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Daylight Savings Time ends Nov. 5

It’s getting to be time to Fall back. On Nov. 5 daylight savings time ends, remember to turn your clocks back an hour. Also at this time, your local fire department encourages all to change the batteries in smoke detectors.

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



(top left) A child rests on his mother’s shoulder during the annual diocesan pro-life Mass, Oct. 17.
(left) A statue of the Blessed Virgin was displayed among flowers before the altar during the Mass.
(above) Father Baiju Kidaagen preaches the homily.
(above right) A child leans aside to touch a mosaic image of the Station of the Cross featuring Veronica wiping Jesus’s face with her veil.

Life is God’s first and greatest gift, said homilist Father Baiju Kidaagen at diocesan Pro-Life Mass

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The evening of Oct. 17 celebrated the Diocese of Covington’s Pro-life Mass. The Mass, orchestrated each year in October (Respect Life Month) by the diocesan Pro-life Office, celebrates and intercedes for life in all stages, from natural conception to natural death. This year’s Mass will be the first diocesan Pro-life Mass celebrated in the Diocese of Covington since the overturning of Roe v. Wade last year.

Bishop John Iffert celebrated the Mass, concelebrated by Father Baiju Kidaagen, pastor, St. Pius X, Edgewood, who additionally served as the homilist for this year’s Pro-life Mass.

Father Baiju began his homily referencing Mother Teresa, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 44 years ago on Oct. 17, 1979, for her humanitarian work with the poor.

At the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C., on Feb. 5, 1994, Mother Teresa stood before at the time President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, along with 4,000 others in attendance, and called abortion murder, Father Baiju said.

“I feel that the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion,” he quoted Mother Teresa. “Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want.”

(Continued on page 4)

All Hallowtide triduum honors the Faithful Departed

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

When talking about the turning of fall and end of October, the holiday of Halloween often comes to mind. Carving pumpkins, ghost stories, bright costumes and candy are all associated with “All Hallow’s Eve” — just one of the three celebrations actually part of the Christian triduum known as “All Hallowtide.”

All Hallowtide is a season intended for both celebration and prayer, honoring all the faithful departed — both those in Heaven and in purgatory.

For many who grew up in Catholic, having a day off school the day after Halloween was a welcome treat. November 1, the day following, is known as All Saints’ Day, or “All Hallow’s” — a solemnity in the Catholic Church. As All Saints’ Day falls on a Wednesday this year, it is a day of obligation.



The painting “All Souls’ Day” by realist French painter William-Adolphe Bouguereau features two women visiting a grave on all Souls’ day.

The origin of All Saints’ Day comes from the 4th century, where early Christians would sporadically hold festivals and commemorations for all martyrs. Years later, during the 8th century, on Nov. 1 Pope Gregory III would dedicate an oratory in Old St. Peter’s Basilica to the relics of “all saints.” This date would eventually become the celebration of all saints and martyrs that we celebrate today, as well as a day of obligation throughout the Catholic Church.

Similarly, the third day of the All Hallowtide triduum occurs on Nov. 2, a day of prayer and remembrance known as “All Souls’ Day,” or “Day of the Dead,” in some cultures. Prior to the establishment of this official date, Catholics would celebrate all Souls’ Day on various dates during the Easter season. These celebrations were much similar to how they’re celebrated today, mostly by remembering and praying for the deceased, specifically for souls in purgatory, and visiting cemeteries.

The Nov. 2 date that All Souls’ is celebrated on today was established during the 10th century of St. Abbot Odilo of Cluny, who originally bid members of his community to pray for the relief of souls in purgatory. This date would soon be adopted throughout the Catholic Church and persists to this day.

Keener photos



Cemetery visitations

The annual cemetery visitations were held Oct. 21 at the three diocesan cemeteries — St. John Cemetery and St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell and St. Stephen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas. Bishop John Iffert greeted the family and friends of the beloved dead and led them in prayer. As he began the prayer service, Bishop Iffert shared that last year at this time his mother died, “so I am grieving with you,” he said. During the prayer service Bishop Iffert read aloud the names of those buried in the cemetery from October 2022 through September 2023. Cemetery visitations are held in late October each year. Praying for the living and dead are spiritual works of mercy and reminds us that we are all a part of the Communion of Saints, which includes “the faithful on earth, the souls in Purgatory and the blessed in heaven. In this Communion, the merciful love of God and his saints is always attentive to our prayers for one another here and for the souls of the faithful departed.” (United States Catholic Catechism for Adults)



Fall interfaith event discusses the importance of defending religious rights via strict scrutiny

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Thomas More University's William T. (Bill) Robinson III '67 Institute for Religious Liberty (IRL) fall interfaith event on the university's campus was held Oct. 19, entitled “In Defense of Strictly Scrutinizing Religious Rights.” The event was moderated by Robert Stern, Ph.D., assistant professor in history and legal studies at Thomas More University. Featured as the keynote speaker was Stephanie Barclay, University of Notre Dame faculty member and director of Notre Dame Law School's Religious Liberty Initiative. Guest commentators included Holly Hinckley Lesan, of Brigham Young University (BYU) Law School, and Gary L. Greenberg, former principal at the law office of Jackson Lewis P.C.

Strict scrutiny, as described in the event's title, refers to a “form of judicial review that courts use to determine the constitutionality of certain laws,” as described by Cornell Law. “To pass strict scrutiny, the legislature must have passed the law to further a ‘compelling governmental interest,’ and must have narrowly tailored the law to achieve that interest.”

“Our keynote speaker, Stephanie Barclay, is one of the

leading scholars in the country in first amendment/religious liberty issues that reach the Supreme Court,” explains Raymond Hebert, Ph.D., executive director of the IRL. “She is considered an expert on issues involving the nature of constitutional rights, the free exercise clause, and strict scrutiny issues. Religious liberty cases are complex because frequently the value of the constitutional right involved clashes with the government's public policy concerns.”

Barclay's research focuses on the role our different democratic institutions play in protecting minority rights, particularly at the intersection of free speech and religious exercise. She directs Notre Dame Law School's Religious Liberty Initiative, which promotes freedom of religion or belief for all people through advocacy, student formation and scholarship.

“Religious freedom rights often act as the canary in the mineshaft,” Professor Barclay said, describing the importance of protecting religious freedoms, “When government is intruding too much on all kinds of freedoms, not just religious freedoms ... sometimes religious folks are the first ones to notice and to speak up because they guard those rights jealously ... those rights affects their day to

day lives in really important ways.”

She continued, saying, “That can act as an alarm bell for us in society to notify us that government is intruding more than it should, and we might want to be more cautious than that.” Barclay went on to cite several court cases throughout U.S. history that have influenced religious liberty protections provided by the first amendment and how those have changed over time.

“What strict scrutiny does,” said Professor Barclay, “is require government to think harder about if there is a way that we can accomplish what we want to do, and so that we can have and protect all those values we talked about in the beginning: more peace, more human dignity, less conflict, less needless suffering.”

The test of strict scrutiny is one that can help to “provide a way for us to navigate allowing government to do its work, and still giving as much protecting as we can to the important, enduring values (of religious liberty),” Professor Barclay concluded.

Both guest commentators have also made significant
(Continued on page 8)

Keener photos



(below) A representative from Passport by Molina Healthcare talks with moms about available Medicaid services.



(above left) Adia Wuchner, executive director, Kentucky Right to Life, draws a big smile from a mom and her baby. By using 3-d models of the stages of fetal development, Mrs. Wuchner was able to show new moms the life growing in their wombs.
(above right) Divine Providence Sister Kay Kramer (far right) and her colleagues from St. Elizabeth Healthcare distributed baby blankets and gave a presentation on safe sleeping.



Community Baby Shower

Over 400 people attended the Community Baby Shower, Oct. 19, held at St. Paul Parish, Florence. The 147 registered moms attending the event received blankets, diapers, wipes and clothes valued at over \$100. Larger items, like car seats, highchairs and strollers, were raffled off. The event was sponsored by the Northern Kentucky Pregnancy Care Network, which includes the Pro-Life Office of the Diocese of Covington. For months, people at the Curia and many parishes have been collecting the items that were donated to the shower. Many high school students volunteered in helping to make the shower a welcoming and efficient experience. A highlight was a presentation on sleep safety by St. Elizabeth Healthcare.



(above left) The Franciscan Daughters of Mary share gifts and information on the Rose Garden Mission.



(above right) Staff from Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington, shared information on the many services offered to families.



(above left) Julie Feinauer, director, diocesan Safe Environment Office, unveils one of the many beautiful blankets that were donated for the baby shower.



(above right) Students at St. Henry District High School take charge of the diaper booth.



Bishop's Schedule

- Oct. 28**
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m.

Oct. 31
Advisory Council meeting, 9:30 a.m.

Nov. 1
Solemnity of All Saints — Diocesan Curia Offices closed

Solemnity of All Saints Day Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 5:30 p.m.

Nov. 2
Presbyteral Council meeting, 1:30 p.m.
- Nov. 3**
The Mustard Seed Community's First Friday Mass, St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, 7 p.m.

Nov. 4
Diocese of Covington Pastoral Council, 9 a.m.

Religious Jubilarians Luncheon, Metropolitan Club, 12 p.m.

Nov. 5
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 10 a.m.

Nov. 6
Confirmation, St. Augustine Parish, Covington, 7 p.m.

40 Hour Devotion

This year, the three-year Eucharistic Revival is in its parish phase. To help unite parishes around the Eucharist, Bishop John Iffert, at the request of the diocesan Worship Committee, has asked pastors to host 40 Hours of continual Eucharistic adoration.

These 40 Hours will be scheduled sometime during the year, from now until July 2024, when the revival culminates with a Eucharistic Congress, July 17–21, 2024, at Lucas Oil Stadium, Indianapolis. Discounted tickets for the Congress are available through the diocesan Office of Worship and Liturgy; an application is online at covdio.org.

Upcoming 40 Hour Devotions

- Nov. 3, 2023, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington
 - Nov. 17, 2023, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring
 - Dec. 15, 2023, St. John Parish, Carrollton
 - May 3, 2024, St. Joseph Parish, Camp Springs
- (The schedule will be updated as needed.)



Deacon retreat

Bishop John Iffert was the retreat master for the annual deacon and deacon wife retreat to St. Meinrad, Sept. 29– Oct. 1. The theme for the retreat was prayer and how to make time for prayer. An overall take away was a quote from Bishop Iffert, “Lord, let me, let you, love me.”

Life is God’s first and greatest gift

(Continued from page 1)

Father Baiju continues, saying, “God’s word to us today in the Gospel of St. Mark reminds us in no uncertain terms that if a kingdom is divided against itself, if a house is divided against itself, it will not be able to stand,” he said, “We are a nation sadly, tragically divided between the right to life, and the right to choose.”

Referencing a bill on November’s ballot in Ohio, directly across the river north from the Diocese of Covington, Father Baiju states how, with the amendment, “there is no limit to abortion. It can happen even if the baby is fully formed.”

“In a historic and far-reaching decision, the U.S. Supreme Court officially reversed Roe v. Wade on June 24

of last year, declaring that the constitutional right to abortion upheld for nearly half a century no longer exists,” he said, “but it is increasingly clear that the only lasting change will happen when we work to change not just the laws, but also hearts.”

