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(above) Amongst a full congregation, altar servers kneel before the altar during the consecration.
(below left) After the procession, Bishop Iffert kneels before the Cathedral's nativity scene, praying and anointing it with incense.
(below right) A member of the Bishop's Choir proclaims the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, from the Roman Martyrology, at the start of Mass.
(bottom right) Bishop Iffert preaches the homily at midnight Christmas Mass.

Baker potos

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A God who became so small, could only be mercy and love, said Bishop Iffert at midnight

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

As the clock struck midnight, Dec. 25, Bishop John Iffert gathered with friends and family from across the diocese and beyond to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord with Midnight Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

The Mass was celebrated in choro with Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys, and concelebrated with Father Ryan Maher, rector, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Msgr. Kurt Kemo, vice-rector, and Father James Schaeper, a teacher at the neighboring Covington Latin School. Deacon Gerald Franzen assisted.

The Mass began with the proclamation of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the Roman Martyrology, followed by a procession that ended as Bishop Iffert knelt before the nativity before taking to the altar.

During his homily, Bishop Iffert began quite simply: by wishing all gathered a Merry Christmas, and welcoming them to the celebration. "It is a joy to be with you on this Christmas night," he said, "when we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ."

He welcomed in a special way the parishioners visiting, not just from the Cathedral, but from parishes across the Diocese, as well as visitors — particularly

(Continued on page 8)



The Diocese’s second Bambinelli brings blessings and community in the season of waiting and rejoicing

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The Diocese of Covington hosted its second Bambinelli Blessing, Dec. 17, at St. Mary’s Park in the Cathedral Square, Covington. The clear December night invited community members for an evening of carols, cookies and blessings — including a lighting and blessing of a Christmas tree in the park by Bishop Iffert, and a blessing of household Bambinellis — baby Jesus’s from home nativities.

The evening opened with music sung by the Blessed Sacrament Children’s Choir; with Bishop Iffert taking the stage following.

As he addressed the crowd present, Bishop Iffert remarked how, on the Third week of advent, we are deep, “waiting, waiting, waiting for Christmas, and, in the larger sense, for the coming of Jesus.” He continued, saying, “Of course, we don’t have to wait to know Jesus in our heart, do we?”

“The victory is already won, and we can wait in celebration, and rejoicing, in prayer commitment with God in constant Thanksgiving... that’s why we’re here tonight.”

With his words, Bishop Iffert went on to bless and light the park’s tree — decorated with oversized baubles representing community Catholic schools and institutions.

After, the park was filled with music from the Cathedral Bishop’s Choir; while sandwiches and cookies were served inside Bishop Howard Memorial Hall. There, David Cooley, co-director of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, read the children’s book “Bambinelli Sunday: A Christmas Blessing” by Amy Welborn.

As the night came to a close, St. Henry District High’s Chamber Choir took to the stage to finish the night with song, and Bishop Iffert invited all who had gathered to come forward with the baby Jesus’s from their home nativity scenes, and blessed them each individually.

Baker photos



(above) Bishop Iffert greets guests at the Bambinelli event before lighting the tree.

(below) A young boy holds his family’s Bambinelli— a statue of Baby Jesus, for Bishop Iffert to bless.



(above) A young girl admires a bauble on the Christmas tree.

(below) Children in the Blessed Sacrament parish Children’s Choir begin the night of song— each child wearing a festively themed hat decorated in lights.



(above) Bishop Iffert blesses a Bambinelli.

(lef) David Cooley, co-director of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, reads the children’s book “Bambinelli Sunday: A Christmas Blessing” by Amy Welborn for children inside Bishop Howard Memorial Hall.

(far left) Jamie Schroeder, chancellor, places a strand of lights around the neck of a young attendee. Curia employees wore these lights as volunteers to help guests at the event.



2023 — A year in the life of the Diocese of Covington

Items are listed in the month they occurred; in several cases, the news appeared in the *Messenger* the following month.

January

In the wake of Catholic News Service dissolving its national and international news service, the *Messenger* begins again its relationship with Our Sunday Visitor, this time as a subscriber to OSV News for its national and international news.

Bishop John Iffert celebrates a memorial Mass for Pope Benedict XVI, kicking-off in the Diocese nine days of prayer and service, Jan. 4-13; Bishop-emeritus Roger Foys concelebrates. The retired pontiff died Dec. 31, 2022. Local priests and people share their encounters and inspirations of Pope Benedict.

Bishop Iffert releases for publication the July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023, Diocesan financial report. An independent public accounting firm issued an unmodified opinion on the Diocesan financial statements — the highest level of assurance attainable. The Diocesan Finance Council reviewed these statements and audit reports and accepted them in October 2023.

Stephen Enzweiler, Cathedral historian and archivist, offers an historical account of the Three Magi.

The Divine Mercy Adoration Chapel at St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright, celebrates its 25th anniversary on the Feast of Epiphany, Jan. 8.

Mike Clines, parishioner, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring and former superintendent for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Covington, is sworn in, Jan. 3, as Representative for Kentucky’s District 68.

Our Savior Parish, Covington, hosts its annual Martin Luther King Jr. discussion breakfast “The Roots of White Supremacy” with featured speakers Divine Providence Alice Gerdeman; Dr. Joan Ferrante and Lynnisia Hillman, sociologists at Northern Kentucky University and John Fisher, field supervisor, Kentucky Human Rights Commission.

After serving five years as campus minister for the Northern Kentucky University Newman Club, Donna Heim retires.

For the first time, the Diocese of Covington does not send a contingency of high school students to the March for Life, a

smaller group from Catholic Charities, NKU Newman Club and Thomas More University attend the March.

In its sixth year, St. Mary Parish implements an optional 26-session program entitled “Chosen” to strengthen the relevance of the sacrament of Confirmation for its confirmandi, participation continues to grow.

Volunteers at St. Augustine Parish, Covington, connect via cards and home visits with homebound parishioners through a ministry began in 2019 entitled “Be Their Light.”

The celebration of Catholic Schools Week begins. Bishop Iffert encourages everyone to support Catholic Schools saying, “Our future is in our past. Our ancestors worked diligently, thought creatively, sacrificed personally and communally to build a Catholic school system the likes of which the world had never seen. Over the next decade and more, I will need your help to continue their work. Together we will do our best to balance obligations and sacrifices, to help find funds for tuition assistance for those who need it, to expand the pool of resources where we can, to find ways to save and remain on the forefront. We will trust in God and one another.”

The 2023 Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal kicks-off its leadership gifts phase with a luncheon. Linda Rawe, leadership gifts chair, thanked participants saying, “Your dedication to the diocese and to the annual appeal are really the key to its success.”

Obituaries
Sister Mariana Kirk, OSB



March – As they were called forward by name, Bishop John Iffert greeted candidates and catechumens at the annual Rite of Election, Feb. 26, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. The crozier Bishop Iffert carried belonged to Covington’s sixth Bishop, William Mulloy, and features carvings of the gifts of the Holy Spirit around the shaft and of St. William at the crook.

Official Appointments
Catholic Charities Advisory Board
Effective January 1, three-year term
Dinah Marron
Randy Rawe
Lisa Knochemann

Diocesan Finance Council
Effective January 1, six-year term
John Garvey

(Continued on page 12)

With One Heart takes planning and prayer

Notre Dame Sister Marla Monahan
Contributor

Bishop John Iffert announced With One Heart to the people of the Diocese of Covington on Sept. 30, 2022: “It is with great joy that I share with you today the beginning of a key pastoral initiative in the Diocese of Covington — With One Heart. The goal of this initiative is to embolden and equip the faithful — priests and the entire Body of Christ — to engage the mission of Jesus with united and determined energy.”

The hope is that With One Heart will empower priests, ignite parishes, and enliven the faithful.

The five major communities of women religious in the



Diocese of Covington, representing 170 women religious, reflected on how they could be supportive of this diocesan initiative.

This is nothing new for these women religious. They

have been involved in the ministry of the Covington Church almost since its founding in 1853. They have established the diocesan college (now university), secondary schools, staffed elementary schools, founded healthcare ministries, staffed childcare ministries, and served in parishes.

Today they continue to teach English to our brothers and sisters from other countries, serve in our parishes and schools, serve as midwife and healthcare educators, provide pastoral care for elders, serve the diocese in canon law, in grief counseling for children, as spiritual directors, artists, in social service ministries and the ministry of prayer.

They asked themselves how they could be an integral part of With One Heart. There are 58 parishes and shrines listed for the Diocese of Covington. The five major communities of women religious: Benedictines, Passionists,

(Continued on page 7)

Reporting Misconduct in the Diocese of Covington

Anyone who has experienced sexual misconduct by a cleric, employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Covington is asked to contact Ms. Julie Feinauer, diocesan victims assistance coordinator (859) 392-1515. Professional assistance and pastoral support will be provided in confidentiality and with respect.

A copy of the “Diocesan Policies and Procedures for Addressing Sexual

Misconduct” is available by contacting the Chancery, (859) 392-1510 or visiting www.covdio.org and going to “Sexual Misconduct Policy.”

Informando sobre conducta inapropiada en la Diócesis de Covington

Cualquier persona que haya experimentado conducta sexual inapropiada por parte de un clérigo, empleado o voluntario de la Diócesis de Covington está invitada a ponerse en contacto con Ms. Julie Feinauer,

coordinadora diocesana para dar asistencia a las víctimas. Teléfono (859) 392-1515. Asistencia profesional y apoyo moral serán ofrecidos de una manera confidencial y con respeto.

Una copia de “Normas y Procedimientos sobre Conducta Sexual Inapropiada” está disponible poniéndose en contacto con la Cancillería, Teléfono (859) 392-1510, o visitando www.covdio.org y marcando “Sexual Misconduct Policy.”



Bishop’s Schedule

- Jan. 6**
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m.

Jan. 7–12
Region V Bishops Retreat
- Jan. 14**
Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 10 a.m.

Jan. 15
Dr. Martin Luther King holiday — Curia offices closed

COMMENTARY

Spreading the Good News begins with an encounter

I'd like to invite you to reflect on your favorite Gospel story featuring a personal encounter with Jesus. Take a

VIEWPOINT



Chris Goddard

few minutes to revisit the passage and contemplate why it holds a special place in your heart or resonates with you.

For those who may not have a favorite, consider some well-known encounters such as Christ's meeting with Simon/Peter (Matt 4:18-22), the Rich Young Man (Mark 10:17-22), Zacchaeus, the tax collector who climbed a sycamore tree (Luke 19:1-10), the Paralytic lowered through the roof (Luke 5:17-26), Levi/Matthew, the tax collector (Luke 5:27-32), the woman with a hemorrhage (Mark 5:25-34), Nicodemus, the Pharisee who visits Jesus at night (John 3:1-21), and Dismas, the good thief (Luke 23:39-43).

Personally, my favorite encounter story involves the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4:1-29). Despite years of envisioning the interaction through reflection,

watching it portrayed in the drama series "The Chosen" (season 1, episode 8) brought it to life. I encourage you to take eight minutes to treat yourself and watch it; the scene vividly illustrates the transformative power of encountering Christ.

I have a special fondness for this story because it underscores the idea that, regardless of internal struggles concerning faith and sin, there is a profound sense of joy and hope when an individual genuinely believes that their Father is loving and merciful.

In this story, Jesus intentionally goes out of his way to meet the Samaritan woman in the heat of the day, without his disciples. He refrains from starting the conversation with admonishment or judgment, fully aware of her marital situation. Instead, he befriends her, engaging in conversation and listening to her painful experiences of mistreatment and prejudice.

As the dialogue unfolds, she openly questions what God has done for her: Jesus reveals that he is there for her precisely at that very moment, declaring himself as the Messiah. He offers her "living water" or the Holy Spirit for eternal life, ensuring she will never thirst again. While acknowledging creative liberties in "The Chosen," especially in revealing details about her past husbands, the artistic license of the script greatly enriches the narrative. Jesus' acknowledgment of her past husbands portrays him not just as a prophet but as a loving and under-

standing Messiah, emphasizing forgiveness and a desire for her transformation.

Though I am generalizing the events for emphasis, this seemingly casual encounter unfolded as Jesus essentially became a friend, made a friend, and drew her into a closer relationship with himself. Consequently, her experience sparks a transformation, propelling her to become one of the earliest evangelists — an unknowing participant in what would become the Great Commission.

