



Special Section:  
**Vocations**  
page 11-22

- 2 SVdP coat drive
- 3 NCYC chaperones meet
- 3 Mass for Parish Kitchen volunteers
- 3 40 Hours Devotions
- 5 Eucharistic Revival
- 11 Catholic Schools in actions
- 28 Father Jim Sichko Visits Newman Club

Bishop's Schedule	3
Commentary	6
People and Events	9
Classifieds	24
VIRTUS	24
Shopper's Guide	26
News Briefs	27

Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the *Messenger* are available online at [covdio.org/messenger](http://covdio.org/messenger).



(above) The Seminary Ball planning committee poses in front of the stage at the 2023 Seminary Ball, Oct. 27.  
(below left) Bishop John Iffert gives his remarks during the Seminary Ball's program.  
(below right) Forgoing the tradition 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.  
(bottom center) Justin Schwarz, seminarian, was the seminarian speaker at this year's ball.  
(bottom right) Attendees of the Seminary Ball fill the tables in the Northern Kentucky Convention Center ballroom.



## Bishop Iffert: 'Be intentional' about inviting young men to the priesthood

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

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 answer questions, the video, which was created by Patrick McNamara of Drawn to the Image Studios, instead follows diocesan seminarians through their daily lives at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Penn. The same video will be used to promote vocations in the Diocese of Covington in the near future and will be made available online on the diocesan

website.

Seminarian Justin Schwarz, a student at St. Vincent Seminary, was the seminarian speaker during this year's program at the ball, who shared his vocation story with the evening's guests. "I started discerning the priesthood through the encouragement of my pastor and parents, who invited me to attend a vocation summer camp in the Archdiocese of Seattle," his home diocese, "which was aimed at helping young men to discern a priestly vocation and which sought to deepen the faith of the young men that attended." Mr. Schwarz shared how he was reluctant and stubborn about the camp and stubborn about the prospect of attending, but ultimately found himself "profoundly inspired by the faith and devotion around (him.)"

"It was the first time in my life that I experienced people my age who love their Catholic faith," he said, "and were not afraid to express it. For one reason or another — this deeply moved me and inspired within me a fire and passion for all things Catholic." He continued, saying, "Not only did this awaken a profound love for my Catholic faith, but it created an openness in my heart for God, who was calling me to discern a vocation."

The night's program proceeded with a short "ask a seminarian" segment, hosted by the diocese's own Bishop John Iffert. During

*(Continued on page 2)*



# 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.

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](https://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 homily as the 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.

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**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.)

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Bishop's  
Schedule

Nov. 4

Diocese of Covington  
Pastoral Council, Curia  
Boardroom, 9 a.m.

Nov. 5

Mass, Cathedral Basilica of  
the Assumption, Covington,  
10 a.m.

Nov. 6

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

Nov. 7-10

Good Leaders, Good  
Shepherd retreat, Our Lady  
of the Holy Spirit Center,  
Norwood

Nov. 7

Confirmation, St. Therese  
Parish, Southgate, 7 p.m.

Nov. 8

Confirmation with  
Immaculate Heart of Mary  
Parish, Cathedral Basilica of  
the Assumption, 7 p.m.

Nov. 9

Confirmation, St. Agnes  
Parish, Ft. Wright, 7 p.m.

Nov. 11-16

USCCB general meeting,  
BaltimoreDate

Religious Jubilarians lunch-  
eon, Metropolitan Club,  
Covington, 12 p.m.



# 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 in the Spirit” in small groups whose membership changed each week “had the effect that we were a big com-

munity, that we were really disciples of Jesus together.”

“As disciples of Jesus, we have to look what would Jesus do? How would his behavior be? How would he welcome people? And I think that’s what the synod participants did,” he said.

Jesuit Father Giacomo Costa, a consultant to the synod secretariat, said the synodal approach showed it is possible for different people with different perspectives and cultures “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’s a little seed of hope.”

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.”

Between now and the second assembly in October 2024, the report, detailing many different topics and degrees of agreement, will go back to the local churches and others for further study and discussion, Cardinal Grech said. Each paragraph of the document was approved with the necessary two-thirds vote, but in many places it also “confirms that these are open topics, that the discussion, the reflection, the follow-up is ongoing.”

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.”

“We 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. 29 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, the German press agency.

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.



Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, relator general of the synod, and Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the synod, talk before morning prayer with members of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican’s Paul VI Audience Hall Oct. 26, 2023.



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# The Preface as thanksgiving

Father Luke Spannagel  
USCCB

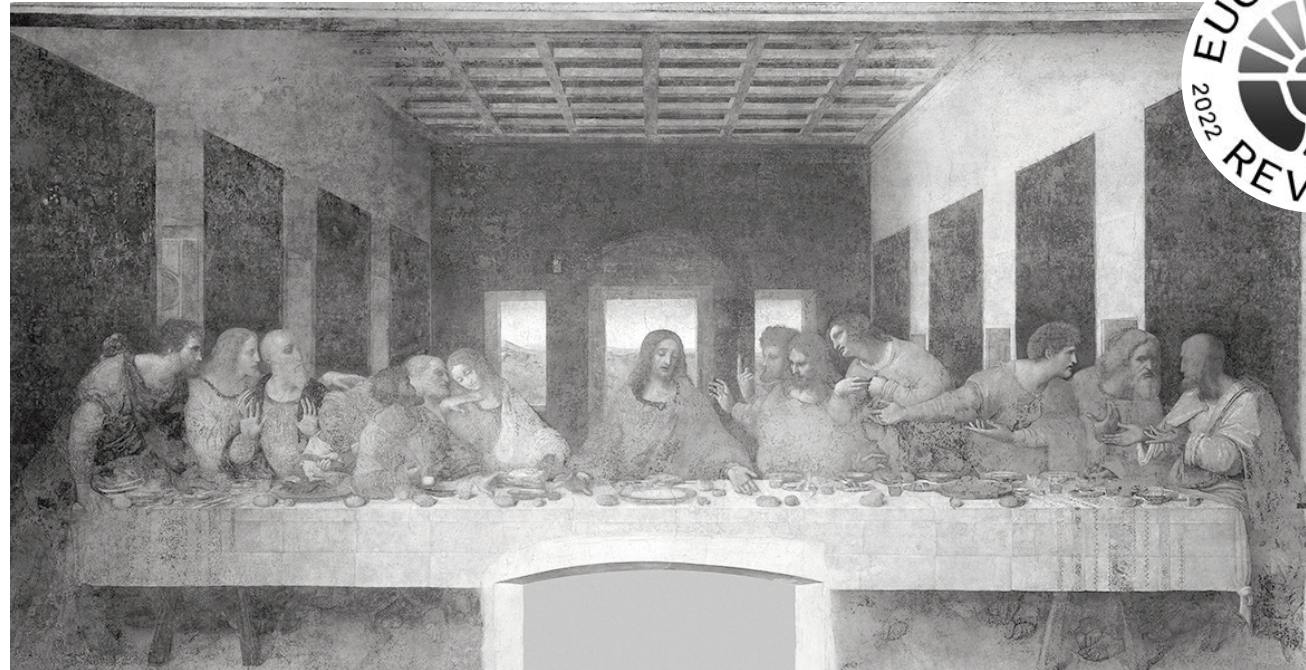
For me as a priest, the Preface is one of my favorite parts of the Mass, especially when I take time to really pray through the phrases. The Preface is one of the variable parts of the Mass, where there are many options that

