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



January 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

The year 2023 marked an important milestone in the life of the Diocese of Covington as it celebrates the 170th anniversary of its foundation by Pope Blessed Pius IX. This anniversary is an incredible testament to the many clergy, faithful and community members who have contributed to the vibrant faith life of Covington.

2023 also marked an important moment for St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption as it celebrates the 130th anniversary of its inception by Covington's Third Bishop, Camillus Paul Maes. Beginning with a simple drawing by architect Leon Coquard in 1893, Covington's Cathedral Basilica has since become an epicenter for prayer and pilgrimage for over one million people from every continent.

Known affectionately as "America's Notre Dame," those who have visited and seen Covington's Cathedral Basilica have been moved by the magnificent neo-Gothic stone edifice that rises over the city landscape — a Church Bishop Maes saw not only for the Catholic faithful, but indeed a "gift for the entire city of Covington."

After more than a century, though, the Cathedral Basilica's masonry and stonework, lovingly built and fashioned by early immigrants and master craftsmen, is in desperate need of repair to preserve it for future generations.

To honor the Diocese of Covington's 170th anniversary, I was pleased to announce "Restored in Christ," the campaign to restore the Cathedral Basilica's exterior stone and masonry. With a fundraising goal of \$6 million, this campaign will ensure that our next 170 years begin with the same resolute commitment to stewardship for the many gifts God has given us.

Great progress has been made in the early stages of the campaign. As I write this, over \$4.5 million has been pledged, but we still have a way to go to meet our goal. This campaign is currently underway at the Cathedral Parish, and now I invite you to be a part of this critical effort. To view the campaign video and learn more visit: [www.covcathedral.com/restored-in-christ](http://www.covcathedral.com/restored-in-christ).

I pray that you will join me in this labor of love for Covington's Mother Church, doing your part, large or small, so that together, we may be restored in Christ.

Humbly in the Lord,

Most Rev. John Iffert  
Bishop of Covington



For more coverage of the "Restored In Christ" project see pages 2, 6-12.



# RESTORED IN CHRIST

Dear Friends in Christ,

For 130 years, the Cathedral has been a place of welcome for all peoples to pray, seek, discover, and worship their Creator. Faith built it and faith has sustained it ever since.

With your prayerful and financial support to the 170th Anniversary Campaign Restored in Christ, the Cathedral — a veritable sign of the incarnation — will continue to be a living witness to God’s love and beauty for generations to come.

As we began this 170th anniversary year in the life of the local Church of Covington, I invite you to join me in restoring the sacred home to so many known affectionately as “America’s Notre Dame.”

*Ryan Maher*

Very Rev. Ryan L. Maher  
Cathedral Basilica Rector



## The Cathedral Basilica — a catechism in stone and glass

Several months ago, Father Ryan Maher asked me to participate on the Capital Campaign Committee to help raise funds to restore our cathedral. I agreed to participate because this cathedral has played a significant role in my own faith journey — not just in the 10 years I’ve been an active member of this parish but for the 50-plus years I’ve been a part of the Diocese of Covington.

Like many of you, I could share personal stories of being here for beautiful weddings (including my own), baptisms, midnights Masses, Pro-Life Masses, Easter vigils, beautiful celebrations of life — I could go on and on. But, if you’ll indulge me, I will share a personal story with you about a little girl named Eloise.

My husband and I are blessed to have four grandchildren and Eloise is the oldest. She is 6-years old and is in kindergarten at St. Timothy School, Union. Occasionally my husband and I will babysit Eloise and when she comes over on Saturday, she often spends the night. We tell her to pack her church clothes (and then we will tell her we’ll spring for breakfast or donuts afterwards).

Several years ago, we brought her to the Cathedral for Sunday morning Mass. We packed her backpack full of food, books and crayons. By the time the homily began she had exhausted all resources in the backpack and was fidgety in the pew. She asked to go for a walk. Since we sit



(above) Amy Neltner Hoen with her two granddaughters, Eloise and Gracie. Mrs. Hoen shares how the art and beauty of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, inspires the faithful, including the very young.

stopped and talked about the purpose of the “pool.”

Out of the corner of my eye I saw The Pieta, the statue of Mary holding Jesus after he had been taken down from the cross. I prayed she wouldn’t ask about it because I had no idea how to explain its meaning to a 3-year-old. But no such luck. She walked right up to it. Upon looking at the statue, she very gently placed her small hand on the foot of Jesus — right where the nail had been.

She recognized Mary but didn’t know who the “man” was or why he had so many boo-boos. I told her it was

under the big window and enter through the side entrance she hadn’t been in the back of church.

We began our walk down the side isle. I watched her gaze up at the stained-glass windows where she spotted the nativity scene, and she recognized baby Jesus. Then I watched her turn to her right and look at the mosaics — the Stations of the Cross. I saw her expression change because she didn’t understand what was happening.

We got to the back of church, and she saw the statue of St. Patrick. “Who is this?” she asked. She saw a yellow and red umbrella in the back of church — the Papal Umbrella. I told her it was the Pope’s umbrella. As we continued our walk, she was excited to find a pool — the Baptismal font — and we

Jesus — big Jesus. She asked who had hurt him and if Mary put Band-Aids on his boo-boos. I assured her that Mary took care of him just like her mother would take care of her if she got hurt. Her final question was, “Is he ok now?” And with great relief and joy — I said, “Yes Eloise — he is very much ok. He’s with his mother and father in heaven.”

Our walks in the Cathedral have continued for years. As a 6-year-old, she very much enjoys going to see the Mary Shrine and lighting candles. Sometimes she even brings her own dollars. She understands that she can pray to Mary and that Mary will intercede for her:

This example is one of the many reasons why I love this Cathedral. It’s beauty and grandeur intrigued my granddaughter to ask questions and be curious about our faith. The murals, stained-glass windows, and statues all tell stories of our faith and that has opened her mind and her heart, which allow the seeds of our faith to be planted.

This Cathedral has been here serving people for over 130 years. Many people gave their time, talent and resources to build a church that would serve as a place for all people to come and find refuge, to pray and to learn about their faith — like Eloise did. I want our church to be here for many more generations.

