The 2023 Seminary Ball opened on a pleasant autumn evening, Oct. 27, with people from around the diocese and beyond gathering to the Northern Kentucky Convention Center, Covington, to support the Diocese of Covington’s seminarians and their education. Hosted by the diocesan Office of Stewardship and Mission Services, the Seminary Ball is a major fundraiser for the Seminarian Education Fund—which assists in funding seminarian’s schooling at their respective seminaries.

The night began with the music of a string quartet, hors d’oeuvres offered alongside drinks during the opening cocktail hour—a first for this year’s ball, and a first among several changes made to this year’s program. Alongside dinner served in the convention center’s ballroom, the evening’s program began with the showing of a new video promoting vocations—one in a different format than years past. Forgoing the usual format of having seminarians sing in years past, an “ask a seminarian” portion was added to the evening, with Bishop John Iffert posing ball attendee’s questions to the seminarians. Attendees of the Seminary Ball fill the tables in the Northern Kentucky Convention Center ballroom.

Seminar Justin Schwarz, a student at St. Vincent Seminary, was the seminarian speaker at this year’s ball. Attendees of the Seminary Ball fill the tables in the Northern Kentucky Convention Center ballroom.
SVdP Northern Kentucky and SVdP Cincinnati partner to provide coats to community

**Staff Report**

St. Vincent de Paul – Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky are partnering to help local adults and children stay warm this winter by providing winter coats for the 23rd annual coat drive. Distributions are planned for early December for those in need of a coat and details can be found below. The program is supported by WLWT, Warm 98.5, Gold Star, Lemasters Consulting, and Rhinegeist.

“The coat drive is such an important initiative when it comes to supporting our neighbors in need,” said Karen Zengel, executive director of St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky. “Being able to stay warm is a necessity, and so many families struggle to do that throughout the winter for a variety of reasons. We are fortunate to have such a generous community on both sides of the river as this program would not exist without the help of others. In 2022, the coat drive distributed more than 1,770 coats and many vouchers for coats were returned to our thrift store locations. Due to rising living costs, we only expect the need to rise again this year.”

There are several ways to get involved in this year’s coat drive:

- Businesses, individuals, and other groups located in Northern Kentucky are invited to support St. Vincent de Paul’s coat drive by hosting drives of their own. If you would like to donate items without hosting a drive, please visit one of SVdPNKY’s four thrift store locations in Cold Spring, Erlanger, Falmouth, and Florence.

Coat distribution events in Northern Kentucky will take place on Saturday, December 2 at Cristo Rey in Florence, KY and John G. Carlisle Elementary in Covington, KY from 9 a.m. – noon as well as on Saturday, December 9 at Newport Intermediate School in Newport, KY and also Life Learning Center in Covington, KY from 9 a.m. – noon.

Gold Star will also be collecting financial donations to help both organizations buy new coats for this year’s drive. As a special thank you to donors, Gold Star will be offering a special bounce back offer for $5 off any $25 purchase.

For a comprehensive list of locations to donate a coat or receive a coat from St. Vincent de Paul – Cincinnati or Northern Kentucky, visit SVdPcincinnati.org/coats.

**Inviting young men to the priesthood**

(Continued from page 1)

dinner. Seminary Ball attendees wrote questions for the seminarians on note cards — which were handed to Bishop Iffert to share with the seminarians, who were seated in front of the ballroom stage.

Afterwards, Bishop Iffert shared some remarks of his own for the evening, where he began on commenting on one specific answer given by a seminarian during the previous segment. When posed a question asking what the one thing everyone in the room should know, first year seminarian William Fuller answered simply — that Jesus loves them.

“I almost wanted to stop everything right after we heard that answer,” said Bishop Iffert. “Jesus loves you and holds you in mind, and offered himself for you on the cross. All for the love of you. That’s one of my favorite aspects of the Eucharistic prayer.”

Recalling his first Christmas as bishop of Covington, Bishop Iffert recalls how he mentioned that “if you want to know the reason for Christmas, if you want to know the reason for the cross… pay attention to those two words in the Eucharistic Prayer ‘for you.’ This is the gift that God gives us.”

In his speech, Bishop Iffert also invited attendees to be “intentional” about inviting young men to consider a vocation to the priesthood. "Every one of these men, and I will add my witness to it, first heard the call of the priesthood in their families, in their schools, in their parishes... in some relationship, God used that to call every one of these six men, “the diocesan seminarians,” to consider life as a priest.”

"Be intentional about working with God to invite young people to give their lives generously to the one who is the Lord, to the one who is the Church. That’s my special call tonight,” said Bishop Iffert.

Additionally, Gold Star will host several coat drive “pop-ups” where guests can bring new or gently used coats to participating Gold Star locations on a designated day.

For a comprehensive list of locations to donate a coat or receive a coat from St. Vincent de Paul – Cincinnati or Northern Kentucky, visit SVdPcincinnati.org/coats.
NCYC chaperones meet in preparation for upcoming November conference

More than 25,000 youth from across the United States will be gathering for the 2023 National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana next month, Nov. 16–19. Of these attendees, will be 250 individuals from the Diocese of Covington, including 60 adult chaperones who will be accompanying the youth pilgrims. These chaperones met Oct. 26 in the Bishop Howard Memorial Hall in Covington Curia building to discuss logistics and planning for the upcoming event. “You are witnesses to our youth by sharing the love of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Faith,” wrote Isaak Isaak, co-director of the diocesan Office of Catechesis and Evangelization to the NCYC chaperones, “I pray that all will be inspired by the Holy Spirit and return to their parishes and schools ‘Fully Alive in Christ!’”

“I am confident the conference will help our youth to focus on growing in their faith and living as faith-filled disciples of Jesus Christ,” Bishop Iffert wrote to Catholic youth leaders across the diocese in a September letter.

Eucharistic sustenance for Parish Kitchen volunteers

Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys celebrated Mass, Oct. 6, for the volunteers at Parish Kitchen. The Mass was held at St. Augustine, Covington. Bishop Foys has been a weekly volunteer at Parish Kitchen since he retired in 2021. “We are thankful to Bishop Foys for his continued support,” said Vicky Bauerle, institutional advancement manager at Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington.

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.)
Synod members asked, ‘What would Jesus do?’ panel says

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — The monthlong experience of synodality with cardinals, bishops, religious and laypeople from all over the world created new and wider “spaces” for everyone to feel welcome, to listen and discern God’s will together, several synod members said at the conclusion of the synod assembly’s first session.

This new way of experiencing the church as “outgoing” and “creating spaces for everyone” has come about “because we are trying to live the Gospel,” Cardinal Mario Grech, synod secretary-general, said at a Vatican news conference Oct. 28.

“This is the attitude, the approach of Jesus: to create spaces for everybody and nobody can feel excluded, not accepted in his house,” he said.

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, relator general of the assembly, said at the news conference that the “conversation spaces for everybody” and “creating spaces for everyone” has come about “because we are trying to live the Gospel,” Cardinal Mario Grech, synod secretary-general, said at a Vatican news conference Oct. 28.

Cardinal Grech said a synod member told him watching people let go of their fear, difficulty or reluctance to communicate was like seeing ice “melt.” Barriers came down because of each member’s “generosity” in creating the “space” needed to be open and willing to listen to the other.

While the first session is over, ending with a 41-page synthesis report, he said, “the synod did not end.”

Each paragraph of the document was approved with the necessary two-thirds vote, but in many places it also “confirms details,” Father Giacomo Costa, a consultant to the synod secretariat, said, the synodal approach showed it is possible to talk to each other, listen to each other, to be not in agreement and then to come together, embrace each other and journey together; therefore, it is a little seed of hope.”

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There was “extraordinary harmony” in the way the members worked together, he said. “We’re a family, a unique family, and we have to respect everyone’s pace.”

“Can’t rush the pace or go backward. We walk together, this is the concept of synodality,” he said, where the “bigger voice” does not claim victory “over the other.”

Father Costa said, “I expect that not all the issues will even be resolved next year. But this synod gave us a new way to face them.”

Cardinal Hollerich said it will be easier to speak about issues with a more synodal church versus “the church as it was structured in the past.”

That does not mean a “synodal church will just embrace everything,” he said. But it means when people have a difference of opinion, no one takes out a “knife” and starts a fight.

Having “this freedom and this openness will change the church. And I am sure the church will find answers, but perhaps not the exact answer this group or this group wants to have but answers which most people could feel well and listen to,” Cardinal Hollerich said.

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, told Catholic News Service, synod members had been “looking for how the church can learn to bring Jesus Christ better to our unjust, war-filled and imperiled world: by being more open, more welcoming, closer to those who suffer, accompanying those in need.”

The most important lesson “we have learned about being followers of Jesus, and therefore missionaries of justice, peace, and care of our common home, is to listen, and to keep on listening, and then to listen until it hurts, and finally to listen all over again,” he said in a written statement Oct. 28.

Bishop Georg Bätzing of Limburg and president of the German bishops’ conference, said at a news conference in Rome Oct. 20 that the synod “placed the questions of God’s people on the table.”