bration 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

was the first to offer himself as the saving Victim, commanding us to make this offering as his memorial. As we eat his flesh that was sacrificed for us, we are made strong, and, as we drink his Blood that was poured out for us, we are washed clean.”

Since they are so good, and since we are in the Eucharistic Revival, here are the key phrases from Preface II of the Most Holy Eucharist, “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!



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 cele-

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 he is the true and eternal Priest, who instituted the pattern of an everlasting sacrifice and



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COMMENTARY

A day at the Synod

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 the members of the synod to refrain from disclosing what has been discussed. So, I won’t be providing any juicy inside information. 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, at the North American College, situated on the Janiculum Hill, about a fifteen-minute walk from St. Peter’s. We commence with a quiet Mass in a small 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 during the colder months of the year. They have cleared out the first fifty or so rows of chairs to open up a space for thirty-six round tables at which the delegates are seated. The leadership of the synod — including the pope himself, when he is able to attend — are situated at a round table on a slightly elevated platform at the front of the room.

The synodal day begins with prayer — in either Italian, Spanish, English, or French — and proceeds with a calling of the roll and an introduction to that day’s work by Cardinal Grech, the General Secretary of the Synod. The focus of our attention is the so-called Instrumentum Laboris (working document), which represents a distillation of two years of preparatory conversa-

WORD ON FIRE



Bishop Robert Barron

tions around the world. In our small groups, we consider the various sections of the Instrumentum under the guidance of a facilitator, who rather tightly manages the process. Each person around the table is expected to offer a prepared five-minute contribution, and then, in a second round of discussion, each can react to what the others have said. At the conclusion of this lengthy (and frankly, sometimes laborious) undertaking, the group puts together a three-minute summary of the main points of convergence and divergence. Then, one by one, each group shares these summaries with the plenary assembly. When those reports are finished, all of the delegates are permitted to request time for what are called “free interventions.” Though the speeches are, in principle, limited to three minutes, speakers frequently go over the limit, and the days when we have to listen, in plenary assembly, to intervention after intervention are, I admit, rather tiresome.

The time that we spend in small groups is the most enjoyable, mostly because it enables us to get to know one another — and we come from an astonishing variety of backgrounds. In the four groups in which I have so far participated, I have met bishops from Liberia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Turkey, Germany, and Lithuania — as well as lay delegates from Australia, Canada, Ireland, and Lebanon. I just don’t think there is any other organization in the world that could gather a group of such stunning cultural and geographical diversity. Being part of these groups shows that Jesus’ command to go out to the ends of the world proclaiming the Gospel has been, against all odds and expectations, obeyed.

I should say a word about the technology, which has worked rather impressively and represents a significant improvement over what was available at previous synods. There are, of course, simultaneous translations available through headsets, but there are also, at each table, cameras that can swivel into position to broadcast the speech of a given individual to the entire assembly. All of it has gone pretty much without a hitch, the great exception being when the system mistook me for my namesake, Sister Mary Theresa Barron from Ireland!

The days are very long, commencing at 8:45 a.m. and ending at 7:15 p.m. — and we work Monday through Saturday. Almost everyone that I’ve talked to is less than thrilled with the schedule and eager for a bit of a reprieve when we regather next year. A saving grace is the coffee breaks: the morning session featuring cappuccinos and the afternoon session a shot of espresso. During these informal times, we small talk, complain a bit, tell stories, and sometimes have some very serious conversations. During the breaks, I have engaged, to name just a few, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna; Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney; Cardinal Michael Czerny, head of the Vatican Dicastery on the Development of Peoples; Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Bombay (India); Cardinal Walter Kasper, a theologian whom I read with great interest when I was a seminarian; and Cardinal Gerhard Müller, former head of the Vatican’s office for doctrine.

The overall mood of the synod I would describe as businesslike and serene. Important and controversial matters are being discussed, and it is very clear that not everyone is of the same opinion, but I have not heard one raised voice or polemical tone. Very occasionally, following an intervention, a smattering of applause might be heard, but typically, each speech is met with a respectful silence.

When the workday ends, I either go back to the North American College for dinner or, a bit more typically, I go out with friends and colleagues to a Roman restaurant. Since supper in Rome begins at 7:30 p.m. or 8:00 p.m., I don’t get back to my room until 9:30 p.m. or so, at which point, I’m pretty exhausted. As you can undoubtedly sense, the whole synod experience is a bit of a slog, and frankly, I’m eager to get home. But it’s also fascinating, even at times, exhilarating. And in a year, I’ll be back for round two. Please keep all of us synodal participants in prayer.

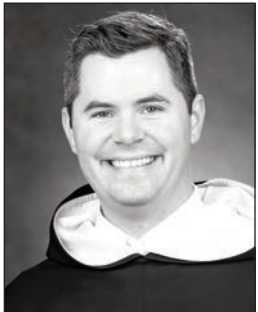
*Bishop Robert Barron is bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota. Article originally published at WordOnFire.org.*

Following the saints or followed by the saints?

