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(above) The congregation sings the opening hymn. A banner representing the Society of St. Vincent de Paul led the opening procession and was placed in front of the sanctuary.
(left) Bishop John Iffert was the celebrant and homilist at the St. Vincent de Paul centennial Mass at Blessed Sacrament parish, March 18.

St. Vincent de Paul celebrates 100 years of serving those in need with Mass

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Northern Kentucky, celebrated the society's centennial Mass, March 18. The service was held at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, and was celebrated by Bishop John Iffert of the Diocese of Covington. Concelebrating were Father Damian Hils, Father Daniel Vogelpohl, Father Augustine Aidoo and Father Albert Ruschman.

Friends and fellows of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul gathered that evening for the celebration, filling Blessed Sacrament's pews.

In his homily, Bishop Iffert recalled a time where he held a funeral for a woman who had passed. The funeral was small, unattended — despite assumptions, it had turned out that the woman was a beloved teacher by many, but due to circumstances could not afford

a large funeral, or the fees to have an obituary in the paper.

"It's a false assumption that bad things happen to bad people and good things happen to good people," Bishop Iffert said, recalling the reading in which Jesus healed a blind man, only for others to assume that the man or his parents were sinful.

"The poor are friends of God. Not unblessed, not unloved — but the opposite. Loved and cherished," he said.

To the fellows of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Bishop Iffert said that, as they celebrate their centennial year, they dedicate themselves to this practice of spiritual friendship with the poor.

"This Lent, as we prepare ourselves for Easter morning," said Bishop Iffert, "we will again dedicate ourselves to seeing as God sees. Becoming those who God sends — his living mission to the world."

What's next for 'With One Heart' and the Disciple Maker Index at the parish level

Laura Keener
Editor

Last week, the *Messenger* talked with some parishioners to get feedback on the Disciple Maker Index. In the conversation, several questions and concerns were mentioned: What are the next steps? What is the diocese looking for? How is the data being analyzed? What will the data be used for?

This week, the *Messenger* talks with Deacon Jim Fortner, chief operating officer, Diocese of Covington and Carla Molina, leadership consultant, Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI), to get answers

(Continued on page 13)



Wherever we go from here Lord,
let us be strong in faith
and poor in Spirit.

Make us your disciples with one heart.

Amen



Ministry of lector

Seven candidates studying for the permanent diaconate for the Diocese of Covington reached a first milestone, March 19, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, as Bishop John Iffert installed each to the Ministry of Lector:

(left to right) Eric Wehrman, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell; Terry Mason, St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger; Jason Gibson, St Cecilia Parish, Independence; Dale Brockman, St. Timothy Parish, Union; Chris Freihofer, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington; Tom Kissel, St. Pius Parish, Edgewood and Steve Winbigler, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring.

During the ceremony, (above, right) the candidate kneels before Bishop Iffert. As the Sacred Scriptures are placed in their hands, Bishop Iffert said, “Take this book of the Holy Scriptures and be faithful in handing on the Word of God, so that it may grow strong in the hearts of His people.”

Those given the Ministry of Lector are entrusted with reading the Sacred Scriptures at Mass and during other liturgies of the Church. They also teach children and adults in the faith and prepare them to receive the Sacraments.

Also, during the ceremony 10 candidates for the permanent diaconate for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati were also installed to Ministry of Lector. All of the deacon candidates are studying at the Athenaeum of Ohio, Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, Cincinnati.



(above) Finalists for the 2023 Pro-life Essay Contest stand with Bishop John Iffert for a photo.
(left) Bishop Iffert stands with the top four essay finalists. This year, third place was tied between Lilly Drees, St. Mary School, Alexandria, and Evan Ryan, St. Cecilia School, Independence. In second place was Sabrina Scroggins, St.Pius X School, Edgewood, and first place was Anna Curtsinger, Sts. Peter and Paul School, California.

Eighth grade Pro-life essayists commemorated at awards banquet

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The annual Pro-life Essay Contest in the Diocese of Covington invites eight grade students to write an essay on the sanctity of life. The contest is sponsored by the diocesan Pro-life Office in coordination with the Department of Catholic Schools. Top students receive scholarships for their efforts as they move into high school, sponsored by the generosity of the Knights of Columbus.

This year, the contest’s theme was “Called to Serve Moms in Need,” a theme consistent with the USCCB and the Diocese of Covington’s Pro-life endeavors following

last year’s overturning of Roe v. Wade, according to Faye Roch, diocesan director of the Office of Pro-Life.

An awards banquet was held, March 20, to commemorate the student finalists of the contest, who were chosen out of hundreds of essays for their merits. Members of the selection committee read excerpts from the finalists’ essays, as well as the full essays for the top four finalists and scholarship recipients, at the banquet.

During the banquet, Bishop John Iffert congratulated the essayists present.

“I love what I heard in your essays. I love that so many of you had such a good understanding of the teaching of

the Church, of the word of God, the way God has revealed himself to us and revealed to us the way we should love and care for on another,” he said.

“I loved hearing you talk about the dignity that every human person, every human being, is endowed with.”

He continued, saying, “Oppose abortion in the most fundamental way you can by respecting your bodies and the bodies of others ... and then, if you find yourself afraid, just remember, Jesus is with you. Thank you so much for your essays.”



Cathedral Concert Series

The Cathedral Concert Series concludes its 46th Season with the annual musical celebration of J.S. Bach’s 338th Birthday on Sunday, March 26, 3 p.m.

Guest artist is organist Mitchell Miller, making his first appearance on the concert series. Music of J.S. Bach will be heard, as well as music inspired by Bach. Both the Historic Schwab Organ (1859) and Cathedral Grand Organ will fill the pristine acoustics of the Basilica.

All Cathedral Concerts are free and open to the public. A freewill offering is gladly accepted. Visit cathedralconcertseries.org

Margaret Klee, St. Patrick School teacher, receives Excellence in Education Award

Messenger Staff report

Margaret Klee, Math teacher at St. Patrick School and High School, Maysville, received the Excellence in Education Award, March 14 at the Cincinnati Woman’s Club, Cincinnati. The Excellence in Education Awards program is sponsored by the Cincinnati Association, Northern Kentucky University, Xavier University, University of Cincinnati, Mount St. Joseph University and Thomas More University.

“It was a blessing to be a part of the celebration recognizing Margaret Klee for her many accomplishments at St. Patrick School,” said Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Covington. “Her dedication to her students mirrors the love of Christ, the pre-eminent teacher in all of our Catholic schools.”

Ms. Klee teaches six different grades and teaches a different subject to every grade: pre-Algebra, 7th grade; Algebra I



Colleagues and family of Margaret Klee attended the Excellence in Education Awards banquet, March 14, at the Cincinnati Woman’s Club, Cincinnati. From left, Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Catholic Schools, Diocese of Covington; Generose Klee, mom; Ethan Klee, son; Margaret Klee, award winner and math teacher, St. Patrick School, Maysville; Sheila Clos, academic dean, St. Patrick School and Rachel Noll, principal, St. Patrick School.