“The synod was very honest, and I’m grateful for that and am going home satisfied,” he said, according to DPA, that these are the issues.

But he said the fear of change was also present at the synod and he called for the courage “to identify evident questions and to bring to them a clarity that changes the church for the sake of the people” when it next year, DPA reported.

The Preface as thanksgiving

Father Luke Spannagel
USCCB

For me as a priest, the Preface is one of my favorite parts of the Mass, especially when I take time to really pray through the phrases. The Preface is one of the variable parts of the Mass, where there are many options that can change from week to week. Our current Missal has about 50 regularly used Prefaces grouped together, including ones for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Sundays of Ordinary Time, Feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, Funerals, and some “Common” Prefaces that can be used on days where another specific Preface isn’t called for. In addition to these, there are many more Prefaces in the Missal, including some specially designed for certain Eucharistic Prayers and those that are used on specific celebrations such as Christ the King or the Most Holy Trinity. There are even some special Prefaces for civic holidays, such as Thanksgiving or the Fourth of July in the United States. Each of these Prefaces will highlight special truths of a particular celebration or season of the year.

Following the response of the people in the Preface dialogue, “It is right and just,” I enjoy how the priest begins praying the Preface with, “It is truly right and just.” We are encouraging each other in giving thanks. These words of the priest communicate, “Yes! Let us continue giving thanks—it is right and just!” I often will pray those words with emphasis, as we transition to the next part of the Preface that will highlight special truths for us.

For example, Preface I of Advent says, “For he assumed at his first coming the lowliness of human flesh, and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago, and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, that, when he comes again in glory and majesty and all is at last made manifest, we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which now we dare to hope.”

As another example, in Preface I of the Most Holy Eucharist, we hear, “For at the Last Supper with his Apostles, establishing for the ages to come the saving memorial of the Cross, he offered himself to you as the unblemished Lamb, the acceptable gift of perfect praise. Nourishing your faithful by this sacred mystery, you make them holy, so that the human race, bounded by one world, may be enlightened by one faith and united by one bond of charity. And so, we approach the table of this wondrous Sacrament, so that, bathed in the sweetness of your grace, we may pass over to the heavenly realities here foreshadowed.”

No doubt, those are prayers packed with great truths! If we aren’t attentive to this part of the Mass, we could really miss out on some great highlights that help ready our hearts for the ultimate prayer of thanksgiving—the Holy Eucharist—the perfect sacrifice of Jesus offered to the Father. If you haven’t noticed the Preface in a while, I give you a challenge for the next time you are at Mass: see if you can notice any of the main themes of the Preface. It is a great summary of the celebration of the day and a fitting preparation for the rest of the Eucharistic Prayer to come!
As some of you probably know, I’ve been in Rome for the past three weeks participating as a delegate at the Synod on Synodality. You might also have heard that in order to ensure the confidentiality of the proceedings, Pope Francis has asked all participants to refrain from disclosing what has been discussed. But I thought you might find it interesting to know what a typical day at the synod is like and what the overall atmosphere is.

I am residing, along with most of the other American delegates, in the North American College, situated on the Janiculum Hill, about a fifteen-minute walk from St. Peter’s. We come and go in a quiet little chapel at 7 a.m., and then, after a quick breakfast, we make our way by bus to the Paul VI audience hall, where the synod is taking place. You have undoubtedly seen photos or videos of this venue, for it is where general audiences with the pope are held. The synodical day begins with prayer — in either Italian, Spanish, English, or French — and proceeds with a round table on a slightly elevated platform at the front of the room. The leadership of the synod — including the pope — are seated. The atmosphere is.

The moment was like the scene where the main character experiences a revelation in every Hollywood movie, except it was somewhat more profound and real-life. I knelt in a pew at the back of the church. The nuns kept chanting. And I began to pray.

The Basilica of St. Martin of Tours was once one of the greatest monuments in the Christian world. Today, all that remains of the ancient church is one tower. The current church was constructed after the Revolution. The building hadn’t just fallen into despair; Revolutionaries used the church as a club, then simply ripped it stone from stone. Then, to make sure it couldn’t be rebuilt, they sold the stones.

And there’s a lesson in that. Jesus always has a way. Often that way is through his saints, who pursue us. The saints invite us to come to them, not for their own glory, but to know Christ.

The Synod on Synodality continues. Following the saints or followed by the saints? We like to think we follow the saints, but sometimes we are followed by the saints.

I rose and approached the sanctuary. Even as the sun for itself. Devotion to a saint. And through the tomb bear eloquent testimony to the power of his intercession.

We like to think we follow the saints, but sometimes the saints follow us.

I stood some distance from the pew where I sat, as I thought about my own church, the one I grew up in, St. Peter’s in Rome. I continued my exploration.

The dimly lit crypt flickered in the candlelight. Ex-votos, memorials of prayers answered and favors received, adorned the sandstone walls. The smell of beeswax and the cold damp of the subterranean refuge were intoxicatingly peaceful. Again, I knelt in prayer. I prayed for my family. For my vocation. Probably for help with my French, too.

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**Commentary**

**Finding peace**

The readings for the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C — are: Malachi 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10; 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9, 13 and Matthew 23:1-12. Have you ever wondered what living in peace would be like? I mean real peace — free of conflict, hurts and anxieties — where there is no war, no strife, no hatred?

My 45th birthday is just a couple weeks away, and to my knowledge there haven’t been real peace among peoples during my life time. If I had to guess, there probably hasn’t been authentic peace since the time that Cain killed his brother Abel. If you turn on any news channel today, you will find reporting on wars around the world and armed conflict where one group of people is seeking the death and destruction of another people.

You will also find unkind and inflammatory words which are just as destructive — maybe not to the physical person, but definitely to the soul.

A quick internet search for “current armed conflicts” will bring lists of countries where there is “war”: Ethiopia, Ukraine, Myanmar, Mexico, Yemen, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Syria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Iraq; where in 2023 the death totals equal 259,199 human persons (that’s almost 60 percent of the residents of NKY in Boone, Campbell and Kenton Counties).

We, of course, know that more armed conflicts have arisen in 2023 — the Holy Land for example. And we cannot be blind to the acts of violence and hatred in our own nation.

What is the cause of all this violence? I would argue that it is fear. Fear disrupts human nature and keeps us from being the authentic image of our Creator: It turns us in on ourselves, and places us in opposition to others. Instead of willing the good of the other (love), we will only the good of ourselves.

What does any of this have to do with the sacred Scriptures for this 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time? The answer comes from the Responsorial Psalm where we pray: “In you, Lord, I have found my peace.”

Peace reigns when fear is destroyed, and fear is destroyed when we live in love — not romanticism, but true and authentic love. We learn from St. John that “God is love.”

Theresa of Calcutta would often say when confronted with situations that would bring most people great discomfort and fear: “I see Jesus in every human being. I say to myself, this is hungry Jesus, I must feed him. This is sick Jesus. This one has leprosy or gangrene; I must wash him and tend to him. I serve because I love Jesus.”

It is in Jesus that we find peace. It is in Jesus that we find hope. It is Jesus that human nature finds its fulfillment and its purpose.

Will conflict ever go away? I doubt it. But can peace reign on earth? Of course it can, when we who claim the name of Christian live for and serve the Lord — it is there that peace is found.

**Better late than never**

I am most excited about the upcoming National Eucharistic Pilgrimage and National Eucharistic Congress. The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage will take place May 17, 2024 through July 16, 2024. Perpetual Pilgrims will accompany the Blessed Sacrament in procession on a 60-day journey covering 6,500 miles via four routes starting from the northern, southern, eastern and western edges of the United States. The processions will converge in Indianapolis, Indiana for the National Eucharistic Congress.

The eastern arm of the procession, the St. Elizabeth Anne Seton Route, will pass through Cincinnati, July 5-7, 2024. All are invited to participate in the accompanying events and give public witness to their love for the Eucharist by following Jesus along our local portion of the pilgrimage. More information is available at https://www.eucharisticpilgrimage.org/st-elizabeth-anne-seton-route.

The 15th National Eucharistic Congress will be held July 17-21, 2024 in Indianapolis, Indiana. It will be the first national Eucharistic congress in 81 years and is expected to draw 80,000 Catholics from across the country. Through Mass, healing, fellowship, and powerful preaching and teaching from an excellent lineup of speakers, participants will gather to pray, receive Eucharist, and learn what we have experienced and share the gift we have received.

The third year ends with Pentecost in 2025 and the Church’s celebration of the Jubilee Year, but the revival movement will be just beginning. As Bishop Andrew Cozzens, chairman of the National Eucharistic Congress, says, “We want to start a fire, not a program.”

In a little while, the year you are, too, but better late than never! Hope to see you at Mass and Adoration, and maybe even in Indianapolis.

Jamie Schroeder is chancellor for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

**Ohioans, vote ‘NO’ on Issue 1**

Somewhere along the way, I looked up the words which have been spoken or written many times around here lately — abort and abortion. My trusty old World Book Dictionary defines them as follows: the former “to give birth before the embryo can live outside the mother’s body because it is still dependent upon her body system to support its own.” The latter a) “birth in (mammalian) species before the embryo has developed enough to live, usually before the first twelve months of pregnancy; miscarriage” and b) “the inducing of premature delivery in order to destroy the fetus.”