That begins with each and every one of us, said Father Baiju to the gathered congregation. “To respect life means to give it dignity — at every stage, in every circumstance.” He said, we can’t overlook the ways our culture does not respect life — not only with regards to abortion, but with the mistreatment of elders in nursing homes, the use of embryos in laboratory research and in cases of war, violence and abuse.

“Anytime we treat the gift of life, God’s first and greatest gift, as a problem or an inconvenience or a hardship or junk, nothing could be further from the truth. We are Easter people, people of the Resurrection, people of life,” said Father Baiju. “Let us seek our opportunities to honor the priceless gift we have been given. Listen to those who are ignored. Remember those who are forgotten. Stand up for those who are victims of hate or violence or disrespect. Pray for those who will be aborted or euthanized.”

Father Baiju concludes his homily, saying, “Respect life, not just in the womb, but everywhere, at every time, in all circumstances ... it means treating every life with dignity and honoring every life as a gift. Doing that, moment by moment, we will begin to change the culture. And, heart by heart, we will begin to change the world.”

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November 4, 2023

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Be Witnesses

“Wake up the world!
Be witnesses of
a different way
of doing things,
of acting, of living!”
— Pope Francis

Religious Communities in the Diocese of Covington

- Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery www.stwalburg.org
- Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis www.brothersofthepoorofstfrancis.org
- Passionist Nuns www.erlangerpassionists.com
- Sisters of Divine Providence www.cdpkentucky.org
- Sisters of Notre Dame www.sndusa.org
- Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker www.ssjiw.org

Public and Private Associations

- Franciscan Daughters of Mary www.fdoofmary.org
- Missionaries of St. John the Baptist www.msjiw.org

A very enriching vocation

Karen Kuhlman
Correspondent

Sister Barbara Woeste, a member of the Sisters of St. Benedict of St. Walburg Monastery, is a lifelong resident of the Diocese of Covington. Sister Barbara said, “I grew up in Newport, attended St. Stephen’s Grade School in Newport, and was taught by the Sisters of Notre Dame. Our family lived on Linden Street, but when the Highway Department needed the property, our home became part of the approach to I-471 in 1970. When our family moved to Ft. Thomas, I was taught by the Sisters of the Congregation of Divine Providence at the Academy of Notre Dame of Providence (Our Lady of Providence).”

After graduating from the Academy, she didn’t go to college immediately. Instead, around 1961, she went to work for an American insurance company, USF&G (United States Fidelity and Guaranty Company). She worked in the claims department there for many years and found the work very interesting.

“My grandmother was an auxiliary member of the Legion of Mary, and one day, I answered a phone call from the Legion for her. During the conversation, the caller asked if I would like to become a Legion of Mary member. I thought I might, so I went to a meeting and became an active member of the Legion of Mary shortly after I began working for the insurance company. Soon afterward, the Legion started a CCD Center at 6th and Central in Newport,” said Sister Barbara.

She began taking religious education classes offered by the diocese and met Benedictine Sisters Mary Catherine Wentstap, and Sister Mary Tewes, two teachers. Benedictine Sister Carla Cook, who was very involved in the charismatic group, used to come to USF&G to visit her sister Patty Mullenkamp.

“Through the Legion, I met Sister Joan Yelton; she was in the Holy Cross group while I was in the St. Stephen’s group. We became good friends, and she invited me to St. Walburg for a discussion group. I did not know much about the Benedictines, but I soon began learning a lot about them,” she said.

Sister Barbara said it was through Sister Joan Yelton that she became a Benedictine. In 1976, she began living at the St. Joseph House, a beautiful home that dates to the Civil War, on the grounds of St. Walburg Monastery. Sister was an associate for two years while still working at the insurance company and enjoying the work there. She left her position and became a Benedictine novice in 1979.

“When I took my first vows in 1980, I was still working at the Catholic Mission in Newport, located in an impoverished section of town. Children from the projects and surrounding neighborhoods came to the Mission for instruction. I taught religion to the first grade at Corpus Christi and worked in hospitality at the monastery,” she said.

Sister Barbara continued her education and received a BA in religious studies and theology from Thomas More University. She followed those accomplishments with an associate degree in psychology and then added a master’s in religious studies from the University of Dayton.

She made final vows in 1984 and was well prepared when she received a call in 1988 from Father Michael Comer, associate pastor at St. Pius X, with a request from pastor, Father Tenhundfeld. Sister Madonna Fitzgerald was leaving, and they needed someone to take over the Adult Education program. That included RCIA, parish missions and various programs for adults to encourage them in their faith. Sister Barbara said, “St. Pius is a very good faith community, and I enjoyed it very much. We also had bible school and, of course, a CCD program. A group of wonderful women did artwork for our Bible school. We had some of the most beautiful artwork you can imagine!

“We had good teachers. Parents, mainly the women, participated as the programs were held primarily during the day. That was a

sign of the times, as many women were stay-at-home moms while the men worked outside the home. But, the men were involved in adult programs in the evening, and we had some very good men who took part. They were also involved in our parish missions. I worked with the St. Pius teachers and school children and ran the religious education programs from 1988 to 1997.”

In 1997, Sister Barbara received a call from Father John Cahill, who asked if she would be interested in taking the Pastoral Associate for Faith Development position at the Cathedral Parish Office to nurture and guide the development of small faith communities already in place. Divine Providence Sister Virginia Wolfzorn was leaving the Adult Education and Evangelization program, and Father hoped Sister Barbara would succeed her in the RCIA program.

Sister Barbara accepted the responsibility for the program through which non-baptized men and women enter the Catholic Church. She used Disciples in Mission, based on an encyclical by St. Pope Paul VI and recommended by the Paulist Fathers to direct the evangelization program. Sister also agreed to oversee the religious preparation program for children not attending Catholic school.

Sister Barbara has been the director of Religious Education and pastoral associate since 1997 but says that description is too broad. DRE more closely defines her role — overseeing the VIRTUS program, working specifically with RCIA candidates who are registered members of the Cathedral Parish on the sacramental programs for reconciliation, Holy Communion, and confirmation at the Cathedral Parish. That applies both to high school students and grade school children. Sister devotes eight weeks of preparation to them after Sunday Mass, as do the adult candidates.

Sister Barbara is happy to have welcomed people to the faith through the Rite of Christian Initiation. She has brought Holy Communion to the sick, prepared parents for the baptism of their babies, and readied children for the reception of the sacraments of penance, Holy Communion, and confirmation.

While the Cathedral was undergoing renovation in 2001, parishioners had to go to other Catholic Churches during the renovation. At Father William Cleves’ suggestion, Sister was part of a committee that planned activities for parishioners to help foster a sense of community during the Cathedral’s closed period. Some of those activities included bus trips to points of interest places like St. Meinrad’s in Indiana, Metamora and Bardstown; that time spent together softened the loss of community.

Over the years, Sister Barbara has worked for many wonderful pastors at the Cathedral Parish Office, including Father William Neuhaus, Father William Cleves, Father Ryan Maher, and Father Paul Tenhundfeld.

“Overall, I have found my vocation very enriching and the Rule of St. Benedict very spiritual. Our daily liturgy of the hours feeds our spirituality so that we can go out to others. Life as a Benedictine wouldn’t have happened if I had been elsewhere,” said Sister Barbara. “I see the decline in the number of women entering religious congregations, and it makes me sad. I pray every day that other women would see value in religious life. I pray they will understand that religious life is still necessary and explore what women religious are doing today. Like all vocations, it has taken on forms and ministries of which some may not be aware.

“Parents can nurture a vocation in a child by going with them to Mass, having prayer in the home, fostering a devotion to Mary, and encouraging a sense of humility. Humility is so important in today’s world, where everybody wants to get ahead. Humility helps you accept life as it is. You learn to work with and through it. You don’t place yourself ahead of other people. You see Christ in others and love them for who they are.”



Sister Barbara Woeste

For more information about consecrated life in the Diocese of Covington, contact Sister Marla Monahan at mmonahan@covdio.org or (859) 392-1569.

Cardinal Pizzaballa’s heroic inspiration in these dark, chaotic days

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa’s recent offer to exchange himself for the children held hostage in the Gaza Strip by Hamas is a testament to his extraordinary

VIEWPOINT

Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board: Father Patrick Briscoe, O.P., Gretchen R. Crowe, Scott P. Richert and York Young

leadership and unwavering commitment to peace. This selfless act of courage has showcased his dedication to the people of the Holy Land — Christians, Jews and Muslims alike — and his tireless efforts to bring about reconciliation in a region marred by conflict.

Today, leaders are often defined by their political acumen or strategic decisions. Cardinal Pizzaballa stands out for his moral clarity. When asked if he would be willing to offer himself in exchange for the innocent children held by Hamas, his response was unequivocal: “Anything, if that can lead to freedom and bring those children home, no problem. There is an absolute availability on my part.” These words reflect not only the moral expectations of his priestly vocation but also his readiness to act on his convictions.

The Israeli Ambassador to the Holy See, Raphael Schutz, praised the cardinal’s offer on X, formerly Twitter, saying, “My deepest heartfelt appreciation to His Eminence Cardinal Pizzaballa.”

As of this writing, more than 1,000 Christians are sheltering in church buildings in Gaza. While the Israeli military has warned them to leave the area, Cardinal Pizzaballa says they “practically all have chosen to stay there because it is safer for them to stay, since the situation is even more delicate elsewhere.”

The Vatican, under Cardinal Pizzaballa’s guidance,

has also expressed its willingness to mediate a peace agreement and to focus on the release of hostages and the protection of innocent lives.

From the outset of the conflict, Cardinal Pizzaballa has urged a peaceful resolution. In a joint statement issued on Oct. 13 with the Patriarchs and Heads of the Churches in Jerusalem in the Holy Land, Cardinal Pizzaballa said, “We are witnessing a new cycle of violence with an unjustifiable attack against civilians in Israel.”

Following the attacks by Hamas, Israel cut off water and electricity and closed border crossings into Gaza. In response, these Christian leaders courageously called for humanitarian aid to be delivered to Gaza. (More than 423,000 people in Gaza have already been displaced, the U.N. reports.)

The statement was met with criticism from Ambassador Schutz. Specifically, the ambassador objected to the claim, “We see a new circle of violence with unjustified attacks against all civilians.” Ambassador Schutz wrote on X, “??What actually happened was that the ‘circle of violence’ (typical false symmetry expression) started with an unprovoked criminal attack by Hamas + Islamic Jihad (the Patriarchs refrain from mentioning their names) murdering more than 1,300 Israelis and from other 35 nationalities mostly civilians.”

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen offered similar criticism of the statement. The minister told the Holy See’s Secretary for Relations with States Archbishop Paul Gallagher, “It is unacceptable that you put out a statement expressing worry primarily for Gazan civilians while Israel is burying 1,300 who were murdered.”

Israel has the right to defend itself. But that defense cannot come at the expense of innocent human life. News media report that Hamas continues to hide behind civil-

ians. Palestinians are being prevented from leaving their homes and from moving to safer locations. The evil means through which this war is being fought must be clearly condemned, and it has been by Cardinal Pizzaballa and the leaders of Christian churches in the Holy Land.