Honors, 8th grade; Geometry Honors, 9th grade; Algebra II Honors, 10th grade; pre-Calculus, 11th grade and Calculus, 12th grade. She also offers two dual-credit courses for juniors and seniors, earning credit at Morehead State University.

In addition to her classes, Ms. Klee is the moderator of the school yearbook — a yearlong class that culminates in the publication of the pre-K through 12th grade yearbook.

She serves as the Title I math tutor offering tutoring for 60 minutes after school, twice each week (sometimes four). Tutoring is offered for every student she teaches. She also offers to tutor alumni on Saturdays, during the summer or right before college exams — without expecting payment.

She also has volunteers as coach the Lego Robotics team for grades 6-8 and at the school library — buying, cataloguing, checking out and reshelving books.

“When I say that she is touching and impacting a generation of students, it is not hyperbole,” said Dr. Rachel Noll, principal. “She is indispensable and she does it all with a smile.”

Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child provides healing to those have who lost a child; celebrates their memory

In 2016, the Pro-life Office for the Diocese of Covington held the first Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child, offered for parents, grandparents, family members and friends of those who have lost a child through miscarriage, still-birth, early infant death, abortion, illness, suicide, accident or any other reason. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this yearly service has not been held since 2019 — up until March 15, 2023.

This year, the Mass was held at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, with celebrant Father Michael Comer. In his homily, he spoke of God’s parental love for his people, with the message of letting those attending the Mass know that, though they are grieving, they are loved by God.



(above, left) Father Michael Comer was the celebrant for the Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child, March 15.
(above, center) Attendees were invited to place a lighted candle before a statue of Mary in memory of their child.
(above, right) Attendees also wrote the name of their deceased child in the book of intentions.
(left) Father Comer accepts the gifts, which were brought up by a family.

Altar servers honored for Christian witness inside and outside of church

Laura Keener
Editor

The Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky held its annual Server Awards and Vespers, March 19, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Bishop John Iffert distributed the iconic blue ribbon with silver crucifix award to over 90 seventh-grade servers from 27 parishes.

Mike Murray, president, Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky, welcomed the servers and their families. “The Serra Club is very proud to sponsor this time-honored tradition of recognizing our altar servers,” said Mr. Murray. “The Serra Club thanks you for your faithful service to your parish and to our Church. We encourage you to consider what form your service to the Lord may take in the future.”

Father Jordan Hainsey, pontifical master of ceremonies, was the

(Continued on page 8)



Bishop’s Schedule

March 24 Senior Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 10 a.m.	March 28 (continued) Catholic Charities appreciation dinner, Receptions, Erlanger, 5:30 p.m.
March 25 Mass, Franciscan Daughters of Mary perpetual vows, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.	March 29 Mass, St. Paul Elementary School, Florence, 8:15 a.m.
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 4:30 p.m.	Building Commission meeting, 2 p.m.
March 25–26 DPAA Follow-up Weekend	Annual Bishop Hughes dinner, Drees Pavilion, 5:30 p.m.
March 28 Advisory Council meeting, 9:30 a.m.	March 30 Diocesan Review Board meeting, 10 a.m.
	Deans meeting, 1:30 p.m.

COMMENTARY

Right to Life

According to The National Right to Life Organization, approximately 93 percent of all abortions occur due to “social reasons” rather than concerns for the mother’s

GUEST



Anna Curtsinger

health or situations like rape or incest. This statistic shows that in order to protect life, we must support pregnant women and mothers. It is not enough to choose life before a baby is born. We must support mothers and babies at all stages. We can look to the example of Mary, the Mother of God, as a model for this attitude.

While all life, including plants and animals, is valuable and should be protected, human life is sacred. The Bible tells us that as humans we are formed in God’s image. Life is a gift directly from God; therefore, only God has the power to decide when a life should end.

We know life begins in the womb because we are told in Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.” This is repeated in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person — among which is the invi-

olable right of every innocent being to life.” Clearly as Catholics, we must believe that all human life is holy, and that this life begins at conception.

Mary, the Blessed Mother is our best example of this attitude. As an unmarried virgin, Mary did not expect to be pregnant. The Bible tells us that when the angel Gabriel told her the news, she replied, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”

Mary had no plan to be pregnant at that point in her life. While the situation is different, many women today face this same challenge of unexpected pregnancy. Just like these women, Mary must have had many concerns: What will people think? What will my future look like? How am I going to handle this?

The way Mary responded to these fears is what makes her our perfect model. Mary chose to say “yes” to God’s plan. She trusted that God would take care of her.

Mary put this attitude into action when she went to visit Elizabeth. Elizabeth’s pregnancy was also unexpected. In Luke 1:6 it says, “Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.” As an older mother, Elizabeth needed extra support, and Mary immediately reached out. The Gospel of Luke tells us that as soon as Mary heard the news, she rushed to be with Elizabeth. Mary acted out her respect for life and God’s will. In the same way, we should try to model Mary’s attitude towards life. We should also follow her example in actions.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us to put our beliefs into action, “The duty of making oneself a neighbor to others and actively serving them becomes even more urgent when it involves the disadvantaged, in whatever area this may be.”

Women with unplanned pregnancies need our help both before and after the baby is born. As Catholics we are called to support and help during all phases of life. Simple actions like preparing dinner for a pregnant mother or babysitting for a single mother are ways to follow the example of Mary. Volunteering at Vacation Bible School is one way to share the Word of God with younger children. Supporting organizations like The Madonna House that help single mothers is another way to live out our commitment to life. The St. Vincent de Paul Society provides an easy way to donate baby toys and clothes to those who need them.

As a community, we are all invested in the future generations. The babies of today are the teachers, doctors, scientists and leaders of tomorrow.


Mother Theresa of Calcutta said, “It is a poverty to decide that a child must die so that you may live as you wish.” Everyone benefits when we support mothers and children. Mary clearly understood the importance of God’s plan when she said yes to the angel Gabriel. She showed this understanding through her support for Elizabeth. By following Mary’s example, we show our commitment to life and to the lives of mothers and babies.

Anna Curtsinger is an 8th grade student at Sts. Peter and Paul School in California, Ky. Her essay was the winning essay of the 2023 Pro-life Essay contest, sponsored by the Diocesan Pro-life Office, and is being printed here.

Losing a loved one to suicide

New York Times columnist David Brooks recently wrote an article about a lifelong friend who died by suicide. In describing his friend and his descent into a suicidal illness, Brooks sheds some needed light on how we still have a long way to go in our understanding of suicide. (*New York Times* Feb. 9, 2023)

IN EXILE



Father Ron Rolheiser

His friend, Peter, seemed a most unlikely candidate to die by suicide. He had a wonderful marriage, two loving sons, a warm circle of friends and a fulfilling career as a doctor within which he took a lot of satisfaction in helping others. He was also physically healthy, active and athletic. Yet, at point, he began to sink into a crushing depression before which all the love in the world stood helpless. Eventually, he took his own life.