On Tuesday, Nov. 7, as a major newspapers stated, “Ohioans will vote on Issue 1, an amendment that would ‘endure’ abortion rights and other reproductive decisions in the state constitution.”

The question arises in many minds, I suspect, “Which state is next?” Who knows?

“Vote NO on Issue 1” signs abound in the Queen City area and “Protect Parents’ Rights” on the other. In an attempt to assist one’s efforts to understand the pros and cons of this so delicate issue, “Create Equal” org/Ohio issued a summary of the main dangers in the issue and a brief q&a Issue 1 15 actual test.

Create Equal’s summary claims that one’s vote actually says “no” to “legalizing painful late-term aborti-

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aborted, according to CreatedEqual.org/Ohio’s interpretation of Issue 1’s actual text.

Recently, as reported locally, the USA Today Network Ohio Bureau asked religious and community leaders from across the state to answer two questions:

1) “What is your religion's position on abortion?”
2) “What advice are you giving (church) members about the November 7 vote?”

The report pointed out that “their responses represent a sampling of the views on this often-divisive topic.” Here is a sampling of key parts of their reviews and replies to those questions:

Pastor Brian Williams, Hope City House of Prayer, a nondenominational church in Columbus, Ohio: Pastor Williams “spearheaded a letter from more than 100 Black faith and community leaders opposing Issue 1. His answer: “Our position as Christians, as faith and community leaders, is that life begins at conception and that life is sacred. Life is a gift from God.”

Michelle Duffey, associate director of communications and outreach with the Catholic Conference of Ohio: “The Catholic Church teaches that every human life is a gift from God and deserves protection and support no matter their circumstances or stage of development. As science affirms that a unique child forms from conception and abortion ends a child's life, Catholics must oppose its legalization. The Catholic Church advocates for expansive structural support for pregnant women and young families and accompanies women in need so that any woman considering an abortion will receive the (alternative) support she deserves.”

True story. Once upon a time, a Catholic teenage senior in a girls’ Catholic high school asked her parents to sit down with her in the living room. She told them she was pregnant, due to the careless mistake of a “one-night stand” with a boyfriend. Without a word, her parents rose, smiled, crossed over to her, engaged in a strong, supportive embrace and offered their full, unlimited support. That being accomplished, she shared her hoped-for plans to stay in school and complete her senior year. She was determined to bear the child and eventually arrange an “open” adoption with the best appropriate married couple after a careful search, sufficient interviews, credential checks, etc. Furthermore, she said that ideally, the selected couple would already have an adopted child who would be an ideal playmate.

Her parents were amazed at their daughter’s presence of mind throughout the whole situation, her dedication and patience all during her pregnancy, her high school’s outstanding love and support all the way, her selection of parents and the success of the final outcome, a beautiful daughter presented to a perfect couple and their adopted daughter two days after her child’s birth. Her grown child eventually became the mother of two, making her a very young grandmother. Life can be so beautiful!

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

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE: Legal and Financial Planning

Thursday, November 9, 2023
6:00-7:00 p.m.
at Crescent Insurance
7430 U.S. Hwy 42 Suite 108, Florence, KY 41042

An Alzheimer’s Association Education Event
Featuring Chad Seiter, Attorney at Law,
Darpel Elder Law

If you or someone you know is affected by Alzheimer’s disease or dementia, the time for legal and financial planning is now. Join us to learn about important legal and financial issues you may face and how to put plans in place.

This event is FREE, but registration is required. Register with this QR code or call 937-610-7011
Attendees receive a voucher for a FREE appetizer at Texas Roadhouse

Vote No on Issue 1
(Continued from page 7)
Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. the Covington-Lexington section of the Equestrian Order of 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.

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 859-341-0332.

St. Barbara, Erlanger, Turkey Shoots. Saturdays Oct. 26, Nov 4 and Nov 12, 12-4 p.m., $2 per gun only; beer, soft drinks and food available. Call (859) 538-2620.


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 Stitham at town.stitham86@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 lives and culture of teenagers and learn practical skills to effectively communicate the unchanging gospel in a constantly changing landscape. Open to youth ministers, DRs, 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 Cathedral Concert is Nov. 12, 3 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. The CCM Brass presents a musical tribute to the late Betty Glover, formerly the head of the brass department — as well as personal friend of the late Dr. Robert Schaffer and trombonist with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. The public is invited with no admission charge. Visit cathedralconcertseries.org for more information.

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 p.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 svdpnk.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://svdpnk.org/new-beginnings/ or call (859) 989-1008, ext. 1989. The next session will be held on consecutive Thursdays, Oct. 12 – Dec. 7, 7 – 8:30 p.m. Holy Trinity Elementary School, Bellevue. DCC Children’s Home Flas Market. St. Mitchell, year-round. 8:30 a.m.–noon, Monday, Thursday and Saturday. 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 svdpnk.org.
WASHINGTON — The number of legal abortions provided by virtual-only clinics via abortion pill prescriptions spiked 72 percent in the year following the Supreme Court’s reversal of Roe v. Wade, according to a report by #WeCount, a research project by the Society of Family Planning, a group that supports legal abortion.

The study is notable because it is the first full-year census of U.S. abortion providers following the June 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, that sheds light on how they view trends in their industry. The survey only considered data from licensed clinics within the health care system, researchers said, and does not account for what may be illegal procedures, such as abortion pills ordered from overseas.

The increase in abortions at virtual-only clinics, which use telemedicine to prescribe an abortion-inducing drug regimen to patients, comports with some previous studies showing similar results post-Dobbs. Even prior to that decision, data from the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that more than half of the abortions performed in the U.S. were chemical or medical, rather than surgical.

The #WeCount report, which examined the period from April 2022 to June 2023, found that although abortions decreased in states that have banned or limited the procedure, abortions increased nationally.

“The Dobbs decision turned abortion access in this country upside down,” Dr. Alison Norris, #WeCount co-chair and a professor at The Ohio State University’s College of Public Health, said in a statement. The increase, she said, demonstrates that people seeking abortions will travel for them despite “tremendous hardships,” while those who cannot travel can face “mental, emotional and economic impacts.”

The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred and must be respected from conception to natural death. As such, the church opposes direct abortion as an act of violence that takes the life of the unborn child.

After the Dobbs decision, church officials in the U.S. have reiterated the church’s concern for both mother and child, as well as about social issues that push women toward having an abortion.

Asked about the #WeCount report, Destiny Herndon-De La Rosa, founder and president of New Wave Feminists, told OSV News that “this is why at New Wave Feminists we have always said our goal isn’t to make abortion illegal, but to make it unthinkable and unnecessary through practical support.”

“You make it unnecessary by creating a society that doesn’t penalize pregnant people for choosing life,” Herndon-De La Rosa said. “Most of the individuals who contact us need help with housing, child care, health care resources and transportation. Many work at minimum wage jobs that don’t offer any type of family leave, and they know that continuing their pregnancy means they won’t be able to feed their other children, so they feel trapped.”

“The irony of choice,” she added, “is that abortion decisions are often made when a person feels they have no other choice at all because society is only willing to provide the cheapest option (such as abortion pills), but won’t actually invest in the safety nets that would assist them in choosing life and parenting.”

Kristen Day, executive director of Democrats for Life, told OSV News that “in a perfect world #WeCount and the Society for Family Planning would put as much energy into investing in programs to support parenthood as they do to support abortion.”

“The almost celebration of the increased number of virtual abortions is deeply disturbing,” Day said. “The push for virtual abortion leaves women alone and endangered if something goes wrong.”

A post-Roe world, Day said, requires society to be “more innovative and creative in ensuring that women have the opportunity to choose to have their babies.”

“We need to build support systems” for women, Day said, and “stop advocating for abortion by mail, leaving women to suffer by themselves in silence.”
Catholic Schools in Action

For more information about the Department of Catholic Schools, call (859) 392-1500 or e-mail asmorey@covdio.org.

(top right) Covington Latin School, Covington, students and staff completed 1,923 hours of community service on Sept. 7th around Northern Kentucky.

(right) Covington Latin School Pontifical Servers joined Bishop Iffert to celebrate the school’s Centennial Mass.

(right) Students at Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, demonstrated “Charity First” by holding a shoe drive to support micro-enterprise vendors and small businesses in developing nations. Students collected and sorted over 4,300 pairs of shoes!

(left) Students at Bishop Brossart High School volunteered to beautify the BBHS campus during fall break. Many BBHS students dedicated their time and put forth the action to having a clean campus.
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“Dear brothers and sisters, vocation is a gift and a task,
a source of new life and true joy.

May the initiatives of prayer and of activity associated with this Day
strengthen an awareness of vocation within our families,
our parish communities, our communities of consecrated life
and our ecclesial associations and movements.”

— Pope Francis 2023 World Day of Prayer for Vocations message.
‘How can they hear without someone to preach?’