For his part, Pope Francis called for the release of hostages and the protection of civilians on Oct. 15. “Humanitarian law is to be respected, especially in Gaza, where it is urgent and necessary to ensure humanitarian corridors and to come to the aid of the entire population,” the pope urged.

The response to terrorism cannot come at the expense of morality. And the leaders of the Catholic Church are teaching this clearly.

On Sept. 28, speaking to journalists, Cardinal Pizzaballa said, “To be a cardinal is not just a title, but also a responsibility, to be a voice from Jerusalem, of Jerusalem, about our situation, and also from Jerusalem to all the churches, to be able to say something positive for constructive building in this very complicated context.” In his words and actions, Cardinal Pizzaballa is carrying this responsibility with heroic courage on the global stage.

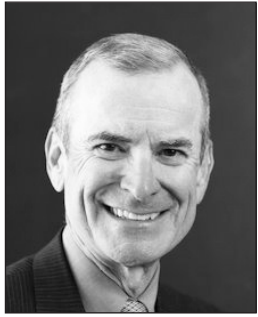
Hamas is not likely to accept the cardinal’s offer. But in extending it, he made the Christian response clear. The cardinal’s willingness to put his own life on the line for the sake of others is a remarkable example of Christian selflessness and compassion. His public, unshakeable commitment to the Gospel is an inspiration to all Catholics.

Our Sunday Visitor Editorial Board: Father Patrick Briscoe, O.P., Gretchen R. Crowe, Scott P. Richert and York Young.

Why does Obi-Wan remind me of St. Joan of Arc?

In the epic lightsaber battle between Darth Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi from Episode IV of “Star Wars,” Obi-Wan utters one of the most famous lines from the entire franchise: “You can’t win, Darth. If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you can possibly imagine.”

GUEST



Kenneth Craycraft

Kenobi subsequently stops dueling, holds his saber in front of him in a posture of surrender, and permits Vader to fell him in one powerful stroke. Instead of Obi-Wan’s body falling to the ground, however, it vanishes, as his robes collapse in an empty heap at Vader’s feet. And, of course, the accuracy of Kenobi’s prophecy is well documented in subsequent episodes.

I thought of this scene as I revisited George Bernard Shaw’s play “Saint Joan” about the trial, execution and restoration of St. Joan of Arc, which debuted 100 years ago, in December 1923.

In Shaw’s dramatic recreation of St. Joan’s sham trial, she agrees to renounce her alleged crimes and heresies after she learns that her sentence will be death by burning. “[O]nly a fool will walk into a fire,” she declaims; “God, who gave me common sense, cannot will me to do that.” Thus, illiterate Joan makes her mark on a confession and recantation, “tormented by the rebellion of her soul against her mind and body,” as Shaw notes in a stage

direction. But when a sentence of life imprisonment is still passed against her, St. Joan flies into a holy rage, rips up the recantation, and shouts, “Light your fire: do you think I dread it as much as the life of a rat in a hole?”

After Joan’s execution, the Earl of Warwick, who presided over the trial, says to a member of the ersatz court, Brother Martin, “I am informed that it is all over.” To which Brother Martin replies, “We do not know, my lord. It may have only just begun.”

He then recounts his observation at the execution: Joan “looked up to heaven I firmly believe that her Savior appeared to her then in His tenderest glory. She called to Him and died. This not the end for her, but the beginning.” Minutes later, when the executioner reports to Warwick, “You have heard the last of her,” Warwick replies, “The last of her? Hm! I wonder!”

It is difficult to know what to make of St. Jean d’Arc. Was she a revolutionary feminist, bursting the artificial bonds of what is not permissible for women to say, do, or even wear? Was she a great military strategist and inspired leader of soldiers? Was she a champion of the common person, vicariously raising the esteem and spirits of the French peasantry? Was she a religious mystic, experiencing direct instruction from Sts. Catherine, Margaret, and Michael? Was she a political nationalist, asserting God’s favor over France? Was she mad — a holy fool, with whom one might show condescending sympathy and patience, but be wary of her counsel and claims?

Of course, in 1456, 15 years after her conviction and execution, the verdict was overturned. And in 1920, the Church declared her a saint. But neither of these events are necessarily inconsistent with any or all of these (or other) possible judgments about St. Joan.

This is precisely the genius of Shaw’s “Saint Joan,” and the reason for its abiding importance.

Hundreds of theologians, historians, poets, novelists, songwriters, sculptors and painters have tried to crack the code that is the enigma of Maid of Orleans. Shaw does not try to do this; he has no interest in attempting to solve the riddle of St. Joan.

And that’s precisely why he succeeds where so many others fail. Shaw’s play teases out the tensions and paradoxes in Joan’s life and faith. Like many saints, she did not always act or speak in a saintly way. Similarly, Shaw accounts for the quandaries and contradictions in 15th-century political powers and ecclesiastical authorities. He charges none of the Maid’s accusers with bad faith but exposes all of them to judgment. In doing so, Shaw directs the stage lights on us, the audience. His St. Joan of Arc is a proxy for the tensions and paradoxes that lie in every human breast. And her prosecutors and executioners are a challenge to see the same in ourselves, before we judge it in others.

We know very little about the historical person St. Jean d’Arc. What we know with certainty, however, is that her death by burning in 1431 was not the “last” we heard of her: After she was struck down, she became more powerful than her accusers and executioners could possibly have imagined. On its centenary, George Bernard Shaw’s “Saint Joan” remains an enduring testimony to that power:

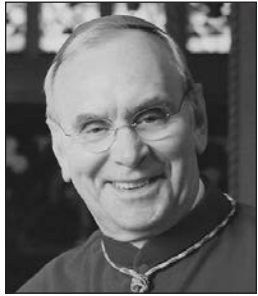
Kenneth Craycraft is an associate professor of moral theology at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary and School of Theology in Cincinnati.

The greatest commandment

The readings for the thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: Exodus 22:20-26; 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10 and Matthew 22:34-40.

“You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind ... you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matt 22: 37, 39)

GO AND GLORIFY



Bishop Roger J. Foy, D.D.

“How do I love thee? Let me count the ways. I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach ... I love thee to the level of every day’s most quiet need, by sun and by candle-light. I love thee freely, as men strive for right. I love thee purely, as they turn from praise. I love thee with the passion put to use in my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith ... I love thee with the breath, smiles, tears, of all my life;

and, if God choose, I shall love thee better after death.” (From Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “Sonnets from the Portuguese, #43”)

The depth and breadth of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s love for her husband is almost palpable in the excerpt from her sonnet. One can almost feel the unconditional love that she pledges jump off the page. It is described as a love through all conditions — good times and bad, success and failure, through, in her words, all the smiles and tears of all her life. And her love is meant not only for this world but, “if God choose” even after death.

WOW! That is a true love, that is a love that comes from deep within the recesses of one’s heart, a love that knows no bounds, a love that is above all other loves and one that, please God, will survive even after death.

That type of love can describe the love of God that Jesus tells his questioner we owe to God. It is a love that knows no bounds, that is faithful in every situation in which we find ourselves, a love that exceeds our love for anyone or anything else. It is a love that is meant to supersede all others. It is a love that is meant to go on forever.

We are to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind. THAT IS LOVE. Jesus doesn’t mince any words. He makes himself very, very clear.

Then, Jesus follows that statement up with another, which yokes the love of God with love of neighbor: “The second (commandment) is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.” (Matt 22:39-40)

Jesus yokes the two commandments as one. One is hardly possible without the other. Now that is something to reflect on. We must love God without reserve and love our neighbor as ourselves.

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” (1 John 4:20)

Whoa! That changes things a bit, doesn’t it. I must love my neighbor to love God?!?! Well, it would seem so, no? Isn’t that what Jesus himself says?

Of course, then we get into the whole “who is my neighbor?” thing. But fortunately, Jesus cleared that up in his story about the Good Samaritan. (cf. Luke 10: 29-37)

I don’t think it’s a stretch to say that the world is desperately in need of love. True love. Genuine love. A love of God and a love of neighbor. A love that fills our hearts and our souls, that changes lives — ours as well as others. A love that will bring us peace of mind and peace of heart.

And so, we can ask the Lord as did the scholar of the Law in today’s Gospel passage: Which commandment in the law is the greatest? And the Lord will respond just as he did to the scholar: You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The rest, my friends, is up to us.

Most Rev Roger J. Foy, D.D. is Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Covington, Ky

Día de Los Muertos

My husband and I are a mixed-race couple. My husband is a first generation American, with his parents coming from Mexico to Oklahoma in the 1980s. Our

daughters are half white American, half Mexican American. Being in a mixed culture household comes with responsibilities that I never realized until we had children.

My husband’s family all live in Oklahoma and Texas, meaning my daughters spend most of their time with my family, experiencing my family traditions and way of life. My husband’s parents are very proud of their all-American son and put a

lot of emphasis on him learning to be what they believed was a “true American” while he was growing up. This has led to my husband being less than fluent in Spanish, despite his parents and older siblings all being bilingual. As a family, we are having to put extra effort into ensuring our daughters benefit from both cultures that they belong to.

How do we manage this without belonging to a strong Hispanic community ourselves? I have learned several of my mother-in-law’s recipes, trying to make them as authentic as I can while being respectful of my German Irish tolerance for spice. My husband has been practicing his Spanish by speaking to our girls and his family, asking for help for words or phrases he uses regularly. We both worked on our basic vocabulary and help the girls practice their numbers and colors in English and Spanish. I have also taken the steps to try to add Mexican traditions to many of my family’s holiday traditions. One of the holidays I have added to our family is Día de Los Muertos.

Thanks to Disney’s Coco, Día de Los Muertos has become a more recognized holiday for Americans, but as happens often when holidays are introduced through pop culture, the true roots and meaning behind Día de Los Muertos has sometimes been lost. Día de Los Muertos is not Mexican Halloween, and although its roots come from ancient Meso-American traditions, I find that it is a beautiful holiday to celebrate in harmony with the Catholic faith.

Día de Los Muertos is a two-day celebration uniting the living with the dead, normally falling on November 1st and 2nd, perfectly in line with All Saints and All Souls Days. The first day, Día de los Angelitos, celebrates the “little angels” or the children who have died. The ofren-

VIEWPOINT



Sarah Torres

das, altars with “offerings” for the dead, are covered in pictures of departed children, favorite toys, sugar skulls and candies, everything the little ones loved in life.

The second day, Día de los Difuntos, celebrates the adults, then halfway through the day transitions to the true Día de Los Muertos celebration — celebrating all the deceased. The ofrendas take on more adult themes with favorite foods, tequila or mezcal or other adult beverages, pan de muerto (bread of the dead), etc.

Traditionally, the ofrenda also includes representation of each of the four elements: air with incense and papel picado (the beautiful paper banners), water with pitchers or glasses of water for the dead to drink, earth often with the bread and food, and fire with the candles. Marigolds are also used to decorate with their bright color and strong fragrance being believed to guide the spirits back to their families.

