeding alone is always lurking, especially when the path becomes impassable, and we feel the burden of the commitment.”

But it also is tempting “to adopt the worldly logic of numbers and polls” or to rely on one’s own ideas and programs rather than on the Holy Spirit, he said. Having a plan and analyzing what is working can be helpful but is always “secondary” to “the strength the Spirit gives you to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ.”

That truth, he said, is that “God’s love is not just for a little group, no, it’s for all, everyone, no one excluded.”

Quoting from the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, Pope Francis said the task of the church is “to continue the mission of Christ, who was ‘sent to preach the Gospel to the poor,’” a task for which all the baptized are responsible.

Within the church there cannot be “active” members and “passive” members, he said. “There are not those who preach, those who proclaim the Gospel in one way or another and those who keep quiet. No.”

Pope Francis imagined a conversation:

“Are you Christian?”

“Yes, I’ve been baptized.”

“Do you evangelize?”

“What’s that mean?”

“If you do not evangelize,” he said, “if you do not give that witness of the baptism you have received, of the faith the Lord gave you, then you are not a good Christian.”

Faith is a gift that must be shared with others, “with a sense of responsibility” and a commitment to journey together with the rest of the church even when the going seems rough, the pope said.



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis greets Ukrainian refugees after his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican March 8, 2023. As he has done for more than a year, the pope asked people at the audience to pray for peace in Ukraine and for the victims of the war.

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS



Bump, set, spike for Catholic Schools

Students at St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs, gathered for a fun game of volleyball during Catholic Schools Week as the Teachers took on the 8th graders.

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.

“Put Out Into the Deep,” Lenten Mission with Msgr. William Cleves, St. Agnes Church, Ft. Wright, March 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.

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 \$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.

Film screening and Q&A with award-winning Indie filmmaker Joe Duca, March 28, 7–8:30 p.m., Xavier University, Conaton Learning Commons, Kennedy Auditorium. Presented through the joint partnership of Xavier University and The Angelico Project. Visit <https://angelico-project.org>.

Thomas More University will host its 25th Bishop William A. Hughes Award Dinner, March 29, 6 p.m., Drees Pavilion, Covington. Three awards will be presented to individuals who have shown leadership in the community and made significant impact on Catholic education: 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.

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 Assumption, St Benedict, St Augustine, St John Evangelist and then Mother of God — 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.

The Thomas More University Observatory and Professor Wes Ryle invite you to the next two lectures/night sky viewings: **“Fusion Power: Energy Savior or Hopeless Dream?”** on March 25 and **“JWST: At Work At Last!”** on April 29. Lectures are at lecture in Steigerwald Hall – Saints Center; with a 9 p.m. night sky viewing at the Thomas More Observatory. Event is free and open to the public, no reservations required.

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



Bake sale

Fourteen women parishioners of St. Henry Catholic Church, Elsmere, are preparing for their next Welcome retreat. To help offset the cost of the retreat, they held a very successful bake sale after all Masses.

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, March 3, 10, 17, 4–7:30 p.m.
- St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, March 10, 24, 31, 5–8 p.m.

All Fridays of Lent — Mar 10-Mar 31

- Holy Cross District High School, Covington, 5–8 p.m.
- Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger, 4–8 p.m.
- St. Augustine, Augusta, every Friday through March 31, 5 p.m. until fish runs out.
- 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. James, Brooksville, 4:30 p.m–6:30 p.m.
- St. Joseph Academy, Walton, 4:30–8 p.m.
- St. Joseph Parish, Camp Springs, 4–7:30 p.m.
- St. Matthew Parish, Morning View, 4:30–7 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.

learning more, please contact St. Henry parishioner Michael Portwood, (859) 878-6905 or e-mail pamarinedad@yahoo.com.

Catholics concerned as U.S. child labor violations increase and lawmakers seek to weaken laws

Kimberley Heatherington
OSV News

Not all children filling many vacant U.S. jobs are working the drive-thru window, pushing carts or helping on the family farm — jobs typically associated with teenagers learning responsibility, along with useful business and personal skills.

According to recently published reports and investigations, minors are toiling in some of the most dangerous conditions in American industry, such as construction, slaughterhouses and assembly lines.

Catholics and labor leaders OSV News spoke with voiced concern that children are all too easily exploited in the U.S. economy, where some lawmakers are looking to loosen further restrictions on child labor in response to companies clamoring for workers to fill vacancies.

“Even responsible adults who have been trained periodically are at risk of injury in this kind of an environment,” shared Clayton Sinyai, executive director of the Catholic Labor Network. “Certainly children do not belong there.”

Sinyai referred to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Feb. 17 announcement that an investigation found more than 100 children were working for a contractor cleaning equipment in meat-packing facilities in eight different states.

“It’s shocking to see things like that in the 21st century,” Sinyai said.

In one of the largest child labor cases in its history, the Labor Department’s Wage and Hour Division discovered 102 children ages 13 to 17 were employed by Kieler, Wisconsin-based Packers Sanitation Services Inc., PSSI, at its client facilities in the states of Arkansas, Colorado, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, Tennessee and Texas.

According to the department, the children worked overnight shifts, and at least three suffered injuries while cleaning back saws, brisket saws and head splitters. The company was fined \$1.5 million in civil penalties.

While Packers Sanitation Services Inc. is an illustrative example, it is hardly isolated. The Labor Department says it has 600 ongoing child labor investigations.

“Since 2018, the U.S. Department of Labor has seen a 69 percent increase in children being employed illegally by companies. In the last fiscal year, the department found 835 companies it investigated had employed more than 3,800 children in violation of labor laws,” the department said Feb. 27.

U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh emphasized that child labor “is a today problem” and called on Congress and states to “come to the table.”

“This is a problem that will take all of us to stop,” Walsh said in a Feb. 27 statement.

The Labor Department called for Congress to increase violation penalties; an interagency task force; a strategic enforcement initiative and increased enforcement funding; and additional outreach services to unaccompanied refugee and migrant children who are vulnerable to labor exploitation.