What Brooks highlights in documenting his friend’s journey should be required reading for everyone. What does he highlight?

First, that in most cases, suicide is an illness. People don’t choose to sink into this kind of depression any more than people choose to have cancer, diabetes or a heart condition. They are hit with an illness, and they cannot will themselves out of it any more than someone with a major physical illness can cure himself or herself through simple willpower and attitude. You don’t just will your way out of a suicidal depression. Moreover, suicidal depression is not something that any of us, as outsiders,

really understand.

Second, the depression is horrible, the ultimate nightmare. Note how William Styron describes his own depression in his memoir, “Darkness Visible,” “I experienced a curious inner convulsion that I can only describe as despair beyond despair. It came out of the cold night; I did not think such anguish possible.”

Then, the suffering is compounded by the fact that part of the anatomy of the disease (most times) is that the person undergoing it finds it impossible to articulate what the pain exactly consists of. Hence, they are alone inside it, unanimity-minus-one, and with that aloneness comes the overpowering feeling that one is doing a favor to family and friends by removing oneself through suicide.

Moreover, in the face of suicidal depression, medicine and psychiatry can be helpful but they are limited in effectively treating this kind of depression.

What should we do when we are dealing with someone who is undergoing this kind of paralyzing depression? In trying to answer that, it can be helpful to start with the *via negative* — what shouldn’t we do?

Brooks shares some of his sincere, but ultimately misguided, efforts to reach his friend. For example, he reminded Peter of all the wonderful blessings he enjoyed and how blessed his life was. Later he realized that “this might make sufferers feel even worse about themselves for not being able to enjoy all the things that are palpably enjoyable.”

As well, we should not ask the person if he is thinking of hurting himself. The person is already hurting so badly that everything inside of him wants only to stop the pain, and suicide is perceived as the only means of doing that.

What should we do? Brooks is clear: “The experts say

if you know someone who is depressed, it’s OK to ask explicitly about suicide. The experts emphasize that you’re not going to be putting the thought into the person’s head. Very often, it’s already on her or his mind. And if it is, the person should be getting professional help.”

Experts also agree that we should take the risk and ask the person openly if he or she is thinking of suicide. If the person isn’t thinking about suicide, he or she will forgive you for asking; but if he or she is thinking of suicide and you are too timid to ask, your timidity might stand in the way of saving that person’s life.

Brooks points out that despite all the work that has been done in medicine and psychology in recent years, suicide rates today are 30 percent higher than they were even 20 years ago and one in five American adults experiences mental illness.

My own life has been much affected by suicide — the suicide of relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues, classmates, former students and trusted mentors. In my experience, in every one of these deaths, the person who died was a good, honest, gentle, sensitive and over-sensitive soul who, at a point in his or her life, was too bruised, too full of pain, and too overpowered by illness to continue to live. Each of these deaths also left behind a tragic sadness that was massively compounded by our lack of understanding of what really caused this person’s death.

In his assessment of his friend’s suicide, Brooks says that in the end “the beast was bigger than Pete; it was bigger than us.” It still is. Simply put, we are still a long way from understanding mental health and its fragility.

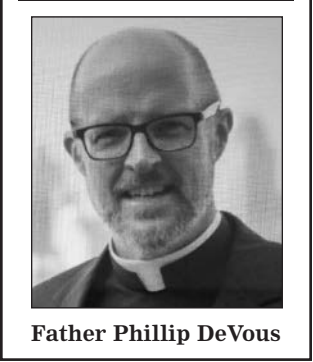
Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author.

If only the Spirit of God dwells in you

The readings for the fifth Sunday of Lent — Cycle C — are: Ezekiel 37:12-14; Romans 8:8-11 and John 11:1-45.

I recall a felicitously cutting phrase from the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who in reference to some political ordeal of the day, referenced “a leakage of reality from American life.”

I would like to borrow and adapt that phrase to make note of what I perceive to be a leakage of the Holy Spirit from the Christian life, and not in that graced, overflowing way for which we hope. I rather think it is something more worrisome.



What might I be on about? I think a spirit of materialism in the philosophical and social sense, and a certain rendering of the human person as merely biological material with synapses firing to create feelings has invaded the consciousness of Christians. I think this infiltration is deeper than we are comfortable acknowledging. This, I think, is much involved with the contemporary crisis of discipleship, where people give up their faith in Jesus by just melting back into the world. And following that, we operate as if the material is sufficient and that we can satisfactorily “manufacture” meaning within ourselves in the absence of truth.

I think St. Paul makes a statement worthy of our consideration when he says, “those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

Now, the word “flesh” as St. Paul uses it does not mean the body. It means the whole of fallen and mortal nature, body and soul. And “spirit” used here does not mean “soul,” but the whole of redeemed human nature now under God’s Holy Spirit. As the philosopher and theologian, Peter Kreeft, notes: “The Holy Spirit is God. God performs miracles by the Holy Spirit. That’s how he raised Jesus from the dead, and that’s how He will raise us with Jesus, in Jesus, as part of His Body the Church.”

Where the “flesh” is regnant there is a leakage of the Holy Spirit from the life of a Christian, as well as from the life of the Church, and the world. I do not think one has to be deeply perceptive to note that a whole slew of materialist ideologies has buffeted and battered believers.

As Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger noted in a rightly famous and insightful homily in 2005: “How many winds of doctrine have we known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking. The small boat of the thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves — flung from one extreme to another: from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so forth...”

Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be ‘tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine,’ seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.”

Are not these the things, among others we might mention, that are the manifestations of the regnant “flesh” that batter, embitter and sometimes puncture the faith of the faithful, causing a leaking of the Spirit from the Christian life? Are these not the powerful trends and movements that, at times, vex the Church’s own integral proclamation of the Gospel of new life in Christ?

It is precisely this emphasis on one’s own ego and

(Continued on page 14)

Say Yes!

A few days ago, I received a very exciting e-mail. My youngest daughter’s school opened the track and field team to 6th graders. Previously, this team was only open to 7th and 8th graders. I could hardly contain my excitement. Seriously!



I love to run. My two older children also enjoy running. My youngest — well, let’s just say she is the creative one in the family, finding joy in drawing, painting, baking and singing. She is very talented.

Knowing my girl, I hesitated to bring this opportunity to her attention. However, I could not help myself and gently presented it to her — pressure free.

Yes. What? Yes, I’d like to run track. Are you sure? You don’t have to. Yes. I want to join the team.

She said, “I want to join the team.” This was an expression of enthusiasm and willingness from a little girl who generally shied away from any kind of structured exercise that required purposely pushing your body to the limit. Willingness from a little girl who watched her sister and brother hobble around the house after a challenging work-out. Willingness from a little girl who had watched runners collapse at the finish line from exhaustion. Willingness from a little girl who had sat through wind, rain, snow and stifling hot weather for hours. She said yes knowing what the experience is likely to entail.

I believe God sends subtle messages to remind us what it means to be a Christian. This exchange with my daughter is one of those subtle messages. God invites us to serve him in so many ways. We should look for these

opportunities and be prepared to say “Yes,” regardless of the challenges.