Now, I am not suggesting that the Catholic Church believes that the dead return to earth or need us to provide food, drink or personal belongings for them. However, we do believe that the dead need us, they need our prayers and for us to remember them.

Many elements of Día de Los Muertos mirror practices we as Catholics follow regarding our faithful departed. On All Saints Day and All Souls Day, we honor the saints in heaven and pray for the souls of those in purgatory. We light candles and burn incense, with the same belief that the smoke symbolizes the connection between earth and heaven and the carrying of our prayers to heaven. We put out pictures of our deceased family and statues of the saints we hold special connections to on our home altars or on dining tables to remind us to pray for them. We grow or purchase roses, and sometimes even marigolds, in honor of Mary, Our Mother.

Día de Los Muertos always ends with celebration with the deceased in cemeteries. Every year, the Catholic Church grants a plenary indulgence for the souls in Purgatory if a Catholic, in a state of grace, visits a cemetery between November 1 and 8 and prays for the dead.

Día de Los Muertos has provided my family a perfect opportunity to help our daughters connect to their Hispanic roots while reminding all of us of the importance of praying for the dead and bringing our faith into our fun during the holidays.

I am still new to this holiday, and I am sure there are still many important elements that I have forgotten to mention and/or still need to learn myself. I encourage others to learn more about Día de Los Muertos and consider how many of the elements of this beautiful tradition could help you and your family have a more prayerful holiday season.

¡Feliz Día de Los Muertos!
Sarah Torres is the archivist for the Diocese of Covington, Ky

U.S. politics badly needs an infusion of decency and idealism via Aquinas

One needn’t be a big fan of Kevin McCarthy to see the California Republican’s ouster as Speaker of the House of

Representatives as a significant low point in recent American politics. Unfortunately, there’s apparently more — much more — yet to come.

Consider the painful fact that a year before the election, the presidential race already shows signs of being the nastiest in living memory. Some Democrats talk seriously of using provisions of the 14th Amendment, originally aimed at office-holders of the Confederate

States, to keep former president Donald Trump off the ballot. Not to be outdone, House Republicans have begun an impeachment probe with the goal of tarring President

GUEST



Russell Shaw

Biden. Do I hear someone saying, “At least it can’t get any worse”? Maybe not, but I wouldn’t bet on it. The bipartisan spirit of vengeance and extremism now animating our politics threatens to turn America into the superpower version of those unhappy places where seeking high office can land you in prison.

However you look at it, our politics stands badly in need of an infusion of decency and idealism. And a help to that can be found in St. Thomas Aquinas and his treatise on kingship. Written in the 1260s at the request of the King of Cyprus, much that it says doesn’t apply to our present situation, but parts of it deserve thoughtful, even prayerful reflection.

As, for example, this: “It pertains to the king’s office to promote the good life of the multitude in such a way as to make it suitable for the attainment of heavenly happiness ... [A king] should command those things which lead to the happiness of heaven and, as far as possible, forbid the contrary.”

Can you imagine a candidate saying anything remote-
(Continued on page 20)

Workshop encourages participants to reexamine negative biases and be open to goodness

Sister Alice Gerdeman, CDP
Contributor

“Biases, we all have them and the negative ones usually show up in times of stress — like in traffic.” With these words, Brice Mickey, vice president of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Beech Acres Parenting Center, opened the workshop, “Dealing With Our Biases,” held Sept. 23 at The Province Center of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Melbourne.

What is a bias and where do they come from? The 60 participants explored some of their own inclinations for or against an idea, object, or individual — from foods to nationality, gender and age. Biases are often learned. The biases we hold can come from personal social status, education, ethnicity or other variables. Parents and teachers may pass on values and norms and these may be reinforced or challenged by institutions, churches, legal systems or the media or cultural messaging.

Mr. Mickey described the hurt that negative and unfounded judgements can cause as “death by a thousand cuts.” Those present were reminded that their biased words, sometimes not well thought out or intentionally meant to be derogatory, do cause pain to persons and influence society toward injustice and inequality. Even good people of faith can’t assume that they know or



understand others. The words of Pope Francis, “We are all irreplaceable fragments of the Divine mosaic” a theme for the workshop, call us to reexamine negative biases and be open to the goodness in others.



(above right) Divine Providence Sister Leslie Keener with presenter Brice Mickey, vice president of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Beech Acres Parenting Center.
(left) Sisters of Divine Providence attending the “Dealing with Our Biases” workshop, Sept. 23, at the Province Center, Melbourne.


Fall interfaith event

(Continued from page 2)



contributions in the area of religious liberty. Lesan co-directs the Young Scholars Fellowship on Religion and the Rule of Law, held annually at Oxford University. Greenberg has more than 40 years of experience counseling and representing employers in a wide variety of workplace legal issues including representation of religious employers in employment law matters. He also served on the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Board of Governors Executive Committee until May 2022, and as president of the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati from May 2018 to May 2020.

When discussing strict scrutiny, Holly Lesan said, “we’re asking to take a look where there’s a limitation of a religious manifestation that has to happen where the government does have an interest... what is the way that is most accommodating in a fullest, most expansive sense of that word, to achieve that interest?” She continued, “I think it goes back to human dignity... can we accommodate two different travelers on a road with different religious needs?” How may we use those relationships to accommodate the innate dignity of the citizen, and the necessity of the state, she asked.

“I believe that this (strict scrutiny) was what was intended when the First Amendment,” freedom of religion, “I believe that this is also good policy, because it protects individuals in a very diverse and disparate society, to be able to live the lives that they believe that they should live,” Mr. Greenberg concluded the evening.




November is the Month of the Poor & Holy Souls




An indulgence, applicable only to the Souls in Purgatory, is granted to the faithful, who devoutly visit a cemetery and pray, even if only mentally, for the departed. The indulgence is plenary each day from the 1st to the 8th of November; on other days of the year it is partial.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord; and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen



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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Newsworthy

The Thomas More University Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation held its Fast Pitch Competition Oct. 3, where teams of undergraduate students pitched new concepts, ideas for growth potential for existing businesses, and community growth models. The top team received \$2,000; second place \$1,000 and third \$500.

First place: Team Saints’ Express concept of providing 24/7 assistance to students who do not have personal transportation on campus. The Saints’ Express team included: **Matthew Igel, Jenna Lillard, Emma McKenna, Sofia Pearson, and Tyshaun Thomas.**

Second-place: Team Thomas More Marketplace, idea for a digital space where students that own small businesses, want to provide services, or sell other goods within the Thomas More community can post their listings. The Thomas More Marketplace team consisted of: **Aliza Brock, Drew Edrich, Blake Kibler, Omarion Pierce, and Donahugh Simpson.**

Third place was awarded to ACE, represented solely by **Colin Wilmhoff**, had an eye on sustainability, pitching a cost effective, low impact bug meat that would solve the environmental impact of factory farms by replacing them as the main source of the meat market.

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.

St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, offers Veneration of a relic of the True Cross, on the first Friday of every month, from noon-1 p.m. Confessions are offered concurrently. The monthly veneration is held in silence and concludes with a blessing and the opportunity for the faithful to come forward to personally venerate the True Cross relic. The monthly veneration is sponsored by the Knights and Dames of the Covington-Lexington section of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, Art Gallery presents “St. Francis of Assisi,” a display of St. Francis statues on loan



Oct. 29 — Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Mt 22:34-40)
A lawyer asked Jesus a question to see if he really knew the law: “Which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Jesus put the whole law into one commandment by saying we are to love God above all. But he added a second part: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” The people listening knew both commandments, but the two had never been made one before.
— Do you have family rules/laws that help you to reach out and love others?



Knights fore life

The Northern Kentucky Knights of Columbus Golf Committee presented Chris Goddard, executive director, Catholic Charities, \$14,000 from the proceeds of its annual golf outing held in July. For 14 years the Knights of Columbus have donated \$149,000 to Catholic Charities Lifeline Fund. Catholic Charities is so thankful for the dedication and support from the Knights, sponsors and golfers. Pictured (from left) Knights of Columbus Committee — Bill Kopp, Carl Biery, Keith Cahill, Chris Goddard, Catholic Charities; Vicky Bauerle, Catholic Charities; Dennis Elix, Deacon Bill Theis, Suanne and David Ledonne and Eric Oberschmidt.

from St. Mary/Bishop Brossart alumni. Statues range in size from 3 inches to 4 feet tall and represent both indoor and outdoor statues. Show dates are Sundays only, Oct. 1-29, noon-4 or by appointment (859) 630-2874.

The Eva G. Farris Art Gallery at Thomas More University presents “The Secret Garden: Hidden Dreams, Quiet Screams, Whispers that Seep from the Leaves” an exhibition by Stephanie Berrie, Oct. 13–Nov. 2. Gallery talk is Nov. 2, 3:30–4 p.m., and closing reception 4–7 p.m.

Come celebrate First Friday Mass followed by a healing service, Nov. 3, St. Joseph Church, Crescent Springs. The evening begins at 6:30 p.m. with music by the Sacred Heart Praise Band, followed by Mass at 7 with celebrant Bishop John Iffert. Sponsored by the Mustard Seed Catholic Charismatic Community of the Diocese of Covington. For more information, call Carol at 859-341-5932.

St. Barbara, Erlanger, Turkey Shoots, Saturdays Oct. 28, Nov. 4 and Nov. 12, 12–4 p.m., 12 gauge only. Beer, soft drinks and food available. Call (859) 380-9260.

Musica Sacra Cincinnati returns to begin the 47th year of Cathedral Concerts Sunday, Oct. 29, at 3 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Under the baton of musical director, L. Brett Scott, this program will feature Joseph Haydn’s Mass in C Major: The pristine acoustics of the Cathedral Basilica, along with its inspiring gothic architecture and sacred art, provide lovers of music and the arts an opportunity to hear large-scale sacred choral music — in the setting for which it was originally intended. All Cathedral Concerts are open to the public with no admission charge. A freewill offering is gladly accepted. Visit www.cathedralconcertseries.org for information on this concert and the 2023-2024 season.

St. Peters COF Court #1492 annual matching funds Turkey Raffle, Nov. 4, the Social Center of Sts. Peter & Paul School, California. BINGO, raffles and plenty of food. Proceeds benefit Sts. Peter & Paul School for updating school furnishings. Call Jeanette Geiger at (859) 803-3782.

St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, PTO Craft Show accepting vendor applications for its craft show Nov. 4, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Table prices include 8-foot tables and two chairs. One table: \$30; two tables: \$50, electric available for an additional \$2.50 per table. Set up the evening before the craft show available. Contact Rebecca Stidham at fawn.stidham486@gmail.com.

“Understanding GenZ,” Nov. 9; 11 a.m.–3:30 p.m., Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Cost \$15 includes lunch and snacks. Gain better insight into the



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lives and culture of teenagers and learn practical skills to effectively communicate the unchanging gospel in a constantly changing landscape. Open to youth ministers, DREs, campus ministers, pastors, volunteers, or anyone who has a heart for sharing Jesus with the next generation. Sponsored by NET ministries. Registration: www.covdio.org/youth.