Bishop John Iffert
Diocese of Covington

But how can they call on him in whom they have not heard? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not known? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news!” (Romans 10:14-15)

We sometimes miss a simple truth. Priests and consecrated religious are sent from the heart of a local church like the Diocese of Covington to proclaim the good news in the mission fields close to home and far flung. Our priests, brothers, and sisters are literally our brothers and sisters. Where will men hear the call to make themselves available to be sent to proclaim the good news as priests? How will men and women begin to hear God’s invitation to witness with their lives as consecrated religious? Who will invite holy and reputable men to be deacons? Who will encourage people to intentionally prepare to enter a vocation of service to Jesus and his people. I ask you to encourage young people to discern in their vocation in the world, to embrace that vocation, and to live it intentional- ly. Joining or beginning a vocation ministry in your parish is a great way to do that. Here is a plan for start- ing a vocation ministry.

1. Pray. Ask God to use you in this great task of calling and encouraging holy voca- tions in our Church and in our families.
2. Talk with your priest. Your pastor coordinates all ministry and outreach in your parish. You will need his buy-in and encouragement. He may also be able to tell you about efforts that are already underway or others who have expressed an interest in promoting vocations.
3. Read “Hundredfold: A Guide to Parish Vocation Ministry.” At this point, please contact Father Conor Kunath, the Vocation Director for the Diocese of Covington. He will gladly supply you with copies of this recommended book and help you be aware of vocation and discernment opportunities in the Diocese.
4. Visit vocationsministry.com. Select the “Parish” tab and you will find a 4-phase process for establishing and advancing a vocation ministry, along with planning cal- endars, resources, sample initiatives and great advice (including a list like this one).
5. Recruit members. Start with holy people who love Jesus and the Church. Include people who have a heart for young people and representatives of groups in the parish who are interested in promoting vocations (e.g., members of the Serra Club, Knights of Columbus, etc.).
6. Meet and begin planning.

Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to discern

Father Conor Kunath
Vocations Promoter

David Crowder Band has this song I remember from my days in high school. The title of the song and the refrain is “Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die.” I always thought that there was a great deal of insight there. So many Catholics and Christians really sincerely want to go to heaven. They make it their stated goal in life, but they are often terrified of death. I suppose many Catholics want to have their cake and eat it too. Death is a sad, but necessary step to get to heaven though. I think there is some of that same tension in the way that many of us Catholics live our discipleship. We really want to do God’s will. We pray every day, “your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” However, when the time for doing God’s will arrives, we put it off or perhaps refuse to do it at all. We say we want to do His will, but we don’t want to make the sacrifices that come with it. We say we want to go to heaven, but we don’t want to pay the price of admission — death.

While there are no quick fixes for finding the courage to do God’s will, there are some barriers that we can remove from our path. I think the largest of these barriers is igno- rance. I don’t have a study to back this up, but I would con- servatively estimate that well over half of all Catholics don’t know that there is a concrete process for discerning the will of God that was given to us by St. Ignatius of Loyola. Even if they do know that it exists, I doubt that even a fraction have the practical knowledge to actually use it. Before a soul can embark on any true discernment of God’s will there has to be an understanding of what disci- plship looks like. True discipleship is not living the life I want to live and giving God some time on the weekend or at the end of the day. True disci- plship begins with the understanding that God’s will is the foundational guiding principle of my life and that everything I do every day is to be oriented towards the salvation of my soul. Every decision I make has to be weighed on the bal- ance of salvation. The good that I seek in making a decision is not a human, earthly good, rather it is the salvation of my soul. For example, if a soul is discerning between two job opportunities, the con- sideration is not about salary but about how this job will affect salvation.

As a consequence, Ignatius tells us that we have to be like a scale at balance when discerning. This means that as we weigh the individual paths we could take, there must be nothing that is unfairly influencing us to go in one direction or the other, and our only real consideration is God’s will and the salvation of our soul. For example, if a soul is deciding between which college to attend, being a party school or where our friends are going cannot be allowed to influence our decision. Rather, there has to be a balance so that no option is preferred for the wrong reasons. If we want to achieve these dispositions we have to be aware of what is holding us back. In one way or another, every inclination that goes contrary to the will of God can be traced back to some effect from, or attachment to, sin. Sin and attachment to sin are nearly always the obstacles that obstruct proper discernment. Knowing this, it becomes clear that purifying ourselves of sin must be our highest priority. If we truly want to correctly discern God’s will and have the courage to do it, then we must reg- ularly use the sacrament of reconciliation, we must pray every day, and we must endeavor to free ourselves from worldly attachments. Once we have achieved this critical balance, we can begin to discern and to freely use the three modes of discernment that St. Ignatius taught.

The three modes of discernment are hierarchical. When we go to discern a decision we always start with the
The less traveled road makes all the difference

Noire Dame Sister Marla Monahan
VOCAR for Religious

Many years ago I joined the Sisters of Notre Dame. When I told my family I was entering religious life, my brother gave me one of Robert Frost’s poems, “The Road Not Taken.” The closing line is, “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

I loved my family and I loved children but for me one husband and one set of children didn’t seem like enough! St. Augustine’s famous quote was on my high school classroom bulletin board, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, God.” That is how my heart felt.

I joined religious life because I loved God and people and I felt this was the way God was calling me to be the person of love God made me to be. My life has been blessed by so many people I have taught or worked with, and I hope I have made a difference in their lives. Religious life is one way we can live our life with “a passion for Christ, and passion for his mission.” For me, I hope it has been how I have loved God and how the gift of my life has served the needs of our world.

Discernment is not an optional part of life for disciple-ship nor is it something that is reserved only for those in religious life. At confirmation each of us is strengthened with the grace of the Holy Spirit who is sent to us as a guide and counselor. Good discernment is critical if we want to make the most of the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives, Church, and world. And when we begin to use the gifts of the Spirit as they are offered, then we can ask with St. Paul, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”
Laura Keener
Editor

The Newport Central Catholic High School “Looking Up” capital renovation project has staff and students looking back. During demolition of its third floor to make way for a state-of-the-art Science lab and classrooms, a prayer card for vocations was found hidden behind lockers. The prayer card has the imprimatur of Bishop William Mulloy, the sixth bishop of the Diocese of Covington.

“It’s amazing what you can find when you dig deep and open up places, interesting things that remind sometimes of things we forget,” said Bradley Barnes, campus minister, NCCHS. Things like how vocations “have always been on the forefront of every bishop’s mind — wanting to replenish the laborers of the vineyard.”

The prayer card, he said, “was greeted with an amazement and thankfulness to the Holy Spirit that we found it and that we get the chance to promote that prayer again and have it become a part of our identity.”

Students pray the prayer at Mass each week and, during the month of November — Vocations awareness month — will be praying the prayer as a school consistently throughout the month. Mr. Barnes also has plans to share the prayer with parents and alumni.

Bishop Mulloy was chief shepherd of the Diocese of Covington from 1945-1959. The prayer card was probably the cornerstone of a Vocational Program he developed in 1945, which had won national acclaim, according to the 1953 “History of the Diocese of Covington,” written by Rev. Paul E. Ryan on the 100th anniversary of the diocese.

March was the month Bishop Mulloy had chosen to recognize vocations awareness. His program enlisted “the full cooperation of the Priests, Brothers, Sisters and Lay people of the Diocese,” according to the Ryan history. Wasting no time, Bishop Mulloy first launched his program in March of 1946, one year and three months after his installation as Bishop of Covington.

During the month of March “special attention is given to the schools of the Diocese and every means available is used to make the children and parents vocation-minded,” wrote Father Ryan. Bishop Mulloy insisted on using the latest technologies in his vocation program, noting visual aids. Priests, Brothers and Sisters and laymen would speak to the children. Parents took an active role as well and were “enlisted by carefully prepared talks on vocations.”

In 1949, Bishop Mulloy organized The Bishop’s Lay Committee on Vocations. Father Ryan wrote, “These Catholic laymen serve as ‘public relations men.’ The organization is dedicated to the sanctification of its members, as well as the furtherance of religious vocations in the Diocese.” Their program called its members to pray for vocations and many families adopted the practice of praying a Hail Mary after meals for an increase in vocations.

Bishop Mulloy’s vocations program “has shown unusual visible results,” wrote Father Ryan, “The Diocese at present has 115 young men studying for the priesthood.” Father Ryan ended the chapter on Bishop Mulloy’s vocational efforts summing up the hope and prayer of every bishop, priest, brother, sister and lay faithful, “In the continued success of this Vocational Program lies the hope of the Diocese to meet its educational needs; and through this means also to eliminate the numerous churchless, priestless and sisterless counties within its borders.”

The front and back of a vocations prayer card from circa 1946 was found behind lockers at Newport Central Catholic High School. The lockers were removed for the renovation of the school’s new state-of-the-art Science lab and classrooms.

Most Rev. William T. Mulloy

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GLENMARY.ORG/VOCATIONS
The joy of vocation: We praise you, O Lord!

Divine Providence Sister Paula Gohs, (60 year jubilarian)

Contributor

"We praise you, O Lord, for all your works are wonderful! We praise you, O Lord; forever is your love!"