We know that saying yes doesn’t mean that it will be easy. In Matthew 16:24-25, Jesus says to his disciples: “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wishes to save this life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Jesus warns his disciples in no uncertain terms that following him will be difficult. We understand this and it should not stop us. Why?

Because Jesus said “Yes.” God made the ultimate sacrifice in the crucifixion of his Son to save the world. Jesus said “Yes” to unimaginable suffering and death so that he could save us. Jesus said “Yes” so that we could experience the joy of eternal life.

What does saying yes look like? Saying yes could be as simple as spending more time in prayer; sacrificing our busy schedules to focus on our relationship with God. Saying yes could be generously supporting a need in our community, requiring us to divert our spending from a meal out to providing a meal for a neighbor in need. Saying yes could be having a meaningful conversation with a homeless friend, demanding courage to speak with a total stranger to learn more about him as a person, not a statistic. All these things (and many more) require consciously denying what makes us comfortable.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Phil 4:13)

Facing hard things is our cue to turn to God for help. He reassures us repeatedly, “Do not be afraid.” By saying yes even when it may be hard or inconvenient, we have an opportunity to experience God’s love, to see how he can carry us through the difficulty. Our suffering is transformed to joy because we realize we are not alone. God is always with us.

Karen Zengel is executive director, Society of St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky.

‘I Thirst’ (John 19:28)

Thirst is persistent and insistent. I can sometimes distract myself from my hunger but not my thirst. It cries out to be sated and not merely with a sip. When I am really thirsty, I want deep gulps and even imagine excess water running down my chin.



Jesus speaks from the cross in John’s Gospel and proclaims thirst. The sponge soaked in wine which is offered does not respond to the words Jesus utters, which seem more like a statement about the identity of Jesus than a request for water.

After this, aware that everything was now finished, in order that the Scripture be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I thirst”

(John 19:28). A dry and choking thirst accompanies the loss of quantities of blood. A horrifying walk on a dusty road with a heavy load increases the intense dryness in the throat and nostrils. Yet, the Gospel announces that Jesus’ thirst is about the fulfillment of Scripture and of the fullness of the revelation of Jesus.

“I thirst.” A request? Clearly not for the drink that is offered nor for a numbing of the pain. For what then, this thirst? It is a statement about what is finished and fulfilled, the unveiling of the deepest identity of Jesus.

“I thirst” declares the longing for the reign of God to be established, a reign where there is nothing outside the will of God. He said that he came to do the works of the Father; works that reveal who God is and what God does, and now it is done.

The hour, not yet come when there was a wedding feast at Cana, has come. There he was asked to fulfill the longing for the drink of joy and celebration. Now is an

hour Jesus has longed for, the completion of the revelation of God, the hour when he drinks the cup the Father has prepared for him, when he drinks with his disciples in the reigning of God.

The reign of God is here, the moment when creation is brought to its goal, when there is no power operative in all of creation but the power of God. It is what we pray for when we say, “Your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In this reign evil is destroyed and God is revealed. Jesus’ proclamation of thirst from the cross reveals God as the one who thirsts, who longs for and reaches toward us. God is thirsting for you, for me, for all creation, longing to be in a loving union.

“I thirst” reveals us to ourselves. God is thirsting for us while Jesus is thirsting with us. Who among us has not thirsted? We thirst for water each day. We thirst also for many necessities of life — for affection, for involvement, for approval, for power and even for wealth. We thirst for many things.

Recall that Jesus once met a woman who was thirsty without knowing her deepest thirst. A woman who tried to satisfy her thirst with idols that mimicked the water she needed. Jesus opened her to see beyond her mistaken ideas of what would fulfill her. He asked her for a drink, and she saw who he was — a man and a Jew who should not be asking her for water. To her he revealed her need for something more — for a prophet and a savior, for a place to worship, for a God worthy of her worship, a God who loved her infinitely.

The one who said he provides living water, thirsts. The one who said, I will not drink again until I drink with you anew in the reign of God, now thirsts. This is no ordinary thirst. It is a thirst that brings the Scripture to fulfillment, that reveals the fullness of the message — of what it is to be human and what we see most clearly of our God.

John began at the beginning. In the beginning was the Word. And now we are at the end, the fulfillment, the

(Continued on page 11)

Sisters and Oblates of St. Walburg Monastery — living the Benedictine way

Vickie Cimprich
Contributor

Long before I made my 2016 oblation at St. Walburg Benedictine Monastery, Villa Hills, Ky., and before I became a bit of a medievalist in Notre Dame Sister Mary Phillip Trauth’s classes at Thomas More College, my favorite story among the sixth century “Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great” was surely the one about the twin siblings Scholastica and Benedict.

They founded the Benedictine orders in the fifth century. Each greatly enjoyed her annual visit with the other. After one supper, when Benedict got up to go back to his monastery, his sister begged him to stay longer. There was so much to share about their ways of being monastics, about their loves of God, their communities and guests.

Absolutely not, Benedict replied, adhering formally to his rule.

Scholastica bowed her head over the table and there came a horrendous storm, maybe like those we’ve had throughout California this year. He couldn’t possibly go out in it. “Sister,” he wailed. “What have you done!”

The year 1859 saw the arrival of Benedictine sisters in the Diocese of Covington. Sisters Josephine Buerkle, Anselma Shoenhofer and Ruperta Albert came from Erie, Penn., to Covington, Ky., to teach the German children of St. Joseph Parish. Others joined them.

By 1867, many people within the U.S. had been freeing themselves while others were still at bitter odds. That year

new Benedictine way. “Sister, what have you done!” Benedict exclaimed.

His sister Scholastica, I guess looked him straight in the eye: “I asked you for a favor and you did not listen. So I asked God and he did listen.”

Vickie Cimprich is an Oblate of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills, Ky. To learn more about the Benedictine Sisters and Oblates of St. Walburg Monastery visit www.stwalburg.org.



Covington Benedictine Benedicta Bunning collaborated with the monks at St. Meinrad Monastery to found Immaculate Conception Monastery in Ferdinand, Indiana.

The order founded Villa Madonna College, now Thomas More University in 1921.

Benedictine sisters staffed parish schools in the Diocese of Covington for decades.

Within their monastery as well, their lives were shaped within Benedictine charisms of *Ora et Labora* — pray and work — as well as their singular practice of hospitality, meeting all guests as if they were Christ.

I have flourished among them, celebrating rich liturgical lives, Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours and Lectio Divina, bonding with the sisters and oblates, making retreats and receiving spiritual direction at St. Walburg Monastery. Through study and communal events, we support each other and welcome others in the age-old and ever



(left) Benedicta Bunning photo from St. Walburg Monastery archives.
(top) St. Benedict and St. Scholastica painting, public domain.
(above) Benedictine Sister Mary Tewes photo. From left: late Benedictine Oblate Pam Neal, friend and dulcimer player Owen Lewis, Benedictine Oblates Vickie Cimprich and Joan McAlonan.