We need the help of many people to raise the funds necessary to restore our beloved Cathedral. All parishioners in the Diocese should have received information in the mail. Please review the materials and prayerfully consider making a one-time or multiple-year pledge. Every single gift — no matter how big or small — matters. For more information visit [www.covcathedral.com/restored-in-christ/](http://www.covcathedral.com/restored-in-christ/).

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

*Amy Neltner Hoehn is a parishioner of St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption Parish, Covington, Ky*



**Save the date & Join us in Frankfort on**  
**Tuesday, January 23, 2024**  
**Music, Terrific Speakers & Great Cause**

### 2024 March for Life

Join the Diocese of Covington for March for Life Kentucky, Jan. 23. Mass starts at 9:30 a.m. at Good Shepherd Church, Frankfort, with a “Love Them Both” rally following at both the Kentucky Capitol Rotunda and the Memorial for the Unborn in the historic Frankfort Cemetery until 3 p.m.

Four buses are scheduled to shuttle people from the Diocese of Covington to Frankfort for the event, with RSVP’s for the buses due by Jan. 19.

RSVP’s can be given to the diocesan Pro-Life Office, (859) 392-1500.



# Safe Haven Baby Box blessed at Edgewood fire station

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

In 2022, Dale Henson, chief financial officer of the Diocese of Covington and, at the time, councilman of the City of Edgewood, asked city council to consider the installation of a baby box into Edgewood’s fire station.

These boxes, protected under Safe Haven laws, allow for parents of newborns to anonymously surrender their infants in a safe location. The box activates a silent alarm

when used, which alerts an on-duty firefighter to retrieve the child. Infants surrendered to the boxes are offered medical care and a chance at adoption.

This is the 27th baby box to be installed in the state of Kentucky, and in the past year, three infants have been surrendered to the boxes in Kentucky alone, according to Faye Roch, director of the diocesan Pro-life Office.

“I am very proud of this,” said Mr. Henson at the box’s installation, “It is the last thing I did on Council. I pray that

it is never needed, but if it is, I want it to be there.”

Bishop John Iffert, who was also in attendance at the box’s installation, offered a blessing both to the box and to the firefighters/EMTs who would attend to it.

“We want every child in this community and in all of Northern Kentucky to be loved, welcomed, and desired,” Bishop Iffer said, “Yet, we live in a world that can be difficult and tough, and people can feel despair. And so, we also pray that if someone finds themselves in that situation, that they will use this box to preserve that child.”



(from left to right) Father John Paul, parochial vicar, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood; Deacon Jim Feddor; Faye Roch, director, Office of Pro-life; Father Baiju Kidaagen, pastor, St. Pius X Parish; John Link, mayor of Edgewood; Bishop John Iffert; Dale Henson, diocesan chief financial officer and former City of Edgewood council member; Monica Kelsey, founder, Safe Haven Baby Boxes, and Karen Henson, parishioner, St. Pius X Parish.

# The Eucharistic witness of St. Cyril of Jerusalem

In 350 AD, St. Cyril of Jerusalem became Bishop of Jerusalem. He became known for his writings documenting the instruction of catechumens and the Liturgy in the early Church — and today is revered as both a saint and Church Father.

His feast day is celebrated March 18.

Here’s what he has to say on the true presence in the Eucharistic.

“The bread and the wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were simple bread and wine, but the invocation having been made, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine the blood of Christ.” (Catechetical Lectures 19:7 [A.D. 350])

“Do not, therefore, regard the bread and wine as simply that; for they are, according to the Master’s declaration, the body and blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by the faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the body and blood of Christ. ... [Since you are] fully convinced that



An image depicting St. Cyril of Jerusalem from the Basilica of St. Mary in Kevelaer, Germany.

the apparent bread is not bread, even though it is sensible to the taste, but the body of Christ, and that the apparent wine is not wine, even though the taste would have it so, . . . partake of that bread as something spiritual, and put a cheerful face on your soul” (ibid., 22:6, 9).

## Official Assignments

Effective January 1, 2024

**Rev. Michael T. Grady**  
To: Presbyteral Council  
Term: Three years  
Continues other duties

**Rev. Niby Kannai**  
To: Presbyteral Council  
Term: Three years  
Continues other duties

**Rev. V. Ross Kelsch**  
To: Presbyteral Council  
Term: Three years  
Continues other duties

**Very Rev. Daniel L. Schomaker**  
To: Presbyteral Council  
Term: Three years  
Continues other duties

**Very Rev. Ryan L. Stenger, J.V.**  
To: Presbyteral Council  
Term: Three years  
Continues other duties

Assigned by the Most Rev. John C. Iffert  
Bishop of Covington

*Jamie N. Schroeder*  
Jamie N. Schroeder  
Chancellor



## Bishop’s Schedule

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Jan. 14</b><br>Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 10 a.m.  | <b>Jan. 18</b><br>Directors meeting, 9:30 a.m.<br>Priest Holy Hour, Cathedral Basilica, 3 p.m. |
| <b>Jan. 15</b><br>Dr. Martin Luther King holiday — Curia closed   | Confirmation, St. Joseph Parish, Camp Springs, 7 p.m.  |
| <b>Jan. 16</b><br>Advisory Council meeting, 9:30 a.m.<br>2024 DPAA videotaping, 2 p.m.<br>Confirmation, Holy Cross Parish, Latonia, 7 p.m.                          | <b>Jan. 20</b><br>Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 4:30 p.m.                                    |
| <b>Jan. 17</b><br>Blessing of Science Learning Center, Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport, 9 a.m.<br>Confirmation, St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas, 7 p.m. | <b>Jan. 21</b><br>Mass, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California, 9 and 11 a.m.                  |
|   | <b>Jan. 22</b><br>Confirmation, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, 7 p.m.                         |



# It’s not your life, it’s not your death, it’s not your choice

When I was an auxiliary bishop in the Los Angeles Archdiocese some years ago, the state of California was militating in favor of physician-assisted suicide. During the campaign, while driving through my pastoral region, I saw a pro-euthanasia billboard with the following message: “My Life, my Death, my Choice.”