This commission, issued by the resurrected Jesus Christ to his disciples, and all baptized Christians, instructs them (and us) to spread the Gospel to all nations. Departing from the presence of Jesus, invigorated by the profound interaction, she is eager to share the Good News within her village. Jesus' approach to the woman, echoing the principles in Cursillo renewal, offers a valuable model for our own mission to evangelize.


To underscore a brief but final point, it is essential to recognize that effectively guiding others to Christ requires our ongoing, personal commitment to cultivating a deeper relationship with our Savior. This personal encounter is primarily attained through the reception of the sacraments and a daily life of prayer.

Chris Goddard is executive director for Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington, Ky

Five surprising 'firsts' of Pope Benedict XVI

Upon his election to the papacy, we all thought we knew who Pope Benedict XVI would be. "Is anyone sure what will happen to church unity now if the oppression of thinkers and the suppression of questions becomes a papal norm," asked Sister Joan Chittister after the conclave.

GUEST



Elizabeth Scalia

Reporter John L. Allen, a knowledgeable Vatican insider; however, speculated that a Ratzinger papacy could have some surprises in store. In fact, Benedict did surprise the world in many ways, not least with his wholly unexpected resignation — the first papal

resignation in nearly 600 years.

Pope Benedict XVI was the first pope to do many things, however; and on the one year anniversary of his death it is worth taking the time to reflect on all the ways the unassuming Bavarian pope broke new ground during his eight years of papal leadership.

— Embracing new media: Today the @Pontifex ("bridge builder") handle on "X," formally Twitter, has over 18 million followers, and we don't think twice about it, but in 2012 the notion of a pope embracing social media to encourage the faithful was nearly unthinkable. Benedict, though, had already demonstrated a keen interest in the evangelical possibilities presented by new media. In May 2011 he invited several hundred bloggers — lay folk and clergy — to discuss exactly that. A month later, in his World Communications Day address, he waxed enthusiastic over the digital age's "unprecedented opportunities," while almost prophetically anticipating a risk that sounds uncomfortably familiar to many of us: "Does the danger exist that we may be less present to [others, and] more distracted because our attention is

fragmented and absorbed in a world 'other' than the one in which we live?" His advice against that, unsurprisingly, was pure Benedict: We are to be like "the risen Jesus when he joined the disciples on the way to Emmaus" (Lk 24:13-35).

— Benedict, the "Green Pope": This one may surprise people because his successor, Pope Francis, issued Laudato si', the groundbreaking encyclical on the environment (and that's a good example of how continuums develop from one papacy to another). In 2009, Allen wrote of Pope Benedict's "remarkable ecological sensitivity" in having solar panels installed atop the Vatican's audience hall, also citing Benedict's inclusion of environmental concerns in the 2009 encyclical, "Caritas in Veritate," where he wrote, "When nature, including the human being, is viewed as the result of mere chance or evolutionary determinism, our sense of responsibility wanes. [We end up] abusing it" (No. 48). Benedict observed that promoting peace in the world relied, in part, on resolving our environmental issues and observed, sagely, "The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa" (No. 51).

— Abuse Reforms: The argument is made that Pope Benedict, both as head of the Holy See's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) and as pope, did not do enough to address the sexual abuse crises whose revelations have been roiling the church for two decades. In the face of hundreds of thousands of victims throughout the world, it is difficult to know how any pope could ever do "enough," but Benedict — while he was still Ratzinger at the CDF — created new rules and procedures to help identify and prosecute predator priests, codifying them into law in 2010, during his papacy. He prosecuted the deeply disturbing Father Marcial Maciel Degollado and sentenced him to a life of "prayer and penance." He imposed similar sanctions against the disgraced (now laicized) former cardinal Theodore McCarrick, although enforcement in that case seems to have been poorly handled).

Still, on Benedict's first Good Friday as pope, he decried the "filth" in the church, and he was the first

pope to personally meet with abuse victims and to apologize to them. Between 2004-2014, the Vatican defrocked 848 priests for rape or abuse-related causes, with Benedict laicizing nearly 400 of them during the last two years of his papacy. His 2010 letter to the anguished and shaken church in Ireland was moving, prayerful, contrite and deeply pastoral. As Pope Francis recently apologized to the victimized indigenous people of Canada, Benedict said to Ireland, "You have suffered grievously, and I am truly sorry. I know that nothing can undo the wrong you have endured. ... It is understandable that you find it hard to forgive or be reconciled with the Church. In her name, I openly express the shame and remorse that we all feel. At the same time, I ask you not to lose hope"(No. 6).

— Financial Reforms: In another example of a pontifical continuum, Pope Francis has wisely permitted the Vatican's still-troubled finances to undergo secular scrutiny, but after the Vatican crafted new transparency laws in 2010, it was Benedict who, in 2011 (and with rumored resistance within the Vatican) brought in Moneyval, the monitoring body created by the Council of Europe in order to counter money laundering and terrorist financing, and let them see the books. "This was the first time the Vatican opened itself to review by an outside body," wrote Father Thomas Reese at the <<National Catholic Reporter>>, adding, "Because of Benedict, Moneyval periodically reviews and publicly reports on the Vatican's progress, or lack of it, on financial reform."

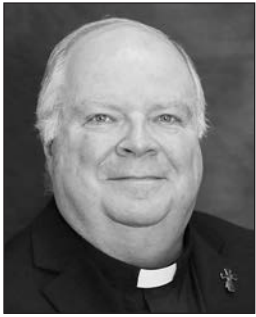
— The Pilot Pope: Ending on a slightly lighter note, and still a surprising one, Pope Benedict XVI was reportedly the first pope ever to fly a helicopter from the Vatican to Castel Gandolfo, the papal summer residence. He never pursued a driver's license, but at some point Joseph Ratzinger became a pilot, licensed to fly small-engine planes or helicopters. There seems to be only one source for the story, so details are sketchy, but hopefully more information on this tidbit will emerge. There is something delightful in imagining this soft-spoken, highly scrutinized man, called "God's Rottweiler" by some, escaping the Vatican to enjoy a bit of playtime in the sky.

Elizabeth Scalia is culture editor at OSV News.

Joseph’s proper place

A couple of weeks ago, my wife and I went to see “Late Night Catechism.” It was a very funny and very nostalgic trip back in time to being in Catholic grade school. The stage setting was an actual classroom complete with

BELIEVE, TEACH, PRACTICE



Deacon Peter Freeman

Advent wreath, the alphabet above the chalkboard with Catholic pictures for each letter and, of course, a photo of John F. Kennedy. The only actor was “Sister.”

On the blackboard Sister had written “JM.J.” During her late-night adult catechism class, Sister reminded us that “JM.J” stood for “Joseph, Mary and Jesus.” My wife took exception to this. “JM.J stands for Jesus, Mary and Joseph,” she told me.

I thought about this and it seems JM.J meaning Jesus, Mary and Joseph is kind of symbolic of Joseph’s place in most of the Christmas narratives. Last. There are even no recorded words of Joseph in Scripture.

Certainly, in the Gospels, Mary’s role as the spotless virgin Mother of God takes precedent. I think it’s important to note, however; that while God could have just had his son, Jesus, be born of Mary, without Joseph, God chose to create a family. God knew the importance of a child being raised by both a mother and a father. God chose Joseph to be Jesus’ father on earth. Joseph was part of God’s plan for raising his son.

Most of what we know about Joseph from Scripture is that he protected Jesus and Mary from harm. God sent an angel to appear to Joseph in dreams and told Joseph to take his family and move when they were in danger. Joseph did it without question. In the Eastern Church, Joseph is referred to as “nutritor Domini” — “the guardian of the Lord.”

We know that it would have been Joseph’s role to present Jesus to the priests in the temple and to raise Jesus in the Jewish faith. Joseph also taught Jesus the trade of carpenter, which in those days was more like being a handyman. A carpenter fixes things.

Joseph was also Mary’s husband. We believe Mary remained a virgin her entire life. Joseph, as her husband, would have accepted that. After all, when he found out she was with child, he could have had her put to death but instead had planned to divorce her quietly to protect her. Then, he obeyed God and remained married to Mary. God was in the middle of Joseph and Mary’s marriage literally and figuratively — as he should be in every marriage.

Joseph is recognized as a saint of the Catholic Church. He has two main feast days. March 19 is the Feast of St. Joseph the Husband of Mary. In 1955, in response to communists’ “May Day,” Pope Pius XII declared May 1 as the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker. In 1870, St. Joseph was declared to be the “Patron of the Universal Church.”

Today, as men, we should reflect on St. Joseph’s life and our own roles in our families. How are we doing as husbands to our wives? Are we loving them and protecting them? Do we put God in the center of our marriages? Do we pray with our wives?

How are we as fathers? Are we providing for our children? Are we taking an active role in teaching our children not only things they will need to succeed in life but, are we taking an active role in teaching our children the Catholic faith? Are we showing up and taking them to Mass as Joseph took Jesus to the temple? Do we pray at home with them? Or do we abdicate that role to our wives or schoolteachers?

As men, we can all use the life of St. Joseph as our role model. There are many great books written about St. Joseph and many devotions to him.

The Gospels have no recorded words spoken by St. Joseph. But we can know with certainty one word that he definitely spoke. When Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple to present him to the priests, the priests would have asked what name they gave to their child. As a father, it would have been Joseph’s role to say, “Jesus.” What other words did he need to say?

What we know about Joseph is inseparable from the life of Jesus. Our lives as husbands and fathers should be equally inseparable from the life of Jesus and from our families.

God bless you always!
Deacon Peter Freeman is assigned to St. Philip Parish, Melbourne.


What did you give for Christmas?

The readings for the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord — Cycle B — are: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6 and Matthew 2:1-12.

This weekend we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, where we commemorate the arrival of the Magi from the East in Bethlehem.

We all have our favorite (and least favorite) Christmas hymns. For me “We Three Kings” is at the bottom of the

GO AND GLORIFY



Very Rev. Daniel Schomaker

list. I don’t know why but I just do not like the melody. The words however are a different story. Maybe it’s because they remind me of one of my favorite Christmas hymns, “Little Drummer Boy.”

In both hymns we hear about the bringing and giving of gifts for the Christ Child. “I have no gift to bring, that’s fit to give a king, shall I play for you ... I played my drum for him, I played my best for him...” And then: “We three kings of orient are

bearing gifts ... Gold I bring to crown him again ... Frankincense to offer have I ... Myrrh is mine it’s bitter perfume.”

The celebration of Christmas is not about the receiving, it is about the giving. God gives us his very self, manifested in the person of Jesus Christ. The wise men bring gifts to give away; the drummer boy offers his talents as a gift for the baby Jesus.

When we gather to worship — and even when we don’t — our lives are to be about what we give away, not what we take or receive. It’s about what we bring to the other and THE OTHER!

How many times have I heard: “Father, I don’t come to Mass anymore, because I don’t get anything out of it.” Or “Mass is just so boring.” Mass is not about what you get — it’s about what you give. Life is not about what you get — it’s about what you give.

When we give ourselves away, to God and to others, I promise there will be joy. Life will be anything but boring and you will in fact receive more than you can possibly imagine.

As we celebrate Epiphany, let us be sure to reflect on how we give ourselves to others, how we seek the good of the other. If we find we are doing so regularly and often — GOOD! Keep doing so. If not, it’s a new year — time for a change for the better.

May the Lord’s blessings be upon you today and especially throughout this new year of 2024.

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

He’s top of the list!

Last week I had the opportunity to spend a full day with my grandma — all by myself! She’s amazing and still quite spry for 93.

VIEWPOINT



Julie Feinauer

We talked, we laughed; we ate fried chicken from the “little store” up the road. I listened to stories of distant family in the mountains of Tennessee I had never heard and reminisced on times that I remembered. The day was a treasure. I knew that this was just about as good as life could get, time with someone you love and who loves you, just talking and listening and being us, without any expectations

of the world. We made each other a priority. That was what made all the difference.