Eucharistic meditation 5: Dying and Rising

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 give me new 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 give me new life.

Scripture Meditation

“O my people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back to the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and have you rise from them, O my people!” (Ezekiel 37:12-13)

Reflection Question

How are you “spiritually” buried right now? What parts of your heart feel lost in darkness and death? Speak to Jesus about these places of sorrow and loss.

Scripture Meditation

“[Jesus] cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So, Jesus said to them, ‘Untie him and let him go.’” (John 11:43-44)



Reflection Question

Jesus has power over life and death. The grave is no hindrance to his creative love. Imagine Jesus commanding you by name to “come out!” of whatever spiritual grave has robbed you of life. Gazing upon Jesus in the Eucharist, ask him to gently untie the burial cloths around that place in your heart most in need of resurrection and new life. Ask him for the courage to bring any sins that weigh you down to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Closing Prayer

By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we walk eagerly in that same charity with which, out of love for the world, your Son handed himself over to death. 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, Fifth Sunday of Lent)



PEOPLE AND EVENTS



St. Mary robotics team headed to Dallas
The St. Mary School, Alexandria, 7th grade robotics team won the VEX Robotics Kentucky State Championship, March 11, at Apollo High School, Owensboro. They also won the Excellence Award for their performance on the field as well as their design skills. Both accomplishments qualify them for the World Tournament in Dallas, Texas. The 8th grade team also had a great day, qualifying for the World Tournament with their “Skills” performance. The St. Mary School teams will be 2 of 5 teams representing Kentucky at the World Tournament in April.

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.

Flea Market, Diocesan Catholic Children’s Home, Ft. Mitchell, year-round, 8:30 a.m.– noon, Monday, Thursday, and Saturday; (Dec.– April, Monday, Thursday and every 3rd Saturday). Donation drop-off during Flea Market hours.

“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://covidio.org/oce/catholic-bible-study/> or call (859) 392-1529.

The Bishop Mulloy Knights of Columbus (Council 1301) is conducting a blood drive at Holy Spirit Parish March 31. Register at www.hoxworth.org/groups/holyspiritkofc or call (513) 451-0910.

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.

“A New Manna Retreat: Dining in the Desert” with Father Thomas Picchioni, April 1, St. Cecilia Church



Blankets for the homebound
Sixth graders at Mary, Queen of Heaven made fleece tie blankets to be given to homebound and hospitalized parishioners. At a recent school mass, Father Kevin blessed the blankets before they are distributed.

undercroft, Independence. This one-day retreat will explore the four different faces of the Real Manna come down from heaven, how with each face comes a different understanding, a different response, and a different relationship. Registration: 7:30–7:55 a.m.; retreat 8 a.m.–3 p.m. Light breakfast and lunch provided. No cost to attend, free will offering accepted. RSVP: e-mail psr@stcindependence.org.

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

Morning of reflection — a mini retreat on discernment — with Father Conor Kunath, April 15, Undercroft, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, 9 a.m., presentation and discussion; 10 a.m., Mass; and 11 a.m. Holy Hour with confession available.



Knights at Hosea House
Bishop Mulloy Council 1301 recently furnished breakfast to Hosea House Soup Kitchen, from left, Greg Ziegler, Paul Kremer, Deacon Joe Wiedeman, Carl Luersen, John Cunningham, Deacon Bill Theis and Wilma Luersen.

Fish Frys

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

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

St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, March 24, 31, 5–8 p.m.

All Fridays of Lent — Mar 24-Mar 31

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

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

St. Augustine, 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.

Altar servers honored

(Continued from page 3)

homilist. Surrounded by the art and architectural beauty inside the Cathedral Basilica, Father Hainsey reminded the students that it is the Church’s sacraments and its people, not stuff, that are the true beauty of the Church and that bring it life.

“It’s only when we are in this place that it comes alive, that it breaths again, that it has a pulse,” Father Hainsey said. “What we do here, how we do it and who does it is cen-

tral to our tradition and our faith life as a worshipping Catholic people.”

In his privileged role as master of ceremonies for the Bishop, Father Hainsey said he gets to see and be a part of the behind-scenes preparations and blunders that can occur during Mass and liturgical services. And while one can become preoccupied with the desire for perfection, what the congregation expects, experiences and appreciates is the decorum of the altar servers.

“We are a religion of the senses,” said Father Hainsey. “Altar servers, all of you here, are certainly present in

every liturgy to fulfill functions. But you are primarily present to impress upon God’s people ... the great reverence we should all have for God in the Sacred Liturgy. Us seeing you in your reverence should move every one of us to deeper faith.”

That witness of faith and reverence to God should not be confined to the four walls of the Church, Father Hainsey said. “By every and all means let your service and Christian witness in God’s house spill out into your relationships in the world outside of the confines of this sacred space.”

Keener photos



(above, right) In his homily, Father Jordan Hainsey, pontifical master of ceremonies, said to servers, “By every and all means, let your service and Christian witness in God’s house spill out into your relationships in the world ...”

As each server is called forward by name, Bishop Iffert presents each the blue ribbon that is the Server Award.





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The Server Awards

The Server Awards are sponsored by the Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky, and are distributed to 7th-grade altar servers to recognize their dedication and ministry to their parish. The servers honored this year are:

**All Saints Parish/
St. Joseph Academy,**
Walton

Wesley Ackermann
Caleb Blair
Brogan McDaniel
Allana Samuels

**Blessed Sacrament
Parish,** Ft. Mitchell

Chloe Brannen
Liam Crossen
Leo Dyas
Sam Edwards
Harper French
Cooper Gastright
Max Klopp
Wade Koester
Olivia Lange
Kellen Lashua
Kate Moening
John Nerswick
Ben Pfeiffer
Caroline Rice
Erin Scheuerle
Sam Stout
Landon Thoss
Andreas Ursic
Henry Wahoff
Tucker Wall
James Weber

Carson White
Miles Wigger
Luke Wischer

**Immaculate Heart of
Mary Parish,**
Burlington

Emma Arlinghaus
Noelle Earls
Miguel Gabriel
Moises Gabriel
Thomas Van Auken
Carson Weil

**Mary Queen of
Heaven Parish,**
Erlanger

Michael Gartner
Anthony Haselwood
Ben Holian
Chandler
Kirchgaessner
Chloe McCauley
Isabella Neiheisel
Penelope Ogonek
Hope Schwarz
Samantha Torres-
Guzman
Ava Waymeyer

St. Agnes Parish,
Ft. Wright

Kate Averdick
Stella Berger
Emilie Bowman
William Brungs
Blake Dougherty
Wesley Eckhardt
Raigan Herald
Henry Hopkins
Lincoln Janes
Charley Koehl
Annie Lawrie
Ashely McGraw
Michael McHugh
Taylor Murphy
Walker Murphy
Annabelle Nader
Lily Olexia
Clare Pelstring
Reece Randolph
Arien Reed
Abi Teller
Jude Thamann

St. Anthony Parish,
Taylor Mill

Greidy Aguilar Deleon
Ashley Mendez Quino
Bayter Aguilar
Domingo
Emilio Rodriguez