WORD ON FIRE



Bishop Robert Barron

Immediately, I thought of St. Paul’s diametrically opposite remark in his Letter to the Romans: “We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s.”

I do believe that in regard to the issue of assisted suicide, it comes down to this: Did the billboard get it right, or did St. Paul? Does my life belong

to me, or is it a gift from God? Is my death a matter of my personal choice, or is it under God’s providence and at his disposal?

This great question has come to the forefront of my mind once again, since my current home state of Minnesota is considering legislation very similar to the one that California did indeed adopt.

The proposal is couched in language designed to assuage moral anxieties: it will be offered only to those

who have a terminal diagnosis and who are making the decision in complete autonomy. In regard to the first point, color me very skeptical. In many countries in Europe and in Canada, where physician-assisted suicide was approved in a similarly limited way, the restrictions on who can access it and the safeguards in place to prevent elder abuse, among other things, have been gradually lifted. In many of those places, the elderly, those with dementia, those experiencing depression or severe anxiety can all be candidates for this form of “treatment.” Though the advocates of medically assisted suicide will deny it until the cows come home, this law places the entire state directly on the slipperiest of slopes.

And in regard to the second point, we’re back to the California billboard. Though we place a huge premium on it in our culture, I don’t consider autonomy the supreme value. Authentic freedom is not radical self-determination; rather, it is ordered to certain goods that the mind has discerned.

I become free, for instance, to play golf, not inasmuch as I swing the club any way I want, but instead in the measure that I have interiorized the rules that properly govern the swing. A purely “autonomous” golfer will be a failure on the course. In precisely the same way, a sheerly autonomous moral agent will wreak havoc all around him and lose his ethical bearings.

If I speak obsessively of “choice” but never even raise a question regarding the good or evil being chosen, I find myself in a moral and intellectual wasteland. True freedom is ordered toward moral value and ultimately to the supreme value who is God.

Some advocates of physician-assisted suicide will

argue that autonomy over one’s body is of utmost importance for those who face the prospect of a dreadfully painful demise. But this consideration is largely beside the point, for palliative care is so advanced that in practically all cases, pain can be successfully managed. I say this with special emphasis in the state of Minnesota, which is justly famous for the high quality of its hospitals, including and especially the Mayo Clinic.

The deeper point is this: even if a dying person found himself in great pain, actively killing himself would not be morally justifiable. The reason is that the direct killing of the innocent is, in the language of the Church, “intrinsically evil” — which is to say, incapable of being morally sanctioned, no matter how extenuating the circumstances or how beneficial the consequences.

I have argued before that when this category is lost sight of a dangerous relativism holds sway. And when even the direct taking of innocent life is a matter of personal choice, the entire moral enterprise has in fact collapsed into incoherence.

And so, could I ask all of my fellow citizens of Minnesota, especially those who are Catholic, to oppose this legislation (SF 1813/HF 1930) in any way you can: call your representative or senator; write to the governor; talk to your friends and neighbors, circulate a petition. And to those in other parts of the country, I would urge vigilance. If this legislation hasn’t come to your state yet, it probably will soon enough. If you stand for the culture of life, fight it!

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

# Kindness –A hidden power for evangelization

Evangelization was the topic of a recent daily reflection on one of the prayer apps I use. It was a powerful commentary on the need for each of us to take seriously our baptismal call to mission, that is to “Go, therefore,

VIEWPOINT



Jamie Schroeder

and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you,” (Matt 28:19-20) as Jesus directed before his ascension into heaven. It was a strong reminder and enkindled in me once again the desire to share the good news of God’s love with others.

But what does evangelization really look like?

Does it mean preaching on street corners or going door to door? Or does it mean simply being a person of good will?

I think it includes both, and everything in between, depending on the circumstance and the individual. However, a good number of Catholics are uncomfortable or feel ill-equipped to undertake Christ’s Great Commission, as shown by the results of the Disciple Maker Index survey that parishes of the diocese completed last Lent. Plans are underway in the diocese to offer greater opportunities to learn and improve our evangelization skills. In the meantime, there is already something that everyone can do, a skill that is very effective. It is to practice the virtue of kindness.

This might seem obvious, and on the surface, too simple. However, if we take a closer look at this virtue, we

realize just how much it involves and that we may not be as skilled as we thought we were! This past Advent, I resumed reading a book called “The Hidden Power of Kindness: A Practical Handbook for Souls Who Dare to Transform the World, One Deed at a Time,” by Rev. Lawrence G. Lovasik. It’s an oldie but a goodie.

In the first chapter alone, there are practical suggestions to last a lifetime. Talk about New Year’s resolutions! These are a few that spoke to me:

Be obliging. Anticipate and fulfill the needs of others, especially those that are unspoken, for “most of God’s gifts come to us without our asking for them ... Keep your eyes open to discover other people’s needs; take the trouble to remove an obstacle in the path of another; let your hands be busy providing pleasant surprises for your neighbor; be eager to undertake things for others or run errands for them without waiting to be asked.”

Be courteous. Courtesy is polite or respectful behavior toward others, and from the Christian perspective, it is the respect shown to another because he/she is made in the image and likeness of God. Courtesy encompasses a number of behaviors which may not at first come to mind. A genuinely courteous person is aware of everyone and considers how his or her words and actions might be received in every circumstance.

“He is tender toward the bashful, gentle toward the distant, and merciful toward the absent. He guards against introducing any topics that may irritate or wound; ... he never speaks of himself, except when compelled to do so, never defends himself by heated retort, has no liking for slander or gossip, is careful not to impute wrong motives to those who interfere with him, interprets everything for the best, if he can, and, if he cannot, is silent.” Courtesy includes dependability, punctuality (particularly difficult for me!), thoughtfulness, loyalty and being a good listener.