When I think about my priorities, I know that they should be faith, family and friends, work, and maybe a few other things that are important to me. Unfortunately, like so many people I often get sidetracked. Instead of starting my day with prayer, I start by pulling up my social media to see what I have “missed.” Instead of unwinding by having a conversation with my husband or one of my children I tune out and tune in to a TV program that I have probably seen before. It takes commitment to prioritize what is important. It is not as simple as it may seem with the many distractions in our lives.

When we lose focus and allow ourselves to be lulled

into believing that those few moments don’t matter; we don’t realize that those few moments become hours, then days, months and years. We miss out on time that we could spend building relationships with community, with loved ones, and above all, with God. Proverbs 3:6 proclaims, “In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success.”

So how do we prioritize God? Get to know him — through prayer, the Mass and study. As we deepen our relationship with him, we can better care about those around us. By heeding his word, we can understand what will help lead us to him.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matt 6:33) God is posting a sign telling us how to reach him. He is pointing us in the right direction. It’s telling us to reestablish our priorities, to put Jesus at the top of our list. In this way, when we seek God, all is given to us. We become more by seeking less.

Putting God first also means making choices that aren’t as comfortable as when we do what is easy, or what conforms to society’s expectations. Recently, a friend of mine was telling me that they “just can’t make it to Mass” due to sports schedules. I offered that one church has an early morning Mass on Sunday, and another an evening Mass. “That’s too early,” and “I’ve never been to that church,” became excuses.

I realized quickly that it wasn’t a priority for them. If you prioritize something, you don’t have excuses. You find a way. If you must reorganize other parts of your life, you do, to achieve what is truly important.

Often, we turn back to “prioritizing” God when WE think we need him. Times of difficulty, even tragedy,

where we pray for the outcome we hope for. We aren’t really prioritizing God; we are putting ourselves and our desires first. That is not to say that we should not pray during these times, but imagine if a friend only came to you when you could do something for them? You would know that what you could give, not the relationship, was the priority.

We always need a relationship with the Lord, not just in times of trouble. We are strengthened in the good times for hardships in our lives. “Following Christ isn’t something that can be done halfheartedly or on the side. It is not a label we can display when it is useful. It must be central to everything we do and are.” Francis Chan

So, spend time with God daily. Listen, talk, be together. Keep him on the top of your list, make him your priority, and that will make all the difference.

Julie Feinauer is director of the Safe Environment Office, Diocese of Covington, Ky

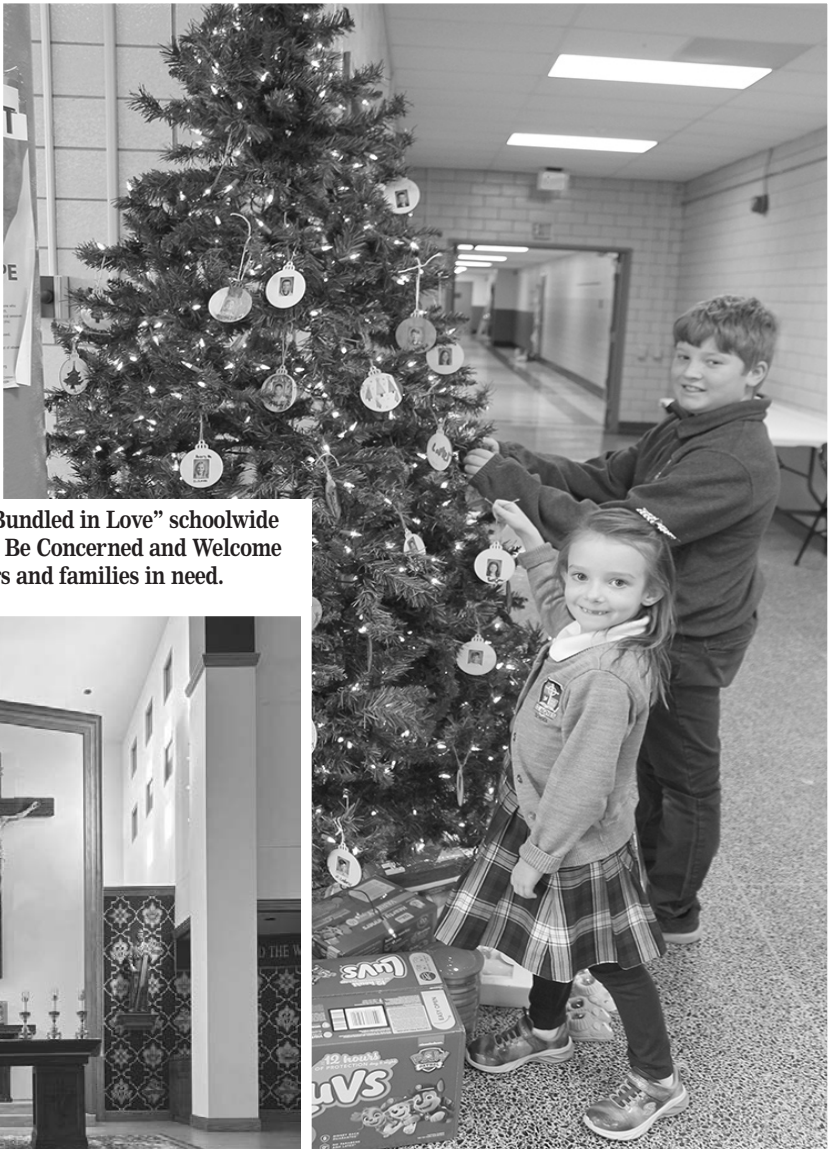
Catholic Schools in Action



Catholic Schools in Action



(above left and right) Advent is a season of prayer and preparation. At St. Henry District High School, Erlanger, students prepared their hearts for Christ's coming by giving back to their community. Campus Ministry and Spanish Club members organize SHDHS's yearly Toy Drive. This year, students gathered hundreds of toys to donate to the Diocesan Catholic Children's Home.



(above left and right) Students at St. Agnes School, Ft. Wright, were generous with contributions to the "Bundled in Love" schoolwide Advent project. They collected baby diapers, wipes, food, formula, blankets, bibs, booties, etc. to donate to Be Concerned and Welcome House. Each child's gift was noted with a personalized ornament on the "Giving Tree" for helping mothers and families in need.



(far left) Upon the sudden death of beloved sixth grade teacher, Mrs. Christine Bartel, Immaculate Heart of Mary brought in therapy dogs that helped the school community grieve and heal.

(left) Immaculate Heart of Mary school, Burlington, prayed a Living Rosary during October in observance of the Month of the Rosary and Pro-Life. All 5th grade students presented a candle to represent each prayer of the rosary. A beautiful, lighted rosary was created with lights and prayers on the altar.

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

With One Heart takes planning and prayer

(Continued from page 3)

Sisters of Divine Providence, Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker, and Sisters of Notre Dame, divided up the parishes and committed to daily prayer for those parishes.

Each parish received a “certificate” indicating that

parish, and the community of women religious who pledged prayers. These prayers continue for the next several years as we implement With One Heart in our diocese.

In the words of Bishop John Iffert, “may we engage the

mission of Jesus with united and determined energy.”

Notre Dame Sister Marla Monahan is vicar for religious for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

The Sisters of Notre Dame are praying for the following parishes/missions:

- St. Agnes Parish in Ft. Wright
- St. Augustine Parish in Augusta
- St. Augustine Parish in Covington
- Divine Mercy Parish in Bellevue
- St. Edward Parish in Cynthiana
- Holy Spirit in Newport
- St. James Parish in Brooksville
- St. John the Baptist Parish in Wilder
- St. John the Evangelist Parish in Carrollton
- St. John the Evangelist in Covington
- St. Joseph Parish in Cold Spring
- St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Alexandria
- Mother of God Parish in Covington
- Sts. Peter & Paul Parish in California
- St. Therese Parish in Southgate

The Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker are praying for the following parishes/missions:

- All Saints Parish in Walton
- Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Park Hills
- St. Patrick Parish in Maysville
- St. Timothy Parish in Union
- St. William Parish in Williamstown

The Benedictine Sisters are praying for the following parishes/missions:

- Cathedral Parish in Covington
- St. Benedict Parish in Covington
- Blessed Sacrament Parish in Ft. Mitchell
- St. Henry Parish in Elsmere
- Holy Cross Parish in Latonia
- St. Joseph Parish in Crescent Springs
- St. Paul Parish in Florence
- St. Pius X Parish in Edgewood

The Passionist Nuns are praying for the following parishes/missions:

- St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Ft. Thomas
- St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Flemingsburg
- Church of the Transfiguration in Perry Park
- Cristo Rey Parish in Florence
- St. Edward Mission in Owenton
- St. Francis Xavier Parish in Falmouth
- Holy Redeemer Parish in Vanceburg
- Immaculate Conception Mission in Stepstone
- St. James Mission in Minerva
- St. John Mission in Dividing Ridge
- St. Joseph Parish in Warsaw
- Mary Queen of Heaven Parish in Erlanger
- St. Matthew Parish in Kenton
- St. Patrick Parish in Taylor Mill
- St. Rose of Lima Parish in Mays Lick
- Shrine of the Little Flower in Southgate

The Sisters of Divine Providence are praying for the following parishes/missions:

- St. Ann Mission in Covington
- St. Anthony Parish in Taylor Mill

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Morning View

- St. Barbara Parish in Erlanger
- St. Bernard Parish in Dayton
- Sts. Boniface & James Parish in Ludlow
- St. Cecilia Parish in Independence
- Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Burlington
- St. Joseph Parish in Camp Springs
- Our Savior Parish in Covington
- St. Philip Parish in Melbourne
- St. Thomas Parish in Ft. Thomas
- Thomas More University, Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel



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A God who became so small

(Continued from page 1)

mentioning young people returning from college for the holidays, and those that “don’t know why they’re here.”

“...you found yourself drawn in the middle of the night to this midnight Mass tradition,” said Bishop Iffert. “Thank you for joining us and celebrating with us and marking the birth of our Savior. We are so glad to have you.”

As the homily continued, Bishop Iffert remarked on the nativity scene.

“As we gaze upon the manger scene,” he said, “our hearts recall what it is to hold a baby in our arms. Whether it’s the miracle of holding your own child in your arms for the first time, or the excited nervousness of greeting a baby brother or sister; or the eager curiosity of a young person contemplating for the first time that they used to be that tiny and helpless.” He continued, saying, “We look to the child in the manger; and we immediately experience that slight awkwardness of receiving a baby from another — nervous to support the child’s head and neck.”

“God all-powerful, all-knowing, creator of everything, Lord of the Universe,” he said, “entered the world dependent upon human beings to support his neck and clean his mess.”

Bishop Iffert recalled how he had been meditating on a quote from St. Thérèse of Lisieux: “a God who became so small, could only be mercy and love.”

“This is a gift that we receive,” said Bishop Iffert, “God



(above) In the loft, the Bishop’s Choir leads the songs at Mass.

makes himself small and enters the world to save us, not by conquering or asserting himself like Caesar — but by an offer of mercy so real that it can only be incarnated in the gentleness of a child.”

“When you receive his free gift: he is mercy, he is love. And so, the choirs of angels sing and give glory to God. The shepherd’s

acclaim God’s mercy in awe ... because the Prince of Peace was born in history as a little child,” Bishop Iffert concluded. “The Church joins the angel choirs in praise because he comes to us today in the form of a slip of bread, a sip of wine. He will come again to restore all things and present them to God the Father. And the way he receives and redeems, and presents is mercy and love. A God who makes himself so small can only be mercy and love. Merry Christmas, everyone. Praise be Lord Jesus Christ.”

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Cooley photos

Newsworthy

The Catholic Herald, a London-based Roman Catholic monthly magazine, released its **“U.S. Catholic Universities and Colleges Guide 2023: Top 25,”** with **Thomas More University** included on the list. Thomas More was the only university in the Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati region to be included, with more than 200 Catholic colleges and universities in the U.S. in contention. Criteria used to create the list includes academic excellence, sports, student life, campus size, spiritual formation and Catholic ethos.

Mary Kennedy, junior, Newport Central Catholic High School is one of the winners of the 2023 “Keeping It Wild! Sustaining Kentucky’s Native Wildlife” writing contest sponsored by the Campbell County Conservation District.

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.