**St. Augustine
Parish,** Augusta

Maddox Jett

Josh Schellenberger

**St. Augustine
Parish,** Covington

Olivia Conn
Kendra Kidd
Melany Miranda Perez
Susanna Russell
Ann Marie Russell
Kary Domingo Sicajon

St. Barbara Parish,
Erlanger

Gabriel Fulmer
Alexandra Lagemen
Kirsten Lageman
Dilynn Stacey

St. Benedict Parish,
Covington

Sawyer Franxman

**Sts. Boniface and
James Parish,** Ludlow

Hank Lockard

**St. Catherine of
Siena Parish,**
Ft. Thomas

Morgan Baldwin
Ellery Browning
Tommy Burkart
Colin Desmond
Grant Desmond
Hailey Fritz
Lucy Gillen
Emily Hallau
Joseph Hicks
Natalie Kirst
Connor Stacey
Wren Twehues

St. Cecilia Parish,
Independence

Allie Bowling
Darby McDonald
Kyla McGuire
Colin Saalfeld
Samantha Spenlau
AJ Younger

**St. Francis Xavier
Parish,** Falmouth

Joseph Schmidt

St. Henry Parish,
Erlanger

Luke Jankowski
Geneva Miller
Faith Rowekamp

St. James Parish,
Brooksville

Kade Jefferson
Gus Rechtin
MaKenzie Rudd

**St. John the
Evangelist Parish,**
Covington

Dylan Topmiller

St. Joseph Parish,
Cold Spring

Alexa Combs
Micah Fischer
Brycen Gastright

(Continued on page 10)

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring (continued)
Drake Herget
Reid Knipper
Elizabeth Kruse
Luke Neltner
Paschal Nwachukwu
Jordyn Reckers
Hailey Ryan
Isabella Schaber
Adam Tarvin

St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs
Troy Chamblee
Landon Kiely
Luke Pastura
Carson Wulfeck

St. Mary Parish, Alexandria
Molly Blackburn
Larkin Eten
Grace Frommeyer
Madeline Holtz
McKenzie Kremer
Kylie Smith

St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill
Aiden Brinkman
Bryant Brinkman
Abby Bromwell
Skyler Steiner
Cecilia Washnock

Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California
Martina Bezold
Drew Kreidenweis
Lucas Lauer
Preston Lauer
Lucy Phirman

St. Philip Parish, Melbourne
Owen Record
Alex Twehues
Daniel Wimmer

St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood
Sam Baker
Sophia Bakis
Michael Bischoff
Liam Bradley
Ben Bramlage
Annie Brockman

St. Therese Parish, Southgate
Miriam Van Ausdall
Julia Babst

St. Timothy Parish, Union
Maci Arrasmith
Addison Collins
Theodore Depenbrock
Saleena Egan
Josie Folzenlogen
Grace Hendrix
Calen Kobman
Grant Krahe
Jacob Kremer
Allyson Mahoney
Liam McCormack
Kate Mueller
Aubrey Peavie
Aleyandro Peralta Gomez
Charlie Ramsey
Charlie Ray
Rylee Schmidt
Kayla Verkamp
Ava Vogt
Adelynn Washnock

Carson Campoamor
Landon Dailey
Amelia Dreier
Allison Dressman
Maggie Durrett
Maura Dwyer
Liam Fitzpatrick
Isabella Heringer
Ben Ireland
Landry Queen
Jacob Sparks
Mia Summe
Camilla Tranter
Colin Vann
Claire VonLehman
Andrew Wagner
Chase Woeste

St. William Parish, Williamstown
Letting King
Emmanuel Munguia
Esteban Munguia
Avandia Rodriguez
Erasmus Rodriguez



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.



Saint Joseph Academy Fish Fry Is On!
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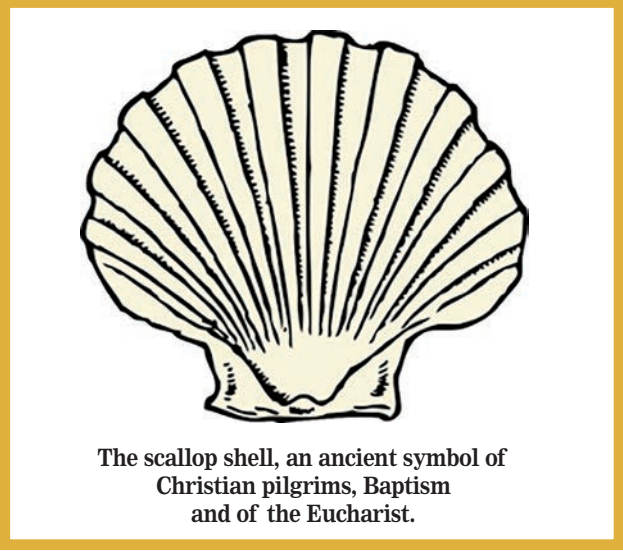
Lenten pilgrimage invites pilgrims to Covington churches

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

During Lent, Margie Springelmeyer, along with her husband and some friends, began to visit shrines on their own pilgrimages each year.

“It dawned on me that there are incredible churches right here in Covington that I haven’t even stepped foot in,” Mrs. Springelmeyer said. From there, the idea of a Lenten pilgrimage visiting Covington’s churches blossomed, with a group realizing that five churches, notably, were positioned less than a mile apart.

One Saturday afternoon, Mrs. Springelmeyer and a group of about six others made this journey, which takes anywhere between two and two



The scallop shell, an ancient symbol of Christian pilgrims, Baptism and of the Eucharist.

and a half hours, and realized that the pilgrimage was not only doable; but a wonderful opportunity.

“This needed to be organized and have the cooperation of everyone,” said Mrs. Springelmeyer, “and then Father (Daniel) Schomaker,” pastor of St. Augustine parish, one of the churches along the pilgrimage route, “graciously accept-

ed it, to foster the whole program.” After reaching out to Bishop John Iffert, the efforts to bring the pilgrimage into fruition was under way.

Now, the date of the pilgrimage approaches, with April 1 set as the date for all the churches along the route to be open. Spanning 4.3 miles in total, the personal journey can be either walked or traversed via car.

The churches: the Cathedral Basilica of Assumption, St. Benedict, St. Augustine, St. John Evangelist and Mother of God, will open their doors to pilgrims at 9 a.m. and stay open until 2 p.m. Adoration will be offered at each church, and pilgrims are invited to take the journey in any order, at any time that is convenient to them.

“I’m mostly excited about what people are going to take away in their hearts,” Mrs. Springelmeyer said about the pilgrimage, “I believe that if someone is dedicating their time to this, the Lord is going to touch them in some way. Everybody is unique, the Lord has a special message for us — so I’m excited to see what people take away from it.”

‘I Thirst’ (John 19:28)

(Continued from page 5)

completion. The fullness is thirst.

Does “I thirst” sum up the interval between the beginning and the end? Was Jesus’ life a series of thirsts? A growing thirst ending in this final cry?