The 16th annual St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky Turkeyfoot Trot 5k Run/Walk will be held Nov. 18, 9 a.m. at Thomas More University. Check-in for the race will begin at 7:30 a.m.; Early check-in and packet pick-up is Nov. 16, 10 a.m.–8 p.m. and Nov. 17, 10 a.m.–6 p.m. at Tri-State Running Company, Edgewood. Registration is available online through race day at svdpnky.org.

A faith-based support group, New Beginnings provides separated and divorced individuals the opportunity for healing and growth. In this group, participants find new understanding of themselves and their relationships and gain courage to discover new life. Registration is required. Visit <https://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/> or call (859) 392-1500, ext.1592. The next session will be held on consecutive Thursdays, Oct.12 – Dec. 7, 7 – 8:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Elementary School, Bellevue.

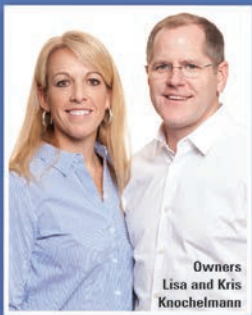
DCCH Children’s Home Flea Market, Ft. Mitchell, year-round, 8:30 a.m.– noon, Monday, Thursday and Saturday; (Dec.– April, Monday, Thursday and every 3rd Saturday). Donation drop-off during Flea Market hours or at drop-off box anytime.

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Historic Guido Reni Painting Enshrined at Cathedral Basilica

Father Jordan Hainsey
Contributor

A painting of St. Philip Neri was enshrined at St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in late July. Visually framed by the vaults and pillars of a side aisle, the painting hangs above the west portal door at the Cathedral’s narthex. While the painting is new to the Cathedral, its storied history stretches back to one of Rome’s greatest painters and the earliest days of Germanic Covington. The painting was brought from Rome to the United States in 1839 by Father Ferdinand Kühr, first pastor of Mother of God Church, Covington.

Father Kühr was born in Eslohe, Prussia on August 25, 1806. An early history by Mother of God Church relates: *Having lost his parents at an early age, the boy was forced to work in the fields for a living. A priest uncle, noticing his inclination toward the ecclesiastical state, sent him to the Gymnasium of Paderborn. After two years, the benefactor died and the boy was again left destitute. Ferdinand was determined to become a priest — money or no money. Hearing that poor boys might be educated for the missions gratuitously at the college of Propaganda Fide, he set out on foot for Rome with one companion. By the time they had reached the Alps, their little money was gone, and they accepted charity at Saint Gotthard, where they were advised to turn back to Germany. The two youths, however, proceeded to Rome; and according to Father Kühr’s own description, arrived, footsore, hungry, and in tatters. On the outskirts of the Eternal City, they knelt to beg God’s blessing on their future and trudged on to the first church in sight. Here they fell asleep, only to be awakened by a confused lay brother, who, not being able to understand them, conducted the two “urchins” to a German priest. They were presented to the Propaganda by their newly-found friend and were enrolled at the College.*

The college Kühr found himself was the Pontifical Urban College for the Propagation of the Faith. Founded in 1627, the college prepared young men for holy orders and missionary work in their homelands. Italians were not admitted to the college. It instead welcomed students — like Kühr — from the Balkans, Northern Europe, and the Middle East.

At the time of Kühr’s arrival, Karl-August Graf von Reisach was rector. A native Bavarian, Reisach enjoyed a close friendship with several popes and was a well-respected churchman known for his cultured diplomacy. Reisach would eventually be named Bishop of Eichstätt, later Archbishop of Munich-Freising, and, eventually, a Cardinal. Decades later, when Pius IX began preparations for Vatican Council I, he called on Reisach to begin preparations and went on to name him council president.

The Painting Travels From Rome to America

Divine providence not only carried the poor boy from Prussia across the Alps and brought him to ordination day, but it gave him an education and formation by Reisach, one of the most influential churchmen of the 19th century. On August 10, 1836, Kühr was ordained in Rome by Reisach. The Holy Spirit and the imposition of Reisach’s hands not only conferred Holy Orders upon him, but seemingly passed on a missionary zeal that would carry Kühr to the shores of America.

Following ordination, Kühr became professor of Theology at the Propagation of the Faith from 1836-1839. According to “The Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky,” Kühr was said to be an “energetic and faithful priest highly esteemed to the clergy to whom he was known. He was a holy man unpretending in his ways, and deeply pious.” Gaining the affection of many, sometime during these three years the Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne (likely Clemens August Droste zu Vischering) gifted Kühr a painting of St. Philip Neri purported to be one of six created by the Baroque Master, Guido Reni. Where he got it and how it was chosen to give to Kühr is unknown.

Almost immediately though, Kühr felt an interior voice say, “Go to the new world and build a church in honor of the Mother of God!” As the story goes, when he told the cardinal friend that he would take his treasured painting with him to America, his eminence replied: “You dare not; the Pecci Law is written forbidding masterpieces to be taken from Rome.”



St. Philip Neri in Ecstasy
Workshop of Guido Reni (Italian, 1575-1642), St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington

What exactly the cardinal meant by the Pecci law is unclear, as no historical record of such law exists as we know it. However, beginning during the reign of Pius VI in the 18th century, strict regulations about exporting artworks from the Pontifical States were enforced. Such regulations would have later been incorporated bodily into the legal code of the Kingdom of Italy particularly after the so-called Unification.

Whatever the case, Kühr found a loophole. As tradition relates, “Knowing that the law is not in force until duly promulgated, Father Kühr left Rome quietly at night, and took his Saint Philip Neri with him.”

The Painting Arrives in Covington and Mother of God Parish is Established

Covington’s “St. Mary’s Mission,” served a congrega-

tion of both English-speaking and German-speaking Catholics, most of them immigrants in the early 1830s. For the first three years of its existence, it had no resident priest. “One of the Reverend clergy of the Cathedral of Cincinnati,” noted the Catholic Telegraph, “celebrated ‘Holy Mass’ on two Sundays (second and fourth) of every month.” The “Reverend clergy” mentioned in the article was Father Stephen Montgomery. Soon though, Father Kühr would be drawn to this growing congregation.

In the Spring of 1839, Kühr arrived with the painting in the United States and began ministry. Beginning in Cincinnati, he eventually traveled to Pennsylvania before offering his service to Bishop Flaget for ministry to the growing German faithful who had settled in the city of Covington.

(Continued on page 12)



The Painting of St. Philip Neri in Ecstasy, View facing West
St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington

(Continued from page 11)

By the time he arrived, the number of German-speaking families at St. Mary's had increased to nearly 40, which warranted the creation of a new parish church. With the Bishop's permission, a new congregation was organized under Kühr. Kühr first rented a hall in the Old National Hotel Building on Scott Street in which to have Mass. Then in the spring of 1841, he bought a piece of property a block from St. Mary's on Sixth Street upon which the new German church was erected.

Contractors, builders, and labors were generous, donating both their time and materials. The church was under roof by August and was dedicated shortly thereafter on October 10, 1842 as Mutter Gottes Gemeinde (Mother of God Parish).

While it seems likely the Kühr's painting of St. Philip Neri would have been enshrined in the Church, sadly no photographs exist to prove such a hypothesis. Where it hung in these early years is a mystery. What is clear

though is that Kühr had kept his promise to "go to the new world and build a church in honor of the Mother of God!"

What makes the story of the painting's arrival in America even more intriguing though is its purported artist. Oral and written provenance by the Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati, relate that the painting is one of six painted by the very hand of the Baroque master, Guido Reni.

Guido Reni, The Painting's Artist

Reni was the most celebrated painter of seventeenth-century Italy. He was famous for the elegance of his compositions and the beauty and grace of his upturned heads and entrancing eyes; these were his religious zeitgeist. In 1608, Pope Paul V made him his court painter. Already popular, Reni could now barely keep up with commissions; the powerful Borghese dynasty around Pope Paul V, and several other patrons, demanded a stream of new works from the star painter.

To keep up, the artist ran a huge studio in Bologna,



Guido Reni Self Portrait
ca. 1602-1603, Palazzo Barberini, Rome

employing at one time up to 80 assistants. Reni's Bolognese studio emerged as an attraction for visitors to the city. It had a constant stream of art dealers, cardinals, and ambassadors, all dropping by.

Whether altarpieces or devotional pictures, mythological scenes or portraits, Reni's art remained highly sought after. Reni also had his studio assistants reproduce countless copies of his most popular paintings. More than 50 workshop copies of the "Penitent Magdalene" are known today. But Reni himself is said to have held the firm opinion that it didn't matter who executed the paintings or, indeed, how many times they were repeated. What counted was the brainchild behind them. In that vein, every workshop copy was an original Reni.

After Reni's appointment in 1608 to the Papal Court, the Oratorians of Santa Maria in Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova) commissioned the famed Reni to create a new painting of St. Philip Neri to hang in the Church's chapel which housed the saint's moral remains beneath the altar. The painting was slated to be the centerpiece of the 1615 Beatification ceremonies.

Known as the third Apostle of Rome, St. Philip Neri was born on July 22, 1515. He lived during the Renaissance — a period of resurgence in learning, affecting philosophical thought, science, and art.

At a time when the Catholic Church was embattled in the Reformation, Neri achieved a spiritual renewal in the Church's capital city of Rome. Neri was gentle, kind, and had a warm personality. He had a wonderful sense of humor and used this gift when helping others. His two favorite books were the Bible and a joke book. He used charm and humor to teach others about Jesus and he shared joy and kindness with the poor.

By the time he died in 1595, Neri's popularity had skyrocketed. Now part of Heaven's cloud of witnesses, Neri was on par with Rome's greatest patrons, Sts. Peter and Paul. The new painting by Reni then would become the focal point of devotion for Rome's newest saint.

In 1614, Reni completed the commissioned painting of St. Philip Neri to the delight of the Oratorians and faithful. Executed in his typical style, the painting depicts Neri's ecstatic encounter with the Madonna and Christ Child. Employing those hallmark eyes, Reni has depicted Neri kneeling in an orans position (hands outstretched in prayer), alluding to the mystical experience Neri had in the Catacombs of St. Sebastian.

In that vision, a fire from the Holy Spirit settled in his chest and expanded his heart to the point that ribs were broken — a physical reality corroborated by doctors upon examination after his death. He is dressed in a rich red brocade "Neri Chasuble" — a vestment whose distinct, ample



Cardinal Karl-August Graf von Reisach, 19th century



Father Ferdinand Kühr, ca. 1860



The Penitent Mary Magdalene
Guido Reni, 1633, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome



Red Chalk Sketch of the Vision of Saint Philip Neri
Guido Reni, after 1614, Art Institute of Chicago, IL

cut was popularized and codified at the Council of Trent and is now synonymous with Neri himself. The pairing of an ecstatic moment and the use of Mass vestments (which allude to Eucharist itself) create a picture of anamnesis — a Jewish and Christian concept that says what we are doing and experiencing is not simply a passive process, but one by which one can actually enter into now. Reni wanted to create a work that would draw the viewer into a transcendent encounter with the Divine who is ever-present. Reni's success is undeniable.