Be selfless. Make little sacrifices of personal freedoms or conveniences to do good for others. Give in to the ideas, preferences and plans of others with grace and humility so long as no sin is involved. In other words, imitate the self-sacrifice of Christ. “No labors are too great for a loving heart, for where there is love, there is no labor ... The Saints were Saints because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful, patient when it was difficult to be patient, silent when they wanted to speak, and agreeable when they felt an urge to scream.”

Be cheerful. Cheerfulness is shown through being encouraging and sympathetic, having a sense of humor and a ready smile. It lifts spirits, increases hope, and brings joy. Facing struggles with hope, courage, and patience is, in itself, cheerfulness when expressed appropriately.

And, finally, follow the “rules” of kindness. “Don’t speak unkindly of anyone. Don’t speak unkindly to anyone. Don’t act unkindly toward anyone. Do speak kindly of someone at least once a day. Do think kindly about someone at least once a day. Do act kindly toward someone at least once a day. For any unkindness committed: Make a brief act of contrition ... Offer an apology, if possible. Say a little prayer ... for the one to whom you have been unkind.”

These are tall orders! The bottom line is that in practicing kindness, we imitate Jesus. Kindness is attractive. Others see it and want it.

Remember the hymn, “They’ll Know We Are Christians By Our Love”? When we practice kindness well, we take a first step in evangelization, in winning souls for Christ.

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

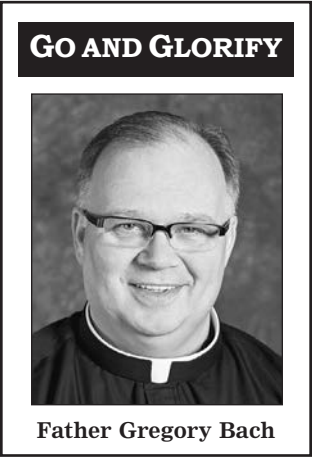


COMMENTARY

God’s calling

The readings for the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle B — are: 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19; 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20 and John 1:35-42.

When I was studying at St. Meinrad College I had a friend, Tom, who was a year behind me. Tom was just a down-home, good guy to hang out with. Tom was trying to figure out what God was calling him to in life. He thought about the priesthood. He thought about marriage. He thought about becoming a permanent deacon. He was open to wherever God was calling him.



Father Gregory Bach

When Tom returned after Christmas break, he told me a story about God calling him. He planned to ask out an old girlfriend of his. He had the night all planned out. He would pick her up, go to dinner and then see a movie. The night went as he had planned. After dinner and a movie, he took her home and was expecting a good night kiss. Well, that didn’t happen, and he was frustrated.

He drove around his hometown for a while and saw lights on in his parish church. He drove down the road, he got to the church and walked inside. No one was there and he took a seat in one of the front pews. He was asking God what he should do with his life, and he poured out his heart to the Lord.

Tom had a unique way in which he prayed. He would open a bible to a random page and reflect on whatever passage his finger landed. That night he pointed to the phrase, “You are a priest forever according...”

As he was telling me this story, I couldn’t believe what happened to him. I asked Tom what he did after pointing to the passage. He said, “I got the heck out of there!”

Tom ended up continuing his education and is working at a college in Australia and is happily married. Can you imagine something like that happening to you? As if a voice from God came down upon you as a booming voice, or in a quiet whisper, or while at prayer. Maybe God is doing that but it’s just so hard to hear because we are so busy.

In the first stanza of our psalm this weekend we hear; “I have waited, waited for the Lord, and he stooped toward me and heard my cry. And he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God.”

Prayer can be a waiting game. We go to God with our prayers and at times we may feel like it takes too long to receive an answer. Or maybe, like Tom, we hear an answer that comes swiftly and it’s just hard to believe that it comes from God.

Whatever our situation we should know that God hears our prayer and grants them according to his will, not ours. As Tom poured out his soul to the Lord so we should do the same.

May we continue to pour out our soul to the God who gives us the necessary grace to follow his will and lift our prayers to the Lord over and over again.

Father Gregory Bach is assistant to the Bishop and vice-chancellor, Diocese of Covington, Ky

Let God love others through you

It was close to Christmas more than 15 years ago at the women’s federal prison camp where I was facilitating an ongoing group. The discussion that day centered around coping and making the most of the Christmas holidays.



Sister Aileen Bankemper, O.S.B.

One woman commented about Helen, also a group member (not her real name) and how Helen decorated doors of the women who were recently incarcerated. Helen was serving a long sentence. Her family lived a distance away and didn’t have the means to visit. It had been years since she had seen some of her children.

When asked why she decorated doors, she responded that she remembered how lonely and sad she felt, especially the first Christmas away from family. She responded

ed something like this, “I love to create! and it makes me happy to do something for others.”

Helen possessed artistic abilities and could make magic out of scraps of crepe paper. After the group she asked if I would like to see some of her work. It was true, she did work miracles with scraps of paper, glitter, glue, tape and scissors. Of course, photos were not allowed, which I wanted to take, but the memory of her artwork and, in particular, the joyful expression on her face and the faces of the women for whom she decorated the doors have stayed with me.

The experience reminded me of a statement by St. Teresa of Calcutta: “It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you ... yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother (or sister) and offer your hand.”

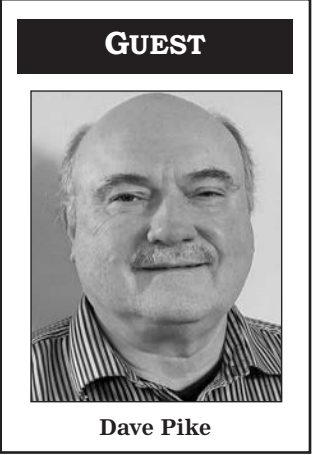
Or in the case of Helen, sharing your talent and generosity by decorating a door bringing joy to someone experiencing distress. Helen’s loving act of kindness allowed God’s love to be shown.

(For those wondering, Helen finally did have a joy filled reunion with her family several months later.)

Benedictine Sister Aileen Bankemper is prioress for St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills, Ky

A reflection on prayer

The other day someone asked me to pray for them. Not an uncommon request, but it always takes me to a deeper place. Sometimes it gives pause and, in my own quiet, draws me to ponder what prayer is.