If thirst is the summation of his life and the fulfillment of what he announced, then thirst is the shorthand for all that his life has been. He thirsts to heal and give sight that enlightens. He thirsts to share life and light and the way. Now it is finished.

Let me know God’s thirst for my love. As I explore my thirsts, teach me to thirst for you, my God, and to share Jesus’ thirst for the fullness of the reign of God, for the healing of the woundedness in my world.

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

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STAFF WRITER

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

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Saint Dominic, a Blue Ribbon School in Springfield, KY, is seeking a principal for the 2023 – 2024 school year who possesses leadership and communication skills necessary to promote dynamic educational growth and staff development. Our school has an enrollment of 220 PreK – 8 students, along with a dedicated, highly motivated and experienced staff. The town of Springfield has strong enrollment growth potential, as well as strong parental and community support. Candidate must be a practicing Catholic, have teaching experience and be certified or working toward administrative certification. Competitive salary commensurate of qualifications and on the diocesan salary scale. Applicants are asked to submit a letter of interest and resume by March 15, 2023 to: St. Dominic Church Attn: Principal Search Committee 303 West Main Street Springfield, KY 40069

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 of fax. SKoplyay@CovDio.org or 859-392-1589. EOE

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What’s next for ‘With One Heart’

(Continued from page 1)

and insights. Deacon Fortner and Ms. Molina are the project leaders for the Diocese of Covington’s “With One Heart” initiative.

With One Heart is a four-year, multiple-program process of leadership development and data gathering and analysis that will assist pastors and parish leaders in the development of a strategic parish pastoral plan. The Disciple Maker Index — a 75-question survey open to all members of the Diocese of Covington age 15 or older — is the largest data gathering tool of the With One Heart initiative.

Parishioners have until March 27 to complete the Disciple Maker Index (DMI). The survey can be completed online at <https://covdio.org/withoneheart>. Paper surveys are also available at the parishes.

Throughout the diocese, parishioner response has been strong. At least one parish has had 100 percent of its parishioners complete the DMI. Several parishes, including several of the diocese’s largest parishes, have over 70 percent participation. To have enough data for good quantitative analysis, parishes will need at least 30 percent of its parishioners complete the DMI.

“We are looking at two things, the spiritual growth of the people in the parish and their engagement with the parish,” said Ms. Molina about the DMI.

Several of the parishioners the *Messenger* interviewed in its March 17 article expressed some level of disappointment that the survey did not allow any area for comments or explanations. Ms. Molina said that was by design, so that the DMI could provide quantitative data that could then be used for comparison and analysis with other dioceses, other parishes and at different times within the same parish.

“CLI has taken best practices in the industry, reaching out to, in our case parishioners, to canvass them for opportunities, understanding what’s on their heart, to see how we can improve — improve our product, improve our communications, and in this case specifically to the Diocese of Covington, to improve our pastoral planning process,” said Deacon Fortner. “The quantitative data really helps identify where to hunt, where’s the opportunities, where’s our strengths that we want to keep leveraging.”

Ms. Molina said that the quantitative data provided through the DMI will allow pastors, with the help of a CLI mentor or with CLI training, to learn key insights, especially through regressive analysis. Regression analysis will allow pastors and parish leaders to look at two important variables and to measure the relationship between them.

“One of the things that we have learned is that if people recommend their parish, they are nine times more likely to recommend their pastor. That gives us some evidence that pastors are an important driver of the life of the parish,” said Ms. Molina. “We can also identify other factors, like is there a vibrant Sunday Mass, are the homilies relevant, is information easy to find, and we can again quantify those factors as contributing to others.”

Right now, pastors are being asked to gather a team of parish leaders to assist in developing a strategic pastoral plan for their parish using the data collected from the DMI survey. Pastors and parish teams will participate in three upcoming training webinars to facilitate this process. Each webinar is offered at three different times to allow flexibility in scheduling.

Webinar 1 — Accessing the DMI data: May 9, 10 a.m. or



the DMI parish. Pastors and parish teams at this level will participate in the three training webinars listed above. Then, using that training and the DMI data, the pastor and parish team work to develop a pastoral plan on their own.

Eleven pastors have chosen a higher level of assistance — the Virtual Disciple Maker Index (VDMI). With the VDMI, pastors and parish leaders will participate in four training webinars and will be assigned a CLI mentor to help in the development of a pastoral plan.

Seven pastors have chosen the highest level of assistance — the Next Generation Parish. Next Generation Parishes will participate in the three training webinars in May, plus will be assigned a CLI mentor that will help guide the pastor and parish team in developing and implementing a pastoral plan over the next three years.

Throughout the entire process, parishioners will assist their pastor and parish team as they seek out additional information to prepare the pastoral plan. Most parishes will include in their pastoral

What’s next for With One Heart at the diocesan level?

Once the Disciple Maker Index (DMI) closes, March 27, the Catholic Leadership Institute will incorporate the quantitative data from the DMI with the qualitative data received during the Deanery Strategy Sessions and Focus Groups held in the Fall of 2022. Using that data, CLI together with the “With One Heart” Planning Commission, Deacon Fortner and select Curia staff will develop the Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan.

In late May or early June 2023, the Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan will be presented to Bishop John Iffert for review, modifications and approval.

In September 2023, the Diocesan Strategic Pastoral Plan will be presented to the people of the diocese. At which time, the “With One Heart” Core Team will begin its work in assisting Bishop Iffert, Deacon Fortner and Ms. Molina by providing feedback and making sure that implementation of the plan stays on track — a three year process.

7 p.m.; May 10, 2 p.m.

Webinar 2 — Understanding the DMI data: May 30, 10 a.m. or 7 p.m.; May 31, 2 p.m.

Webinar 3 — Making decisions based on the DMI data: June 20, 10 a.m. or 7 p.m.; June 21, 2 p.m.

In 2026, parishioners will be asked again to complete a DMI survey. “When we go back and do the DMI again at the very end of this process, we’re going to see where we started, we’re going to have all the action plans and a couple interventions, and we’re going to be able to measure progress — have we moved the needle?” said Deacon Fortner.

Deacon Fortner said that a lot of this can sound very overwhelming. But the great news for the Diocese of Covington is that the Catholic business professionals at CLI are assisting pastors every step of the way. Pastors determine for themselves how much assistance they need and want. Through generous anonymous donations, the Diocese of Covington is implementing all the programs available through CLI, including for some parishes one-on-one assistance from CLI mentors.

There are three levels of CLI engagement in which pastors could participate. The first and most essential level is

plan two or three opportunities identified in the DMI. Pastors will communicate to their parishioners in ways that have been determined to be most effective at their parish. Are bulletin announcements most effective? Pulpit announcements? Information meetings or workshops?

Also during Lent, while parishioners were taking the DMI, pastors have been completing the Priest Leadership Inventory — an in-depth self-assessment inventory identifying their strengths and weakness, likes and dislikes. At the upcoming Priests Continuing Education Days, May 23 and 24, priests will review the results of their survey and receive instruction on how to apply the information.