Broadcast Mass time change

Beginning Sunday, Dec. 31, the time of the Sunday broadcast of the TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, will change from 12 p.m. to 10 a.m. Viewers will continue to tune-in to the Mass on The CW on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517; and DirectTV 25. The Mass is also streamed live with a recording available on the Cathedral’s website covcathedral.com.

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.

The Sisters of Notre Dame introduce their new online year-long program called “Give God a Year.” This program has been created in response to the significant number of young women who are feeling “stuck” in their vocational discernment. Each monthly session will include shared conversation and prayer as together we strive to deepen our relationship with God in order to better follow the path that leads to greater peace, joy and true inner freedom. The first online session will be on Jan. 7, 7:30–9 p.m. and will continue on the first Sunday of each month for the year. Women in their 20s and 30s are invited to contact Sister Jenny Zimmerman at jzimmerman@sndusa.org or at (419) 438-6056 to sign up or to find out more information.

Martin Luther King discussion breakfast, Jan. 13, 9:30–11:45 a.m., Our Savior Parish, Covington. Come join the discussion on “The White Washing of Black History” with keynote speaker, Dr. Eric Jackson, author of “Black America Series — Northern Kentucky.” Free and open to the public.

Join other Pro-Life Kentuckians Jan. 23 at the 2024 Kentucky March for Life. The program begins with Mass at Good Shepard Parish, Frankfort, followed by the “Love them Both” rally at the State Capital. The event ends with a procession to the Cemetery of the Innocents

in the historic Frankfort Cemetery. The Pro-Life office will be organizing buses that will leave from Northern Kentucky. Contact the Pro-Life Office for more information, (895) 392-1500.

Learn more about the **Walking with Purpose parish program.** **Volunteer leaders at St. Barbara Parish,** Erlanger, will share how WWP is transforming hearts and bringing women closer to Christ. This complimentary, 30-minute virtual event will be held Jan. 31, 7 p.m. Register at www.walkingwithpurpose.com/events. WWP helps women to learn how to read Scripture and apply it to day-to-day life; invest in the hearts of other women and create community in the parish; go deeper into the Catholic faith, connecting Sunday Mass to the rest of the week.

2024 Thomas More Women’s Conference, March 15, 8 a.m.–1 p.m., Steigerwald Hall, Saints Center. An interactive conference designed to enlighten, engage, and challenge women to seek more within their lives and careers. The 2024 Women’s Conference explores the topic of “Responsibility to Others.” Open to all. Information available at tmuky.us/tmwc. Cost: \$50 for alumni and friends; free for current students/faculty/staff. Special rates available for high school groups.

New Beginnings is an 8-week program for separated or divorced individuals, which provides an opportunity to heal and move forward despite a complicated situation. Led by facilitators who have been through their own personal losses, this program invites participants to move toward their own new beginning. The next session will be held on consecutive Thursdays – Jan. 25, Feb. 1, Feb. 8, Feb. 15, Feb. 22, Feb. 29, March 7, and March 14, 2024, 7-8:30 p.m., Holy Trinity Elementary, Bellevue. Register at covdio.org/new-beginnings.



A big Thank You!

The Parish Kitchen annual sleeping bag and blanket drive has been an unbelievable success, said Vicky Bauerle, institutional advancement manager, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington. Staff and volunteers distributed the donated items on Dec. 13 to Parish Kitchen guests during lunch. “We are so thankful to all who donated. It was truly amazing,” Mrs. Bauerle said.

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.

Annual Report of the Finances for the Diocese of Covington – June 30, 2023

The annual report of the Diocese of Covington shows the financial position and results of operation of the Diocese for the years ended June 30, 2023, and 2022. The financial statements of the Diocese of Covington are audited by the certified public accounting firm of VonLehman & Company, Inc. The auditors' report on the financial statements includes an unmodified opinion that the statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Diocese of Covington and the related affiliates. An unmodified opinion is the highest level of assurance given by a public accounting firm.

The financial information presented herein includes the Diocese of Covington Curia offices which are fiscally responsible to, and under the direct control of, the Bishop of the Diocese. This includes the central administrative offices, program offices and departments of the Diocese, its cemeteries and retreat centers, the Diocesan/Parish Annual Appeal, seminarian recruitment and education, the care for elderly and infirmed priests, the Diocesan-wide secondary school support program, the Alliance for

Urban Catholic Education (ACUE) school operations, and the Diocesan-wide self-funded employee health insurance program.

Various religious orders, lay societies, religious organizations which operate within the Diocese, parishes, parish elementary schools, secondary schools and other related institutions are not included in the accompanying financial information.

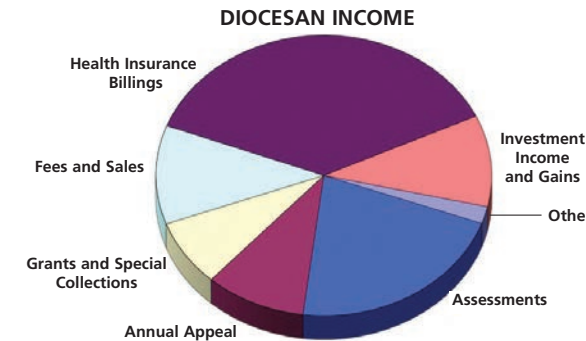
Results of Operations

During this past fiscal year, total revenues increased from the prior year by 22.6%. This is due mostly to increased investment income and gains. Total expenses increased a modest 5.4% due entirely to the increase in health insurance claims/administration of the diocesan self-funded health care program..

Operating Revenue

During the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023, the Diocese received operating revenue from the following sources which it used to fund its various ministries and services.

Health insurance billings	\$ 10,216,284
Assessments	5,873,547
Fees and sales	3,118,339
Investment income/(losses)	2,890,901
Diocesan/Parish Annual Appeal	2,660,387
Grants and special collections	2,106,566
Other	537,611
Total Operating Revenue	<u>\$ 27,403,635</u>



• Parish assessments are comprised of three taxes on the parishes of the Diocese. The first two are applied to assessable income, which is defined by diocesan policy and includes offertory, fundraising, school tuition, and bequest income. A 6.75 % tax on the assessable income of all parishes provided \$2,942,830 of income to fund the administrative offices of the Diocese. A 5% tax on the assessable income of the parishes of Kenton, Campbell, Boone, and Mason counties provided \$2,200,529 of support for the secondary and urban schools of the Diocese. Lastly, in lieu of operating individual inner-city schools as parochial schools, the parishes of the inner-city core of the Diocese provide a subsidy to the Diocese to operate those schools as a consortium under the auspices of the Alliance for Catholic Urban Education (ACUE). This subsidy amounted to \$730,188.

• The Diocesan/Parish Annual Appeal for 2022 (ended on March 31, 2023; adjusted to fiscal year ended June 30, 2023) raised an amount totaling \$4,182,958. Of this amount \$1,522,571 was returned to parishes as rebates for use in local ministries.

• Grants, special collections, and contributions represent: 1) grant monies received which are distributed to Diocesan parishes and missions, 2) the seminary collection used for seminarian education and 3) bequests received by the Diocese.

• Fees and sales represent the following for the 2023 fiscal year:

ACUE tuition and fees	\$ 1,077,886
Cemetery fees and sales	1,051,146
Newspaper ads and subscriptions	292,907
Education office fees	256,360
Retreat Center fees and sales	191,936
Departmental fees and fundraising	248,104
Total Fees and Sales	<u>\$ 3,118,339</u>

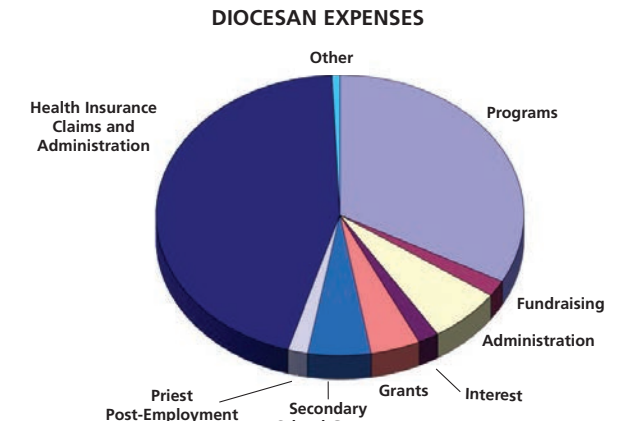
• Health insurance billings are premiums the Diocese and its entities charge themselves to fund the self-insured medical fund. This fund pays for the health insurance claims from doctors, hospitals and prescription drugs for Diocesan employees and covered dependents..

• Investment income/(loss) is the accumulation of interest, dividends, realized and unrealized gains/(losses) on investments held by the Diocese.

Operating Expense

During the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023 the Diocese incurred programmatic costs, grant-making and departmental expenses as follows:

Health insurance claims/administration	\$ 12,302,514
Program expenses	9,025,763
Episcopal administration	1,757,579
Secondary school grants	1,518,601
Diocesan Grants	1,200,328
Priest post-employment benefits	486,830
Fundraising expenses	513,435
Interest expense	505,336
Other expenses	188,414
Total Operating Expense	<u>\$ 27,498,800</u>



• Health insurance claims and administration are the hospital and doctor bills and the prescription drugs costs for employees and their dependants who receive coverage under the Diocesan self-insured health insurance plan.

• Program expenses represent expenditures for carrying out the various ministries for the Diocese. These expenses include personnel salaries and benefits as well as direct expenses of the ministry. Program expenses are categorized as follows:

ACUE expenses	\$ 3,566,332
Diocesan properties	870,761
Cemeteries	960,532
St. Anne's Retreat Center	578,976
Community and pastoral services	678,954
Catholic Schools	751,716
Messenger	774,064
Seminary studies, vocations and deacon formation	450,467
Clergy	393,961
Total Program Expenses	<u>\$ 9,025,763</u>

• Secondary school grants are made to the Diocesan urban and secondary schools for operating, scholarship, and capital purposes from the secondary school assessment of parishes.

• Grants are made to various parishes, schools, and other Diocesan institutions from the Annual Appeal and from other Diocesan revenues as follows:

Priest Retirement Fund	\$ 275,000
Cathedral operations	266,992
Catholic Charities	250,000
Inner city grants	222,500
Educational assistance	100,000
Parishes and schools	43,105
Holy See	22,000
Other grants	20,731
Total Grants	<u>\$ 1,200,328</u>

Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, Diocesan Curia CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION			
June 30	2023	2022	
Assets			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 7,781,847	\$ 7,996,699	
Restricted Cash for Perpetual Care Fund	22,727	23,409	
Accounts Receivable, Net	639,141	655,838	
Loans Receivable, Net	4,429,950	3,491,849	
Notes Receivable, Net	6,072,189	8,939,883	
Unconditional Promises to Give, Net	1,937,065	1,572,247	
Cemetery Property Held for Sale	342,133	365,858	
Investments	23,054,314	24,786,021	
Restricted Investments for Perpetual Care Fund	3,194,904	3,109,313	
Property and Equipment, Net	12,654,988	13,080,535	
Other Assets	763,477	548,008	
Total Assets	<u>60,692,735</u>	<u>64,589,660</u>	
Liabilities			
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	1,903,846	1,935,903	
Claims and Reserve for Incurred but not Reported Benefit Claims	799,279	537,778	
Special Collections Payable	584,120	733,894	
Pledges Payable, Net	542,381	642,302	
Deposits Payable	10,409,043	11,417,733	
Notes Payable, Net	6,057,258	8,933,263	
Advances and Deferred Receipts	3,387,004	3,108,319	
Priest Postretirement Liability	4,378,907	4,354,406	
Total liabilities	<u>28,061,838</u>	<u>31,663,598</u>	
Net Assets			
Without Donor Restrictions	21,953,731	23,011,910	
With Donor Restrictions	<u>10,877,166</u>	<u>9,914,152</u>	
Total Net Assets	<u>32,830,897</u>	<u>32,926,062</u>	
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	<u>\$ 60,692,735</u>	<u>\$ 64,589,660</u>	
See accountants' report and accompanying notes.			

Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, Diocesan Curia CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES				
Year Ended June 30	2023		2022	
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total	Total
Revenues, Gains and Other Support				
Parish Assessments	\$ 5,873,547	\$ -	\$ 5,873,547	\$ 5,629,681
Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal	-	2,660,387	2,660,387	2,664,801
Dividends and Interest	867,678	54,239	921,917	684,318
Grants and Special Collections	17,421	450,695	468,116	411,997
Realized Gains on Investments	971,886	378,799	1,350,685	752,021
Unrealized Gains / (Losses) on Investments	442,969	175,330	618,299	(4,323,757)
Contributions and Bequests	233,422	1,405,028	1,638,450	2,101,015
Self Insurance Premium Retention	471,172	-	471,172	502,668
Fees and Sales	3,118,339	-	3,118,339	3,541,843
Health Insurance Billings	10,216,284	-	10,216,284	10,286,895
Gain on Sale of Property and Equipment	-	-	-	22,480
Other Income	66,439	-	66,439	69,373
Total revenue, Gains and Other Support	22,279,157	5,124,478	27,403,635	22,343,333
Net Assets Released From Restrictions	<u>4,037,073</u>	<u>(4,037,073)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total Revenue, Support, Gains, and Reclassifications	26,316,230	1,087,405	27,403,635	22,343,333
Expenses				
Programs	9,025,763	-	9,025,763	8,998,882
Fundraising	513,435	-	513,435	422,534
Management and General: Episcopal Administration	1,757,579	-	1,757,579	1,988,874
Settlements, Legal Fees and Counseling Related to Sexual Abuse	86,351	-	86,351	111,651
Grants Made by Diocese	1,200,328	-	1,200,328	1,171,459
Interest	505,336	-	505,336	335,436
Priest Post Employment Benefits	486,830	-	486,830	751,677
Secondary School Grants	1,518,601	-	1,518,601	1,500,000
Health Insurance Claims and Administration	12,302,514	-	12,302,514	10,717,567
Contributions and Assessments	102,063	-	102,063	100,867
Total Expenses	27,498,800	-	27,498,800	26,098,947
Change in Net Assets	<u>(1,182,570)</u>	<u>1,087,405</u>	<u>(95,165)</u>	<u>(3,755,614)</u>
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	<u>23,136,301</u>	<u>9,789,761</u>	<u>32,926,062</u>	<u>36,681,676</u>
Net Assets at End of Year	<u>\$ 21,953,731</u>	<u>\$ 10,877,166</u>	<u>\$ 32,830,897</u>	<u>\$ 32,926,062</u>
See accountants' report and accompanying notes.				

Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, Diocesan Curia CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS			
Year Ended June 30	2023	2022	
Cash Flows From Operating Activities			
Change in Net Assets	\$ (95,165)	\$ (3,755,614)	
Reconciliation of Change in Net Assets with Cash Flows From Operating Activities			
Depreciation	718,554	691,122	
Amortization of Debt Issuance Cost Included in Interest	15,163	15,163	
Bad Debt (Recovery) Expense	(69,203)	4,572	
Realized Gains on Investments	(1,350,885)	(752,021)	
Unrealized Losses / (Gains) on Investments	(618,299)	4,323,757	
Gain on Sale of Property and Equipment	-	(22,480)	
Interest credited directly to deposits	150,842	128,281	
Changes in			
Accounts and Contributions Receivable	16,697	(13,449)	
Unconditional Promises to Give, Net	(364,816)	105,350	
Cemetery Property Held for Sale	43,725	23,698	
Other Assets	(215,469)	218,891	
Accounts Payable, Accrued Expenses and Other Liabilities	21,438	285,256	
Claims and Reserve for Incurred but not Reported Benefit Claims	261,501	(135,522)	
Cash Provided by Operating Activities	<u>(1,485,719)</u>	<u>1,097,004</u>	
Cash Flows from Investing Activities			
Purchases of Property and Equipment	(293,007)	(576,886)	
Proceeds From Sale of Property and Equipment	-	24,965	
Purchases of Investments	(4,420,687)	(6,389,324)	
Proceeds from Sales and Maturities of Investments	8,035,767	6,441,810	
Issuance of New Loans	(988,344)	(517,682)	
Payments Received on Loans	119,446	224,219	
Cash (Used) / Provided by Investing Activities	<u>2,453,195</u>	<u>(793,198)</u>	
Cash Flows from Financing Activities			
New Deposits Received	2,332,808	3,146,484	
Withdrawals of Deposits	(3,492,340)	(2,797,075)	
Payments on Notes Payable	(23,478)	(27,576)	
Cash Provided / (Used) by Financing Activities	<u>(1,183,010)</u>	<u>321,833</u>	
Net change in Cash and Cash Equivalents	<u>(215,534)</u>	<u>625,639</u>	
Cash, Beginning of Year	<u>8,020,108</u>	<u>7,394,469</u>	
Cash, End of Year	<u>\$ 7,804,574</u>	<u>\$ 8,020,108</u>	
See accountants' report and accompanying notes.			



January 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Blessings in this New Year!

I am pleased to present you with the audited financial statements for the Diocese of Covington for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. As you review these reports, you will see that an independent public accounting firm has again issued an unmodified opinion that these statements present an accurate and thorough picture of Diocesan finances for the year. This is the highest level of assurance attainable. The Diocesan Finance Council reviewed these statements in December 2023. Now it is your turn to review them for yourself.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the members of the Diocesan Finance Council and the staff of the Diocesan Finance Office. Their advice and diligence promote sound management of the resources you entrust to the Church. In doing so, they improve our ability to serve Christ and his mission.

We first encounter Christ and our hearts are moved with joy. This encounter with Christ changes us, so that we are directed toward sharing the good news of God's love with others and to caring for our neighbor. To achieve these ends, we entrust our time, talent, and treasure to the Church for carrying out Jesus' mission. I am grateful to God for the inspiration and grateful to you for your faithfulness and love. I trust that you will find in these columns the story of how we are working together to teach, heal, and sanctify, through the proclamation of God's kingdom of love.

As we begin this new year, I thank God for each of you and entrust you to His loving care. Be assured of my prayers. Please, pray for me and for our beloved Diocese of Covington.

Yours in the joy of Christ,




Bishop John Iffert
Diocese of Covington

Special Collections

The people of the Diocese of Covington have been extremely generous with their support of various agencies and relief efforts in our country and around the world. The following table is a listing of these Special Collections.

Eastern Kentucky Flood Relief	\$ 332,026
Mission Cooperative (ACUE)	189,282
International and domestic needs	166,299
Religious Retirement Collection	160,293
Holy Father collection for worldwide charities (Peter's Pence)	56,843
Opportunities for Life	17,472
Other special collections	1,481
Total Special Collections	<u>\$ 923,696</u>

Respectfully Submitted,


Dale Henson, CPA
Chief Financial Officer
Diocese of Covington

(Continued from page 3)

February

School lunch workers Trudy Carr (31 years, St. Agnes), Anita Green (32 years, Newport Central Catholic) and Cheryl Heuser (32 years, St. Pius X) are recognized for their decades of committed service; “We do it for the students,” they say.

Newport Central Catholic High School offers a new program for students interested in pursuing a career in a trade, The St. Joseph Institute, offers plumbing, electrical, auto mechanics, masonry and welding.

Bishop Iffert celebrates Mass for Catholic Schools Week with representatives from all Catholic schools in the diocese. “...Every one of the schools that is sponsored by our Church is just that same thing, first and foremost — a school for charity, of growing to love God ... and growing to love one another,” he said in his homily

Eucharistic Revival features: “Where is the Eucharist mentioned in the Bible;” Mercy Sister Suzanne Toolan composer of

the song “I Am the Bread of Life;” Holy Hour assistance, “Eucharistic meditation 1: The Journey Home;”

St. Paul Relics Chapel, St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption commissions two new speaking reliquaries to house relics from the collection: a piece of the carpal bones of St. Paul the Apostle and the ulna and radius bones of St. Arnold of Arnoldsweiler. Both relics were obtained by Covington’s third bishop, Camillus Paul Maes.

On the Feast of St. Blaise, Feb. 3, Bishop Iffert celebrates Mass at St. Henry District High School. Following Mass, Principal Grant Brannen presents an alumni award to recently ordained Father A.J. Gedney.

Thomas More University recognizes alums Colonel Jon McClain ’19, Chief of Police and Pierce Turner ’21, assistant to the city administrator and alcohol beverage control administrator, Bellevue, for their civic service.

Part 4 of Stephen Enzweiler’s Eucharistic Revival series focuses on “19th Century Know-Nothings and anti-Catholicism.”



March – On March 16, the Covington skyline said some temporary goodbyes to the chimeras— also known colloquially as gargoyles— from the roof of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. As part of the “Restored in Christ” initiative to maintain the cathedral’s outer façade, the beloved gargoyles will be cast and replaced in terracotta as many have fallen into disrepair over the years over wear and tear.

The *Messenger’s* marriage supplement focuses on preparation and Pope Francis’s document “Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life.” “A loving response from the Church is to ... instruct young couples properly ... and accompany them as they begin to live out their life-long vocation,” said David Cooley, co-director, Catechesis and Evangelization, Diocese of Covington.

In his Lenten message, Bishop Iffert says, “Lent is a season of love. Love leads us to surrender ourselves as gift to God and one another.” An exhibit honoring the Benedictine legacy in the diocese is on view Feb. 11 to March 31, at the Cathedral.

Benedictine Oblates — St. Cosmas Deanery hosts its inaugural gathering at the Cathedral.

Bishop John Iffert joins Missionary of St. John the Baptist Fathers Shannon Collins, pastor, and Sean Kopczynski, at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Ft. Wright, for the blessing and dedication of three new bells.

Father Jordan Hainsey writes a feature entitled

“Benedictines in Covington— revisiting history at Immaculate Conception Church at Stepstone.”

Catholic school and parish educators gather for an overview of the ARK standardized test, a test assessing religious knowledge.

The Newport Central Catholic High School \$13 million “Looking Up” capital campaign enters its public phase with a kickoff dinner.

TMU Institute for Religious Liberty welcomes Asma Uddin, a religious liberty lawyer and scholar, for a discussion on “Political Partisanship and Its Impact on the Future of Religious Liberty,” with commentator Dr. William Madges, chair of Theology, Xavier University.

The Kentucky Supreme Court, in its opinion in the Cameron v. EMW abortion case, returns the question of abortion back to Jefferson Circuit Court for further proceedings; abortion ban remains in effect.

Franciscan Daughters of Mary, with the help of the Let Them Live organization, save a baby boy from abortion.

The Pro-Life Office invites non-profit agencies and ministries across Northern Kentucky, collectively known as the Pregnancy Care Network, to discuss how to “improve the overall health and well-being of childbearing families in Northern Kentucky.”

At Ash Wednesday Mass, Bishop Iffert calls Lent a reminder of “our Christian campaign ... We remember that Jesus calls the children of the kingdom to be as cunning and diligent as those who seek profit in the ways of the world.”

Beginning Ash Wednesday and through March 27, parishes invite parishioners to take the Disciple Maker Index, a 75-question survey on the health and vibrancy of the parish. This is the main initiative of the With One Heart parish pastoral planning process.

At the Rite of Election Bishop Iffert receives 76 catechumens and 126 candidates from 29 parishes in the Diocese of Covington and Thomas More University and Northern Kentucky University.

Over 120 people attend this year’s first DPAA dinner at The Prizing House in Cynthiana.

George (“Gar”) Read, diocesan internal auditor, retires after five years service.

Obituaries

Father Gerald B. Witzemann

Official Appointments

Diocesan Catholic Children’s Home Board of Directors Effective Sept. 1, 2022, six-year term (announced in Feb. 2023)
Dr. Charles Kelly

Catholic Charities Diocese of Covington Board of Directors Effective Nov. 3, 2022, three-year term (announced in Feb. 2023)
Juan Aviles

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Official Assignment

Effective Feb. 1, three-year term
Very Rev. Baiju Kidaagen, V.C., V.F.
to Vicar Forane (Dean), Northern Kenton County Deanery

March

Alan Pickett, executive director of Catholic Charities; Raymond Hebert, Ph.D., executive director of the Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III '67 Institute for Religious Liberty (IRL); and Wilbert Ziegler '53, J.D., honorary chair of the TMU Second Century Campaign Steering Committee are honored at the TMU Bishop William Hughes Awards dinner.