Dave Pike

Spiritual writer Joyce Rupp describes prayer as a relationship. Very lovingly asking, “When did you first weave your way into my life, Beloved?” Some of us can relate to her prayerful relationship — somehow, someway, God has always been a part of our lives.

Some of us, however, might have a different experience of prayer: Kentucky’s own poet, writer and farmer, Wendell Barry, writes about prayer in this way; “I prayed like a man walking in a forest at night, feeling his way with his hands, at each step fearing to fall into pure bottomlessness forever. Prayer is like lying awake at night, afraid, with your head under the cover, hearing only the beating of your own heart.”

Prayer is personal and communal. Full of faith or somewhat uncertain. Loving and fearful at the same time. But always honest.

Prayer is a sign of both our relationship to God as well

as to one another. But it is also an indicator to ourselves of our own helplessness.

As Catholics and as Christians, let us understand our role in our community. We are called to be healers. Healing is as natural as a mother with her baby. Or as inspiring as a group of people with addictions coming together in search of sobriety. A pressing of the known and unknown. Blessings upon us.

The Jail Ministry Program at Catholic Charities strives to meet the spiritual needs of all who are impacted by the criminal justice process. We work with people who are incarcerated or about to be released from jail or prison, families and friends of the incarcerated, and victims of crime.

We emphasize justice and mercy for everyone in our work. We are concerned about the effects of crime and punishment in our society and advocate for justice in these areas — promoting responsibility, rehabilitation, and restoration.

Catholic Charities staff work in partnership with agencies, correctional facilities, and volunteers to develop and support appropriate programs for those who are impacted by the effects of crime and punishment.

Dave Pike is the Jail Ministry coordinator for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington. For more information about volunteering with the Jail Ministry Program contact him at dpike@covingtoncharities.org or visit wwwcovingtoncharities.org.

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, coordindora 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.”

Moving? Wrong address?

Call the circulation desk,  
(859) 392-1570



# THE CATHEDRAL

With the gift of a silver dollar, Maes' vision came to life.


On October 1, 1884, Camillus Paul Maes, a Belgium native and priest of the Diocese of Detroit, was appointed third Bishop of Covington. Transplanting European aestheticism and culture to America, he envisioned a grand, new Cathedral to replace Covington's original 1853 wood-framed Cathedral that had fallen into disrepair. Driven by his passion for the Gothic style, he immediately turned his gaze toward the design and construction of a new, magnificent Cathedral that would serve the needs of the growing German and Irish communities.

Never doubting God's providence and that he had been chosen for the creation of a new Cathedral, Maes's dream was divinely confirmed one day when a young, unknown girl arrived at his residence and placed in his hand a single silver dollar, requesting that he "build a new cathedral with it."

Later, in 1890, James Walsh, Sr., a wealthy Covington distiller, died and bequeathed \$25,000 to the Bishop "for a new St. Mary's Cathedral," and two years later, his partner Peter O'Shaughnessy gifted the bishop \$100,000 for the same purpose.



Purchasing two homes with large lots at the northeast corner of Madison Avenue and 12th Street as a site for the new Cathedral, Maes set to work right away. For his architect, he chose 31-year-old Leon Coquard of Detroit. Coquard would base his design for the new Cathedral on the interior of the Abbey Church of St. Denis in Paris, France, with the exterior after Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral.

Using wood, stone, marble, glass, and gold, the greatest artisans of the 19th century were chosen to build and decorate this holy place that would evoke the Heavenly Jerusalem.




Speaking at the façade dedication on June 29, 1910, Maes expressed his heartfelt feelings about the Cathedral:

*"Twenty-five years of life in this community have made me devoted to the spiritual and civic interest of the city of Covington. It has been my ambition to give the public a token of my love for the city by erecting in it a monument which will speak for centuries to come of the love of Christ for souls. Indeed, the message of the Cathedral is the message of Christ Himself."*



(left) Bishop Maes lays the Cathedral cornerstone on September 8, 1895 to a crowd of 20,000 onlookers.

(above) Bishop Maes visited the Cathedral construction site almost daily. The photograph from circa 1896 captures Maes inspecting the progress of the Cathedral's construction near the spot where the main altar is today.




## St. Paul Catholic School

### Open House

Sunday, January 28  
12:00-3:00 p.m.



St. Paul School offers Preschool (3 & 4 year old), Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and 1st through 8th Grades. Tour the school and meet the teachers. To register, use the QR code or call 859-647-4070.



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# RESTORED IN CHRIST

*The Campaign to Preserve and Restore*

The goal of the 2023 Cathedral Campaign is simple: to preserve and restore the stone and masonry exterior of the Cathedral just as Bishop Maes and his architects had visualized and seen it over a century ago. Utilizing state-of-the art technology for study, restoration, and repairs, artistic processes from centuries past will also be used. Indiana limestone will be sourced from the same quarry the Cathedral stone was taken over a century earlier, and terra cotta ornamentation, such as the grotesques, will be replicated in the same process the Cathedral builders used in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Project highlights include:





RESTORED  
IN CHRIST

Right: Cathedral Basilica 2023  
Below: Cathedral Façade on Sept. 9, 1909





Grotesques

The Cathedral features a magnificent collection of 58 terra cotta figures known collectively as grotesques. Modeled after those at Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, the Cathedral's gargoyles (decorative false rainspouts) and chimeras (decorative anthropomorphized figures atop the façade) are in desperate need of care. Many of the grotesques are cracked and broken while many require complete replication for replacement.

Stained Glass and Tracery

The Cathedral contains 82 stained-glass windows created by Mayer and Co. of Munich, Germany and the Tyrolean Art Glass Company of Innsbruck, Austria. While many of the windows are in fine condition, several windows are in need of conservation along with masonry repairs at the tracery frames that support many of the stained-glass panels.

Balustrades and Colonnades

Toward the middle of the Cathedral's façade are a series of balustrades and colonnades. Metal pins holding these stone arches and columns together have rusted from water damage, requiring their complete restoration by replication and replacement.