Starting in October, all priests are invited to participate in the Good Leaders, Good Shepherds component of With One Heart. Good Leaders, Good Shepherds utilizes world-class leadership training to provide the skills and practices to be a happy, holy and healthy shepherd in any leadership circumstance.

In addition to completing the Disciple Maker Index, Deacon Fortner asks everyone “to keep praying — keep praying and trust the Holy Spirit will guide your parishes; trust your priest in leading this process. And, if they have an interest in helping the priest, feel free to share that.”

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Spirit of God

(Continued from page 5)

desires that can and does build the dictatorship of relativism and narcissism in our hearts, and within the Church, cutting us of from Jesus Christ and his grace, his truth, his mercy, and his Spirit. If we are not attentive, a slowly accumulating rejection of the Spirit, of the one who raised Jesus from the dead, will increasingly leak the Spirit out of the Christian life and the life of the Church.

Knowledge, however, is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the path to allowing the Spirit to open our self-created graves and rise from them.

Let us recognize our lot, and from the depths, cry out to the Lord. Let us renew our trust in the Lord by turning with convinced faith to the holy sacraments, especially those of the Eucharist and penance. In so doing, we will not only stop the leakage of the Spirit from the Christian life, but that which is wounded by the tragedy of flesh will hear and respond to the powerful cry of the one who calls to us: "Lazarus, come out! Untie him and let him go."

Father Phillip W. DeVous is the pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish, May's Lick, Ky



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National/World

Catholic community helps three Afghan siblings start new life in western Kentucky, far from Taliban

OWENSBORO, Ky. — After a harrowing escape out of Afghanistan, a young adult and his two teenage siblings have restarted their lives in Owensboro with the support of St. Stephen Cathedral and Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Owensboro. Shahram, whose last name has been withheld for security reasons, has even started volunteering with Catholic Charities to help other Afghan families resettle in the local area. “We have been so happy,” said Shahram, who arrived with his siblings in Owensboro in 2021. Reaching their safe and happy new home in Owensboro, however, was not easy or simple. In 2021, the Taliban began targeting Afghans who supported the United States’ anti-terrorism efforts within their country after U.S. troops pulled out that year. Shahram’s father received an email from the U.S. Embassy that their family could receive help to get out of the country. “I was 18, my brother was 16, and my sister was 15,” Shahram told *The Western Kentucky Catholic*, Owensboro’s diocesan newspaper. “When we left our country, we didn’t take anything. Most everyone left everything. I took my cellphone, backpack, ID card, and one pair of shoes. Shahram’s parents sent the children ahead and told them, “We will follow behind you.” To date, their parents have not yet gotten out.

Mercy sister who is lifelong advocate for developmentally disabled to receive Notre Dame’s Laetare Medal

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Mercy Sister Rosemary Connelly, former executive director of Misericordia and lifelong advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities, will receive the University of Notre Dame’s 2023 Laetare Medal, the oldest and most prestigious honor given to American Catholics. It will be presented at the university’s 178th commencement ceremony May 21 at Notre Dame Stadium. The announcement was made March 19, Laetare Sunday, which is the fourth Sunday of Lent.

The medal has been given to Catholic leaders since 1883. “With her characteristic tenacity, grace and genius, Sister Rosemary has ensured that the residents of Misericordia — as wonderful children of God — have the quality of life and opportunities they deserve,” said Holy Cross Father John I. Jenkins, president of Notre Dame. “We are inspired by her vision, her leadership and her compassion and are honored to bestow the Laetare Medal on her.” Sister Connelly, now 92, said, “I always felt that God was with me, that God really took care of me. He even spoiled me by always making sure the right people were in the right place at the right time. ... I’m thankful to God that we have a Misericordia. It’s a place where the children are respected and loved and the staff is very committed to them.”

Church calls for ‘international protection of holy sites’ after attack on church at Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM — The Greek Orthodox Church March 19 denounced what it called a “heinous terrorist attack” on a church at the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Jerusalem. As reported by AFP, Israeli police said that earlier that same day a 27-year-old resident of southern Israel was arrested over “a violent incident” at the church in annexed East Jerusalem, without providing further details on the suspect’s identity. While the police said the apprehended suspect entered the church with an iron bar and that there were no injuries, a witness told AFP that a priest had been injured in the forehead. The attack on the Tomb of the Virgin Mary in Jerusalem is one of many attacks on Christian sites in Jerusalem in recent months.

Rosary project supplies ‘long-range, heart-changing weapons’ to Ukraine

PHILADELPHIA — Dorian Kernytsky, the son of Ukrainian immigrants, and his fellow volunteers — including Ukrainian refugees — are making hundreds of rugged rosaries for

Ukrainian soldiers, hoping to provide solace while evangelizing on the battlefield. The Our Lady’s Weapon project (ourladyswapon.com), which has supplied more than 800 rosaries to Ukraine’s military chapel in Lviv, began with a broken replica of a First World War-style rosary. Kernytsky told OSV News he believes “God’s will for Ukraine is very much through Our Lady.” The rosary, he said, is a spiritual long-range weapon “that changes hearts” for the long term. Kernytsky said, “It’s only when individuals surrender themselves (to God) that their hearts really do change.”

West Virginia parishes, people help Ukrainians find safe haven in Mountain State

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. — On a visit to her beloved home country a few years ago, Veronika McCann of Martinsburg thought to herself, “My Ukraine is blossoming.” She and her husband, Brian, originally from Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, and their daughter Oxana were visiting Veronika’s mother and father and younger sisters. Veronika noticed how nice the community looked, the economy was good, and flow-ers adorned the streets and businesses of her hometown. It’s a cherished memory of happy times before the horror that befell her homeland, and before her family’s life would be changed forever. Her mother, Oksana, and two younger sisters, Mariia and Anna, were able to leave Ukraine and are now safe in Martinsburg with her. Veronika’s father is unable to leave Ukraine, and her mother’s side of the family is in an area under occupation. Veronika is channeling her anger and grief into the efforts of St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg to help more Ukrainian families, just like her own, to leave the war-torn country and come to the state’s Eastern Panhandle. A number of parishes are helping Ukrainian refugee families, who are finding sponsors through the federal Uniting for Ukraine program. Catholic Charities West Virginia’s Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services in Martinsburg is working with 42 Ukrainians in 10 counties of West Virginia.



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Off and away! Cathedral chimeras removed for replacement

On March 16, the Covington skyline said some temporary goodbyes to the chimeras— also known colloquially as gargoyles— from the roof of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.

As part of the “Restored in Christ” initiative to maintain the cathedral’s outer façade, the beloved gargoyles will be cast and replaced in terracotta as many have fallen into disrepair over the years over wear and tear.

O’Rourke Wrecking Company took care of the gargoyle’s removal from the rooftop, completing the procedure over the course of that single Thursday — making use of a crane to bring them down from their perch. After being wrapped in plastic and carefully loaded, each gargoyle was safely brought to the Cathedral parking lot and towed away.





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