Thomas More University welcomes local media for a celebration of the first 24 months of its Second Century Campaign: It's time for More, the funding mechanism for the University's strategic plan: Lighting the Way.

Retrouvaille, A Lifeline for Married Couples, to begin a session in April. The marriage ministry hosts three sessions each year.

The 58 chimeras are removed from the top of the Cathedral for replacement, the first project in a \$6 "Restored In Christ" campaign to preserve and restore the exterior of the Cathedral Basilica.

At the second DPAA dinner held at the Hebron Marriott, Matt Hollenkamp, DPAA chair, announced that a record breaking \$544,280 had been raised in the leadership gift phase.

The Safe Environment Office welcomed speaker Stephen Smith for two presentations, one at St. Henry District High School and the other at Bishop Brossart High School, for parents and grandparents on "Social Media & The Adolescent Digital Tribe: Navigating the Teen World State."

The Catholic Church celebrates the 10th anniversary of the election of Pope Francis.

Parishioners share their thoughts on the DMI survey.
The DCCH Center for Children and Families announce Denise Govan as its new executive director. She succeeds Bob Wilson who retired after eight years of service.

Paula Seiter, parishioner and lector, Holy Cross Parish, Covington, shares how braille materials from the New York based Xavier Society for the Blind assist her in her ministry.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Northern Kentucky, celebrates its centennial Mass, with Bishop Iffert at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell.

Bishop Iffert installs seven permanent deacon candidates to the Ministry of Lector: Eric Wehrman, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell; Terry Mason, St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger; Jason Gibson, St Cecilia Parish, Independence; Dale Brockman, St. Timothy Parish, Union; Chris Freihofer, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington; Tom Kissel, St. Pius Parish, Edgewood and Steve Winbigler, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring.

Winners of this year's Pro-Life Essay contest are: third place, tied Lilly Drees, St. Mary School, Alexandria, and Evan Ryan, St. Cecilia School, Independence; second place, Sabrina Scroggins, St. Pius X School, Edgewood; first place, Anna Curtsinger, Sts. Peter and Paul School, California.

The Cathedral Concert Series concludes its 46th Season with the annual musical celebration of J.S. Bach's 338th birthday.

Margaret Klee, Math teacher, St. Patrick School and High School, Maysville, received the Excellence in Education Award sponsored by the Cincinnati Association, Northern Kentucky University, Xavier University, University of Cincinnati, Mount St. Joseph University and Thomas More University.

The Pro-Life Office host its annual Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child.

Bishop Iffert distributes over 90 awards to seventh-grade servers at the annual Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky Server Awards and Vespers.

Bishop Iffert announces that the last of the COVID restrictions, the distribution of the Precious Blood, will be lifted beginning on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (June 10-11, 2023).

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington announces Chris Goddard as its 10th executive director. He succeeds Alan Pickett and will assume the position May 26.

Evelyn McLendon, student, Villa Madonna Academy, was this year's Child Abuse Prevention Month art contest winner, sponsored by the Family Nurturing Center.

At its annual volunteer appreciation dinner, Catholic Charities presents Msgr. Gerald Reinersman with its Marcella Strategier Angel of Hope award and St. Elizabeth Health Care with its Community Partner award. In recognition for his eight years as executive director, a new bicycle ministry, Pickett's

Corner, is announced for the Parish Kitchen.

Bishop Iffert celebrates the annual High School Senior Mass.

TMU officially unveils its second college to be named in under a year: The Robert W. Plaster College of Business.

As Mike Murray, director, diocesan Stewardship and Mission Services, announces his retirement, the 2022 DPAA sets a new record with \$4,078,000.14 pledged and \$3,926,020.75 currently collected. The 2023 DPAA is on pace to eclipse 2022.

Sister Veronica Mary professes her vows before Mother Seraphina of the Franciscan Daughters of Mary.

In part 1 of two-part series, Stephen Enzweiler lays the case that the 1914 murals in the apse of St. Augustine Church, Covington, are the work of artist William Blank.

Bishop Iffert and Faye Roch, director of the Office of Pro-life (left), both receive the 2023 "Hero at Heart" award by Kentucky Right to Life.

Seminarians Henry Bischoff and Bradley Whittle are instituted into the ministry of lector.

Obituary

Sister Mary Belle Borros, CDP



June – Through the laying on of hands by Bishop John Iffert and the praying of the prayer of ordination, the gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred on Michael Elmlinger.

April

Representatives from the entire Catholic community gather as Bishop Iffert celebrates the annual Chrism Mass.

Bishop Iffert celebrates the Masses and services of Holy Week. In his Easter message he says, "Because Christ has sought us out and called us into relationship with himself, we now have a share in his resurrection. May the realization that our eternal life with God has already begun, lead us to love one another as Jesus loves."

The Cathedral Basilica hosts veneration of relics associated with the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus including exact copies of the Shroud of Turin and its companion the Sudarium of Oviedo.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

take up the annual Good Friday collection for the Holy Land.

Dr. Marilyn Schleyer, a psychology professional, Associate of the Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, and Diocesan Review Board member, discusses the short-term and long-term effects of child abuse.

Newport Central Catholic High School begins its partnership with Dynamic Catholic Institute focusing on "Holy Moments."

TMU announces three new academic programs for 2023-2024 academic year: Bachelor of Science in finance and Bachelor of Arts in tourism and recreation management and a Master of Public Health.

Spiritual Motherhood of Priests celebrates 10 years of ministry in the diocese.

The 2022 DPAA ends with a record breaking \$4 million in donations.

The Rosarian Monastery relocates from St. Anne Retreat Center, Melbourne, to the former convent at St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright.

Two retreats held in January and March of this year, marked the final retreats at the shuttered St. Anne Retreat Center, Melbourne. Diocesan officials are considering options for the building.

Kendra McGuire, superintendent, hosts a school safety training for all the Northern Kentucky school district leaders and law enforcement officials.

Julie Dupont, Annual Fund Chair of the Alliance for Catholic Urban Education reflects on how Catholic education can bring the presence of God to children living in difficult circumstances.

52 high school students are accepted as Governor's Scholars (GSP), Governor's School for the Arts (GSA) and Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE).

The Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky, honors Pauline Baumann as the Serran of the Year.

The Pregnancy Care Network hosts a Community Baby Shower in Covington; over 200 attend.

Part 2 of Stephen Enzweiler's series on the murals of St. Augustine Church, Covington, identifies Theodore Braasch as the artist of the four major wall murals in the sanctuary and transepts and the decorative medallions of evangelists, saints and angels along the nave walls.

Benedictine Oblates of St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills, share thoughts on their ministry.

Obituary

Sister Andrea Collopy, OSB
Diocese of Steubenville's third bishop, Gilbert I. Sheldon

Official appointments

Thomas More University Board of Trustees
Effective June 1, three-year term
Dr. Rachael Lemkuhl
Joseph Roesel
Susan Sturgeon
Ted Zalla

May

Pickett's Corner at Parish Kitchen, Covington, a ministry to repair and distribute bicycles to those in need opens.

The Cathedral begins First Friday Veneration of the True Cross of Christ from noon to 1 p.m.

Father Michael Hennigen blesses and dedicates Covington Catholic High School's Tom Berger Baseball Stadium and newly turfed Jerry Collins Field.

St. Mary School, Alexandria, break ground on Phase 2 of its Cultivating Legacy Campaign, which adds a new building and four new classrooms and a multipurpose space and gym.

The Diaconate aspirant program is revised to include Archdiocese of Cincinnati's Lay Pastoral Ministry Program.

Foster parents, Tobias and Rachel Nathe, parishioners, St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill encourage others to do the same.

Friends of the Rose Garden Home Mission, Covington, break ground on a new addition dedicated to maternity and pregnancy care.

The Franciscan Daughters of Mary welcome its newest sister, Sister Sara, into the novitiate.

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

10 men and women are welcomed as the first novitiates to the Oblates of St. Benedict, St. Cosmas Deanery.

Laura Hatfield, director, School Lunch Program of the Diocese of Covington, informs readers of the USDA Summer meals for Kids Site Finder.

Bishop Iffert confers degrees to 389 TMU graduates and diplomas to 683 high school graduates.

Nearly 30 adults receive the sacrament of confirmation on Pentecost Sunday.

Official Assignments

Effective July 11

Rev. Augustine K. Aidoo to Parochial Administrator, St. Patrick Parish, Maysville, St. James Mission, Minerva, and Holy Redeemer Parish, Vanceburg

Rev. Gregory J. Bach to Vice-Chancellor; Assistant to the Bishop

Rev. Edward J. Brodnick to Retirement

Rev. Alexander J. Gedney to Parochial Vicar, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring; Assistant Chaplain, Northern Kentucky University

Rev. G. Michael Greer to Retirement

Rev. A. Conor Kunath to Parochial Administrator, Sts. Boniface and James Parish, Ludlow; Diocesan Vocations Director

Rev. Thomas F. Picchioni to Pastor, St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton and Transfiguration Mission, Perry

Rev. Msgr. Gerald L. Reinersman, V.F. to Retirement

Rev. Joseph C. Rielage to Parochial Vicar, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington

Rev. Lawrence A. Schaeper to Pastor, St. Benedict Parish, Covington

Rev. Aby Thampi, C.M.I. to Parochial Administrator, St. John the Evangelist Parish, Covington and St. Ann Mission, Covington

Very Rev. Andrew L. Young, V.F. to Pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring; Chaplain, Northern Kentucky University

Ordinations

Father Michael Elmlinger is ordained a priest for the Diocese of Covington, June 2.

June

Father Michael Elmlinger is ordained priest for the Diocese of Covington.

Bishop Iffert addresses the walkers of the 2023 Cross the Bridge for Life.

Catholic Charities awards its annual Reach and Teach Scholarship to Kendall Hemsath, a senior at Notre Dame Academy.

Gary and Trish Galbraith, Diocesan Catholic Children's Home foster parents, have fostered nearly 20 children.

At annual dinner, Friends of the Rose Garden and Franciscan Daughters of Mary welcome keynote speaker Father James Sichko, and honor Dr. Margeurite Schabell and Father Robert Rottgers.

After 14 years as director of Stewardship and Mission Services, Mike Murray retires. Jim Hess, a parishioner of St. Catherine Parish, Ft. Thomas, is named new director.

The Serra Club for Vocations host its annual picnic for women religious, this year at Ryland Heights Country Club.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

CAFETERIA MANAGERS- DIOCESE OF COVINGTON SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

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

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The 2023 DPAA rebate reinstates the historic frieze and diaper wall pattern designed by renowned artist Frank Duveneck in the Cathedral’s Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

Laura Keener, editor, *Messenger*, is awarded first place for Best News Writing on a Local or Regional Event at the Catholic Media Conference for “Tech Tuesdays,” a five-part series on technology use in schools.

Official Assignments

Effective July 11
Rev. Michael K. Elmlinger to Parochial Vicar, St. Timothy Parish,
Rev. Douglas J. Lauer to Parochial Vicar, St. Henry Parish, Elsmere
Rev. Samuel K. Owusu to Parochial Vicar, Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger
Rev. Msgr. Gerald L. Reinersman, V.F. to Director, Permanent Deacon Formation
Rev. James P. Schaeper to Residence, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington

Effective July 11
For one-year term
Rev. Jason M. Bertke to Chaplain, St. Henry District High School
Rev. Michael A. Black to Chaplain, St. Patrick High School, Maysville
Rev. Eric L. Boelscher to Pastoral Administrator, Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills
Rev. Richard G. Bolte to Pastoral Administrator, St. Henry District High School, Erlanger
Rev. Edward J. Brodnick to Chaplain, Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria
Rev. Michael K. Elmlinger to Chaplain, Covington Latin School, Covington
Rev. Alexander J. Gedney to Chaplain, Newport Central Catholic High School,
Rev. Michael C. Hennigen to Chaplain, Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills
Deacon Barry J. Henry to Assistant Chaplain, Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport
Rev. V. Ross Kelsch to Pastoral Administrator, Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport
Very Rev. Baiju Kidaagen, V.C., V.F. to Chaplain, Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills
Rev. A. Conor Kunath to Chaplain, Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills
Rev. Thomas P. Robbins to Chaplain, Holy Cross District High School, Latonia
Very Rev. Ryan L. Stenger, J.V. to Pastoral Administrator, Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria
Rev. Jeffrey D. Von Lehmen to Chaplain, Holy Cross

July

The With One Heart four-year pastoral plan and leadership development initiative transitions from the data gathering and analysis phase into its pastoral planning phase.