Delicate Elements

In addition to the Cathedral's collection of grotesques, the Cathedral features more delicate carvings such as friezes and moldings. In many instances, water has permeated their seams, requiring restoration or complete replacement.

Soiling

Visible at the Cathedral's iconic flying buttresses and at numerous places across the exterior are dark stains from biological and carbon soiling. If left uncleaned and untreated, these areas will lead to future deterioration.

Facing Stones

The body, or facing stones, and carved details of the Cathedral are constructed from solid Indiana limestone. Many of these stones have cracked or shattered due to water damage, requiring complete replacement. In addition, extensive tuck-pointing, cementitious grout, and pin repair to jointed stones is required.



(below) Several windows are in need of conservation along with masonry repairs at the tracery frames that support many of the stained-glass panels.



(above and right) Metal pins holding these stone arches and columns together have rusted from water damage, requiring their complete restoration by replication and replacement.



(above) The Cathedral features delicate carvings such as friezes and moldings. In many instances, water has permeated their seams, requiring restoration or complete replacement.



(above) A chimera atop the Cathedral in need of complete replication and replacement.



(above) Visible at numerous places across the exterior are dark stains from biological and carbon soiling. If left uncleaned and untreated, these areas will lead to future deterioration.

(below) Many of the solid Indiana limestone facing stones, and carved details of the Cathedral have cracked or shattered due to water damage, requiring complete replacement. In addition, extensive tuck-pointing, cementitious grout, and pin repair to jointed stones is required.





# RESTORED IN CHRIST

## CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

**August 2022**

Architectural study begins on entire Cathedral exterior.



**December 2022**

Architectural study and plans are completed.



**March 2023**

170th Anniversary Campaign "Restored in Christ" announced.



**February 2024**

Site planning and scaffolding to begin.



**March 2024**

Cathedral stone restoration begins. Completion Fall 2024.



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# LOVINGLY BUILT

The Cathedral spoke not only of 19th century engineering ingenuity, but of the dedicated immigrants who built it.

Despite an economic depression, Bishop Maes and the faithful put their trust in God and broke ground for the new Cathedral in April 1894. Constructed of brick, terracotta, and locally-quarried Bedford limestone, the Cathedral’s construction was carried out almost entirely by German and Irish immigrant craftsmen. Skilled in carpentry, masonry, and sculpting, these truly American craftsmen mirrored their medieval guild counterparts and the artistic imagination that centuries prior had given rise to Europe’s Gothic masterpieces.

Every inch of the Cathedral was lovingly fashioned. Bricks were fired locally; limestone was quarried and shipped by train from Indiana; and farmers even lent horses and carts so that materials could be transported on site with ease. An elaborate system of pulleys and winches, paired with sheer willpower, lifted millions of metric tons of stone seamlessly into place high atop Covington’s cityscape.

By Christmas 1900, the new St. Mary’s Cathedral was ready to be dedicated. The soaring new Cathedral church was a masterpiece. Light filled the interior, giving it the appearance of a shimmering “Cathedral of glass.” The public gasped at its beauty and celebrated its joyous dedication on January 27, 1901.

When Bishop Maes died in 1915, the Cathedral’s stone façade had been decorated with magnificent sculptural work by Clement Barnhorn. Just over 100 years later, 24 statues and two tympana would be added to the façade schema, completing the original decorative vision of Bishop Maes and those dedicated Cathedral builders.



Construction of the stone façade began in 1908 and was completed in 1910. This photograph from 1909 to the left captures a view toward the west as workmen hoist stone for the façade into place. Such intricate movements required the work of many hands, from engineers and masons to skilled laborers and craftsmen.



By Winter 1908, work on the lower facade was complete and attention shifted to the remaining upper half. In this photograph from early 1909, workmen pose as newly carved stone arches are prepared to be hoisted into place.

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February 23 - 25 | Men & Women’s Retreat with Fr. Jeff Putthoff, SJ

March 1 - 3 | Men’s Retreat with Fr. Jim Kubicki, SJ

March 8 - 10 | Women’s Retreat with Nicki Verploegen

March 15 - 17 | Men & Women’s Retreat with Fr. Michael Graham, SJ

March 22 - 24 | Men’s Retreat with Fr. Chris Manahan, SJ

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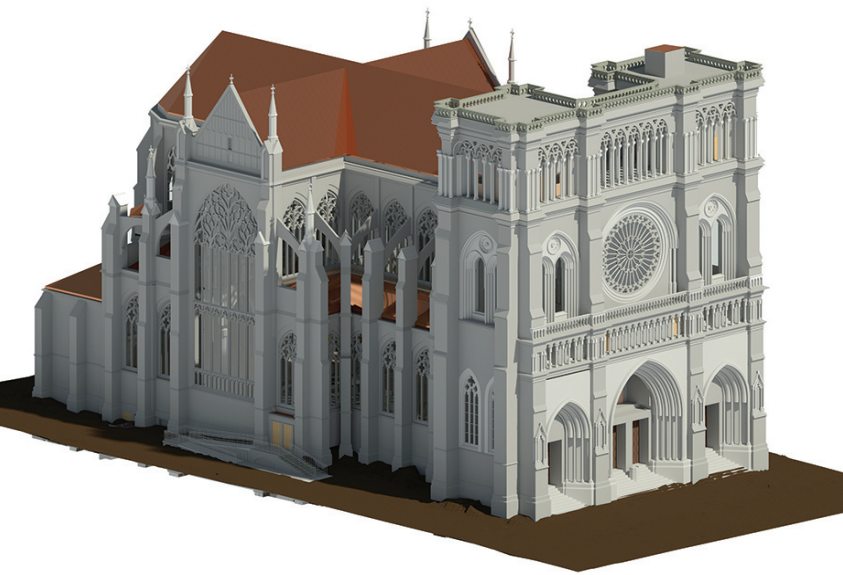
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## THE CATHEDRAL STUDY

Given its age and condition reports, an extensive survey and study of the Cathedral exterior was conducted in 2020. Utilizing a laser scan of the exterior, a precise 3D model of the Cathedral was generated for reference and analysis. Using this model, architects, conservators, and masons conducted several weeks of exhaustive field observations from ground level to the use of a 250 foot crane.