“The church, in these recent times, has become alarmed by the increasing number of children involved in the labor force,” Father Christopher Mahar, an official in the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, told OSV News. “It is essential for society to concentrate on the root causes of poverty and not attempt to solve the economic crises by turning to child labor.”

Employers frequently cite an ongoing worker shortage among their challenges, which has motivated some state legislators to introduce bills that would weaken child labor law age regulations and safety protections.

In Minnesota, Sen. Rich Draheim, R-District 22, is the sponsor of SF 375, a bill that would make it easier for construction companies to hire 16- and 17-year-olds.

“My bill simply conforms Minnesota law to the existing federal standards,” Draheim asserted in a statement to OSV News. “Eliminating work opportunities for youth just because of their age will make it even harder for businesses to find reliable employees. Businesses teach these youth workers skills that will prepare them for their future, and maybe even attract them to their industry for life.”

Draheim’s office noted that Minnesota’s unemployment rate is among the lowest in the country, with an exceptionally tight labor market.

The Minnesota Catholic Conference indicated it had “no comment on the bill as we have not vetted it fully.” The bill is currently in committee.

In Iowa, SF 167, a bill introduced by Sen. Jason Schultz, R-District 6, would extend work hours for 14- and 15-year-olds; allow six hours of work a day during the school year; allow 17-year-olds to work the same hours as adults; eliminate work permits; and limit employer liability.

There also is the possibility of exceptions for previously prohibited industries, allowing teens 14-17 to take part in “work-based learning or a school or employer-administered, work-related program.”

Schultz’s office did not respond to OSV News’ request for comment.

The Iowa Catholic Conference said it “has not taken a position on the bill to date.” The Iowa Senate Workforce Committee approved the bill March 6, renumbering it SF

542, with the Iowa House Commerce Committee advancing its companion bill March 7.

“When I hear an employer say that there’s a worker shortage, what they’re actually saying is there are no workers available to work at the price I’m willing to pay,” Clayton Sinyai noted. “They don’t like the current labor market, and would like to pay people less. And children will work for less.”

Mary Leary, professor and senior associate dean for academic affairs at The Catholic University of America’s Columbus School of Law in Washington, agreed.

“It’s a cost-cutting measure for global companies to not do what the market would normally say they have to do — which is increase costs, decrease risk, and make this job more attractive to the workforce,” she told OSV News.

Kevin Cassidy, director of the U.S. office of the International Labor Organization, told OSV News the problem is that in the U.S., “People are not being offered good pay for those dirty, dull and dangerous jobs.”

The ILO is a Geneva, Switzerland-based specialized agency of the United Nations, and has confronted the issue of child labor since its 1919 founding. It sets international labor standards, and advises the U.S. government concerning policy. The Vatican delegates a permanent observer to the U.N. and its agencies, and Pope Francis has offered messages to ILO gatherings.

“Unscrupulous employers take advantage of the fact that the children are not aware of that,” Cassidy said. “At the end of the day, it is an exploitation of their vulnerability, and that is absolutely unacceptable from a human rights point of view.”

Benjamin Smith, the ILO’s senior child labor specialist, told OSV News that for economic growth, “decent work for parents is critical, so labor markets don’t respond to shortages by plugging the gap with children.”

Pope Francis has made the same argument. At the Vatican’s 2021 conference “Eradicating Child Labor, Building a Better Future,” the pontiff said, “We must encourage states and actors in the business world to create dignified jobs with equitable salaries which allow families to satisfy their needs without their children being forced to work.”

Ultimately, child labor will persist until the national willpower is summoned to end it.

“We can’t turn a blind eye to this. We do have an obligation — whether it’s morally, spiritually, or economically — to ensure that we do our part,” said Cassidy. “When we see these things happening around us, we have to call it out. It’s not somebody else’s problem. It’s society’s problem.”

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‘Have mercy and save us’: Ecumenical prayer service at national basilica pleads for peace in Ukraine

Richard Szczepanowski
OSV News

WASHINGTON — Marking the first anniversary of the Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and praying that God will “have mercy and save us” and “convert those who foster aggression and war,” Washington Cardinal Wilton Gregory and Metropolitan Archbishop Borys Gudziak, the Ukrainian Catholic Archbishop of Philadelphia, led a March 7 ecumenical prayer service for peace at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

“As one human family, we gather this evening to pray as we mark the sorrowful occasion of one year of war in the country of Ukraine and Ukraine’s courageous resistance to the Russian invasion,” Cardinal Gregory said. “We pray this evening and each day for comfort and wisdom as well as for the continued strength to endure. Our prayers are for all war and conflict to cease in every part of the world — that we may experience God’s healing and live in peace.”

The prayer service was held 11 days after the first anniversary of the start of the war. On Feb. 24, 2022 Russian forces invaded Ukraine after a massive military buildup at the border. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine last year is actually a continuation of hostilities that began in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea and supported pro-Russian separatists who seized the Donbas region in southeastern Ukraine.

“For these 12 months of devastation and destruction, we have joined in prayer with Pope Francis to reiterate our desire that everything possible be done to foster dialogue and a pathway to cooperation and peace,” Cardinal Gregory said, adding that “we remain committed to work for justice and the wellbeing of all God’s people in every circumstance and country.”

Among the churchmen joining Cardinal Gregory and Archbishop Gudziak at the service were Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the U.S.; Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, and president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; and Cardinal Donald Wuerl, the archbishop emeritus of the Archdiocese of Washington. Orthodox clergy members also participated in the prayer service.

More than 150 lay and religious attended the service in the basilica’s Crypt Church. The ecumenical prayer service for peace in Ukraine was chanted in both English and Ukrainian. Those gathered prayed that God would “grant victory to your faithful people over their enemies” and grant “the people of Ukraine the grace of faith and endurance amid the devastating trials of war.”