Notre Dame Sister Marla Monahan, Deacon Brian Cox and Father A.J. Gedney, throw out the first “pitches” for Vocations night at the Y’All’s stadium, sponsored by the Serra Club.

Thomas More University celebrates a ceremonial ground-breaking of the changes to come for its softball field and surrounding complex.

Bishop Iffert blesses a 48-niche columbarium, which was recently added to the Sisters of Divine Providence cemetery in Melbourne.

Stephen Enzweiler’s historic feature share the story on how an obscure artist, William Blank, once saved the Cathedral’s famed Duveneck murals from total ruin.

On the one-year anniversary of historic flooding that destroyed homes and wiped out communities in Eastern Kentucky, Bishop Stowe of the Diocese of Lexington invites all to a Mass of Healing and Hope and two volunteer days to assist in the continued clean up.

Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Schools, announces that the Diocese of Covington has been accepted as a FIRE Foundation affiliate. The Schools Office and its Inclusive Education Committee begin planning to implement the FIRE Foundation’s programs and processes for the 2024–2025 school year. The FIRE Foundation its affiliate schools to hire special educators and to acquire learning materials and technology that create successful learning experiences for all students.

Cassba features the 2023 Student Art Gallery, a new art auction featuring the work of high school students.

The Local History and Genealogy Department of the

Kenton County Library, Covington, hosts a sampling of artifacts from Covington Latin School’s archives in celebration of the schools centennial.

A new scholarship, the Guilfoyle Family Scholarship Fund, is announced for students attending TMU. The needs-based scholarship gives preference to graduates from Covington Latin School, Holy Cross District High School and St. Henry District High School; with second preference to graduates from elementary schools: St. Anthony, St. Augustine, Holy Cross, Holy Family, Holy Trinity, and Prince of Peace.

Angie Poat, diocesan Youth Minister, welcomes over 30 youth leaders and parish youth ministers for a two-day leadership retreat entitled THRIVE!.

St. Ann Mission, Covington, celebrates its 136th annual St. Ann Novena with its new parochial administrator, Father Aby Thampi, as celebrant.

July 29th marks the 170th anniversary of the establishment of the Diocese of Covington by Pope Pius IX.

Official Appointments

Effective June 22
Diocesan Review Board, five-year term
Kathy Stevie
Stacy Tapke

Effective July 1
Development Advisory Board, Alliance for Catholic Urban Education Term, two-year term
Nicholas Winnike

Official Assignments

Effective July 1
Deanery assignments, three-year term
Very Rev. Raymond N. Enzweiler, V.F., Campbell County

Jubilarians

Platinum Jubilee 70 years

Father James Quill
Father Albert Ruschman
Sapphire Jubilee 65 years
Father Robert Reinke

Golden Jubilee 50 years

Bishop Roger Foys, D.D.
Ruby Jubilee 40 years
Msgr. William Neuhaus
Father Richard Bolte

Deanery
Rev. Msgr. Dominic K. Fosu, V.F., Southwest Deanery
Very Rev. Britton C. Hennessey, V.F., Southeast Deanery
Very Rev. Ryan L. Maher, V.F., Covington Deanery

Effective July 11
Rev. John Paul, V.C. to Parochial Vicar, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood
Rev. Jordan M. Hainsey to leave of absence
Rev. Gregory J. Bach to Notary

August

Twenty-four youth and parents from the Diocese of Covington, along with Bishop John Iffert, Deacon Jim Fortner, and Isaak Isaak, attend World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal.

With only three weeks until the first day of school and with no applicants for two critically needed vacant teaching positions, Bishop Iffert directes that operations at Holy Family School be suspended for the 2023-24 school year.

St. Mary School and Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, kickoff the 2023-2024 school year.

Educators gather for opening school-year Mass celebrated by Father Baiju Kidaagen.

The Diocese of Covington’s Deanery Pastoral Council meet for its first meeting of the fiscal year; Bishop Iffert introduces the newly instated Diocesan Pastoral Council.

With the increase of Spanish-speaking Catholics in the Diocese of Covington, the need to provide for their pastoral care increases. To begin to fill this need, and with an eye to the future, seminarians Hank Bischoff, Joshua Heskamp and Michael Schulte, participate in a summer immersion experience in Guatemala and Texas. The *Messenger* caught up with the three seminarians upon their return.

Supporters of the DPAA gather to celebrate the success of the 2023 campaign; service grants are awarded.

Notre Dame Academy installs its fourth president, Trish Miller.

The Equestrian Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem Diocese of Covington hold its annual Bishop’s Mass; Msgr. Gerald Twaddell, prior of the Covington section of

(Continued on page 17)



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Bulletins:

■ Jan. bulletin: posted Sunday, Jan. 7; due Tuesday, Feb. 6.

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VIRTUS Training:

■ Tuesday, Jan. 9, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Jan. 9, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Jan. 11, 6–8:30 p.m., Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Britt Hall, Burlington

■ Wednesday, Jan. 24, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Jan. 24, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Feb. 7, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Feb. 7, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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the Order, announces the establishment of the order's first
(Continued from page 15)

Squires for United States Lieutenancy.

New Beginnings begins an eight-week session of peer-led, faith-based support for divorced or separated Catholics.

Obituaries

Sister Mary Eileen Bertsch, C.D.P.
Sister Joan Marie Boberg, C.D.P.

September

Bishop John Iffert celebrates opening school Mass at Villa Madonna Academy.

Bishop Iffert welcomes 10 members of the newly formed Diocesan Pastoral Council for its first gathering. The Diocesan Pastoral Council is an offshoot of the five Deanery Pastoral Councils.

A crowd of around 100 individuals gather to celebrate a ceremonial groundbreaking on the campus of Villa Madonna Academy marking the start of renovations to Villa Madonna Academy's Center Building.

Olivia Staverman, parishioner, St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, enters the novitiate with the Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Bishop Iffert celebrates a farewell Mass.

Bishop Iffert celebrates a Mass honoring Covington Latin School's 100 year anniversary.

This year, 102 couples celebrating milestone wedding anniversaries — 1 year, 25 years, 50 years or 60-plus years — were recognized by Bishop John Iffert.

Villa Madonna Academy's elementary school is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon School for 2023. VMA has earned National Blue Ribbon School Awards in 2007, 2017, and now in 2023.

Vincentians celebrate the feast day of St. Vincent de Paul and its 100-year anniversary in Northern Kentucky with Mass celebrated at the Cathedral with Bishop John Iffert.

The Diocese of Covington is home to the first group of Squires of the North Central Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem; the Squires investiture is held Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Thomas More University. Squires are: Heather Konerman, Madison Light, Esteban Munguia, Jeffrey Noe, Juan Pablo Francisco and Houston Watson.

The recipient of the 2023 Faith Hope and Inspiration Award, ACUE's highest award, is presented to Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys for his longstanding and unwavering devotion and support of the ACUE mission of Catholic urban education in the diocese.

October

Bishop John Iffert makes his first visit to Carmel Manor; Ft. Thomas, a nursing care facility run by the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm.

High school youth around the diocese participate in SUMMIT 23, a Eucharistic retreat for youth.

The Thunder Builders at St. Timothy School, Union, celebrate as Bishop Iffert blesses its new school addition. The new building doubles the number of classrooms and includes a gymnasium.

Newport Central Catholic High School marks a historic milestone as its "Looking Up Capital Campaign" achieves its \$13 million goal.

Seminarian Henry Bischoff is instituted into the Ministry of Acolyte.

The Diocesan Catholic Children's Home celebrates 175 years with a special edition of the <<Messenger>>.

Bishop Iffert celebrates the annual Pro-life Mass, the first since the overturning of Roe v. Wade last year.

TMU's Institute for Religious Liberty event focuses on "In Defense of Strictly Scrutinizing Religious Rights," with keynote speaker Stephanie Barclay, University of Notre Dame faculty member and director of Notre Dame Law School's Religious Liberty Initiative. Guest commentators included Holly Hinckley Lesan, of Brigham Young University (BYU) Law School, and Gary L. Greenberg, former principal at the law office of Jackson Lewis P.C.

Over 400 people attend the Community Baby Shower held at St. Paul Parish, Florence, sponsored by the Northern Kentucky Pregnancy Care Network, which includes the Pro-Life Office.

The annual cemetery visitations are held at St. John

Kate Lonneman, a student at Bishop Brossart High School,



August – The pilgrims from the Diocese of Covington pose for a group photo at World Youth Day, Lisbon.

Cemetery and St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell and St. Stephen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas. Bishop Iffert shared that last year at this time his mother died, "so I am grieving with you," he said. During the prayer service Bishop Iffert read aloud the names of those buried in the cemetery from October 2022 through September 2023.

The 2023 Seminary Ball is held at the Northern Kentucky Convention Center; Covington.

Obituaries

Father Robert Reinke

November

Bishop Iffert celebrates Mass on the Solemnity of All Saints, at the Cathedral.

The Thomas More University School of Education welcomes media to an open house announcing initiatives in the recently launched Education VILLA.

Bishop Iffert and Notre Dame Sister Marla Monahan, vicar for religious, host a luncheon, Nov. 4, at the Metropolitan Club, Covington, for this year's jubilarians celebrating 60 and 70 years of consecrated life. Bishop Iffert expresses gratitude for the women religious for "keeping alive a spirit in the life of the Church that is not quite so prone to judgementalism — a generosity of spirit."

Alexandria, is selected as the artist for Bishop John Iffert's 2024 Thanksgiving card. Her artwork, which features a watercolor landscape dotted with small sheep and a shepherd to guide them, was inspired by the Psalm 23, reading, "The Lord is my shepherd."

St. Augustine Parish, Covington, set up an ofrenda, or "altar of remembrance," commemorating the deceased family members of parishioners as a way of incorporating the faith into the season of All Saints Day and All Souls Day.

As the Diocese and parishes finalize their three-year pastoral plans, the With One Heart initiative is transitioning from its data-gathering and planning phase into leadership development. Fittingly, the priests of the Diocese are leading this phase. Seventeen priests and Bishop John Iffert, collectively known as Cohort 1, participated in the first four-day leadership development retreat at Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center, Norwood. This is one of four retreats, that will be held over the next five months, that comprises the Good Leaders, Good Shepherds priest leadership development curriculum.

Bishop Iffert attends the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Fall Plenary Assembly in Baltimore, Maryland.

Kenny Collopy, principal, Newport Central Catholic High School, invites alumnae of the Academy of Notre Dame de la

(Continued on page 18)

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(Continued from page 17)

November (continued)

Providence and Our Lady of Providence Academy to its all-school Mass in honor of the feast of Our Lady of Divine Providence.

The 2024 DPAA chairs meet with Jim Hess, director, Stewardship and Mission Services, and his staff to make plans for the annual campaign. Linda Rawe returns this year as the DPAA General Chair with Jeff Jehn coming on as the Leadership Gifts Chair. The theme for the 2024 DPAA is “Zeal for Your House Will Consume Me.”

At its annual Priests’ Appreciation Dinner, Serra Club for Vocations – Northern Kentucky members present a check to Bishop John Iffert for the Seminary Education Fund.

Obituaries

Sister Marylyn Ehrman, S.N.D.
Sister Mary Judeann Lueken, S.N.D.
Sister Rosemary Lee, C.D.P.

Official assignment

Rev. Aby Thampi, C.M.I. to pastor, St. John the Evangelist Parish, Covington, and St. Ann Mission, Covington.

December

A filming crew from France Télévisions, the French national public television broadcaster, visit the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. As restoration from the 2019 fire of the famed Paris Cathedral is completed, editors at France Télévisions sent its Washington, D.C. crew to Covington to learn more about the Cathedral’s history, to interview Father Ryan Maher, rector, and parishioners and receive a tour by Stephen Enzweiler, Cathedral historian and docent.

The Sisters of Notre Dame introduce a new yearlong program for young adult women, called “Give God a Year.” The program is tailored to young women who feel “stuck” in their vocational discernment.

