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.”
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.

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 one another,” he said.

“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 predominant 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, 8th grade; pre-Algebra, 9th grade; Geometry, 10th grade; Algebra II, 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 4-8 and at the school library — buying, cataloging, 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 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, stillbirth, 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.

Altar servers honored for Christian witness inside and outside of church

Laura Keener

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 Hiert 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)
According to The National Right to Life Organization, approximately 90 percent of all abortions occur due to “social reasons” rather than concerns for the mother’s 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 to have 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 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.

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 unmarred 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 1:8 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 Catholic Church urges us to take the risk and you 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.”

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 state, 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)

Brooks shares some of his sincere, but ultimately misguided opinion that suicide 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 conversion that I can only describe as despair beyond despair. It came out of the cold night; I didn’t think such anguish was possible.”

Then, the suffering is compounded by the fact 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. In many 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, can effectively treat 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 simplest of all: in the rush of depression, what’s wrong — 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 he might make sufferers feel even worse about themselves for not being able to enjoy all the things that are palpably enjoyable.

As we, should not ask the person if he is thinking of committing suicide, if he is already doing that. It is 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’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.

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 had a good, honest, gentle, sensitive and over-sensitive soul. Suicide might be a sign of the person’s love of life. Suicide is 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 a 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 Peter; it was bigger than us.” It still is. Simply put, we are still a long way from understanding mental health and its fragility.

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

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 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 do 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 should show our commitment to life and to the lives of mothers and babies.

Anna Curtisinger is an 8th grade student at St. Peter and Paul School in Covington. 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.

Reprinted 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 its existence, a human being must be recognized as a subject capable of rights.”

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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 up opportunity to her attention. However, I could not help myself, and gently present it to her—pressure you don’t have to. Yes, I want to join the team. She said, “I want to join the team” to respond to the words Jesus uttered, which is offered does not entail. The reign of God is here, the moment when creation is manifested to joy because we realize we are not alone. God is thirsting for you, for me, for all creation, long- ing 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 meaning of God’s real life. The reign of God is here, the moment when creation is manifested to joy because we realize we are not alone. God is thirsting for you, for me, for all creation, longing for the drink of joy and celebration.

Thirst is persistent and insistent. I can sometimes drink too much of a good thing. I can have a glass of water running down my chin.

“I thirst” reveals us to ourselves. God is thirsting for us, for me, for all creation, longing to be in a loving union. 

The one who said he provides living water thirsts. The reign of God is here, the moment when creation is manifested to joy because we realize we are not alone. God is thirsting for you, for me, for all creation, longing to be in a loving union. 

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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, be wailed. ‘What have you done!’” The year 1839 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 St. Joseph Parish. Others joined them.

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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.

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, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. By your help, we beseech you, Lord our God, may we...” (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, ‘Un tie 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 around that place in your heart most in need of reconciliation and new life. Ask him for the courage to bring any sins.
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 under 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.

Fea Market, Diocesan Catholic Children’s Home, Pt. Mitchell, year-round, 8:30 a.m.– noon, Monday, Thursday and Saturday; (Dec.– April, Monday, Thursday and every 1st Saturday). Donation drop-off during Fea Market hours.

“The Book of Wisdom” a workshop hosted by the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization and presented by Father Timothy Schehr, March 10 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 Bishop Mulloy Knights of Columbus (Council 1301) is conducting a blood drive at Holy Spirit Parish March 31. Register at www.howsor.org/groups/holyspiritblood or call (513) 651-0990.

Thomas More University will host its 25th Bishop William A. Hughes Award Dinner, 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 BvmLentenPilgrimage@gmail.com.

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

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 20 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 vespers Masses in the very places where miraculous gifts became pages in the Gospel. If interested in learning more, please contact St. Henry parishioner Michael Pertwood, (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, Pt. Mitchell, 9 a.m., presentation and discussion; 10 a.m., Mass; and 11 a.m. Holy Hour with confession available.

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, 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, 4-8p.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, Cinthiana, 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, 4:30–7:30 p.m.
St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill, 4:30–7:30 p.m.
St. Timothy, Union, drive-thru, credit card only, 4:30–7 p.m.; Dine-in 5-7:30 p.m.
St. William Parish, Williamstown, drive-thru only, 4:30–7 p.m.

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 Laursen, John Cunningham, Deacon Bill Thies and Wilma Laursen.