In addition, prayers were offered for the soldiers who defend Ukraine, those “wounded and traumatized” by the hostilities, civilians in the battle zones, those who have died in the war and those who mourn them, those who have been displaced by the war and for those assisting the people of Ukraine.

“O Lord, in this time of war, we beseech you: Sustain the people of Ukraine and teach them to be devoted to justice and peace,” Archbishop Gudziak led the faithful in



OSV News photo/Mihoko Owada, Catholic Standard

Family members, some wearing traditional Ukrainian dress, participate an ecumenical prayer service for peace in Ukraine in the Crypt Church of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington March 7, 2023.

praying. “Grant them prudence, strength and perseverance to defend their land from foreign attacks.”

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR, as of March 5 more than 8,100 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and more than 13,600 injured since the start of the war.

“In this tragic year, the world has witnessed the faith and resilience of the Ukrainian people as they have defended their God-given dignity and freedom,” Cardinal Gregory said. “We stand in solidarity with all who suffer and with those who defend the innocent.”

The UNHCR also estimates that about 8.1 million Ukrainians, approximately 20 percent of the population, have been displaced from their homes. At one point, nearly 20 million Ukrainians were displaced, but nearly 11 million have since returned. The U.N. has declared the exodus the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the end of World War II.

“We understand the lasting effects of the trauma and horror of war that are affecting many,” Cardinal Gregory said at the March 7 prayer service. “We see in the news stories and social media the heartache and suffering that move us to be responsive in all the ways we can to call for peace and an end to war.”

Archbishop Gudziak, who recently returned from a visit to Ukraine, said, “Catholics along with people of other faiths and children and grandmothers and students and others have asked me to thank you for your prayers, your advocacy and your help.”

“Thank you for the solidarity you have shown. The people of Ukraine are incredibly grateful,” he said. “It is important for people (around the world) to understand how grateful the people of Ukraine are.”

He said one product of the war is that “Ukrainians are turning to the Lord and relying on the Lord.”

“With the grace of God, many are digging deep — and not just in the earth to dig trenches, but to the very depths of their souls,” the archbishop said. “We pray for peace. We pray for justice.”

Archbishop Gudziak also pointed out that because of the Internet and social media, “we can see almost minute by minute what is going on” as the war wages.

“Everybody who is on the front lines is doing what they are supposed to do,” the archbishop said. “And, they appeal to all people of goodwill to pray, to advocate and to do what you can to help. May God reward you a hundredfold for your generosity.”

Cardinal Gregory also said he was “extremely grateful” for the ways “our American hearts, hands and homes have been opened wide to embrace the Ukrainian people in countless ways,” including welcoming displaced

Ukrainians “as they navigate their new reality as refugees.”

“Serving our brothers and sisters in their time of need is our demonstration of love in our modern society that has minimized — and in the case of war, completely disregarded — the value of life and the importance of family,” Cardinal Gregory said.

Among those at the prayer service were parishioners of the Ukrainian Catholic National Shrine of the Holy Family, which is near the basilica. Father Robert Hitchens, pastor of the Ukrainian Catholic National Shrine, told *Catholic Standard*, the Archdiocese of Washington newspaper, that his parishioners “are more intensified in our prayers in the face of these ongoing barbaric attacks.”

“With our prayers, we are bearing witness and encourage our neighbors to keep up support for Ukraine, especially with prayers for peace,” he said.

Olga, a native of the Crimean region of Ukraine who asked that her last name not be used, told *Catholic Standard* she attended the prayer service because “with God’s help, there will be a victorious end for Ukraine to this war.”

“Ukrainian resilience is remarkable, but would not be possible without help from the West — militarily, financially and, of course, prayer,” she said. “We cannot forget to pray.”

Richard Szczepanowski is managing editor of Catholic Standard, newspaper for the Archdiocese of Washington.

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Church must accompany people, tell truth about gender ideology

Andy Telli
OSV News

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Gender ideology has permeated the culture, rewriting society’s understanding of the differences of the sexes, and leading to a sharp increase in the number of people, particularly teen girls, who are seeking a gender transition.

The role of Catholics and the church is to accompany the people facing these issues to guide them to the truth and to the Gospel, said Mary Rice Hasson, the Kate O’Beirne senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington.

Hasson addressed a recent teacher in-service program sponsored by the Diocese of Nashville’s Catholic Schools Office. More than 600 administrators, teachers and staffers at the Catholic schools in the diocese attended the program held at the Catholic Pastoral Center:

“Accompaniment has a purpose. It’s loving the person. But because you love the person, you lead the person closer to God,” said Hasson, an attorney who directs the Catholic Women’s Forum, a network of Catholic professional women and scholars, and is co-founder of the Person and Identity Project, an initiative that equips parents and faith-based institutions to counter gender ideology and promote the truth of the human person.

“We need to love people enough to tell them the truth,” she said. “It’s not love to encourage someone to believe something that’s not true.”

Catholics can look to Pope Francis’ approach to gender ideology for guidance, Hasson said. The pope reaches out to people who identify as transgender to take care of their needs while also speaking forcefully against gender ideology as a false anthropology, she said.

In his apostolic exhortation “Amoris Laetitia,” Pope Francis wrote: “It is one thing to be understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life, and another to accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality. Let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator. We are creatures, and not omnipotent. Creation is prior to us and must be received as a gift. At the same time, we are called to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created.”

From the perspective of gender ideology, Hasson said, “there is no God. I create who I am.”

From the Christian perspective, “the most fundamental thing ... is we are created by God,” Hasson said. “He gave me my dignity because he created me in his image.”

Our sexual identity as a female or male is a gift from God, Hasson said in her Feb. 17 address. “Every person is either a son or daughter of the Lord,” she added. “Everything else flows from that.”