We like to think we follow the saints, but sometimes the saints follow us. As I walked home from class in Tours, France, I had an irresistible urge to explore the church I was passing by. As I entered, I marveled at the architecture. A choir of nuns happened to be singing Vespers. The moment was like the scene where the main character experiences a revelation in every Hollywood movie, except it was actually playing out for me, in real life. I knelt in a pew at the back of the church. The nuns kept chanting. And I began to pray. Then I noticed something strange about the church. The altar appeared to have two tabernacles. How strange, I thought. This required investigation. I rose and approached the sanctuary. Even as the sun fell, the neo-Byzantine church was luminous. Gazing up at the brass chest perched on top of the high altar, I couldn’t determine what it was. I searched around for a brochure. Then, thanks to the help of reading, I learned: the chest was not a second tabernacle, it was a reliquary. It contained a relic of the skull of St. Martin of Tours. And in fact, the church was not only dedicated to him but included his tomb. Twin staircases descended on either side of the high altar (not unlike St. Peter’s in Rome). I continued my exploration. The dimly lit crypt flickered in the candlelight. Ex-votos, mementos 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. It was the first visit I made to a saint’s tomb. And it was a complete accident. I was baptized in St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church in Martinsville, Indiana. It was my grandmother’s parish, my mother’s family church. It was the place where I received the grace of faith. And here I was, an undergraduate in France, receiving grace through St. Martin, yet again. 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 rebuilt after the French Revolution. The building hadn’t just fallen into despair. Revolutionaries used the church as a stable, then subsequently ripped it stone from stone. Then, to make sure it couldn’t be rebuilt, they sold the stones. But it was rebuilt. 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. St. Martin’s story shows this clearly. A Roman soldier, he famously split his cloak in two and gave half to a beg-

GUEST



Father Patrick Briscoe

gar on the street one cold winter night. Christ later came to him in a dream, revealing that he had been the beggar. The inscriptions around his tomb bear eloquent testimony to the power of his intercession. St. Martin’s love of Christ is what made him a saint. And through the centuries pilgrims can discover that love anew for themselves. Devotion to him is what inspired the reconstruction of the once-destroyed basilica. And through Martin’s intercession, the faithful are still discovering new grace. I know St. Martin was pursuing me that day, now 16 years ago. We are closer to the saints than we often think. And, pray God, may we one day be numbered among them. *Father Patrick Briscoe, O.P., is a Dominican friar and the editor of Our Sunday Visitor.*



## 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 44th birthday is just a couple weeks away, and to my knowledge there hasn’t been real peace among

peoples during my lifetime. 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 conflict” 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 2022 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 the self.

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.”

St. 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 joy. It is in Jesus that we find hope. It is in 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.

Father Daniel Schomaker is pastor, St. Augustine Parish, Covington and director, Office of Worship and Liturgy for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

## Better late than never

There is a lot happening in our local Church of Covington these days with the With One Heart strategic planning and leadership development initiative. There is also much going on with the Church in the United States.

We are about halfway through a three-year National Eucharistic Revival. Numerous articles have appeared here in the *Messenger*, there is a dedicated page on the diocesan website <https://covdio.org/eucharistic-revival>,

multiple parishes are hosting 40 Hours devotions, and other events are being hosted on the diocesan and parish levels. Nevertheless, I am late to the game in delving into this national effort to renew the belief in, appreciation for, and devotion to our Lord present body, blood, soul, and divinity in the Eucharist.

The National Eucharistic Revival began June 19, 2022 on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, launching the Year of Diocesan Revival. This first year was intended for diocesan leadership to spend time in prayer and planning, asking the Lord to revive His Church and discerning how the diocese should respond to the Lord’s invitation to renewal.

The second year, the Year of Parish Revival, began on June 11, 2023, again on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. The emphasis this year is on four pillars of revival: reinvigorated celebration of the Mass, personal encounters with Jesus in Adoration, robust formation on the Eucharist, and missionary outreach to invite lapsed Catholics back to Mass and to serve the poor.

Many free resources are available on the National Eucharistic Revival website, <https://eucharisticrevival.org>, allowing individuals, small groups, and parishes to get involved. There are prayers, videos, and podcasts, as well as a small group study called “Jesus and the Eucharist” that new or existing small groups can use. I registered for the Revival Spark Series which is a nine-day series of short reflections by which I can pray for my own personal renewal.

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-ann-seton-route>.

The 10th National Eucharistic Congress will be held July 17 – 21, 2024 in Indianapolis, Indiana. It will be the first national Eucharistic congress in 83 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 encounter Christ, be renewed in their zeal for the Eucharist and be sent on mission to bring others to know the love Jesus has for them.

I purchased my ticket last spring and cannot wait to attend! The Diocese of Covington has a limited number of discount tickets available. Visit the diocesan Eucharistic Revival webpage, <https://covdio.org/eucharistic-revival>, for more information.

The Congress marks the start of year three of the revival, the Year of Mission. Having encountered the Eucharistic Lord and having been strengthened in faith and revived in spirit, we are called to witness to the world what we have experienced and share the gift we have received.

The third year ends with Pentecost in 2025 amid 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.”

I am a little late getting on board, and maybe you are, too, but better late than never! Hope to see you at Mass and Adoration, and maybe even in Indianapolis.

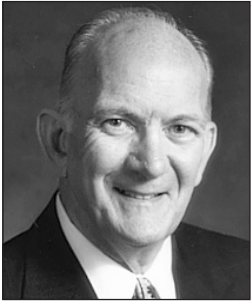
Jamie Schroeder is chancellor for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

### VIEWPOINT



Jamie Schroeder

### ALONG THE WAY



Ray Smith

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 mammals) that occurs 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 offspring.”

On Tuesday, Nov. 7, as a major newspaper stated, “Ohioans will vote on Issue 1, an amendment that would ‘enshrine’ 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 with stern warnings, that is, “Protect Children” on one side and “Protect Parents’ Rights” on the other.

In an attempt to assist one’s efforts to understand the pros and cons of this not so delicate issue, “Create Equal.org/Ohio issued a summary of the main dangers in the issue and a brief synopsis of Issue 1’s actual text.

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

tion, endangering minors and removing parents’ rights.”

In the actual text: “Every individual has a right to make and carryout one’s own reproductive decisions, including, but not limited to decisions on contraception, fertility treatment, continuing one’s own pregnancy, miscarriage care and abortion.

“Furthermore, the State shall not, directly or indirectly, burden, penalize, prohibit, interfere with, or discriminate against either:

“1) An individual’s voluntary exercise of this right or

“2) A person or entity that assists an individual exercising this right, unless the State

demonstrates that it is using the least restrictive means to advance the individual’s health in accordance with widely accepted and evidence-based standards of care.

“3) However, abortion may be prohibitive after fetal viability.

“But in no case may such an abortion be prohibited if in the professional judgment of the pregnant patient’s treating physician it is necessary to protect the pregnant patient’s life or health.”

By precedent, this is not just physical health, but also emotional, financial and more, thus making painful, late-term abortions legal. In case you blinked, the abortionist makes the final decision whether the baby lives or is

(Continued on page 8)



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## Vote No on Issue 1

(Continued from page 7)

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.*


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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

**The prayer intention for November, as recommended by Pope Francis**, is for the Holy Father as he fulfills his mission, may he continue to accompany the flock entrusted to him, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

**The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays, noon to 1 p.m.** Viewers can tune-in on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517; and DirectTV 25.