This summer I celebrated my 60th anniversary as a consecrated woman religious. This milestone gave me pause to reflect on the choice I made to serve God as a Sister of Divine Providence. My simple sharing may be helpful, especially for women and men now focused on discerning which life choice to pursue — married life, single life, consecrated religious life as a sister or brother, the diaconate or priesthood.

We are more than gracious admirers of Jesus Christ. We have been adopted into the royal Trinity Family through the sacrament of Baptism. We have been called, chosen and blessed by God to live life intentionally as disciples of Jesus Christ in whatever vocation we choose to embrace. Each one of us has been judged entirely worthy of following this God-Man, who never considered it beneath his dignity to live, love and die for us on this planet we call home. Jesus’s ministry here on earth was first-and-last genuine presence to people of all ages, back-grounds and persuasions. The four Gospels overflow with stellar images of Jesus Christ — the self-giving, always available God-Man, whose hallmark was service. He often referred to himself as the Son of Man. Jesus’s ultimate gift of death on the cross sealed his forgiveness of our sins. His redemptive mercy extends to all of humanity for all time, until his second coming.

We are grateful stewards in the Lord’s vineyard — our planet. Jesus relies on each of us, to serve one another through the ministry of genuine presence — wherever we find ourselves. Jesus draws our attention where it is needed here, nudges us to engage in loving response appropriate for the situation and prompts us to act. When a rich harvest follows, it is really God’s work, made possible in part by our own unique presence.

Daily prayer is the spiritual “caffeine” that graciously impels us to make room for some quality time with the Lord Jesus, day after day. We sit beside Jesus and contemplate the eternal joy that will be ours in seeing God face to face — Father, Son Jesus and the Holy Spirit for all eternity. We will in the near or far future take our place among the communion of saints we so admire. We will wear the white garment that allows us to be seated around the eternal banquet in Heaven. What else can we say but “Alleluia!”

Providence of my God, I adore you in all your designs

Divine Providence Sister Georgianna Abplanalp (60 year jubilarian)

“Providence of my God, I adore you in all your designs. I place my destiny in your hands, confiding to you all that I have, all that I am, and all that I am to become — my body and my soul, my health and reputation, my life, my death, and my eternal salvation.”

These are the opening words of our Act of Abandonment. I see them as the framework of my life. Part of God’s marvelous design for me was to be born into a loving, close-knit family. As a child I learned to make the best of what I had. If I complained to Mom about something, she would say, “Can you change it? If not, live with it.” So, I learned early on to trust that God would handle the things. I think that is why the Congregation of Divine Providence fits my needs so well.

I was baptized during the summer between the seventh and eighth grade and attended the eighth grade at St. Stephen’s School after which, I entered ANIP (Academy of Notre Dame de la Providence) and had my first experience with the Sisters of Divine Providence. It was an experience that would change my life. I got to know the Sisters over the next four years. I worked at the academy to help pay my tuition. I had the chance to see the Sisters outside the classroom. Their inner peace and joy spoke to my inner turmoil. Without knowing it my life was changing.

Sister Mary Agnes Kelly saw something in me that I didn’t see. She talked to me about religious life. She shared stories of her experiences and that of others. At first, she never directly spoke of my considering this way of life for myself. As time went on, I felt a stirring... a need to learn more. So, I asked questions and began to pray for guidance. In March of 1961, I asked Sister what I would need to do to enter St. Anne Convent after graduation.

With her guidance I got all my papers in order. I finally told my parents of my decision. They had opposing views of my decision. My mother was happy for me and very supportive. My father was not. He felt he was losing me. He did not forbid my entering, but in the end, he reluctantly signed my papers.

Even knowing Dad was not happy about my decision, I still felt compelled to follow the yearning deep within me… On that bright sunny afternoon of August 15, 1961, Sister Mary Agnes Kelly accompanied me and my family and my kidneys shut down necessitating my having to go on dialysis. These events were hard to face but once again I knew a new chapter of my life was unfolding.

This last event changed my life dramatically for the good. I have been on dialysis for 14 years. I still work in the Finance Office part time. My mission now is to be the Sisters at Holy Family Home. I totally enjoy planning cheese parties, Christmas parties or “just because” parties. I also minister to the patients and staff at my dialysis center. A day doesn’t go by that someone isn’t asking for prayers.

Looking back over my lifetime, I realize that many people have touched my life. I’ve known and lived with many wonderful women… women who have greatly enriched my life…women who have helped me to grow and to see myself for who I am and can become. And because of all those who have touched my life, I love being who I am and where I am at this moment. I don’t regret a moment of my life. I can’t wait to see what the next chapter holds in store! “…May I please you all that I have, all that I am, and all that I am to give you and give you glory forever. Amen.”

Sister Paula Gohs, CDP

Sister Georgianna Abplanalp, CDP
“THE ALMIGHTY HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR ME.”

Joshua Reshamp
3rd Year Theology

Justin Schwarz
3rd Year Theology

Hank Bischoff
3rd Year Theology

Michael Schulze
2nd Year Pre-Theology

William Fuller
Preparatory Year

Andrew Pugh
Preparatory Year

Please Pray for Vocations
DIOCESE OF COVINGTON

For more information on priestly vocations:
Father Conor Kunath - 859-392-1500
Rev. Father John C. Elliott
Vocations Director

PLEASE ENCOURAGE MEN TO CONSIDER THE PRIESTHOOD
Seminarian reflects on his vocation, finds joy in doing God’s will

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Michael Schulte grew up Catholic, attending Sunday Mass and praying before meals with his family. However, it was the witness of his brother’s conversion, when he was about the age of 13, that Mr. Schulte decided to “live for Christ.”

Now, Michael Schulte is in his fourth year of college at seminary, and recalls fondly how his brother spoke with him about the scriptures and how that impacted his dis-
cernment.

"From there, my relationship with God really took off and has grown," he said, and although the high school lifestyle had him drift away for a time, it was during his senior year that Mr. Schulte began reading the Bible more, and became more intent on attending Mass in the chapel at Covington Catholic—his high school.

"But," Mr. Schulte continued to speak on his vocation story, "I didn't really start living for Christ again until I actually moved out." Mr. Schulte joined the United States Air Force after high school, something he reported-
ly wanted to do his entire life.

"The Lord put the right people in my life," including the leader of a Bible study group who invited Mr. Schulte in, "and from there the Lord kept on working with me and

kept on drawing closer to me." "Growing up I didn't ever want to be a priest," he said, "I always want-
ed to get married and have kids. But when I was 20 years old, God just kept tugging at my heart, and it wouldn't go away."

Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit," said Mr. Schulte. "So, if I'm feeling joy right now, or if it's a trend, something that I've been feel-
ing more consistently then I know that the Holy Spirit is at work."

He continued, "I find joy in doing God's will. That's what it came down to when I was first discerning. Like I said, I didn't want to be a priest growing up... but the word kept on calling me and not really leaving me alone about it — because I want to do God’s will and that's the only way we find true joy."

"It's been a process over time, but the Lord has given me joy. I take it as a gift from him that he's given me everything that I've wanted and needed, and there's a real kind of joy — knowing that I'm grow-
ing closer to God." Mr. Schulte also notes how, being in sem-
inary, he's surrounded likewise by men who want to do the same thing — to do God's will. “Fellowship has been another source of joy — being in the seminary and with my brothers in Christ.”

"There's an interesting thing that happens, you know, when we draw near to God... it’s that the Lord will make us more like ourselves than we were anticipating. So the closer I draw to God, it's not like I'm mindlessly doing this and losing my identi-
ty — Grace builds on nature, so I'm more like myself and my life has meaning."

"The whole journey has been one thing after another of blessings and surprises and meeting new people," he said, "and drawing nearer to God and learning new things... and I'm looking forward to that because it gives me hope of going to Heaven and seeing God here on earth — just seeing where he leads me to next."

The state of priestly vocations in the United States

Rhonda Gruenewald
Contributor

With shrinking numbers of priests and seminarians nationwide, along with other demographic shifts in both the Church and culture, many diocesan priests report feeling a tangible and growing gap in the numbers of transitional candidates with a desire to serve in the priesthood.

As Catholics, we believe the Lord never stops calling everyone the works of God into the world, bringing forgiveness and grace to a culture without hope through the sacraments. Priests are the foundational mediators between God and humanity ushering in the practical graces of a life lived with Jesus Christ: forgiveness of sins and the grace of the Eucharist. Over the next two years, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is calling for a “Eucharistic Revival” — a renewed focus on the saving power of the Eucharist to counter a growing trend of Catholics who don’t believe in the Real Presence.

But there is a deeper, perhaps congruent problem at work, even more foundational than lack of belief in the Eucharist. The underlying problem is a lack of Eucharist-bringers — priests themselves. The more priests live a life in the Holy Spirit, the more religious and priestly voca-
tions will flourish.

Regardless of the factors affecting the priesthood today — 75 percent of newly ordained priests, year over year, report hearing the call before 18 years of age. Just based on this, priests need to become vocation promoters at their parishes, cultivating the harvest with boys and young adult men who are in the pews each week, by inviting, encouraging and mentoring them until they are ready to vailt with the diocesan vocation director. To cultivate fertile soil from which religious vocations can sprout, a culture change is needed in which vocational promotion is considered not the duty of a few specialists but the common responsibility of priests, parishioners, parents, catechists, coaches, siblings, friends and Catholic school teachers — everyone. The entire Church must encourage each individual’s response to God’s call.