Over the last 40 or 50 years, Hasson said, the culture has forgotten that sex has something to do with reproduction. “People are created male or female,” Hasson said. “There are only two sexes because there are only two reproductive



OSV News photo/ Andy Telli, Tennessee Register

Mary Rice Hasson, the co-founder of the Person and Identity Project, gives a presentation on gender ideology during an in-service program Feb. 17, 2023, at the Catholic Pastoral Center in Nashville, Tenn. More than 600 administrators, teachers, and staff from the Cathoile schools in the Diocese of Nashville attended the program.

roles.”

A person’s sex is marked by the DNA in every cell in his or her body, Hasson said. “You can’t change sex. So if you can’t change sex, why are you changing your body?”

Typically, people considering a gender transition have had previous mental health issues, including body issues or a sense of isolation or not fitting in with their peers, Hasson said.

“You’re modifying the body to deal with feelings,” she said.

One of the arguments for undergoing a gender transition is that without the treatment, the patient will be more likely to choose suicide, but the data does not support that conclusion, Hasson said.

“These are people who are struggling, are in pain,” Hasson said. “Giving someone cross-sex hormones and amputating their breasts is not how you help people experiencing suicidal ideation.”

Unless people address their mental health issues, they will persist “because you come face to face with the fact you can’t change your sex,” Hasson said.

For the vast majority of people, once they start the process of transitioning their gender they rarely reverse the process, Hasson said. “It’s a pathway once you get on, it’s really hard to get off.”

Puberty blockers, cross-sex hormone therapy, and the surgery to transition a person’s gender “can alter your appearance and destroy your natural function,” Hasson said. “It’s irreversible damage by the time you get to surgery.”

“We should celebrate individual differences ... without denying the fundamental truth of whether they’re male or female,” Hasson said.

Andy Telli is the managing editor of the Tennessee Register, newspaper of the Diocese of Nashville.

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Women’s way: Pope opens path for more women at Vatican, in church

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — At the end of his general audience in St. Peter’s Square March 8, International Women’s Day, Pope Francis led a round of applause for women.

He thanked the world’s women “for their commitment to building a more humane society” through their ability to see and understand the world “with a creative gaze and tender heart.”

“It is right for them to be able to express these skills in every sphere, not just within the family,” he wrote in the preface to a book, “More Women’s Leadership for a Better World: Caring as the Engine for Our Common Home.”

In the preface, published by Vatican News on Women’s Day, the pope wrote that “the church can also benefit from the valorization of women” by allowing them to do more than just perform a particular function or job and actually transform the culture to be more caring.

In his 10 years as pontiff, Pope Francis has sought to include more women in the work and governance of Vatican commissions and Roman Curia offices.

According to the latest statistics, there has been a significant increase in the number and percentage of female employees the past decade, and the number of women in Vatican leadership positions has also grown.

Today there are 1,165 women working at the Vatican compared to 846 in 2013, making up 23.4 percent of the total workforce, according to Vatican News March 8. When it comes to roles in the Roman Curia, more than one in four employees is now a woman.

Within the Curia, five women hold the rank of undersecretary, and one has the rank of secretary: Salesian Sister Alessandra Smerilli, whom the pope appointed to the No. 2 position at the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in 2021. It is the highest post ever held by a woman at the Holy See.

The pope has said he intends to appoint the first female prefect now that it is possible for laypeople, and, therefore, women, to lead dicasteries, according to “Praedicate Evangelium,” the pope’s constitution reforming the Curia.

Pope Francis has also, for the first time, appointed women as full members of Vatican dicasteries, when previously that role was reserved to cardinals and some bishops. Members play a key role and vote along with prefects and secretaries at plenary assemblies.

So, while the pope has been bringing more women to “a place at the table” in Rome, he also has opened up new ways for women’s voices to be heard.

His Synod of Bishops on synodality has inspired some groups to create surveys specifically for women and compile the findings to send to the synod. The synodal process is meant to be an ongoing exercise for the entire church to learn to come together, to listen more intently and discern what the Holy Spirit is saying.

The World Women’s Observatory’s of the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organizations (WUCWO) created a survey, which is open until March 15, for women who held leadership positions during any phase of the synodal process to reflect on concerns regarding the role of women in the church.

Also, researchers from Australia’s University of Newcastle produced the International Survey of Catholic Women for the Catholic Women Speak network as a way to contribute their voices to the synod. It received more than 17,000 responses from 104 countries and those findings with recommendations were sent to the synod in September. The complete report was presented at the Vatican March 8 by Tracy McEwan, a theologian and sociologist of religion affiliated with the University of Newcastle and a member of the research team.

The presentation, sponsored by Chiara Porro, Australia’s ambassador to the Holy See, also included María Lía Zervino, a sociologist and president of WUCWO, who gave the preliminary findings of their survey of more than 400 women who played a leadership role during the synodal process.

Zervino said 26 percent of respondents said they experienced no obstacles during the synodal process, while 43 percent of respondents said their “main obstacle” was an ordained minister and 18 percent said other members of the community were obstacles. Smaller percentages felt a lack of experience or difficulty speaking before a formal audience of church hierarchy was their main obstacle.

Some 69 percent of respondents felt “effectively involved in decision making” during the synodal process while 20 per-

cent said they did not. Asked if their opinion had been listened to: 21 percent said “always,” 41 percent said “usually yes,” 12 percent said “several times,” while 23 percent responded “rarely” or “no.”

Both surveys had overlapping findings, one of the most important being that women’s views are not a “monolith” and it is the diversity of their experiences, challenges and hopes that can enrich everyone.

Some common threads when it came to findings and recommendations in both surveys were: the women surveyed were enthusiastic and deeply identified with their faith; they desired more inclusion, especially of those who have been marginalized; there is a need for greater formation for everyone, including male members and leaders of the church. Both surveys found the desire for ordained ministry for women was more predominant in North America and some European countries.

The women they surveyed were “deeply concerned” about transparency and accountability in church leadership

and governance, McEwan said, and concerned about abuse, racism and sexism in church environments.

McEwan said she handed Pope Francis their report at the end of his general audience, where he met them as well as some of the 29 resident women ambassadors to the Holy See.