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

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

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

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

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

**“Understanding GenZ,”** Nov. 9; 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m., Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Cost \$15 includes lunch and snacks. Gain better insight into the lives and culture of teenagers and learn practical skills to effectively communicate the unchanging gospel in a constantly changing landscape. Open to



Learning to serve others

St. Agnes School, Fort Wright, celebrated their Fall Service Day on Friday, October 6. Grade levels did various projects that included making treat bags for the patrons of Parish Kitchen, craft kits for children at Ronald McDonald House, gift bags for the residents at DCCH, tokens of appreciation for military care packages for the Yellow Ribbon Center, blankets for Family Promise participants and Advent kits for a local school. Each grade level had the opportunity to learn about the agency they were helping.

youth ministers, DREs, campus ministers, pastors, volunteers, or anyone who has a heart for sharing Jesus with the next generation. Sponsored by NET ministries. Registration: [www.covdio.org/youth](http://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](http://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 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](http://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://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/> or call (859) 392-1500, ext.1592. The next session will be held on consecutive Thursdays, Oct.12 – Dec. 7, 7 – 8:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Elementary School, Bellevue.

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



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# Report: Abortions provided by virtual-only clinics spike 72 percent in year since Dobbs

Kate Scanlon  
OSV News

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.”

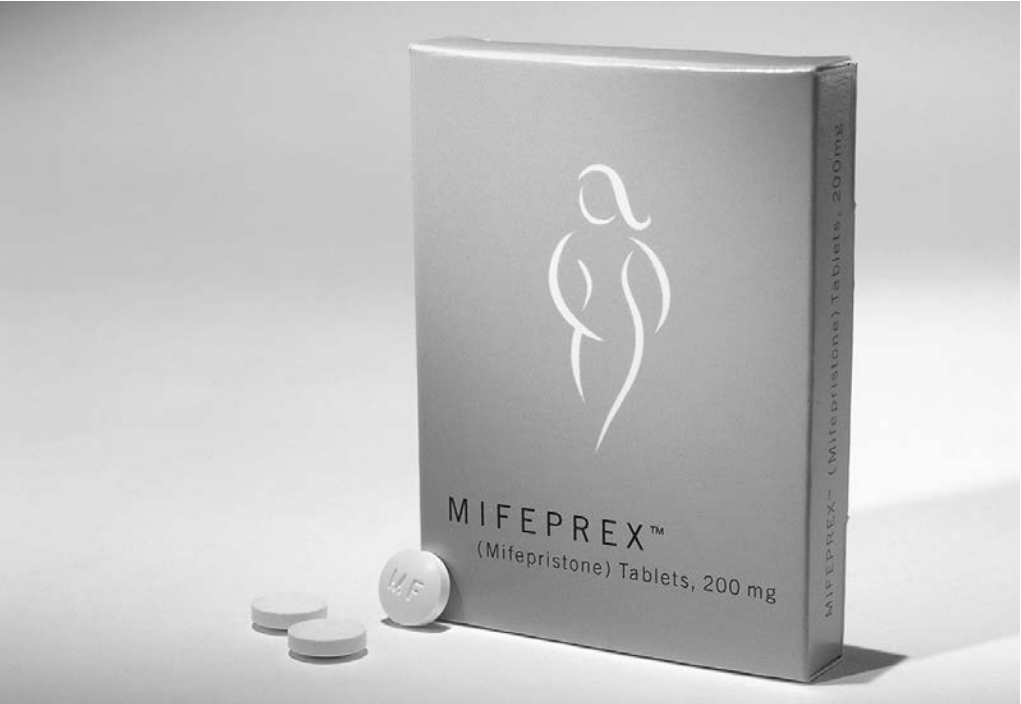
“The irony of ‘choice,’” she added, “is that abortion decisions are often only made when a person feels they have no other choice at all because society is only willing to provide the cheapest option (such as abortion pills), but won’t actually invest in the safety nets that would assist them in choosing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



OSV News photo/courtesy Danco Laboratories

A box of medication used to induce abortion, known generically as mifepristone and by its brand name Mifeprex, is seen in an undated handout photo. Pro-life advocates have responded to a report by #WeCount, an effort by the pro-choice Society of Family Planning, claiming that the number of legal abortions provided by virtual-only clinics spiked 72% in the year following the Supreme Court’s Dobbs decision.



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# Catholic Schools in Action



## Catholic Schools in Action



(top right) Covington Latin School, Covington, students and staff completed 1923 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.



(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.



(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!



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



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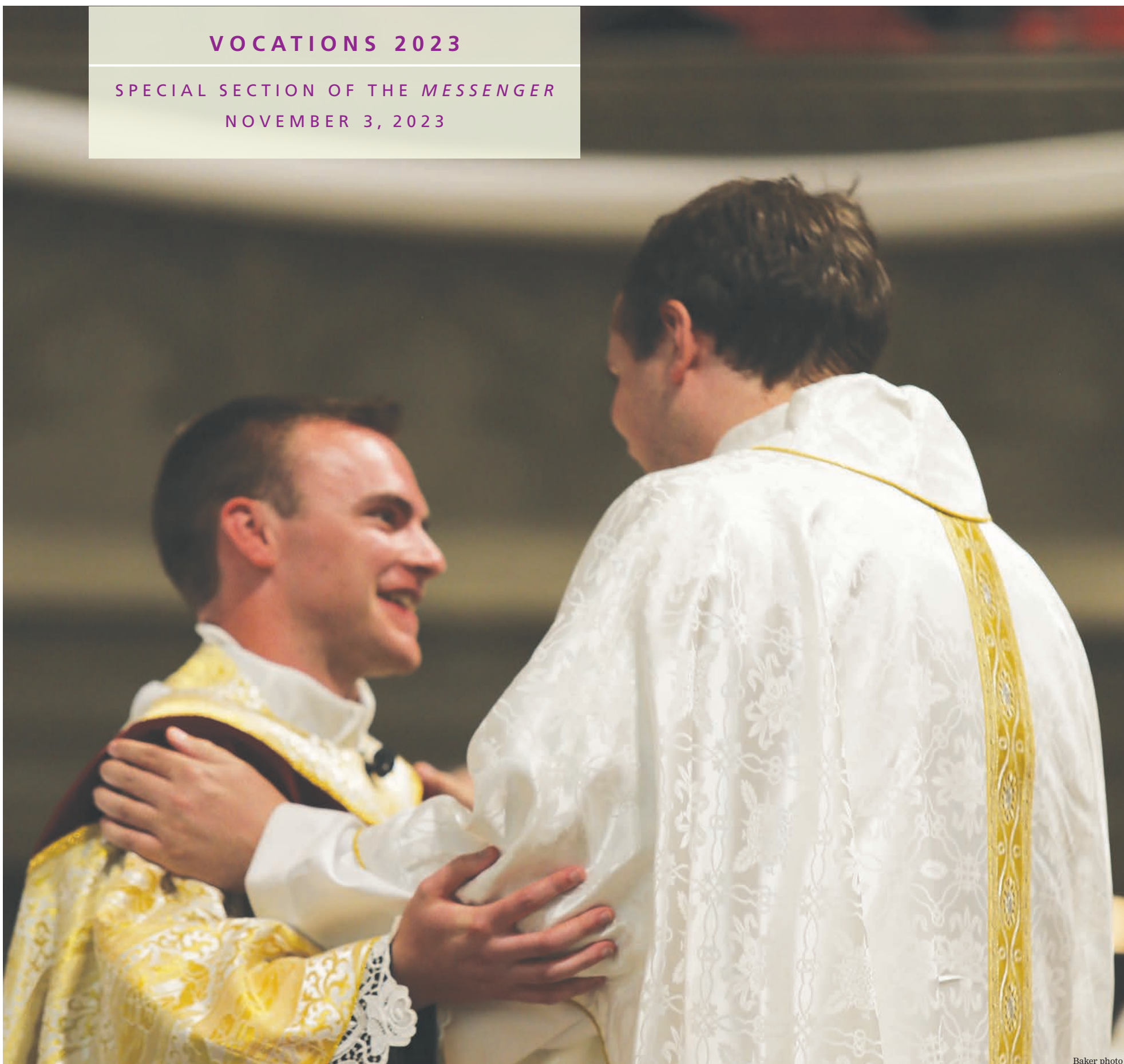
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## VOCATIONS 2023