The Cathedral was found to be in good condition with little signs of structural movement. Other areas, however, like decorative stone supports and ornamental elements have extensive, hazardous deterioration requiring immediate attention:

- Buttresses, piers, and belt courses have eroded and split, requiring replication and replacement.
- Terra cotta gargoyles and chimeras, limestone columns, finials, and arcades are cracked and crumbling, requiring complete restoration, replication, and replacement.
- Lintels, armatures, and colonnades held together by iron pins have eroded from rust and water entrenchment, leaving them vulnerable to collapse.

## GIVING

### Total Campaign \$6M

Covington's St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption welcomes nearly one million visitors and faithful every year. Standing through two World Wars, and now two pandemics, it has been an immovable sign of faith and a symbol of the Lord's covenant to remain with us forever.

Your support to the 170th anniversary campaign Restored in Christ ensures the Cathedral's structural safety, beauty, and permanence for centuries to come.

To learn more about giving opportunities, contact:

**Mr. Jim Hess**  
**Director of Stewardship and Mission Services**  
**[jhess@covdio.org](mailto:jhess@covdio.org) (859) 392-1500**



# ST. JOSEPH SCHOOL

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**SUN | JAN 28 | 2024**  
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Pre K - 8th grade

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

**The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays, 10 —11 a.m.** Viewers can tune-in on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517; and DirectTV 25.

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

**“Preparing for End of Life” presentation**, Jan. 18, 6 p.m., St. Philip Church, Melbourne. Presenters and topics are: “Moral and Ethical Care,” Father Raymond Enzweiler; “Funeral Pre-planning, Cremation and Burial,” Pat Dobbling, Dobbling, Muehlenkamp Erschel Funeral Home; “Estates, Wills, and Trusts,” Chris Lavin, Lavin Law Group and Tom Kaelin, Catholic Order of Foresters; “Hospice Care,” St Elizabeth Hospice and “Palliative Care,” Laura Trice.

**YCET - Youth Commission Evangelization Team.** Angie Poat, diocesan youth minister, is currently seeking a diverse group of high school students, from diocesan parishes and schools to serve as missionary disciples. This leadership team will be commissioned to serve as peer ministers, witnessing to the joy of the Gospel in their communities and assisting the Church in youth ministry. After being nominated by an adult mentor, the nominee will be invited to apply, interview, and discern the opportunity to serve on the team. Nomination form at [covdio.org/youth/](http://covdio.org/youth/). Deadline Jan. 20.

**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.

**Come join the NKU Newman Club for its alumni and friends community night**, Jan. 25. Tailgating before the NKU men’s basketball will be at the Newman House, 19 Clearview Dr., Highland Heights, chili and hotdogs provided. The Newman Club will receive \$3 from every ticket purchased at this link <https://fevo-enterprise.com/event/MB0125NewmanCenterFundraiser>.

**St. Peter’s Catholic Order of Forester Court #1492 Annual Men’s Stag**, Jan. 26, from 7–11 p.m. at Sts. Peter & Paul Social Center in California, KY. Proceeds benefit the COF Scholarship Awards program. Questions go to Jeanette Geiger, (859) 803-3782 .

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](http://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.

**Join us for THRIVE Peer Ministry Leadership Training** – for high school and college leaders – Feb. 8, 6-8 p.m., at the Curia. Attend as an individual peer leader or with your parish, school, music, or retreat team. Newcomer’s welcome. RSVP at [covdio.org/youth/](http://covdio.org/youth/)

**CONNECT Junior High Retreat, “Arise,”** Feb. 10, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., at Thomas More University. Open to all sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students. Register at [covdio.org/youth/](http://covdio.org/youth/) by Feb. 1.

**A Marriage Encounter Experience** will be held on Feb. 16–18 at the Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center in

Norwood, Ohio. Interested parties can call Andy and Melanie Reinersman at (859) 653-8464.

**New Manna Retreat: Dining in the Desert** will be held at Mother of God Church Hall, Covington, Feb. 17, 8 a.m.–4 p.m. In this one-day retreat, Fr. Thomas Picchioni will explore the four different faces of the Real Manna come down from heaven and how with each face comes a different understanding, a different response and even a different relationship. RSVP appreciated to Anne Raispis at [sproutingstumpministries@gmail.com](mailto:sproutingstumpministries@gmail.com) or call/text at (859) 803-8890.

**The William T. (Bill) Robinson III ‘67 Institute for Religious Liberty presents “Who’s My God”**, an interfaith dialogue, Feb. 21, 7–9 p.m. in Steigerwald Hall in the Saints Center on Thomas More University’s Campus. This interfaith dialogue will feature a panel of experts led by moderator Brian Adams, Ph.D., who chairs the governing board for international NGO A Common Word Among Youth. Experts include: Shakila T. Ahmad representing the Muslim faith, Brett Greenhalgh a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Thomas More professor Hannah Keegan representing the Roman Catholic religion and Rabbi Gary P. Zola, Ph.D., of the Jewish faith. For more information visit [thomasmore.edu/religiousliberty](http://thomasmore.edu/religiousliberty).

**Newport Central Catholic High School announces its 23rd class of inductees into its Athletic Hall of Fame:** Tyler Barto ’02, Bob Brunemann ’70, Olivia Huber Bryant ’12, Anastasia Little Frey ’04, Glenn Meyers ’89, and AJ Simon ’95. Also being honored as the “Team of Distinction” is the 2002 Boys Soccer Regional Champion Team. NCCHS will be awarding the Coach Jim Connor Award to Dave Meyers ’98 and the Father John Hegenauer Community Service Award to Mark and Carol Keller Buemi ’82. The induction ceremony is Feb. 24, at the Newport Central Catholic Gymnasium,

beginning with a social hour at 6 p.m.; followed by dinner and ceremony at 7 p.m. Cost \$30, prior to Feb. 12, online at <https://gofan.co/event/1323351?schoolId=KY6479>. Contact the NCC School Office at (859) 292-0001.