Zervino, who is also one of the three women members the pope appointed to the Dicastery for Bishops, said she hopes all the “words” contained in these findings have an impact.

The pope has said that “the church cannot and should not remain just with words,” she said, adding that she believed the time for concrete action has come.

“I am convinced this synodal process will have many concrete results that will change a bit the way things work in the church, perhaps in the structure, perhaps in daily life,” in reaching out to others and other faiths — all areas where women are, in fact, already active, she said.

The pope has opened a “fantastic” new road, she said, so “let’s go” and forge ahead because “we can do concrete things because we women are concrete.”



Stewardship and Mission Services

Due to a planned retirement, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, KY (www.covdio.org) seeks candidates for the position of Director of the Office of Stewardship and Mission Services. The message of stewardship has been part of the salvation history of the Church. All of the teachings of stewardship come directly from the Gospels, the Old Testament, and the letters of the New Testament. Stewardship is the way God expects us to live, with gratitude and with awareness that everything we have is a gift. The goals of this office are straightforward and include: stewardship formation and education; research and planning; development of diocese-wide support for parishes, ministries, and schools in areas of programs; and business and fund development, especially the Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal which makes so many diocesan services possible. This office also works to spread the message of Mission through prayer, education, works of justice, and providing financial support to activities and organizations such as the Seminarian Education Fund; Religious Retirement; International and Domestic Needs; Peter’s Pence; and Operation Rice Bowl. The Director represents the Bishop of Covington and the Office throughout the Diocese and the community at-large to develop relationships and support. S/he provides a wide variety of services to pastors and parishes, including stewardship conferences, programs for school children, and estate planning seminars. We seek an outgoing, creative, faith-filled Catholic individual with a servant’s heart and the expertise and experience to lead, manage, and inspire others to support diocesan initiatives. We require an individual with significant experience in comprehensive fundraising at a senior level, including experience with planned giving, major gifts, and annual giving programs. Those interested in this opportunity may submit a letter of interest along with a comprehensive resume or C-V, including compensation history and a list of references that includes contact email addresses, by email or by fax to **Stephen Koplyay, SPHR, at skoplyay@covdio.org or 859-392-1589.**

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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.

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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(Continued from page 4)

sometimes a mixture of both. I lead each of My children along a path that is uniquely tailor-made for him or her. Comparing is not only wrong; it is also meaningless. Don't look for affirmation in the wrong places: your own evaluations or those of other people. The only source of real affirmation is My unconditional Love. Many believers perceive Me as an unpleasable Judge, angrily searching out their faults and failures. Nothing could be farther from the truth! I died for your sins so that I might clothe you in My garments of salvation. This is how I see you: radiant in My robe of righteousness. When I discipline you, it is never in anger or disgust; it is to prepare you for face-to-Face fellowship with Me throughout all eternity. Immerse yourself in My loving Presence. Be receptive to My affirmation, which flows continuously from the throne of grace."

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Ray Smith is a commissioned Lay Pastoral Minister for the Diocese of Covington.

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‘Restored in Christ’ project

(Continued from page 1)

the behest of Covington’s Third Bishop, Camillus Maes. Don Knochelmann, diocesan director for Buildings and Properties, said that three chimera that were in serious disrepair and causing a safety concern were removed from the Cathedral in 2019. “In fact, pieces had fallen on the ground, on the sidewalks,” Mr. Knochelmann said. At that time, Stephen Enzweiler, Cathedral archivist, completed a condition report on the Cathedral’s chimera and gargoyles. All 58 of the terra cotta figures had fallen into disrepair. Following up on that report, in October 2020, Mr. Knochelmann contracted with the Cincinnati architectural firm SHP to conduct an extensive survey. Using Truescan 3D technology, every inch of the exterior of Cathedral was painstakingly scanned. Overall, the Cathedral was determined to be in good condition with little signs of structural movement. However, the decorative stone supports and ornamental elements have deteriorated extensively, requiring immediate attention. Among the survey’s report, SHP noted: — Buttresses, piers and belt courses have eroded and split. — Terra cotta gargoyles and chimera, limestone columns, finials and arcades are cracked and crumbling. — Lintels, armatures and colonnades held together by iron pins have eroded from rust and water entrenchment. “Some of the work included in the scope is just general masonry repairs, repairs that you would see at any church,” said Mr. Knochelmann as he described tuck-pointing and grouting to the Cathedral’s limestone blocks. “But because the Cathedral is so decorative and ornate ... a lot of that is badly damaged from the freeze and thaw

cycles” over the last 100-plus years. To recreate the chimera and gargoyles — known collectively as grotesques — SHP has created 3D images. Like the originals, terra cotta will be used to craft the grotesques. The new grotesques will be identical in design to the original creatures, which were fashioned after the chimera and gargoyles guarding Notre Dame in Paris. Over 100 years ago, popular wisdom was to fill the terra cotta chimera with concrete. Architects and engineers have since learned that it is better to leave the terra cotta hollow. In fact, it was the continual freezing and thawing of the concrete which exasperated the deterioration of the

Cathedral’s chimera. Additionally, Indiana limestone sourced from the same quarry the Cathedral stone was taken a century ago, will be used in the restoration. Mike Murray and the Office of Stewardship and Mission Services is reaching out to benefactors for the initial silent phase of funding for the project. In early Fall, parishioners throughout the diocese will be invited to make a gift to complete the “Restored In Christ” project. “This campaign will ensure that our next 170 years begins with the same resolute commitment to stewardship for the many gifts God has given us,” said Bishop Iffert.