SPECIAL SECTION OF THE MESSENGER  
NOVEMBER 3, 2023



Baker photo

(above) At his ordination to the priesthood, newly ordained Father Michael Elmlinger and Father Conor Kunath, vocations promoter, exchange a fraternal embrace.

*“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 believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? 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 strong marriages and commit themselves to growing in holiness with the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony? Where else but in our



Most Rev. John C. Iffert

parishes, schools and families? From whom but from people like you? I invite you to become intentional and focused on this mission of encouraging our neighbors to consider a vocation of service to Jesus and his people. I ask you to encourage young people to discern their vocation in the world, to embrace that vocation, and to live it intentionally. Joining or beginning a vocation ministry in your parish is a great way to do that. Here is a plan for starting a vocation ministry.

1. **Pray.** Ask God to use you in this great task of calling and encouraging holy vocations 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** [vocationministry.com](http://vocationministry.com). Select the “Parish” tab and you will find a 4-phase process for establishing and advancing a vocation ministry, along with planning calendars, 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. Everything you can do to help our brothers and sisters encounter Jesus and listen for how the Holy Spirit is inviting them to be generous with their lives is a great service to your brother or sister, the Church, and to God’s plan for the proclamation of the good news. Consider if you have a gift for inviting and encouraging others. If so, become part of the Church’s vocation ministry, because “How can they hear without someone to preach?”

## 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 years 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 out 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 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 ignorance. I don’t have a study to back this up, but I would conservatively 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 discipleship 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 discipleship begins with the understanding that God’s will is the foundational guiding principle of my life and that everything I do has to be oriented towards the salvation of my soul. Every decision I make is weighed on the balance 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 consideration is not about salary but about how this job will affect salvation.





Father Conor Kunath

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 unduly 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 regularly 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

(Continued on page 15)

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VOCATIONS

(Continued from page 14)

first mode and if it is unavailable we try the second and then finally the third. The reason for this process will become clear as the modes are described.

The first mode of discernment is when God gives us certainty beyond doubting. Ignatius tells us, “The first time is when God Our Lord so moves and attracts the will that, without doubting or being able to doubt, the devout soul follows what is shown to it, as St. Paul and St. Matthew did in following Christ our Lord.” This is the ideal situation. God has so blessed us with His grace that there is no ability to doubt its source or the direction and we are simply able to follow it.

Ignatius explains the second mode, “The second time is when sufficient clarity and understanding is received through experience of consolations and desolations, and through experience of discernment of different spirits.” This mode is more complicated than the first. When we are discerning a decision and the first mode is unavailable, we enter into a process of prayer asking God to show us the path we should follow.

During this process of prayer, Ignatius encourages us to examine the spiritual experiences we have surrounding the decision being prayed about. For example, when Ignatius was convalescing after his leg was injured he read many books about Jesus and the saints. These stories always filled his heart with joy and that joy remained with him for long periods after. On the other hand, when he began to contemplate the life of a knight or a courtier, which was the real aspiration of his life at the time, he would be filled with joy initially but that joy would last only a little while and he would be filled with sorrow. Looking at this experience in light of the second mode of discernment, we see that Ignatius experienced a pattern of consolation and desolation that indicated the direction that his life should take. When he considered spending his life in service to the Lord and the Church Ignatius was filled with joy, he experienced consolation. When he considered the path that he was currently on, he was filled with sorrow and experienced desolation. This pattern of spiritual experiences indicated to Ignatius exactly what decision he should make. He left the life of a knight behind and began to serve God as a priest and preacher.

That dynamic is exactly what we are looking at when we employ the second mode. When I consider the various options, where does the spirit seem to be pointing me with consolation and desolation? What patterns emerge that might direct my life?

The third mode is the most practical, but should only be used as a final resort. If the first two modes are either unavailable or have been inconclusive we turn to the third mode. In this mode, keeping in mind the correct disposition and approaching it with a spirit of prayer, we list the spiritual pros and cons of the decision at hand. Remember spiritual reasons are the ones that benefit our salvation. Whichever path has the preponderance of good reasons is the one we should take.

For example, a young woman is discerning between two job opportunities and the first two modes are not available. She turns to this method and begins a list. On the pro-side of one job opportunity is that she would be able to attend daily Mass because she does not have to be at work till later in the morning. On the contrary side might be that the business has a very secular culture and the pressures from coworkers might drive her away from her faith.

If this method proves to be inconclusive then there are three questions that we should then pose to ourselves. Consider a person that you have never met and do not know, and who faces the same choice. Desiring spiritual growth for this person, which path would you advise? Then follow that path for yourself. Consider yourself at the point of death, free from all lesser motivations and distractions. Which decision will you have wished you made? Make that same choice now. Consider yourself at the day of judgment, which will you wish you had chosen? Make that choice now.