Just because we recognize downward vocational trends does not mean we have to assume that continued diminish-
ment of the priesthood is inevitable in the Church in America. Where vocation promotion is taken seriously on a regular basis, we are beginning to see an upward tick amid otherwise downward trends. In fact, there are actu-
al dioceses reporting increases in new seminarians, and we can look to them for best practices when cultivating vocations.

Rhonda Gruenewald is founder of Vocation Ministry, a ministry dedicated to parish vocation ministry through edu-
cation and workshops. Vocation Ministry can be found online at vocationministry.com.
God isn't finished with me yet

Deacon Brian Cox
Contributor

Are you happy with your life? Did you make the right choice? How do you measure success? I’ve been happily married to Jennie for 31 years (32 in Feb.), we have two great kids and that is a wonderful vocation … but God wasn’t finished with me yet.

Sometimes we follow our dreams, but they turn into nightmares. Growing up I didn’t know what I wanted to do, so I just sort of went with the flow, and I ended up driving submarines in the Navy and spending one year under water … but God wasn’t finished with me yet.

I remember while running on the surface, the officer of the deck asked me what I was going to do when I got out of the Navy, I just blurted out that I was going to be a land surveyor. I had no idea what a land surveyor did but become one I did … but God wasn’t finished with me yet.

After a 30+ year career in surveying, I realized that I was being called in another direction — a Permanent Deacon, and not just that but a Campus Minister to boot — now hold on a minute God, I already have a vocation, and that is being a husband and father, isn’t that enough?

You can run, but you can’t hide … God wasn’t finished yet, and so while sitting in church I heard God say, “become a Deacon,” and wow, what an adventure. I had no idea how much fun it would be being a Deacon. I got to baptize children, witness marriages and bury the dead. And, for example, if someone approaches me with a rosary or if a friend or family member purchases a new home I can offer a blessing.

Shortly after I was ordained, I was asked if I could bring some exorcised salt and holy water for a Cursillo restoration team. So, I asked the team that if they wanted to bring the “raw materials” to our next meeting, I would bless them. The very next day while driving to work, I heard a priest on the radio say that a deacon couldn’t bless anything … wait a minute, is that right? Am I not able to bless water? It got me thinking and doubting myself. I asked Father Ryan Stenger, the diocesan Judicial Vicar, and he reassured me that when bishop ordained me, I could bless everything in the book of blessings, that a deacon was able to do. One of my other duties is being on the Deliverance Team with Father Bob Rottgers. He asked me to bring along some of the salt that I had blessed, and we used that salt during our session. And yes, I was able to see that indeed the faculties that I received during ordination truly worked … but God wasn’t finished with me yet.

I was now helping more, becoming one of the deacons assisting at weddings at the Cathedral, being called to assist various priests that didn’t have deacon assigned to their parish and even helping at Northern Kentucky University with the Newman Center. Then we received the announcement that we have a new Bishop … but God wasn’t finished with me yet.

Whenever there is a change of command, something always changes and for me it was being asked to apply as the Campus Minister at NKU. I started on Jan 3, 2023, and it’s been a great adventure. Of course, I asked God for his help and like always his plan is way better than anything I could come up with.

On my first week I asked God to send me someone who could help with marketing, and wouldn’t you know within 5 minutes, he sent Nikki Deward to me. She walked up and said “Hi, I’m Nikki and I want to help with marketing.” (You can’t make this up) Nikki is now the Newman Center president and, along with our leadership team, we have adoration from 2 p.m.–6 p.m. every Monday at the Newman House followed by Bible study, we have Bible study every Tuesday from 7 p.m.–8 p.m., on Wednesday we say a rosary at 9 p.m. Thursday is our big day; we have adoration at the Holy Family Center at St. Joe’s Cold Spring at 6 p.m. followed by Benediction and Mass with a meal (cooked by students and guests) back at the Newman House with fellowship until wee hours of the night … but God wasn’t finished with me yet.

We talk about hearing and listening to the voice of God and the only way to do that is like everything else in life, you must put in the effort. If you want to be good at something, sports, academics or whatever, you need to practice, you need to trust in God, you see God isn’t finished with you!
Every Christian has a vocation to share God’s love, pope says

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

Every Christian has a vocation to respond to God’s love and to share that love with others, Pope Francis said. “The Lord’s call is grace, complete gift and at the same time a commitment to bring the Gospel to others,” the pope wrote in his message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations, in April.

“Vocation: Grace and Mission” was the theme the pope chose for the 2023 celebration.

The pope’s message was released at the Vatican April 30, with a news conference led by Cardinal Lazarus You Heung-sik, prefect of the Dicastery for Clergy.

“The message, the cardinal said, emphasizes that a vocation is ‘the gift of self,’ a call that is ‘common to all Christians: all are called to be on the front line, to do their part so that the earth may become the common home in which individuals and peoples live together as brothers and sisters, under the gaze of the one Father.’

“In his message, Pope Francis said that, ‘led by the Spirit, Christians are challenged to respond to existential peripheries and human dramas, ever conscious that the mission is God’s work.’

“The mission, he said, ‘is not carried out by us alone, but always in ecclesial communion, together with our brothers and sisters, and under the guidance of the church’s pastors.’

“The multiplicity of vocations, gifts and responsibilities in the Church, he said, always has been part of God’s dream, that we should live with him in a communion of love.

“In the Church, and in the pope’s message, ‘vocation’ referred to more than just the call to priesthood or consecrated religious life.

“In fact, the pope wrote, ‘our common vocation to give ourselves in love develops and finds concrete expression in the life of lay men and women, devoted to raising a family as a small domestic church and working as a leaven of the Gospel to renew the different sectors of society; in the testimony of consecrated women and men who are completely committed to God for the sake of their brothers and sisters as a prophetic sign of the kingdom of God; in ordained ministers — deacons, priests and bishops — placed at the service of preaching, prayer and fostering the communion of the holy people of God.’

“The true nature and richness” of each of those vocations, he said, is revealed and makes sense only in relation to the others within the community of the Church.

“Viewed in this light,” the pope said, “the Church is a vocational ‘symphony’ with every vocation united yet distinct, in harmony and joined together in ‘going forth’ to radiate throughout the world the new life of the kingdom of God.

“The vocation God gives to each Christian is not a command or imposition, Pope Francis said, but an individual call to respond to God’s love with the gifts, talents and dreams that each person has.

“In the course of our lives,” he said, “this call, which is part of the fiber of our being and the secret of our happiness, comes to us by the work of the Holy Spirit in ever new ways. It enlightens our minds, strengthens our wills, fills us with amazement and sets our hearts alight.”

“Cardinal You Heung-sik, presenting the pope’s message, told reporters, ‘God, in fact, has a dream that he wishes to realize for us and with us, a project that he gives us so that, accepting it and realizing it with all freedom, we can find the authentic meaning of our existence, the realization of our humanity, but also the mission through which we can contribute to the construction of a more fraternal, more just and more supportive world, the anticipation and realization of the kingdom of God.’

“Sometimes the call comes in ‘completely unexpected ways,’ Pope Francis wrote, recounting how, for him, the call came on ‘Sept. 21, 1953, as I was on my way to an annual school celebration, (and) I was led to stop by a church and go to confession.’

“That day changed my life and left a mark that has endured to the present day” the pope wrote. “The gift of vocation is like a divine seed that springs up in the soil of our existence, opens our hearts to God and to others, so that we can share with them the treasure we ourselves have found,” the pope said.

“The basic way vocation works, he wrote, is: ‘God calls us in love and we, in gratitude, respond to him in love. We realize that we are beloved sons and daughters of the one Father; and we come to see ourselves as brothers and sisters of one another.’

“Cardinal You Heung-sik told reporters that Pope Francis ‘truly gives an excellent example’ of what a Christian vocation is, ‘not just as a bishop or priest,’ but as a person who has encountered Jesus and joyfully shares the faith with others.

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Tom Kissel
Terry Mason
Eric Wehrman
Steve Winbigler

The ministry of Liturgy, Word and Charity

Sister Mary Ann Baichan, cenger, professing first vows during a Mass in 2016 during the 100 year anniversary of the founding of the Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary An online gathering for the National Day of Prayer for Black Vocations April 23, 2023, featured reflections from current members of religious communities and prayers for more vocations.
What is Serra Club?

Mike Murray
Contributor

They don't stand out regarding who they are, but what they do plays an important role in the mission of the Church. Their role is so important that they even have a special relationship with the Vatican. They are Serrans, members of the Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky. The Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky is the only one of its kind in the Diocese of Covington. The members are men and women who meet twice a month to coordinate programs and pray specifically for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and religious life.

Why the name Serra? The name comes from Father Junipero Serra, a Franciscan missionary who worked from 1768-1784 in Mexico and present-day California. He spent much of his time building churches and schools for the poor and the native people. He also worked hard as a priest to catechize those in his care and to build a dedicated priesthood. Because of his evangelical and ministerial work in Mexico and California, Father Serra was beatified by Pope John Paul II on September 25, 1988, and Canonized by Pope Francis on September 23, 2015.