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- Tuesday, March 28, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, March 29, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, April 16, 1:30–4 p.m., Catholic Charities, Training Room, Covington

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Delaware bill would break seal of confession, require priest to report what penitent says

WILMINGTON, Del. — The Delaware General Assembly is taking aim at a basic tenet of the Catholic Church and wants to break the seal of confession between a priest and penitent. House Bill 74 would do away with the privilege between priest and penitent in a sacramental confession by requiring priests to report information relating to child abuse and neglect that is shared in a confessional. The Diocese of Wilmington said priests are prohibited from breaking the seal of confession and are bound to keep the confidence of penitents in the sacrament of reconciliation. “The sacrament of confession and its seal of confession is a fundamental aspect of the church’s sacramental theology and practice. It is non-negotiable,” the diocese said in a prepared statement March 6. In Vermont and Utah, state lawmakers introduced similar legislation, although in Utah, the proposal did not get a public hearing before the Legislature ended its 45-day session March 3. Two other states, Washington and Kansas, are advancing measures to require clergy be listed as mandatory reporters of child abuse or neglect. They are among a handful of states in the U.S. that do not already require this. However, the Kansas measure, introduced by Sen. Tom Holland, does not include protections for religious confessions.

Survivors ask for pope’s support for Nigeria’s persecuted Christians

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Finally free after nine years as a captive of a Nigerian jihadist militant group, Maria Joseph, a 19-year-old Christian from Nigeria, asked Pope Francis to do “whatever is in his means” to support the country’s persecuted Christians. Joseph and Janada Marcus, 22, are survivors of Christian-targeted persecution by Boko Haram, a terror group aligned with the Islamic State that has been active in Nigeria since 2002. Both women received psychological treatment at a trauma center operated by the Diocese of Maiduguri, Nigeria, and met with the pope at the end of his general audience March 8. In 2013, when she was just 9 years old, Joseph was abducted by Boko Haram and taken to a camp where she was tortured and enslaved until her escape in 2022. She said that like other Christians in the camp, she was forced to convert to Islam and kept in a cage. “It was difficult because I was without my family, then they forced me to relinquish my religion and I did not like it,” she told Catholic News Service through a translator March 7. Joseph said she was given a Muslim name and kept in a cage for an entire year after she refused to marry one of the group’s leaders.

UN leaders hail pope’s South Sudan trip for its important message of peace

UNITED NATIONS — The recent trip of Pope Francis and two other prominent Christian leaders to war-torn South Sudan has sent a powerful message about the need for peace in the world’s newest nation, according to United Nations officials. Speaking at a U.N. Security Council briefing on South Sudan March 6, Nicholas Haysom, special representative of the U.N. secretary-general, said the pope’s Feb. 3-5 trip with Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and the Rev. Iain Greenshields, moderator of the Church of Scotland, had “served to echo the message of peace, tolerance, reconciliation, and civic participation so often called for by the South Sudanese themselves.” During that visit, Pope Francis encouraged South Sudanese political leaders to put an end to years of violence following its 2011 independence from Sudan and to unite for the sake of the East African nation’s people. The pope also urged the importance of including youth in dialogue and women in the country’s decision-making processes. Following

the March 6 briefing at U.N. headquarters in New York, U.N. secretary-general spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said the ecumenical visit was “extremely important” in response to a question by OSV News. He said, “Religious leaders have a lot of power and a lot of influence, and it is critical that they use it for good.”

Pope names new cardinals to his council of advisers

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis named five new members to his international Council of Cardinals and renewed the mandate of four current members, the Vatican announced March 7. Those whose mandates have been renewed are: Cardinals Seán P. O’Malley of Boston, 78, who was appointed to the council in 2013; Pietro Parolin, 68, Vatican secretary of state, who was first appointed in 2014; Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India, 78, who was appointed in 2013; and Fridolin Ambongo Besungu of Kinshasa, 63, who was appointed to the council in 2020. The new members appointed are: Cardinals Gérald C. Lacroix of Québec, 65; Juan José Omella Omella of Barcelona, 76; Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg, 64; Sérgio da Rocha of São Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, 63; and Fernando Vérgez Alzaga, 78, president of the commission governing Vatican City State. Italian Bishop Marco Mellino, 56, continues as secretary of the council. He had been appointed adjunct secretary in 2018 and secretary in 2020.

Catholic aid groups network to serve needs of Turkey, Syria quake survivors

NEW YORK — Catholic aid agencies are working alongside other international humanitarian organizations to house, feed and administer additional life-saving assistance to tens of thousands of people in Syria and Turkey. Devastating earthquakes and tremors that ravaged those two countries in February have killed at least 50,000 people, wounded many more and displaced millions of others, according to the United Nations, which is leading some of the recovery efforts and has repeatedly appealed for millions of more dollars in aid for recovery. In Syria, where people were already suffering the effects of ongoing civil war, the post-quake situation is particularly dire, according to Catholic aid groups doing work there. Through a network of Syria-based Catholic churches, Catholic Near East Welfare Association is now feeding and sheltering about 4,600 people in four areas of the country that had suffered the most damage, said CNEWA spokesperson Michael La Civita. Jesuit Relief Services ultimately plans to reach out to about 40,000 affected people in Syria, via its food and shelter programs now underway, which include a psychosocial component. Caritas Turkey program manager Giulia Longo said the agency was helping distribute food, clothing, blankets, hygiene packages and some psychosocial services to approximately 2,600 people, including refugees, in some of the hardest hit and remote areas of Turkey.

Remembering deadly shipwreck, pope prays to end human trafficking

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Human traffickers must be stopped from risking the lives of migrants traveling in search of a better future, Pope Francis said. After praying the Angelus with some 25,000 visitors gathered in St. Peter’s Square March 5, the pope prayed for the victims of a shipwreck off the coast of Cutro in Italy’s southern province of Crotone, which killed at least 70 people Feb. 26. A boat carrying some 180 migrants sank near the Italian coast after sailing from Turkey. Only 80 survivors had been found as of the morning March 6. According to Italy’s border police, the migrants each paid smugglers 8,000 euros (about \$8,500) to be taken to Europe. “That human traffickers be stopped, and that they do not continue to take the

lives of so many innocent people,” Pope Francis prayed after the Angelus. “May the journeys of hope never again turn into journeys of death,” he said. “May the clean waters of the Mediterranean no longer be bloodied by such tragic accidents.”