Discernment is not an optional part of life for discipleship 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?”

# The less traveled road makes all the difference

**Notre Dame Sister Marla Monahan**  
*Vicar 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



**Sister Marla Monahan, SND**

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.

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# NCCHS’s ‘Looking Up’ renovation project has students looking back

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 minis-



Most Rev. William T. Mulloy

ter, NCCHS. Things like how “vocations have always been on the forefront of every bishops 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.”

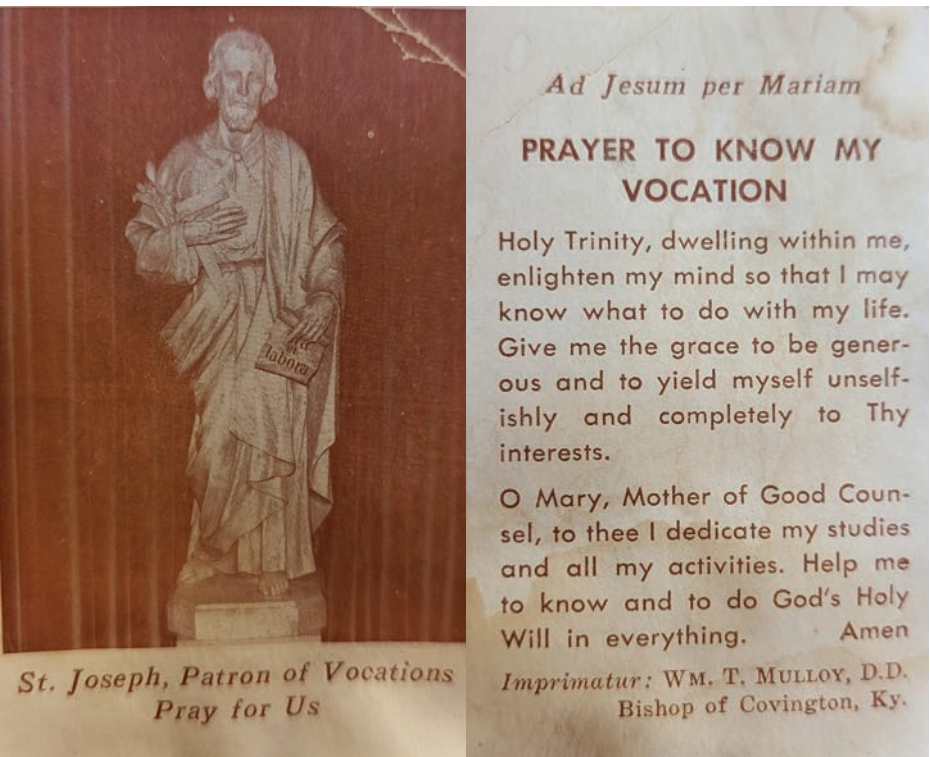
Students pray the prayer at Mass each week and, during the month of November, — Vocations awareness month — will be praying the prayer as a school consistently throughout the month. Mr. Barnes also has plans to share the prayer with parents and alumni.

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



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

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.”



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# 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 gives 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 priestly ordination.

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



Sister Paula Gohs, CDP

planet we call home. Jesus’s ministry here on earth was first-and-last genuine presence to people of all ages, backgrounds 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 gracious 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 tune into his frequency. We allow the warmth of his love to embrace us. We open our minds and hearts to listen and to respond, as we share the wealth of our daily experiences in our chosen vocation. This is non-negotiable. Discipleship blesses us with a far-reaching focus. We 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)**  
*Contributor*  
“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 things. I think that is why the Congregation of Divine Providence fit my needs so well.



Sister Georgianna Abplanalp, CDP

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 ANDP (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 los-

ing 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 so... On that bright sunny afternoon of August 15, 1961, Sister Mary Agnes Kelly accompanied me and my family to the front doors of St. Anne Convent, Melbourne, Kentucky. My life was about to change for good. A new chapter was about to begin. On Aug. 29, 1963, I professed my vows for the first time. It was a day unlike any other. I have often tried to express the feelings of that day and even now, sixty years later, there are no words to truly describe the inner joy and peace of that day. My teaching career began in 1964. I taught at St. Agatha Academy in Winchester, Ky. From there I was sent to Our Lady of Sorrows in Takoma Park, Maryland. In 1969, I was sent to St. John the Baptist on Dry Ridge Road in Cincinnati, Ohio where I served the parish for thirty-nine years as teacher and part time DRE. From 1996 to 2012 I also taught as an adjunct teacher at Mt. St. Joseph College. My final assignment was in our Finance Office in 1994. In 2008 I was diagnosed with final stage renal failure. This made it necessary for me to move to Holy Family Home, our retirement/nursing facility. My trust in Providence was being challenged! I know it was the prayers and support of my Sisters that carried me through those early days. In August of 2009, I suffered a heart attack 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 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 and give you glory forever. Amen.”



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3rd Year Theology



**Justin Schwarz**  
3rd Year Theology



**Hank Bischoff**  
2nd Year Theology



**Michael Schulte**  
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Most Reverend John C. Iffert  
Bishop of Covington

**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 discernment.

“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.” Michael Schulte joined the United States Air Force after high school, something he reportedly 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 wanted 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 feeling more consistently, then that’s evidence 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



Michael Schulte

that I’ve wanted and needed, and there’s a real kind of joy— knowing that I’m growing closer to God.”

Mr. Schulte also notes how, being in seminary, 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 identity. 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 being overworked and with increasingly less support from their local diocese. As the overall number of available priests in active ministry declines, many bishops have to consolidate parishes, cluster regions of parishes, and in some cases close parishes altogether. So, the question everyone asks is “Why aren’t there more priests?”

As Catholics, we believe the Lord never stops calling men to work in his vineyard. The same calling is still there. Rather, it is our response to God’s call that has gone missing on many levels. The question does not offer a straightforward answer. On the surface, the most obvious problem is a large number of Baby Boomer generation priests on a steady retirement track that began a decade ago and is only picking up pace. That, coupled with low seminary numbers across the country, leaves an obvious gap.

With fewer ordinations year over year, the Catholic Church in the United States is far below replacement level compared to the number of Catholic parishes and registered parishioners. Additionally, there are other challenges on the individual level whereby men have simply stopped considering a vocation to the priesthood. In a world where young people experience fewer hardships in life and are inundated with materialism, social media pressure, and unlimited access to pornography, a vocation to the priesthood is easily bypassed.