The Serra Club was originally founded in Seattle, Washington in 1934 by a group of businessmen who wanted to learn more about their faith. Those founding members gathered regularly for a meal and a program featuring some aspect of Catholicism. Eventually, they decided to include the mission of praying for and fostering vocations to the priesthood. As the Club grew, dioceses throughout the nation did not have priests or religious life. At the time of the Club's founding, there were no Serra Clubs in the United States and in most countries around the world.

In due time, their work was recognized by Church leadership. In 1951, Serra International became an official member of the Sacred Council for Catholic Education and the Pontifical Work for Priestly Vocation. Serra International, which has an office located in Chicago, links Serra Clubs around the world.

The Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky is one of the 1,100 Serra Clubs organized in more than 46 countries and is a member of the larger Serra International. Organized in 1951 as part of the Sacred Council for Catholic Education and the Pontifical Work for Priestly Vocation, Serra International today has more than 20,000 Catholic members world-wide.

The Club holds meetings on the first Tuesday of each month. These meetings commence at 7:30 a.m. for breakfast and adjourn by 8:30 a.m. On the third Tuesday of the month, the Club meets for lunch and a presentation that helps Club members grow in their faith. Assembly for the lunch meetings begins at 11:45 a.m. and the meetings last until 1:00 p.m. The local Serra Club also sponsors the Servers Award Ceremony every April, the Picnic for Women Religious and Seminarian Cookout in June, the Seminarian Cookout Luncheon in August and a Priest Appreciation Dinner in November. Fundraisers for the Club include an evening at the Florence Y'alls baseball game every June and the annual Serra Club Golf Outing in September.

The local Serra Club prays for vocations by means of Masses, rosaries, intercessory prayer and the Serra Prayer for Vocations. In addition, the Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky also differs from other Serra Clubs because it has a broader focus which includes the diaconate and religious vocations rather than just seminarians. Club members feel an obligation to pray not just for an increase in vocations to the priesthood, but for all religious vocations, including sisters, brothers, and permanent deacons.
Whom to call

For in-depth information about religious life, permanent diaconate, lay pastoral ministry or priesthood, please contact the following individuals:

**Priesthood**

Father Conor Kunath  
Vocation Office, 1125 Madison Ave,  
Covington, KY 41011-3135  
(859) 392-1566  
E-mail: ckunath@covdio.org

**Permanent Diaconate and Lay Pastoral Ministry**

Msgr. Gerry Reinersman  
Pastoral Ministry Formation Office, 1125 Madison Ave,  
Covington, KY 41011-3135  
(859) 392-1564  
E-mail: greinersman@covdio.org

Deacon Brian Cox  
Pastoral Ministry Formation Office, 1125 Madison Ave,  
Covington, KY 41011-3135  
(859) 392-1568  
E-mail: bcox@covdio.org

**Religious Communities of Women**

Benedictine Sisters of Covington, www.saintwalburg.org  
Sister Cathy Bauer, O.S.B.  
St. Walburg Monastery,  
2500 Amsterdam Rd, Villa Hills, KY 41017-5316  
(859) 331-6324  
E-mail: bauerosb@yahoo.com

St. Joseph the Worker Sisters, www.ssjw.org  
Mother Mary Christina Murray, SJW  
St. Joseph Convent,  
1 Saint Joseph Ln., Walton, KY 41094  
(859) 485-4914.  
E-mail: sjwvocations@gmail.com or motherchristinasjw@gmail.com

Congregation of Divine Providence of Kentucky, www.cdpkentucky.org  
Sister Leslie Keener, C.D.P.  
(859) 441-0700, ext. 22  
E-mail: vocation@cdpkentucky.org

Notre Dame Sisters of Covington, www sndky.org  
Sister Mary Ruth Lubbers, S.N.D.  
1601 Dixie Hwy, Covington, KY 41011  
(859) 750-6190  
E-mail: rubbers@sndusa.org

Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, www.erpasionists.com  
Mother Marie Michelle-Maud, C.P.  
1151 Donaldson Hwy Erlanger, KY 41018  
(859) 371-8958  
E-mail: sistermarie@gmail.com

Public Association of the Faithful  
Franciscan Daughters of Mary, www.fddimmary.org  
Sister Clare Marie Borchard, FDM.  
PO Box 122970, Covington, KY 41012-2070  
(859) 512-5975  
E-mail: fddsisters@gmail.com

Ways to support vocations

Become a prayer partner: Prayer partners are individuals and families who agree to pray for a specific seminarian as he discerns his call. Call Father Michael Norton at (859) 392-1566 or e-mail mnorton@covdio.org.

Many parishes have vocation committees. If your parish doesn’t, consider starting one.

The Serra Club of Northern Kentucky is part of an international organization dedicated to supporting vocations. Contact Michael Murray at (859) 392-1300 or e-mail mmurray@covdio.org. Visit www.serranky.org or www.ser-rainternational.org.

Our diocesan Knights of Columbus send each seminarian a financial contribution for personal expenses. Call Dustin Reed at (859) 866-3122 or visit kofc.org/joinus.

Make a financial contribution to the diocesan Seminarian Education Fund, 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, KY 41011-3135 or online at www.covdio.org.

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The Advancement Director is responsible for planning and implementing a comprehensive relationship development strategy with our individual and corporate supporters and community foundation partners. The Advancement Director works closely with our Executive Director, spreading a message of hope for the less fortunate within our community.

The ideal candidate must have five years or more experience in fundraising and a proven track record of setting goals and motivating and working with a team (internally and externally) to reach those goals. The ideal candidate must also be an effective written and oral communicator, dedicated to delivering the good news of our ministry.

St. Vincent de Paul NKY is a network of friends, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need.

Please join us in this ministry of hope! Interested candidates can send a letter and resume to Karen Zengel at karen.zengel@svdpnky.org. Please forward your resume to lwest@csadultday.org.

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We are a small, non-profit, medical model adult day care in Florence, KY.

We are seeking a LPN - DSP Supervisor to join our team. You will work in conjunction with the RN, Program Manager daily. The ideal candidate will have experience with behavior management, medication administration, individuals with IDD, lifting, trach care and HIPAA.

Must have a Kentucky nursing license.

Regular schedule is Tuesday–Friday 7 am–3:30 pm with additional hours to cover time off for other nursing staff.

We are located at 31 Spiral Drive, Florence, Ky 41042. The Bill & Betty Scheben Care Center. Come join our relaxed and fun environment!

The rate is $27-$35 per hour. Benefits include PTO, Health, Dental, Vision after 60 days, IRA with match

Please forward your resume to Lisa West at lwest@csadultday.org.

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**Cafeteria Managers - Diocese of Covington School Lunch Program**

The Diocese of Covington School Lunch Program is currently seeking dedicated Cafeteria Managers to join our team at Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, St. Agnes, Ft. Wright and St. Anthony, Taylor Mill. The important role of Cafeteria Manager contributes to the successful operation of our school lunch program, ensuring the provision of nutritious meals to our students.

The Diocese of Covington School Lunch Program is also seeking candidates for St. Paul, Florence, part-time cook/prep position.

We offer competitive compensation and benefits packages for eligible employees. Exact details will be discussed during the interview process.

To apply please go to www.covdio.org/employment, School Related Openings, Employment Application Non-Teacher, send completed application to: Diocese of Covington Attn: Laura Hatfield SLP Director, 1125 Madison Ave. Covington, Ky 41011.

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- Tuesday, Nov. 14, 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Tuesday, Nov. 14, 6:30 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, 6:30 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. For other difficulties, contact Marylu Steffen at (859) 392-1500 or msteffen@covdio.org.

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Rome’s underground: Ancient hidden histories

Emmy Stimpson Chapman
GVSNews

In Rome, the churches are legion. For the most part, these churches are simply part of the city’s fabric, woven in as tightly as the government building to the left and the capuccino bar to the right.

What’s true above is also true below. Beneath the great basilicas of Rome, beneath the masterpieces of Raphael, Michelangelo and Bernini, are the ruins of temples and domiciles, shops and baths. The same white marble remnants of the pagan past that lie scattered about Rome’s city center also lie buried in the basements of cathedrals. Upon them, the churches were built.

A journey down into the dark, humid corridors that snake below Rome’s houses of prayer reveal some surprising Christian foundations.

Consider the Basilica of Sts. John and Paul.

Originally constructed in the early fifth century, the basilica pays tribute not to the apostles John and Paul, but rather the martyrs John and Paul, saints of the Roman basilica. Upon them, the churches were built.

For a time, they served the emperor and practiced their Christian faith freely. But that changed with the accession of Julian the Apostate. Julian’s reign was short, from 360—363, but not short enough for John and Paul. Someone betrayed their secret, soldiers were sent to their home, and when they refused to worship Julian, they were murdered on the spot.