Attribution and Provenance of Covington's Painting

The precedent and documented history of Reni's studio creating at times 50 copies of a work lend credibility to the provenance of Covington's St. Philip Neri painting as originating from Reni's workshop. It is likely the work was attributed to Reni and not the workshop because often the two — Reni and the workshop — were conflated overtime leading to a provenance that preferred Reni for obvious reasons.

It is possible, too, that the 19th century clergy and connoisseurs took to heart Reni's own view that since he was the brainchild, ever copy from his workshop was a true origi-

nal. With that in mind, it is absolutely plausible that Covington's painting is one of six executed in Reni's workshop.

Evidence of the painting's long history is evidenced today. The canvas was relined at some point with the surface showing considerable areas of inpainting and infilling. Varnish over time has yellowed, darkening the surface. While the coloration may differ from the original in Rome's Church, and the painter's/painters' hand appears to be less accomplished than the master Reni, the painting still lives and breathes, encompassing the same forms, style, execution, and emotion one can expect from a work by Reni's very hand.

The Church that Kühr built lasted through the late 1860s until overcrowding became an issue. Soon, the original structure was demolished, and ground was immediately broken for a newly planned Italian Renaissance Revival structure.

The cornerstone was set on July 3, 1870 and the building dedicated on September 10, 1871. Unfortunately, Kühr did not live to see the completion, having died on November 29, 1870 after an injury suffered from a shying horse.

Following his death at his month's mind Mass (30 days after) his personal effects were sold at auction. Among the items was the Neri painting. It was bought by a Father Hundt of Aurora, Indiana and later sold in 1883 to Father Thomas S. Byrne, the then Chaplain to the Sisters of Charity and later Bishop of Nashville, who in turn gifted it to Mother Regina Mattingly for their art gallery.

The Cathedral Basilica — A New Home for St. Philip Neri

The St. Philip Neri painting became the centerpiece of the Bishop Byrne Art Collection at the Sisters of Charity Motherhouse from 1883 until May 5, 2022, when much of their collection was de-accessed and sent to auction. It was at that time that Bishop Foys was apprised of the painting's existence.

Owing to Covington's rich patrimony and the painting's important historical significance to Covington, Bishop Foys obtained the painting at auction and donated it to Covington's Mother Church as a votive offering to our Lady and gift to the people of Covington. Hung near the confessional, the life size 65.5 x 43-inch oil on canvas work

(Continued on page 14)



The Altar and Reliquary of St. Philip in Santa Maria in Vallicella Church (Chiesa Nuova), Rome. Reni’s painting was replaced long ago with an exact mosaic copy, but the visual effect remains true.

(Continued from page 13)

has become a focal point of devotion for faithful and visitors to the Cathedral Basilica.

It is unclear if Bishop Maes or the cathedral architects ever planned artwork for the space the painting now lives. However, the painting, which now feels like it has always been there, gives testimony to the ancient and sacred idea that a cathedral is never finished, that each generation is called to leave it better and more beautiful than when it

was first found. And, indeed, it’s only the contributions of many individuals and groups over time that have made the Cathedral what it is.

Art criticism and art history will always fall short in grasping or dissecting the true meaning of this painting without the lens of faith. It is only with faith that the painting receives a pulse and becomes what the iconographers call “a window into Heaven” — meaning, what we are viewing is also viewing us. Perhaps that’s why Kühr ushered it so quickly and secretly out of Rome. For him, it was

not a masterpiece for a gallery wall or palace adornment, but a sacred work that would console the German faithful in the new and unfamiliar land of America. Art heals, it consoles. That’s what any good art does after all.

When the painting left Covington in 1870 at Kühr’s death, gone, too, would be its memory. Now, 153 years later, the painting, its story, and the memory of the faithful, early missionary who carried it here come back to life.

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The elements of the Eucharistic prayer

Father Luke Spannagel
USCCB

According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, “Now the center and high point of the entire celebration begins, namely, the Eucharistic Prayer itself, that is, the prayer of thanksgiving and sanctification.

The priest calls upon the people to lift up their hearts to the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving; he associates the people with himself in the prayer that he addresses in the name of the entire community to God the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the meaning of this prayer is that the whole congregation of the faithful joins with Christ in confessing the great deeds of God and in the offering of Sacrifice. The Eucharistic Prayer requires that everybody listens to it with reverence and in silence” (GIRM, 78).

Here we go! For those longing for the true presence of Jesus, the time is drawing near! For those who yearn to pray well, we are invited to participate in the perfect prayer of Jesus —his perfect sacrifice and worship of the Father:

Throughout the Eucharistic Prayer, we can find a great outline and model for our own prayer. By taking a closer look at the main components, we can hopefully enter more fruitfully into this wonderful prayer.

As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* continues, “The main elements of which the Eucharistic Prayer consists may be distinguished from one another in this way:

—The *thanksgiving* (expressed especially in the Preface), in which the priest, in the name of the whole of



the holy people, glorifies God the Father and gives thanks to him for the whole work of salvation or for some particular aspect of it, according to the varying day, festivity, or time of year.

—The *acclamation*, by which the whole congregation, joining with the heavenly powers, sings the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy). This acclamation, which constitutes part of the Eucharistic Prayer itself, is pronounced by all the people with the priest.

—The *epiclesis*, in which, by means of particular invocations, the Church implores the power of the Holy Spirit that the gifts offered by human hands be consecrated, that is, become Christ’s Body and Blood, and that the unblemished sacrificial Victim to be consumed in Communion may be for the salvation of those who will partake of it.

—The *institution narrative and Consecration*, by which,

by means of the words and actions of Christ, that Sacrifice is effected which Christ himself instituted during the Last Supper; when he offered his Body and Blood under the species of bread and wine, gave them to the Apostles to eat and drink, and leaving with the latter the command to perpetuate this same mystery.

—The *anamnesis*, by which the Church, fulfilling the command that she received from Christ the Lord through the apostles, celebrates the memorial of Christ, recalling especially his blessed Passion, glorious Resurrection and Ascension into heaven.

—The *oblation*, by which, in this very memorial, the Church, in particular that gathered here and now, offers the unblemished sacrificial Victim in the Holy Spirit to the Father.

The Church’s intention, indeed, is that the faithful not only offer this unblemished sacrificial Victim but also learn to offer their very selves, and so day by day to be brought, through the mediation of Christ, into unity with God and with each other, so that God may at last be all in all.

—The *intercessions*, by which expression is given to the fact that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church, of both heaven and of earth, and that the oblation is made for her and for all her members, living and dead, who are called to participate in the redemption and salvation purchased by the Body and Blood of Christ.

—The concluding *Doxology*, by which the glorification of God is expressed and which is affirmed and concluded by the people’s acclamation, Amen” (GIRM, 79; emphases added).



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God wants people to know, praise him in their own language, pope says

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Since the Gospel message touches every aspect of a person’s life, it must be proclaimed in a way people can understand, Pope Francis said.

At his weekly general audience Oct. 25, the pope looked at the lives of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, two brothers from ninth-century Greece who became missionaries in central Europe. St. John Paul II named them co-patrons of Europe and wrote the encyclical “Slavorum Apostoli” (“The Apostles of the Slavs”) about them, affirming Eastern Europe’s Christian culture.

The region included various peoples and cultures, and “their prince asked for a teacher to explain the Christian faith in their language,” which lacked an alphabet, the pope said.

The saints’ first task, therefore, was “to study the culture of those peoples in depth” since faith should always be inculturated and culture be evangelized.



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pope Francis kisses a child as he rides in the popemobile around St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience Oct. 25, 2023.

St. Cyril invented the Glagolitic alphabet so he could translate the Bible and liturgical texts into their language and, soon, the pope said, “people felt that the Christian faith was no longer ‘foreign’” because it was inculturated and “became their faith, spoken in their mother tongue.”

“Just think: two Greek monks giving an alphabet to the Slavs. It is this openness of heart that rooted the Gospel among them. These two were not afraid, they were courageous,” the pope said.

However, he said, “some opposition emerged on the part of some Latins, who saw themselves deprived of their monopoly on preaching to the Slavs. That is the battle inside the church; it’s always like this, isn’t it?”

“Their objection was religious, but only in appearance: God can be praised, they said, only in the three languages written on the cross: Hebrew, Greek and Latin,” the pope said, underlining that “they were closed-minded to defend their own autonomy.”

But, he said, St. Cyril insisted that “God wants every people to praise him in their own language” and, with his

brother St. Methodius, they appealed to the pope who approved their liturgical texts in the Slavic language. Despite St. Cyril’s death and his brother’s imprisonment, “the Word of God was not shackled and (it) spread throughout those peoples.”

Skipping large portions of his prepared text, Pope Francis briefly summed up the three important characteristics of the two saints: unity, inculturation and freedom.

There was unity among “the Greeks, the pope, the Slavs,” he said. “At that time, there was an undivided Christianity in Europe, which collaborated in order to evangelize.”

With inculturation, “evangelization and culture are closely connected” because the Gospel cannot be preached “in the abstract, distilled,” he said.

Proclaiming the Gospel requires freedom, the pope said, “but freedom needs courage. A person is free the more courageous they are and do not let themselves be chained to the many things that take away their freedom.”

Pope Francis invited everyone to pray “that we may be instruments of ‘freedom in charity’ for others, to be creative, constant and humble with prayer and with serving others.”

PART-TIME/ JOB SHARE: ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYST SERVING THE LOCAL CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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Popular catacomb tours at New York cathedral offer lessons in city’s Catholic history

Beth Griffin
OSV News

“Catacombs by Candlelight” perhaps conjures images of a subterranean tour in Rome led by a guide wearing a headlamp. In New York, it’s the name of a revenue-generating history lesson told while exploring the cemetery and burial vaults of one of the city’s oldest Catholic churches. At the Basilica of St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral, the tour’s tone is respectful and the candles are battery-operated LED models.

Frank Alfieri, the basilica’s director of cemetery and columbaria, said the tours were established in 2017 to communicate and monetize the historical significance of the property, which has been an active mainstay of the lower Manhattan area for more than 200 years.

The parish is bordered by Mulberry, Prince and Mott Streets in a gentrified area dubbed Nolita (for “North of Little Italy”). The land on which it stands was originally a farm purchased in 1801 for use as a cemetery by St. Peter’s Church, the city’s first Catholic parish, still located about one mile southwest on Barclay Street. When it opened in 1815, St. Patrick’s served as New York’s first cathedral until the new St. Patrick’s Cathedral on Fifth Avenue was dedicated in 1879. In 2010, the Old Cathedral was named a basilica.

The Catacombs by Candlelight tours are operated by Thomas Wilkinson, principal of Tommy’s Tours. He and his 12 employees conduct eight 80-minute tours five days a week for groups as large as 40. On the other days, they accommodate special group requests from historians and parish, school and fraternal organizations.

Wilkinson said approximately half of the participants are foreign visitors, and its American participants include both New Yorkers and out-of-towners.

“This church is still pretty much unknown by many native New Yorkers, but the tours scaled up very quickly, and this is now a popular destination on par with other larger attractions in the city,” he said.

On a recent Sunday afternoon, guide Leo Goodman unlocked a door in a brick wall to usher his group into the cemetery. He pointed out the oldest legible headstone, dating from 1803.