As dioceses have consolidated and the duties of priests have increased, many dioceses can no longer spare the priest personnel to serve at Catholic high schools and university campuses — the places where young men are most likely to encounter a priest and be exposed to the priesthood as a life calling. Most Catholic boys in America only see a priest behind an altar once a week (if they are even attending Mass weekly with their family) with a possible handshake as they leave Mass. Boys can’t consider a vocation to a calling and a life they have no exposure to.

So, many questions loom — How did we get here? How long will it take to rebuild the priesthood? How do we reach young men caught in the snare of an increasingly secularized culture? Is this a family life issue or lack of focus on vocations in parishes across the country ... or both?

A priest bears 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 vocations will flourish.

Regardless of the factors affecting the priesthood today, 75 percent of newly ordained priests, year over year, report having heard 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 visit 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 diminishment 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 among otherwise downward trends. In fact, there are actually 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 education and workshops. Vocation Ministry can be found online at [vocationministry.com](http://vocationministry.com).*



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VOCATIONS

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 get 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.

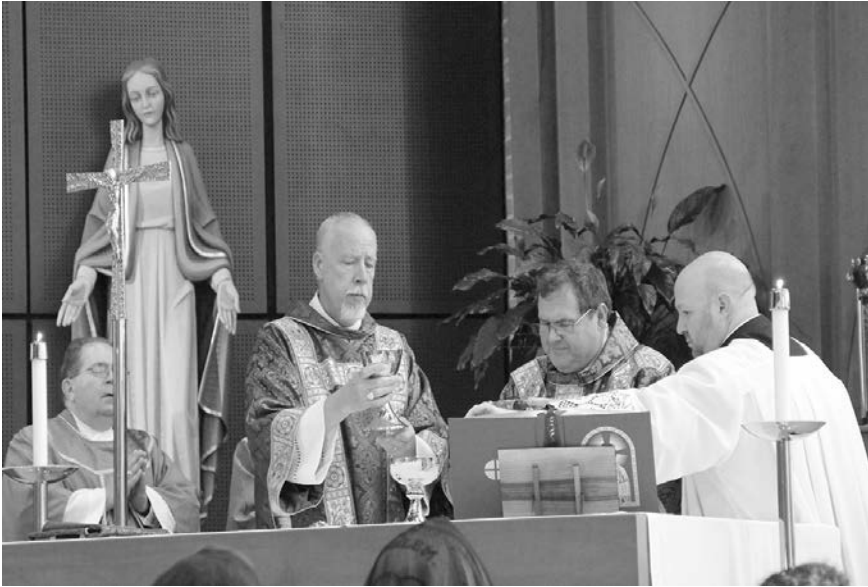
Shortly after I was ordained, I was asked if I could bring some exorcised salt and holy water for a Cursillo restoration team. So, I asked the team that if they wanted to bring the "raw materials" to our next meeting, I would bless them. The very next day while driving to work, I heard a priest on the 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



Deacon Brian Cox (center) lifts the chalice while assisting Bishop John Iffert at the altar during Mass at Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky.

adoration from 2 p.m.–6 p.m. every Monday at the Newman House followed by book 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 guest) 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!

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Director of Priestly Vocations  
Diocese of Covington  
telephone: 859-392-1566  
email: [ckunath@covdio.org](mailto:ckunath@covdio.org)



VOCATIONS

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 26 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 afire.”

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.



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.

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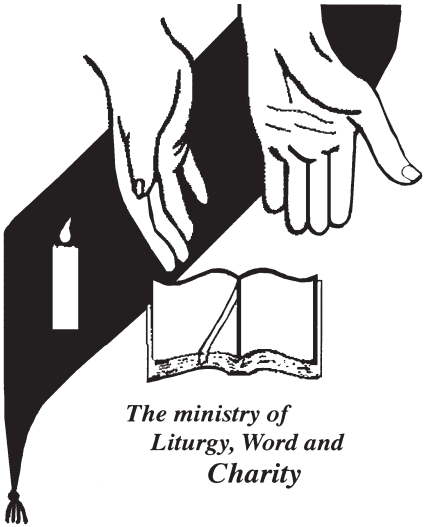
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VOCATIONS

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 beautified 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 and religious life. At the time of the Club's beginnings, dioceses throughout the nation did not have vocation offices. But in the years since the Serra Clubs' founding, clubs have been formed throughout 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 aggregated to the Sacred Council for Catholic Education and the Pontifical Work for Priestly Vocations. In 1986, Serra



International voted to welcome women as well as men to membership in the organization. Today, there are more than 1,120 Serra Clubs in 46 countries with a total membership of more than 23,000 men, women and permanent deacons. Each Serra Club is a member of both a national council and Serra International. 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 business 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.



The weather was perfect as sisters pile-in for an afternoon horse-drawn carriage ride at the 2023 Women Religious Picnic held at Ryland Lakes Country Club. The annual picnic is one of several events hosted by the Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky to support religious and priestly vocations and those who have been called to them.

The Serra Club also encourages its members to live out their own vocation to service.

Pope John Paul II in his address to Serra International in December of 2000 said:

"The whole Church must become completely ministerial, a community of heralds and witnesses, rich in laborers for the harvest," he said. "Prayer moves the heart of God."

"The role of Serrans fits very well into the mission of the Church because they encourage pastors and laity alike to promote vocations," the Holy Father concluded.

If anyone is interested in learning more about the Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky and its mission, please visit the Club's website at [www.serranky.org](http://www.serranky.org).



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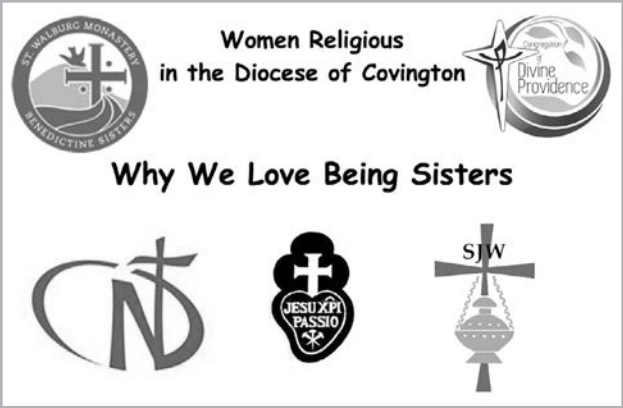
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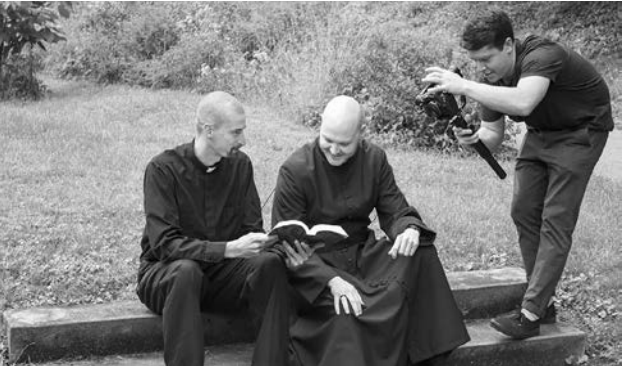
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(above) A screenshot of the introduction page of the new Women Religious video.