Knights at Hosea House
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 breathes again, that it has a pulse.” Father Hainsey said. “What we do here, how we do it and who does it is central 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 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
Caleb Blair
Brogan McDaniel
Allana Samuels

**Blessed Sacrament Parish**, Ft. Mitchell
Chloe Brannen
Leo Dyas
Sam Edwards
Harper French
Cooper Gastright
Max Klopp
Wade Koester
Olivia Lange
Kellen Lashua
Kate Moening
Ben Pfeiffer
Caroline Rice
Erin Scheuerle
Sam Stout
Landon Thoss
Andreas Ursic
Henry Wahoff
Tucker Wall
James Weber

**Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell**
Carson White
Miles Wigger
Luke Wischer

**Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish**, Burlington
Noelle Earls
Victor Grinchenko
Miguel Gabriel
Moises Gabriel
Thomas Van Auker
Carson Weil

**Mary Queen of Heaven Parish**, Erlanger
Michael Gartner
Anthony Hasebrook
Ben Holland
Chandler
Kirchgaesser
Chloe McCauley
Isabella Neinheisel
Penelope Ogonok
Hope Schwarz
Samantha Torres-Guzman
Ava Waymeyer

**Mary Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger**
Mary Schellenberger
Kate Averdick
Stella Berger
Emilie Bowman
William Brung
Blake Dougherty
Wesley Eckhardt
Raigan Gerald
Henry Hopkins
Lincoln James
Charley Keohi
Annie Lawrie
Ashely McGraw
Michael McHugh
Taylor Murphy
Walker Murphy
Annabelle Nader
Lily Olexia
Clare Pelstring
Reece Randolph
Arien Reed
Ari Teller
Jude Thamann

**St. Anthony Parish**, Taylor Mill
Greidy Aguilar Deleon
Ashley Mendez Quino
Bayer Aguilar
Dominio
Emilio Rodriguez

**St. Augustin Parish, Covington**
Joshua Schellenberger
St. Augustine Parish, Covington
Olivia Conn
Kendra Kidd
Melany Miranda Perez
Susanna Russell
Ann Marie Russell
Kery Domingo Sicajon
St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger
Gabriel Fuller
Alexandra Lagemon
Kirsten Lageman
Dilynn Stacey
St. Benedict Parish, Covington
Sawyer Franzman
Sts. Boniface and James Parish, Ludlow
Hank Lockard

**St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas**
Margaret Baldwin
Ellery Browning
Tommy Burkart
Colin Desmond
Grant Desmond
Hailey Fritz
Lucy Gillen
Emily Hallau
Joseph Hicks
Natalie Kirt
Connor Stacey
Wren Tewhues
St. Cecilia Parish, Independence
Allie Bowling
Darby McDonald
Kyla McGuire
Colin Saalfeld
Samanta Spenlau
Aj Younger

**St. Francis Xavier Parish, Falmouth**
Joseph Schmidt
St. Henry Parish, Erlanger
Luke Jankowski
Geneva Miller
Faith Rowekamp
St. James Parish, Brookeville
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)
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. She 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.
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 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 accepted 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.”

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

‘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 the world.

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

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 license 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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January 13, 2023

What’s next for “With One Heart”

(Continued from page 1)

and insights. Deacon Fortner and Ms. Molina are the proj-
ject 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 ini-
tiative.

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, includ-
ing several of the diocese’s largest parishes, have over 75
percent participation. To have enough data for good quan-
titative 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 disappoint-
ment 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 dio-
ceses, 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 oppor-
tunities to help keep us on track, to see how we can improve — improve our product, improve our com-
munications, 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 parishes, with the help of a CLI mentor or with CLI training, to learn key insights, espe-
cially through regression analysis. Regression analysis will allow pastors and parish leaders to look at two impor-
tant 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 fac-
tors, 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. Typically, surveys Pastor 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 7 p.m.
Webinar 2 — Understanding the DMI data: May 30, 10 a.m. or 7 p.m.
Webinar 3 — Making decisions based on the DMI data: June 20, 10 a.m. or 7 p.m.

In 2023, 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 start-
ed, 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 pas-
tors 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 had been completing their Pastoral Leadership Inventory — an in-depth self-assessment inventory identi-
fying their strengths and weaknesses, 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 Shepherds, 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.

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 Disciple Manager 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.

You are invited to participate in several of the training webinars listed above. Then, using that training and the DMI data, the pastor and parish team work to develop a pastoral plan.

Eleven pastors have chosen a higher level of assistance — the Virtual Disciple Maker Index (VDMI). With the VDMI, pastors and parish leaders will partici-
pate 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 informa-
tion to prepare the pastoral plan. Most parishes will include in their pastoral planning efforts information gathered through the Parish Focus Group and the Disciple Maker Index.

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

**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 flots 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. DeVou is the pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish, May’s Lick, Ky.
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 Western Kentucky Catholic. “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 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. 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

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. 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 — Dmytro Kurnytzky, 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 (ourladyweapon.com), which has supplied more than 800 rosaries to Ukraine’s military chapel in Lutsk, began with a broken replica of a First World War rosary. Kurnytzky told O&V 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. Kurnytzky 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 Mossewing.” She and her husband, Brian, originally from Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, and their daughter Oksana were visiting Veronika’s mother and father and younger sisters. Veronika noticed how nice the community looked, the economy was good, and flowers 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 refugees, 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.

Off and away! Cathedral chimeras removed for replacement