He stopped at the site of the original grave of Haitian-born sainthood candidate Pierre Toussaint, who came to New York as an enslaved man. Toussaint became a successful hairdresser and devoted himself to helping the poor and sick. He was a 66-year parishioner of St. Peter’s Church and a donor to the building fund for Old St. Patrick’s.

Toussaint’s body was moved to the more familiar St. Patrick’s Cathedral on Fifth Avenue in 1989 when the cause for his canonization was advanced. He was declared venerable in 1996.

Goodman backed up to a reinforced wall of the cemetery that was built in 1834 to protect the church and the graveyard from destruction by nativist Protestant gangs. Amid another wave of anti-Catholic riots in 1844, while a torchlight parade prepared to march on the church, then-Bishop John J. Hughes marshaled thousands of Irish immigrants to defend the cathedral. He stationed sharpshooters on the wall and warned the New York mayor of fiery consequences if Catholics were harmed. The vio-

lence was averted, and Bishop Hughes’ nickname “Dagger John” was secured.

Before descending to the catacombs, tourists got a chance to see the three wooly sheep who are seasonally employed to control the grass in the cemetery and, not coincidentally, attract the attention of passersby.

The catacombs were developed before the church was built above them, and Wilkinson surmised they may have generated the funds needed to begin the construction. They consist of 37 hermetically sealed family and group vaults arrayed along three 120-foot corridors. Most of the vaults have marble facades and bear the now-unfamiliar names of prominent 19th-century New York Catholics of Irish, German, French and Spanish heritage.

Wilkerson said the vaults’ walls are 30 inches thick and each may contain the mortal remains of as many as 15 people. Complete records are not available, and vaults have not been disturbed to confirm specific occupancy. A single ornate mausoleum was built for Gen. Thomas Eckert, a confidant of Abraham Lincoln and later an executive at Western Union. Eckert’s crypt is open to view and features imported ceiling tiles and original Edison light fixtures.

The catacombs were included in a restoration of the church that was completed in 2015. At that time, lighting, air circulation and walkways were improved. Niches for inurnment of cremated remains were added adjacent to the vaults. Similar aboveground niches were installed in the cemetery. Alfieri said some 500 of the 600 new niches have been sold.

Tours end in the soaring body of the church, where the influence of successive generations of Irish, Italian, Chinese and Hispanic immigrants is seen in art work and devotional details.

Tickets range from \$30-37. According to Alfieri, the tours generate more than



OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

Members of a tour group explore the catacombs of the Basilica of St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral in New York City Oct. 15, 2023. Tours of the historic basilica, its catacombs and cemetery have proven to be popular with New Yorkers and out-of-towners.

\$25,000 a month for the programs and upkeep of the parish. They also are a form of evangelization.

“The tours have a historical and landmark perspective and we’re not reciting Scripture, but on a peripheral and very subliminal level, there is evangelization,” Alfieri said. “Any time you can get somebody into a church, there is a possibility you can evangelize, even nonverbally. A church gives you a small glimpse of heaven.”



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U.S. politics

(Continued from page 7)

ly like that in one of the presidential debates? Neither can I. And doesn't that shed light on our present problem?

How about a platform? Declaring that a king's "principal concern" should be "the means by which the multitude subject to him may live well," Aquinas says this has three elements: first, that people be "established in the unity of peace"; second, that they are "directed to acting well"; and third, that they have "a sufficient supply of the things required for proper living." In other words: peace at home and abroad, laws that serve the common good,

and a stable, prosperous economy operating to the benefit of all.

What should a king get for doing a good job? St. Thomas notes that honor and glory are commonly considered suitable rewards for someone who does well in the top job. But not so fast, he adds: "The desire for human glory takes away the greatness of soul, which is crucial to greatness in a king." True, a king should want glory rather than money or pleasure. But, granting that, "it is the mark of a virtuous and brave soul to despise glory as he despises life."

"Therefore," Aquinas writes, "since worldly honor and human glory are not sufficient reward for royal cares ... it

is proper that a king look to God for his reward." This makes perfect sense, he points out, when you consider that, as Scripture says, "the king is the minister of God in governing the people."

I wouldn't expect to hear any of this on MSNBC and Fox. But I can't help hoping such thinking, appropriately updated, could somehow find its way into the political mainstream during an ugly election year. Would any of our present political leaders like to give it a try?

Russell Shaw, a veteran journalist and writer, is the author of more than 20 books, including three novels. His latest book is "Revitalizing Catholicism in America: Nine Tasks for Every Catholic." (OSV)

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■ October bulletin: posted Sunday, Oct. 1; due Tuesday, Nov. 7.

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■ Tuesday, Nov. 14, 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Nov. 15, 1:30-4 p.m., Catholic Charities, Training Room, Covington

■ Tuesday, Nov. 28, 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Nov. 28, 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, December 5, 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, December 5, 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

Note: If your **Training Tab** is missing or you cannot access your account, contact your parish, school or institution.

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‘God end this madness now!’ Christians appeal as Gaza church campus is left in ruins



OSV News photo/Mohammed Al-Masri, Reuters
Debris surrounds St. Porphyrios Greek Orthodox Church in Gaza Oct. 20, 2023, after an explosion went off the night before. Several hundred people had been sheltering at the church complex, many of them sleeping, at the time of the explosion. The Hamas Ministry of Interior in Gaza blamed the explosion on an Israeli airstrike but responsibility for it had not yet been independently verified.

Judith Sudilovsky
OSV News

An explosion at the St. Porphyrios Greek Orthodox Church campus in Gaza has left the administration building in ruins, and at least 17 people dead, though numbers have not yet been officially confirmed.

Several hundred people had been sheltering at the church complex, many of them sleeping, when the explosion went off the night of Oct. 19. The Hamas Ministry of Interior in Gaza blamed the explosion on an Israeli airstrike but responsibility for the explosion has not yet been independently verified.

On his Facebook page, Latin Patriarchate CEO Sami El-Yousef wrote Oct. 20 that at the time of his writing 10 people had been reported dead and 20 missing, with many more injured. “Our prayers are with our people in Gaza,” he wrote. “Please God end this madness now!”

The Latin Patriarchate said on its Facebook page that it “declares solidarity and stands” with its sister Orthodox Church “in these difficult moments.”

An AP report quoted Mohammed Abu Selmia, director general of Shifa Hospital, as saying that dozens had been injured in the blast but a precise death toll was not yet available because bodies were still under the rubble.

In an Oct. 19 statement, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem expressed its “strongest condemnation” of what it said was an Israeli attack on the church property.

“The Patriarchate emphasizes that targeting churches and their institutions, along with the shelters they provide to protect innocent citizens, especially children and women who have lost their homes due to Israeli airstrikes on residential areas over the past thirteen days constitutes a war crime that cannot be ignored,” said the statement.

Israeli Defense Forces said in an Oct. 20 statement that on Oct. 19 “IDF fighter jets targeted the command and control center belonging to a Hamas terrorist, involved in the launching of rockets and mortars toward Israel. The command and control center was used to carry out attacks against Israel, and contained infrastructure belonging to the Hamas terrorist organization.” IDF said that as a result of the IDF strike, “a wall of a church in the area of the center was damaged,” that they were “aware of reports of casualties,” review the incident and that the IDF “can unequivocally state that the Church was not the target of the strike.”

The explosion came just days after an explosion at the Anglican al-Ahli Arab hospital left hundreds dead with Hamas and Israel trading charges of blame. Following an analysis of the site and other intelligence, Israel determined the explosion was caused by a failed Palestinian Islamic Jihad missile launching from the cemetery behind the hospital complex.

There has been no immediate Israeli response to the explosion at the Greek Orthodox church, but in an earlier release the Israeli Air Force said that since Hamas’ initial attack on Israel Oct. 7, killing 1,400, Hamas has “continuously used civilians in the Gaza Strip as human shields, regularly launched barrages of rockets and used civilian compounds for military purposes.”

“These rocket launches are carried out from areas adjacent to civilian buildings and compounds such as hospitals, U.N. schools, mosques, restaurants, diplomatic buildings, and hotels,” the release said.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate statement said it remained committed, along with the other churches, to “fulfilling its religious and moral duty in providing assistance, support and refuge to those in need.” It said it would not heed Israel’s warnings to leave the area as Israel continues to carry out airstrikes against Hamas targets.

Eleven Catholic religious have chosen to stay in Gaza to be with the Christians in Holy Family Latin Parish in Gaza City. The religious include two priests from the Incarnate Word congregation, three Incarnate Word sisters from Argentina and Peru, three Missionaries of Charities sisters from India, Rwanda and the Philippines who care for severely disabled children, and three Rosary Sisters from Egypt and Jordan.



Proclaiming Christ

The Office of Catechesis and Evangelization welcomed Jared Dees, Oct. 14, as he spoke to catechists, religion teachers, and other diocesan leaders on how “To Heal, Proclaim, and Teach” not only students but all people who come into their lives searching for a deeper understanding of and relationship with Jesus Christ. In the Gospel, Jesus himself would either heal, proclaim or teach depending on the needs of his audience.

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Listen to, trust the lay faithful, pope tells synod members

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

Pope Francis told members of the synod on synodality that they should respect and honor the faith of all baptized Catholics, including the women, trusting “the holy, faithful people of God” who continue to believe even when their pastors act like dictators.

"I like to think of the church as the simple and humble people who walk in the presence of the Lord — the faithful people of God," he told participants at the assembly of the Synod of Bishops Oct. 25.

In a rare intervention as the assembly was nearing its conclusion, Pope Francis told members to trust the fidelity of the people they listened to in preparation for the synod over the past two years.

“One of the characteristics of this faithful people is its infallibility — yes, it is infallible in ‘credendo,’” in belief, as the Second Vatican Council taught, he said.

"I explain it this way: 'When you want to know 'what' Holy Mother Church believes, go to the magisterium, because it is in charge of teaching it to you, but when you want to know 'how' the Church believes, go to the faithful people,'" the pope said.

To illustrate his point, Pope Francis shared the “story or legend” of the fifth-century Council of Ephesus when, the story goes, crowds lined the streets shouting to the bishops “Mother of God,” demanding that they declare as dogma “that truth which they already possessed as the people of God.”

“Some say that they had sticks in their hands and showed them to the bishops,” the pope added. “I do not know if it is history or legend, but the image is valid.”

“The faithful people, the holy faithful people of God” have a soul, a conscience and a way of seeing reality, he said.

All of the cardinals and bishops at the synod, he said, come from that people and have received the faith from them — usually from their mothers and grandmothers.

“And here I would like to emphasize that, among God’s holy and faithful people, faith is transmitted in dialect, and generally in a feminine dialect,” he said.

“This is not only because the Church is mother and it is precisely women who best reflect her,” he said, but also because “it is women who know how to hope, know how to discover the resources of the church and of the faithful people, who take risks beyond the limit, perhaps with fear but courageously.”

It was the women disciples, after all, who at dawn

“approach a tomb with the intuition — not yet hope — that there may be some life,” he said.

“When ministers overstep in their service and mistreat the people of God, they disfigure the face of the church with chauvanistic and dictatorial attitudes,” the pope said.