**Coming to a screen near you**  
The Vocations Office and the Vicar for Religious have added new vocational videos that schools, parishes and organizations can share on their websites and social media accounts. The videos can be found on the office pages of the Diocesan website [covdio.org/vocations](http://covdio.org/vocations) and [covdio.org/vicar-for-religious-2020](http://covdio.org/vicar-for-religious-2020).



(above) A behind-the-scenes shot of the filming of the new video featuring a day in the life of our seminarians.

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## 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 41011-3115  
(859) 392-1566 E-mail: [ckunath@covdio.org](mailto:ckunath@covdio.org)

### Permanent Diaconate and Lay Pastoral Ministry

Msgr. Gerry Reinersman  
Pastoral Ministry Formation Office, 1125 Madison Ave,  
Covington, KY 41011-3115  
(859) 392-1564 E-mail: [greinersman@covdio.org](mailto:greinersman@covdio.org)

Deacon Brian Cox  
Pastoral Ministry Formation Office, 1125 Madison Ave,  
Covington, KY 41011-3115  
(859) 392-1568 E-mail: [bcox@covdio.org](mailto:bcox@covdio.org)

### Religious Communities of Women

Benedictine Sisters of Covington, [www.stwalburg.org](http://www.stwalburg.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](mailto:bauerosb@yahoo.com)

St. Joseph the Worker Sisters, [www.ssjw.org](http://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](mailto:sjwvocations@gmail.com) or  
[motherchristinasjw@gmail.com](mailto:motherchristinasjw@gmail.com)

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

Notre Dame Sisters of Covington, [www.sndky.org](http://www.sndky.org)  
Sister Mary Ruth Lubbers, S.N.D.  
1601 Dixie Hwy, Covington, KY 41011  
(859) 750-8190  
E-mail: [rlubbers@sndusa.org](mailto:rlubbers@sndusa.org)

Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ,  
[www.erlangerpassionists.com](http://www.erlangerpassionists.com)  
Mother Marie Michelle Mudd, C.P.  
1151 Donaldson Hwy, Erlanger, KY 41018  
(859) 371-8568  
E-mail: [sistermariem@gmail.com](mailto:sistermariem@gmail.com)

### Public Association of the Faithful

Franciscan Daughters of Mary, [www.fdomary.org](http://www.fdomary.org)  
Sister Clare Marie Borchard, F.D.M.  
PO Box 122070, Covington, KY 41012-2070  
(859) 512-5575  
E-mail: [fdmsisters@gmail.com](mailto:fdmsisters@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](mailto: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) 392-1500 or e-mail [mmurray@covdio.org](mailto:mmurray@covdio.org). Visit [www.serranky.org](http://www.serranky.org) or [www.serrainternational.org](http://www.serrainternational.org).

Our diocesan **Knights of Columbus** send each seminarian a financial contribution for personal expenses. Call Dustin Reed at (859) 866-2122 or visit [kofc.org/joinus](http://kofc.org/joinus).

Make a financial contribution to the diocesan Seminarian Education Fund, 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, KY 41011-3115 or online at [www.covdio.org](http://www.covdio.org).

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VIRTUS Training:

■ Tuesday, Nov. 14, 9–11:30 a.m.,  
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Memorial Auditorium, Covington  
■ Tuesday, Nov. 14, 6–8:30 p.m.,  
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■ 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,  
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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Violence in Holy Land shows need to support local Christians

VATICAN CITY — As leaders of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem prepared to meet in Rome, the explosion of violence between Israel 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 “consulta” 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 in several countries. Father Ivan Levitsky and Father Bohdan Geleta, both Redemptorist priests, were seized in November 2022 from the Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos in Berdiansk, located just over an hour southwest of Mariupol in Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia oblast. Father Geleta is known to suffer from an acute form of diabetes. Both priests refused to leave their parishioners following Russia’s full-scale invasion in February

2022, which continued attacks launched in 2014 against Ukraine. Ultimately, “the Russians don’t explain what they’re doing, what plans they have, what their intentions are in seizing people,” Forum 18 researcher Felix Corley told OSV News during an Oct. 25 call. Having walked away from multiple international agreements, Russia has made it “quite clear” that its government “does not have much respect for international human rights commitments, and is not shy about showing that to the world,” said Corley.

Limits on religion rise worldwide

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 chairmen of the U.S. bishops’ religious liberty and international policy committees. “Sadly,” 80 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, and Bishop David J. Malloy of Rockford, Illinois, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on International Justice and Peace. The prelates 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

SALT LAKE CITY — A Catholic cemetery in Utah has discovered the grave of miners killed in a 1910 explosion, most of whom were immigrants, and plans to erect a memorial marker. “We need to take care of all the lost souls,” said John Curtice, director of Mount Calvary Catholic Cemetery in Salt Lake City. Mount Calvary Catholic Cemetery is the final resting place of many of the faithful departed of the local church. While most are buried

in individual coffins or mausoleum niches, one grave stands out: that which holds the remains of 17 men killed in a mining accident that occurred at the turn of the last century. On June 1, 1910, several hundred kegs of black powder exploded at the Union Portland Cement Works at Devil’s Slide in Morgan County, killing a team of miners. The June 10, 1910, issue of the Salt Lake Telegram newspaper reported that it took several days to clear the debris, and “unearth the remains of the rest of the victims.” The remains of 16 of the men were buried together at the Morgan Cemetery in one box; another box held the foreman, Hugh McGuire. At some point, the remains of the men were transferred from the Morgan Cemetery to Mount Calvary Catholic Cemetery, and both boxes now rest in a grave marked by McGuire’s tombstone.

Bishops call for solidarity after Hurricane Otis devastates Acapulco

ACAPULCO, Mexico — Mexico’s bishops expressed “closeness” 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 Otis, 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 incommunicado. Dioceses 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 Otis had explosively intensified by 95 mph during the past 24 hours. Media arriving later in the day documented hotels and buildings badly damaged by winds of 165 mph, along with downed trees and entire parts of the city of 1 million residents underwater. The Guerrero state government estimated 80 percent of the city’s hotels were damaged. Mexico’s electrical utility said 58 power line towers were toppled in the storm.



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# 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.”

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