Eight diocesan employees are honored for five, 10 and 15 years of service at the annual Service Awards Luncheon. “Thank you for all the good work that you do,” Bishop Iffert said. “Here in the Diocese of



November – Bishop John Iffert and Notre Dame Sister Marla Monahan, vicar for religious, hosted a luncheon, Nov. 4, at the Metropolitan Club, Covington, for this year’s jubilarians celebrating 60 and 70 years of consecrated life. In his comments to the jubilarians Bishop Iffert expressed gratitude for the women religious for “keeping alive a spirit in the life of the Church that is not quite so prone to judgementalism — a generosity of spirit. Thank you for that example of a balanced approach, of that energy that can compel justice but, at the same time, that generosity of spirit that can prevent us from our most wrathful kind of self ... Thank you for the prayers you offer for me and for the Diocese of Covington. Thank you for the service you offer to me and to the Diocese of Covington.”

Pictured with Bishop Iffert are: (seated, from right) Sister Ruth Nadicksbernd, C.D.P., 60 years; Sister Mary Carol Hellmann, O.S.B., 70 years; Sister Sharon Portwood, O.S.B., 60 years; Sister Mary Dudley, C.D.P., 60 years; (back row, from left) Sister Mary Luann Bender, S.N.D., 60 years; Sister Paula Gohs, C.D.P., 60 years; Sister Georgianna Abplanalp, C.D.P., 60 years; Sister Mary Tereze Deye, S.N.D., 60 years; Sister Mary Margaret Hemmerle, S.N.D., 70 years; Sister Mary Shannon Kriege, S.N.D., 60 years and Sister Mary Judith Averbek, S.N.D., 60 years.

Covington, it’s a real vocation, this work of ours. I thank you all for playing your part in it so beautifully.”

Angie Poat, diocesan Youth Minister, and the Office of

Catechesis and Evangelization, hosts a THRIVE! youth ministry night.

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Bishop John Iffert celebrates the vigil Mass.

Father Joseph Gallenstein, pastor, and the people of St. Mary Parish, Alexandria, welcome Bishop Iffert for the 40th anniversary celebration of the St. Mary Church building.

Cristo Rey Parish, Florence, celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe with Mass celebrated by Bishop John Iffert.

Theresa Glaser, a parishioner at St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill, will be traveling as a Maryknoll Lay Missioner as one of three of the Class of 2023. She will be working in Kenya and will provide quarterly updates to the <<Messenger>>, so that readers can follow along on her journey.

The Diocese of Covington hosts its second Bambinelli Blessing at St. Mary’s Park in the Cathedral Square, Covington.

As the clock struck midnight, Dec. 25, Bishop Iffert celebrates the Nativity of the Lord at Midnight Mass.

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Hong Kong Catholic Jimmy Lai pleads not guilty

HONG KONG — Prominent Hong Kong Catholic, philanthropist and media mogul Jimmy Lai pleaded not guilty to endangering national security in a trial that democracy advocates around the world said includes bogus charges. If convicted in the trial before three high court judges, Lai, 76, could face life in prison. His trial — which is expected to continue for months — is seen as a test of Hong Kong’s autonomy under a controversial national security law imposed by China in June 2020 to crush Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement. Hong Kong authorities arrested Lai in 2020 during a crackdown on pro-democracy advocates. Apple Daily closed the following June after Hong Kong authorities used the security law to raid the paper’s newsroom, arrest six staff members and freeze assets. Vancouver Archbishop J. Michael Miller said Catholics were praying for Lai. “The situation in Hong Kong is greatly concerning to Vancouver Catholics and in particular our Asian Catholic community,” Archbishop Miller told OSV News via a statement Jan. 3, the day after Lai pleaded not guilty to three charges of sedition and collusion with foreign countries. “Mr. Lai is a person of faith who is being silenced and imprisoned for his pro-democracy convictions. He is one of many others who are oppressed for their beliefs. Justice demands that we speak up for them and give them a voice.” Archbishop Miller was one of 10 Catholic leaders who called for Lai’s release in early November.

Pope: Catholics in media can de-escalate war of words

VATICAN CITY — Help “de-weaponize” the way language is used in the media by being respectful to others and fostering greater understanding and peace between people, Pope Francis told a group of Catholics journalists from Germany. “How many conflicts today, instead of being extinguished by dialogue, are fueled by fake news or inflammatory statements spread through the media!” he said in a text handed to participants. “Therefore it is even more important that you, steadfast in your Christian roots and the faith you live out daily, with hearts ‘demilitarized’ by the Gospel, support the disarmament of language,” the pope wrote. The pope gave his text to a delegation representing the Society of Catholic Journalists in Germany during a private audience at the Vatican Jan. 4. The association, which was celebrating its 75th anniversary, brings together Catholic professionals working in media — either Catholic or secular outlets. There is an urgent and fundamental need, he wrote, for “fostering overtones of peace and understanding, building bridges, being willing to listen, and exercising respectful communication toward others and their reasons.” “Even the Church needs communication that is ‘gentle and at the same time prophetic,’” he wrote.

Appeals court rules emergency abortions not required in Texas

NEW ORLEANS — The Biden administration cannot use a 1986 emergency health care law to require hospitals in Texas to perform emergency abortions, a federal appeals court ruled Jan. 2. The ruling by the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals deals a blow to the Biden administration’s strategy to increase access to the procedure in states that have restricted it. Following the June 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, which overturned the high court’s previous abortion precedent in Roe v. Wade, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sent hospitals a guidance stating they must perform abortions when a woman’s life is endangered by her pregnancy under the

Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act. “When a state law prohibits abortion and does not include an exception for the life of the pregnant person — or draws the exception more narrowly than EMTALA’s emergency medical condition definition — that state law is preempted,” that guidance said. Texas, which banned most abortions by state law after the Dobbs decision, sued HHS, arguing the guidance came into conflict with its state law, and was joined in that lawsuit by several groups that oppose abortion. The appellate court found that the federal law in question obligates doctors and hospitals to attempt to stabilize both mother and unborn child in an emergency but declined to expand EMTALA’s scope to include abortions.

Nicaraguan regime publishes photos of Bishop Álvarez

MEXICO CITY — The U.S. Department of State has demanded the release of Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa and other imprisoned Nicaraguan religious leaders following a wave of detentions targeting Catholic clergy over the Christmas season. The Jan. 2 statement described Bishop Álvarez and the other religious leaders — including Bishop Isidoro Mora of Siuna — as “unjustly detained” and deplored the conditions in which they were being held. Bishop Álvarez has been detained for more than 500 days, it noted. “Nicaraguan authorities have kept Bishop Álvarez in isolation, blocked independent evaluation of the conditions of his imprisonment, and released staged videos and photographs that only increase concerns about his well-being,” read the statement, signed by State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller. The regime of President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, “continues to impose severe restrictions on religious communities and deny Nicaraguan citizens the ability to freely practice their religions and express their beliefs. We once again call on the Nicaraguan government to release Bishop Rolando Álvarez immediately and without conditions.” In a separate post on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, Miller called Bishop Álvarez’s detention “unconscionable,” adding, “Freedom of belief is a human right.” On Dec. 31, Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes of Managua urged prayer for the “families and communities that at this moment feel the absence of their priests or are experiencing other types of pain.”

Perinatal hospice and palliative care offers alternative to abortion

FAIRFAX, Va. — Perinatal

hospice and palliative care supports both mother and child from the time of diagnosis through the baby’s death while prioritizing quality of life and comfort, experts told OSV News about this strategy of care after a pregnant mother unsuccessfully challenged Texas’ abortion ban. The lawsuit involved 31-year-old Kate Cox who said that her 20-week-old baby was diagnosed with the life-limiting genetic condition trisomy 18, also known as Edwards syndrome, and that continuing the pregnancy could pose risks to her life and future fertility. Cox ultimately went to another state to get an abortion. Dr. John Bruchalski, founder of Divine Mercy Care, a nonprofit to advance pro-life health care, and Tepeyac OB/GYN, a pro-life faith-based obstetrics and gynecology practice in Fairfax, Virginia, along with other experts, stressed the importance of caring for the baby as a patient and walking with parents when they receive the often traumatic news of a prenatal diagnosis. Pro-life groups also are working to support perinatal hospice and palliative care, including draft legislation to remove financial barriers. Dr. Christina Francis, an OB-GYN and CEO of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, described perinatal palliative care as an essential service. Bruchalski and other medical professionals recommended Be Not Afraid, a nonprofit that provides case management support to parents carrying to term following a prenatal diagnosis. The nonprofit is currently focused on training pro-life and Catholic organizations nationwide, including dioceses and archdioceses, and referring parents to them.



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A Eucharistic Word: Joy

Michael R. Heinlein
OSV News

During a recent 40 Hours celebration at our parish, I decided to sign up for an hour with our son, preparing for his first confession just before Christmas. Of course, I wanted to support the parish initiative. But, even more, I wanted to spend some special time with our firstborn as he prepares to celebrate the sacrament of penance.

I had chosen a few prayers and readings ahead of time, wanting to focus our attention on discipleship and conversion, hoping to plant seeds for reflection on holiness of life and the centrality of the Eucharist in our attempts to answer that call.

We sat in the back of our parish church, where we wouldn't distract others and could have an opportunity to focus our attention on the Lord in a mix of readings, whispered conversation and silence. I drew on some of the richness of Blessed James Alberione's writings and the spirituality of the Pauline family for our reflections.

In one of Alberione's more well-known descriptions of the importance of Eucharistic adoration, he describes the similarities of our time with the Eucharistic Lord with other well-known encounters others had with the Master. One of them, among others, is that adoration is "the shepherds at the manger."

Now my son had some questions about this, and I responded with what I'd regard as forgettable words. But my son responded with something somewhat unforgettable. "I think the shepherds are my new favorite people at the nativity."

As I prayed with that in the silence of our Lord's presence, I started to appreciate the shepherds more — thanks to my son's new interest in them. The shepherds were poor; on the margins, likely without much love in their lives. Had the angelic host announced Christ's birth to the rich and affluent, would they have set out in haste to see a baby born in a barn? Why would they hurry ... for that? But for the shepherds, why wouldn't they? Why wouldn't the hope contained in the heavenly revelation of the newborn king motivate their curiosity and bring meaning to their lives. It was in the low manger that the shepherds, considered nothing in their world, found the All — also appearing in the midst of what the world would call nothingness.

This year, as we all endeavor to grow in Eucharistic living during our National Eucharistic Revival, perhaps we can take a lesson from the shepherds. Perhaps we might, amid the mundane and the trivial, begin to see that God is with us? Perhaps we can begin to get a sense of God's vulnerability on that first Christmas — as a helpless baby, lying in a feeding trough, who actually made the stars of the sky. That vulnerability remained a constant, culminating in his body nailed down to the wood of a cross. His vulnerability was a self-gift, the fullness of love. In this season of gift-giving, do we look for ways to be a gift to others, to live Christ's vulnerable, selfless love?

Do we still recognize his oneness with us? The accessibility of his presence in every tabernacle? His vulnerability in the form of bread? Do we offer our time to him — run to behold the one the angels heralded that first Christmas? Does our Eucharistic worship bring us the joy that changes us, like the shepherds at that first Christmas, who Luke tells us left the manger and "returned, glorifying and



OSV News photo/Sailko, Wikimedia Commons, CC-SA 3.0 license

"Adorazione dei pastori" is a poplar wood bas-relief created by the "Maestro di Trognano," an unknown master c. 1481-1495. The expressive detail of the shepherds depicted in the piece makes it of great artistic interest.

praising God for all they had heard and seen" (2:20).

At Christmas, let us pray that we can be found like the shepherds. May our encounters with the eucharistic Lord, the same as the encounters as the shepherds with the babe in the manger; cause others to ask, as inquired of the shepherds in the carol "Angels We Have Heard on High":

"Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong? What the gladsome tidings be, Which inspire your heav'nly song?"

Michael R. Heinlein is author of "Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I." and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators.



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Registration

Registration is required. To register for this event, please email natalie.ciulla@stelizabeth.com or call us at (859) 301-7878. This Program is not a Boone county Public Library event.

This luncheon has been generously sponsored by the St. Elizabeth Hospice Program.