Fellow Christians buried the martyrs in the home’s walls. Soon afterward, three of them, Sts. Crispus, Crispianus and Benedetta, were caught praying at the tomb. More martyrs were made, and they too were buried inside the home. Eventually Christians arranged for the purchase of the building, and under the auspices of the senator Bazine, remodeled the space for worship.

A few decades later, Bazine’s son Pammachio undertook the building of the great basilica above, using the pillars of the martyrs’ home as his foundation. The rooms beneath the building of the great basilica above, using the pillars of the martyrs’ home as his foundation. The rooms beneath the walls as the new building’s foundation.

It begins in the second century A.D. when two apartment complexes were constructed near the Roman Forum. Joined by a courtyard, the buildings’ windows afforded the families who dwelt there a bird’s-eye view of military parades and the travels of the great.

Decades later, in the third century, the lower level of the complex was converted into an arcade of shops.

Later still, in the early fourth century, Rome’s population waned and the complex was once more restyled, this time into a single, noble dwelling. The home’s first owners are unknown, but eventually two eunuchs of the emperor’s court, the imperial guards John and Paul, took up residence there. For a time, they served the emperor and practiced their Christian faith freely. But that changed with the accession of Julian the Apostate. Julian’s reign was short, from 360—363, but not short enough for John and Paul. Someone betrayed their secret, soldiers were sent to their home, and when they refused to worship Julian, they were murdered on the spot.

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Today, its interior bears few traces of its paleo—Christian beginnings. But below, it’s a different story.

There, more than 20 interwearing rooms tell the tale of the church’s origins. The tale is a layered one.

The church’s origins. The tale is a layered one.

In 1857, they went poking around the foundations of the Basilica of St. Clement, discovering not only the original fourth-century basilica, but also another, lower level, which formed the foundation of the first basilica. That basilica was destroyed in 1884 when Norman soldiers sacked the streets of Rome. Rather than restore the original, builders filled in the lower level with rubble and dirt and used its walls as the new building’s foundation.

Historically, it’s important. From its beginnings as one of the first churches of the newly Christian empire to its more recent history as a shelter for Jewish refugees during World War II, its walls have many stories to tell. But the most interesting stories may lie one level deeper.

There, archaeologists have uncovered two more ancient buildings, which hint at the reason why the Basilica of St. Clement was built on that spot. The first building appears to have been the home of a wealthy Roman family, built shortly after Nero set fire to Rome, in A.D. 64. Later, the home’s owners donated it to pagan worshippers.

There’s always something appropriate about building a Catholic church over a pagan temple, but the real reason for the location of the Basilica of St. Clement may have more to do with the adjacent building, which was at first thought to be a government building.

But later research turned up evidence of a much different history. That evidence suggests that a wealthy Christian named Clement bought the property from Nero and there built an office for his freed slave, a Jewish convert to Christianity. That slave had taken his former master’s name, and now shepherded the church as its fourth pope: St. Clement.

In short, building upon which the Basilica of St. Clement was built may have been nothing less than the first Vatican.
Violence in Holy Land shows need to support local Christians

VATICAN CITY — As leaders of the Equanimous Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem prepared to meet in Rome, the explosion of violence between Israeli and Hamas highlighted the importance of their prayers and their material support for local Christians, leaders of the order said. Cardinal Fernando Filoni, grand master of the order and a former papal diplomat in Iran, Iraq and Jordan, told reporters Oct. 31 that Christians of the Holy Land and those who support them are called to offer themselves as bridges, trying to get both sides to see that affirming the rights of one community does not necessarily mean denying the rights of the other. "One cannot think that Israel has no right to exist, to be, to remain," he said, "just as one cannot think that the people of Palestine have no right to exist, to be, to live." As long as people claim that the rights of one community are greater than the rights of the other, there will be tension, he said. With the Hamas attack on Israel Oct. 7 and the ongoing Israeli siege of Gaza, the "contacts" or plenary assembly of the leaders of the knights and dames of the Holy Sepulchre, scheduled for Nov. 6-10 in Rome, has undergone modifications. For one thing, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, will address the gathering by video link rather than in person.

Fate of two captured Ukrainian Catholic priests still unknown

OSLO, Norway — The fate of two Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests remains unknown almost a year after their capture by the Russian National Guard amid Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, according to Forum 18, an Oslo, Norway-based news service that covers religious and intellectual freedom violations. For one thing, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, chairman of the USCCB's Committee for Religious Liberty, and Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Illinois, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on International Justice and Peace, made the comments in a joint statement issued to the Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty and the USCCB's Committee on International Justice and Peace. The priests made the comments in a joint statement issued to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the law that promotes freedom of religion and conscience throughout the world as "a fundamental human right." President Bill Clinton signed the International Religious Freedom Act into law Oct. 27, 1998, to elevate religious freedom as a foreign policy goal of the United States, promote religious freedom in countries that violate this basic human right, and strengthen advocacy on behalf of individuals persecuted in other countries on the basis of religion.

Catholic cemetery discovers grave of miners killed in 1910 explosion

WASHINGTON — In the 25 years since the U.S. International Religious Freedom Act became law, "restrictions on religious freedom have been steadily increasing for several years" around the globe, said the chairman of the U.S. bishops' religious liberty and international policy committees. "Sadly," 60 percent of the world's inhabitants "live in countries where there are high levels of governmental or societal restrictions on religion," said Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty. In a statement issued to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the law that promotes freedom of religion and conscience throughout the world as "a fundamental human right." President Bill Clinton signed the International Religious Freedom Act into law Oct. 27, 1998, to elevate religious freedom as a foreign policy goal of the United States, promote religious freedom in countries that violate this basic human right, and strengthen advocacy on behalf of individuals persecuted in other countries on the basis of religion.

Cardinal Dolan called for "solidarity with the affected populations and urged generosity after a monster Category 5 hurricane tore through Acapulco, leaving 27 dead and four people disappeared. Cáritas México, meanwhile, mobilized a response to Hurricane Otto, which battered Acapulco around midnight Oct. 25 as the strongest hurricane to ever hit Mexico's Pacific Coast, according to the National Hurricane Center, causing widespread property damage and flooding, while leaving the tourist destination inaccessible. Bishops in Mexico have established collection centers to help the homeless amid widespread devastation. "We are aware of the pain and anguish that overwhelms thousands of families who have lost their homes, property and livelihoods in these disaster areas. Many localities suffered serious damage to infrastructure, and found themselves prevented from accessing essential services," the Mexican bishops' conference said in an Oct. 25 statement. The National Hurricane Center said at 10 p.m. on Oct. 24 that Hurricane Otto had explosively intensified by 90 mph during the past 12 hours. Media arriving late in the day documented hotels and buildings badly damaged by winds of 175 mph, along with drowned trees and entire parts of the city of 1 million residents underground. The Guerrero state government estimated 80 percent of the city's hotels were damaged. Mexico's electrical utility said 58 power line towers were tangled in the storm.
Missionary of Mercy to send 16 NKU Newman Club members to SEEK

With members of the NKU Newman Club behind him, Father Jim Sichko (left) snaps a selfie. Far right is Father Andrew Young, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring. Father Young hosted Father Sichko for a three-day parish mission, which made an opportune time for a spontaneous visit to the NKU Newman house.

Laura Keener
Editor

St. Joseph Church, Cold Spring, was packed for its three-day mission, Oct. 22–24, “60 Minutes for Jesus” with Father James Sichko. Father Sichko is a priest of the diocese of Lexington and a full-time Papal Missionary of Mercy. As a Missionary of Mercy, Father Sichko is allotted discretionary funds from the Vatican to spread kindness.

During his time in Northern Kentucky, Father Sichko visited the members of the Northern Kentucky University Newman Club. And, along with photos from their meeting, on Oct. 23 posted to his Facebook account, “Spontaneous meeting with the Northern Kentucky University Newman Club! I was so move(d) by their hospitality and welcome that I am sponsoring 16 Catholic students to attend SEEK conference in St. Louis!!! #missionaryofmercy.”

Nikki DeWard, president of the NKU Newman Club, said, “Having Father Sichko at the Newman house was a great experience for everyone who was able to attend.” Her impression of Father Sichko is “that he was very generous, he had a lot of energy and he seemed very happy to be hanging out with us.” Ms. DeWard said that members of the NKU Newman Club attended last year’s SEEK conference and that she is excited to now be going again.

“I had a great experience being there and I wanted to attend again this year with even more of my friends. This year at Newman we have a lot of new faces, and they are all about getting involved,” said Ms. DeWard. “I am so excited that they will have the opportunity to attend this amazing event and deepen their faith.”

The SEEK conference, hosted by Focus Ministries, will be held Jan. 1-5, 2024 in St. Louis, Missouri. With a lineup of some of the most popular and engaging speakers, including Father Mike Schmitz of the famed podcast “Bible in a Year”, chastity speaker, Chris Stefanick; and the dynamic Sister of Life, Sister Mary Grace, to name a few, the three-day conference is set to engage and inspire youth in their faith.

“It is an amazing conference filled with so many wonderful speakers, so many opportunities to grow in your faith, as well as getting to spend time with your friends,” said Ms. DeWard. “We are so thankful for Fr. Sichko’s generosity to our Newman Center.”