Vatican statistics show decline in clergy, religious women, worldwide

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The number of Catholics and permanent deacons in the world rose in 2021, while the number of seminarians, priests, and men and women in religious orders declined, according to Vatican statistics. At the end of 2021, the number of Catholics in the world reached 1.378 billion, up 1.3 percent from 1.36 billion Catholics at the end of 2020, according to the Vatican’s Central Office of Church Statistics. The Vatican newspaper, L’Osservatore Romano, published a brief overview of the global numbers March 3. The total number of diocesan and religious order priests decreased globally by 0.57 percent to 407,872, the Vatican office said. The total number of religious women, it said, was 608,958 at the end of 2021 — a decrease of 1.7 percent from 619,546 at the end of 2020. The number of permanent deacons — 49,176 — saw a 1.1 percent increase over the previous year, with the majority of them serving in the Americas. The number of seminarians has been declining each year since 2013, the Vatican office said. The only increase by region for 2021 was in Africa with 0.6 percent and the sharpest decline in the number of seminarians was in North America and Europe with a 5.8 percent decrease each in 2021.

Labor ruling vindicates Starbucks workers over coffee giant’s ‘widespread misconduct’ in union drive

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Experts on Catholic social teaching about labor are applauding a March 1 federal decision in favor of Buffalo, New York-area Starbucks workers who successfully fought to unionize coffee shops in the face of tremendous opposition from the corporate giant. National Labor Relations Board administrative law Judge Michael A. Rosas found that the coffee company, which operates more than 36,000 stores worldwide, had violated federal labor law hundreds of times, impeding workers’ organizing efforts through surveillance, disciplinary action and terminations. “I think it’s a really significant ruling of historic dimensions,” Georgetown University history professor Joseph A. McCartin, who directs that school’s Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor, told OSV News. With union membership at a record low in the U.S., a renewed focus on Catholic social teaching about labor is more important than ever, he added. “I think we’ve seen a decline in the democratic voice in the workplace,” said McCartin. “And that helps to sap the strength of the democratic voice in the larger society as well.”



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Cross Catholic Outreach’s Installation of Safe Water Wells Transforms Lives

Serving the poor in developing countries is often a challenge because locations are remote, access to electricity is unreliable, and modern systems are usually too complicated to provide practical solutions for the problems families are facing. Because of this, the missionary priests and religious sisters serving in these difficult conditions often turn ‘to old-fashioned methods’ in achieving their goals.

“Sometimes, relying on old ways

“There’s a lot of excitement on the day a new well is blessed and dedicated to God.”

Jim Cavnar,
CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach

of doing things is best,” admitted Jim Cavnar, CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach, a respected and successful Catholic ministry founded to serve the poor around the world. Very often, Cavnar’s team works with Catholic ministries located so far from modern conveniences that age-old solutions must be used to overcome the challenges faced by struggling families and the ministries that serve them.

For example, Cavnar’s preferred solution for supplying safe water in a remote African village is to install a traditional deep water well with a simple, manual hand pump.

This idea of tapping an underground source to supply families with clean water is nothing new. Jesus Christ’s encounter with the woman at the well is a case in point, and productive wells are

mentioned in the Old Testament too.

Much has changed since biblical times. Yet, in the world’s developing countries, accessing safe water has remained an ongoing struggle, and installing simple wells continues to be an excellent way to achieve successful results.

“Our ministry was founded to support Church-based efforts to benefit the poor, and we are often asked to help provide



clean water sources,” Cavnar said. “It’s a godsend to families that have had to travel long distances to find water — especially since many of the streams and ponds they draw their water from are also used by animals and are often filled with bacteria and parasites.”

Cavnar is familiar with the value of quality wells because his ministry has funded the construction of many water systems around the world.

“One of the big projects we have going on now is focused on the Central Plateau of Haiti, an area where water scarcity and contamination have become serious problems,” Cavnar said. “Fortunately, our in-country partner



Cross Catholic Outreach’s U.S. benefactors have made a huge difference in the lives of poor Haitian families by installing simple wells with sturdy, reliable hand pumps. It’s an old-fashioned but cost-effective solution that produces incredible results.

there — the Kobonal Haiti Mission — is perfectly positioned to lead the water projects we have planned for that area.” (See the related story on the opposite page.)

Once a specific community has been identified and its needs assessed, the mission brings in heavy machinery to drill the well. Since some areas of the world suffer from regular droughts that can lower the water table, determining whether to drill based on the depth of the well becomes a critical decision too.

“In some cases, we’ve had to drill down 200 meters or more to ensure we reach a plentiful source of water,” Cavnar explained.

After the well shaft is encased in a special tubing to preserve its strength and purity, pump tests are run to ensure that there is enough water for the community, and water quality is checked to make sure the water is safe for people and animals.

With proper maintenance, simple wells and hand pumps like these can serve a community for decades and bless

generations to come.

“There’s a lot of excitement on the day a new well is blessed and dedicated to God,” Cavnar said. “It is a deeply moving experience, and we often share those stories with our U.S. donors who helped fund the work. In fact, Catholics here in the United States play a critical role in this effort. If it weren’t for them, we would never be able to provide this safe water to families in need.”

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach’s water projects and other ministries to the poor can contribute to the ministry by using the brochure inserted in this issue or by sending a tax-deductible gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02400, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The ministry has a special need for partners willing to make gifts on a monthly basis. Use the inserted brochure to become a Mission Partner, or write “Monthly Mission Partner” on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.

Cross Catholic Outreach Endorsed by More Than 115 Bishops, Archbishops

Cross Catholic Outreach’s range of relief work to help the poor overseas continues to be recognized by a growing number of Catholic leaders in the U.S. and abroad.