He reminded synod members of a speech at the assembly by Sister Liliana Franco Echeverri, a member of the Company of Mary and president of the Confederation of Latin American and Caribbean Religious, who spoke about the ongoing service, commitment and fidelity of Catholic women despite often facing exclusion, rejection and mistreatment.

“Clericalism is a whip, it is a scourge, it is a form of worldliness that defiles and damages the face of the Lord’s bride,” the church, the pope said. “It enslaves God’s holy and faithful people.”

Pope Francis described as “a scandal” the scene of young priests going in to ecclesiastical tailor shops in Rome “trying on cassocks and hats or albs with lace.”

Nevertheless, he said, "the people of God, the holy faithful people of God, go forward with patience and humility enduring the scorn, mistreatment and marginalization on the part of institutionalized clericalism."

Synod assembly calls everyone to 'concretely participate' in synodality

Justin McLellan
Catholic News Service

The Catholic Church must continue discerning its future by listening to everyone, starting with the poorest and excluded, after the assembly of the Synod of Bishops closes its first session, participants said in a letter addressed to the “People of God.”

The two-and-a-half-page letter published Oct. 25 recounted the spirit and activities of the assembly's first session, held at the Vatican Oct. 4-29, and looked ahead to the assembly's second session, expressing hope that the months leading up to October 2024 "will allow everyone to concretely participate in the dynamism of missionary communion indicated by the word 'synod.'"

“This is not about ideology, but about an experience rooted in the apostolic tradition,” the synod assembly wrote.

While the letter does not raise specific topics or questions to be addressed in the assembly's next session — a synthesis report reflecting the work of the first session and next steps is expected to be published Oct. 28 — it did say that to “progress in its discernment, the church absolutely needs to listen to everyone, starting with the poorest.”

"It means listening to those who have been denied the right to speak in society or who feel excluded, even by the Church," the letter said, specifying the need to listen to victims of racism, particularly Indigenous populations. "Above all, the Church of our time has the duty to listen, in a spirit of conversion, to those who have been victims of abuse committed by members of the ecclesial body and to commit herself concretely and structurally to ensuring that this does not happen again."



It also specified that the church must gather more experiences and testimonies from priests, bishops and consecrated persons, while being “attentive to all those who do not share her faith but are seeking the truth.”

The drafting of the letter was approved by the synod assembly and was discussed both during small group working sessions and among the entire assembly Oct. 23, the synod general secretariat said.



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Participants in the assembly of the Synod of Bishops meeting in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican Oct. 25, 2023.



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National/World

Synod assembly to issue ‘Letter to the People of God’

VATICAN CITY — Members of the Synod of Bishops will issue a “Letter to the People of God” at the close of the first session of the synod assembly, which ends Oct. 29, the Vatican said. The letter, the drafting of which was approved by the synod assembly, will be discussed both during small group working sessions and among the entire assembly Oct. 23 after a Mass for synod participants in St. Peter’s Basilica, the synod general secretariat announced in a statement Oct. 19. It added that additional time will be made for synod participants to discuss the methodology and steps for the next phase of the synodal process to take place between the first session’s close Oct. 29 and the second session scheduled to take place at the Vatican in October 2024.

Wanda Póltawska, St. John Paul II’s adviser, dies at 101

KRAKOW, Poland — She dedicated her life and career to fight for marriages and unborn children — a battle she would pursue with and for Karol Wojtyla. He signed letters to her as “Brother.” She would talk to him daily on the phone when he became Pope John Paul II and was at his deathbed. Wanda Póltawska, Polish psychiatrist, wife and mother of four, survivor of Ravensbrück Nazi concentration camp and St. John Paul II’s friend and soulmate, died at 101 in Krakow Oct. 24. Originally from Lublin in eastern Poland, she was a member of the Polish underground that fought the Nazis during World War II. Caught by the Germans, she was take the Ravensbrück concentration camp, where she would become a subject of the Nazis’ medical experiments. Rescued barely alive from the camp, she vowed to go into medicine. She married a Polish philosopher, Andrzej Póltawski, in 1947 and graduated with a medical degree in 1951. She and then-Father Wojtyla, a parish priest, met in 1953. Nine years later, when she was the mother of four young girls, she was diagnosed with colon cancer. Now a bishop, Wojtyla wrote to Padre Pio on her behalf, beseeching

his prayers for Póltawska. On the day of the planned operation, Nov. 22, shocked doctors informed her there was nothing to operate on.

Cross stolen from Arizona church remains missing

BISBEE, Ariz. — A church community in rural Arizona is praying for answers more than a week after someone stole a crucifix from the altar at St. Patrick’s Church in Bisbee. The crucifix rested above the tabernacle and was present the morning of Oct. 16 and well into Oct. 17 following the 7:30 a.m. Mass. Soon after that church leaders say it disappeared. The crucifix is brass plated and measures 24 by 18 inches. It’s believed to have been in the parish for nearly 40 years. Father Greg Adolf, the canonical pastor, said the crucifix is more than a symbol in the church. “The crucifix on the main altar has been the centerpiece of the neo-Gothic altar and has witnessed every important event in the life of its dedicated parishioners for over a century,” he said. “The theft of this beautiful crucifix has touched everyone in the community, not just the parishioners.” The church is working closely with the Bisbee Police Department to ensure the crucifix is returned. The parish has fielded numerous calls from parishioners who are praying for swift resolution. Pleas on the parish social media accounts have been shared hundreds of times. The historic church, built in 1917, was one of the first parishes in the Diocese of Tucson.

Diocese of Stockton warns of fake clergy ‘selling’ sacraments

STOCKTON, Calif. — The Diocese of Stockton has issued a warning about impostors posing as Catholic clergy and charging Spanish-speaking faithful “exorbitant fees” for celebrating the sacraments. In an Oct. 20 media advisory, the diocese alerted parishioners in the Modesto area to the scammers, who were reported to have conducted “fraudulent activities related to the sacraments and sacramentals.” The individuals have

falsely assumed the identities of two actual clerics from the Archdiocese of Toluca, Mexico — Archbishop Raúl Gómez González and Father José Adán González Estrada — and have conducted “unauthorized celebrations” of baptism, confirmation and first Communion, as well as house blessings, said the advisory. The impostors also have demanded that individuals present birth certificates for the alleged sacraments, raising concerns about human trafficking and identity theft. Diocesan communications director Erin Haight told OSV News Oct. 24 that an apparent “ring of two or three people” are working together in coordinating the sham sacraments, which “are not valid.” The diocese is urging victims to contact the Modesto Police Department.

Kissinger underscores AI growth as a pressing challenge

NEW YORK — In a time of international tensions and domestic divisions, it is crucial for leaders to bridge the gap between political strategy and practical tactics, said centenarian statesman Henry A. Kissinger, who headlined the 78th dinner of the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Oct. 19. The current risks are so great that “we cannot afford a divided nation in a world in which nuclear power is matched by the growth of artificial intelligence, which removes all obstacles to accuracy and distance,” the former U.S. secretary of state and Nobel Peace Prize laureate said. The dinner honors the memory of the former four-term governor of New York, who was the first Catholic nominated by a major political party to run for president of the United States. Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York returned briefly from the Synod on Synodality in Rome to host the formal event at the Park Avenue Armory. The dinner, known for its good-natured roasting of politicians and other leaders, raised \$7 million, a new record for a year in which presidential nominees are not the headliners. Proceeds from the \$5,000-a-plate event benefit Catholic organizations that serve New York’s most vulnerable children, while advancing education, health services and family resources.

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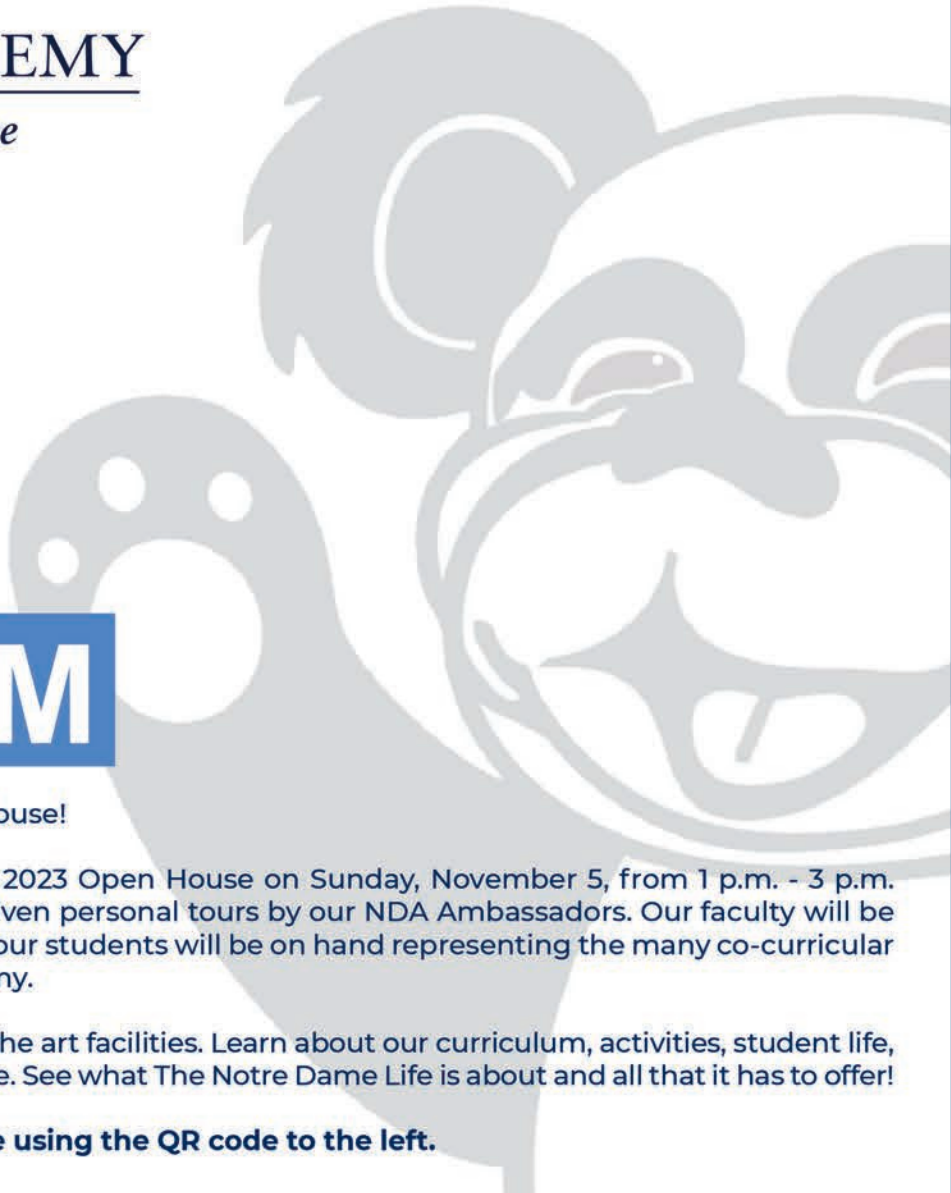
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