“We’ve received more than 115 endorsements from bishops and archbishops,” explained Jim Cavnar, CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach. “They’re moved by the fact that we’ve launched outreaches in almost 40 countries and have undertaken a variety of projects — everything from feeding the hungry and housing the homeless

to supplying safe water and supporting educational opportunities for the poorest of the poor. The bishops have also been impressed by Cross Catholic Outreach’s direct and meaningful response to emergency situations, most recently by providing food, medicines and other resources to partners in Haiti, El Salvador and areas of Belize impacted by natural disasters.”

Archbishop Thomas Rodi of Mobile, Alabama, supports this mission, writing, “It is a privilege for me to support Cross Catholic Outreach. This organization

funds ministries to our neighbors in need in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, and the Pacific. Through the generosity of so many, the love of God is made visible to many who are coping with the most difficult of daily living conditions.”

In addition, many of the bishops and archbishops are encouraged that Pontifical canonical status was conferred on Cross Catholic Outreach in September 2015, granting it approval as an official Catholic organization. This allows the ministry to participate in the mission of

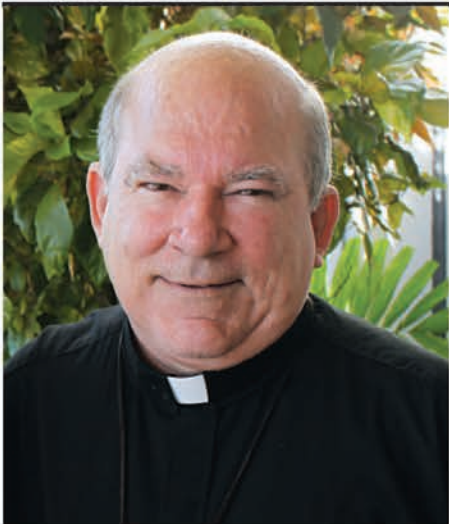
the Church and to give concrete witness to Gospel charity.

“Your work with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is a strong endorsement of your partnership with the work of the Universal Church,” Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco said. “By providing hope to the faithful overseas by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, delivering medical relief to the sick and shelter to the homeless, and through self-help projects, you are embodying the Papal Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*.”

Priest Renews His Commitment to Supply Safe Water to Haiti’s Poor — and Turns to U.S. Catholics for Support

Believing God has called him to be a source of love and hope to the poorest families in Haiti, Father Glenn Meaux is turning to U.S. Catholics for help in accomplishing his latest mission of mercy — an ambitious plan to provide safe water to those in greatest need.

To understand the passion and commitment of this dedicated missionary priest, it is essential to travel back to 1989, the year he arrived in Haiti’s Central Plateau and discovered the hardships families faced in the



“As Catholics, we must extend our hands to help our brothers and sisters in need.”

Fr. Glenn Meaux
Kobonal Haiti Mission

destitute village of Kobonal.

“There was no agriculture, there was no irrigation system, there was literally no hope at the time,” Fr. Meaux recalled.

To say he and his missionary team were deeply disturbed by the magnitude of the poverty in Kobonal would be an understatement. Hardly anyone in the village owned the land their fragile huts occupied. No one grew gardens or raised animals, and very few employment opportunities existed for the uneducated population, so very few families were able to earn enough money to buy food on a regular basis.

While all of these challenges were heartbreaking, Fr. Meaux immediately recognized that there was an even greater risk to local families — a lack of safe drinking water.

He noticed that women and children were gathering water from streams and rivers and that the water they collected was obviously tainted. During the dry



Unsafe water is a leading cause of death among Haiti’s rural poor, and Fr. Meaux believes God is calling on his mission — and Catholics in the U.S. — to bring relief to the many families who drink from these contaminated sources.

season, the situation became even worse. People resorted to digging holes in dry riverbeds, and what seeped up was murky and unsanitary.

While Fr. Meaux has found ways to improve the situation over the years, his heart still breaks every time he discovers a mother or child living in a dilapidated shack and gathering water from a contaminated stream. When that happens, he turns to Cross Catholic Outreach and compassionate Catholics in the U.S. for help in solving the area’s water challenges.

“Fr. Meaux has already given years of his life to serving the people of Haiti, but he always has his eyes forward, looking for the next thing he can do to help relieve the people’s suffering and increase their opportunities in the world,” explained Jim Cavnar, CEO of Cross Catholic Outreach, a leading Catholic relief and development ministry supporting Catholic missions in Haiti and around the globe. “We have partnered with Fr. Meaux for more than a decade and a half because we believe in his visionary goals for Haiti. He wants to address the people’s most urgent needs, but his ultimate goal is to break the cycle of poverty in this part of Haiti forever.

”Fr. Meaux describes this vision and his objectives in an even more direct way. “As Catholics, we must extend our hands to help our brothers and sisters in need,” he said.

This year, Fr. Meaux aims to bring

safe, abundant water to even more families living in and around Kobonal. The success of this project will end the collection of unsafe water from remote sources, benefiting both the health and well-being of local families.

“At Cross Catholic Outreach, we work on many projects like this, obtaining donations from U.S. Catholics to pay for the equipment and organize the construction efforts involved,” Cavnar explained. “Our current goal is to help Fr. Meaux install six new community water systems and repair five existing wells, so more than 2,000 children and adults in the Kobonal area will have access to an abundant supply of clean water.”

According to Cavnar, the new wells will have hand pumps and a cement wall for security and will open during set hours of the day. These measures will ensure that the well stations are safe and

easy to use for all. Next, community members will receive training in proper sanitation and hygiene practices and will learn how to maintain the wells, ensuring well stations are operational for generations to come.

Families will be able to use the water for drinking and cooking and also to sustain the important gardens they rely on for food and income.

“Anticipation is mounting for this project, and volunteers have already stepped forward to offer their help with the construction of the wells. Now, all that’s needed are the funds for drilling, purchasing pumps, constructing a pump house to store supplies, and training community members to handle maintenance of the new facilities,” Cavnar said. “Our goal now is to make American Catholics aware of the project and gain their support.”

How to Help

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach’s effort to help the poor worldwide, use the postage-paid brochure inserted in this newspaper or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC02400, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. The brochure also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

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