**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.” Information available at [tmuky.us/tmwc](http://tmuky.us/tmwc). Cost: \$50 for alumni and friends; free for current students/faculty/staff. Special rates available for high school groups.



*Sisters of Life visit St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs*  
The Friends in Faith women’s group at St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, hosted a women’s Day of Recollection, Dec. 9, featuring the Sisters of Life of New York City. Sister Ann Immaculee, Sister Catherine Joy Marie, and Sister Elena Marie shared stories of hope, healing, mercy and God’s unwavering love for every human life. The Sisters encouraged the 79 women in attendance to embrace the gift of themselves; that most people struggle to accept their weaknesses, but God isn’t afraid of our messiness; our weaknesses are not an obstacle to God. In fact, Jesus is found in the lowest and weakest parts of our hearts, and if we let him in, that’s where grace happens. Trust the Lord, depend on the Lord, there we will find the freedom to love him and to love each other as he has called us to do. (above, from left) Sisters of Life Joy Catherine Marie, Ann Immaculee and Elena Marie lead a Day of Recollection



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# Covington chimera to be recreated by New York terra cotta company

Since March of 2023, the iconic chimeras (known colloquially as gargoyles) have been missing from Covington’s skyline — having been removed from the roof of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption for recreation as part of the Restored in Christ campaign. Currently, the chimeras are being recreated by Boston Valley Terra Cotta, a company specializing in architectural terra cotta, out of Orchard Park, New York. Boston Valley Terra Cotta was founded in 1981 following the Krouse family’s purchase of Boston Valley Pottery. The factory, which originally produced bricks and clay pots prior to the change of ownerships stands to this day and has been converted to the terra cotta manufacturing facility it is currently being used as.

Boston Valley Terra Cotta “combines advanced technology with traditional craftsmanship” to “contribute to the successful preservation of some of the most architecturally significant buildings in the

world,” with contributions by the company made to terra cotta building around the globe, such as Louis Sullivan’s historic Guaranty Building in Buffalo, NY; and the restoration of Battersea Power Station in London, England.

Architectural terra cotta, such as the kind created and installed by Boston Valley Terra Cotta, uses a clay mix that helps withstand climate conditions such as consistent freezing and thawing weather, which has been part of the original chimeras’ weathering over the years.



## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

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VATICAN CITY — In the Sistine Chapel, Pope Francis baptized 16 infants, who, he said, “give us the witness of how to receive the faith: with innocence and with an open heart.” Celebrating the feast of the Baptism of the Lord Jan. 7, the pope baptized seven girls and nine boys, including one set of twins, during a morning Mass with fewer than 300 people in the chapel. Afterward, he led the recitation of the Angelus prayer with about 12,000 people gathered in St. Peter’s Square. Thanking the parents for bringing their children to be baptized, Pope Francis assured them — as he usually does during baptisms — that they should not worry about the babies crying or fussing during the Mass, that they should feel free to feed the babies if they are hungry or take off some of their baptismal finery if they get overheated. After the parents received candles lighted from the Paschal candle, Pope Francis encouraged them not to keep the candle stored away but to have it handy to look at “in difficult moments. This candle reminds us of our Christian roots; never extinguish it in our hearts.”

VATICAN CITY — One of the most dangerous vices is gluttony, turning people who are meant to be custodians of creation into mere consumers and even exploiters and predators, Pope Francis said. “The sin of those who succumb before a piece of cake, all things considered, does not cause great damage, but the voracity with which we have been plundering the goods of the planet for some centuries now is compromising the future of all,” he said. “We have grabbed everything, in order to become the masters of all things, while everything had been consigned to our custody, not to our exploitation,” the

pope said Jan. 10 at his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall. Continuing a new series of audience talks about vices and virtues, the pope reflected on the vice of gluttony. "The way we eat is the manifestation of something inner: a predisposition to balance or immoderation; the capacity to give thanks or the arrogant presumption of autonomy; the empathy of those who share food with the needy or the selfishness of those who hoard everything for themselves," he said. "We must eat to live, not live to eat," he said, encouraging people to be cautious with this vice "that latches onto one of our vital needs."

TUCKAHOE, N.Y. — A beloved Italian saint is speaking to the faithful anew through a series of letters sent directly to their email inboxes. The Saint Pio Foundation has announced the release of “Epistolary,” a collection of 365 letters written by Padre (“Father”) Pio to his spiritual directors and students. A dedicated page on the foundation’s website includes a sign-up form (available at <https://www.saintpiofoundation.org/saint-pios-epistolary>) for receiving a weekly PFY with seven letters, one for each day of a given week. The first batch of letters was sent out Jan. 1 by the Tuckahoe, New York-based foundation. Freshly translated into English from the original Italian, the Epistolary represents a fraction of the “thousands and thousands of letters” Padre Pio wrote during his lifetime, Luciano Lamomarca, founder and CEO of the Saint Pio Foundation, told OSV News. Lamomarca said the Epistolary is one of several “gifts” he wanted to give to the Catholic community to mark the foundation’s upcoming 10th anniversary in April. But the gifts he has received from his own devotion to the saint have been life-changing, he added, noting that he and his wife Valentina credit the 2015 birth of their son Sebastian — after

losing several children to stillbirth and miscarriages — to the saint's intercession. Lamonarca told OSV News that Padre Pio's spiritual wisdom is summarized in one of the saint's best-known maxims: pray, hope and don't worry. "He releases his fear; he releases everything (into) God's grace."

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's bishops have pledged dialogue with their country's new liberal government, but leading Catholics warned that government plans for rapid secularizing change could spark conflict as the ruling coalition plans to limit religious classes in public schools and abolish the state Church Fund. On Dec. 27 Prime Minister Donald Tusk confirmed that his newly installed coalition would also abolish a state Church Fund as part of its reforms. In a Dec. 29 statement, the bishops' secretary-general, Bishop Artur Mizinski, said the church was "open to dialogue" on new financial arrangements, provided they are in accord with Poland's 1998 concordat, or treaty, with the Vatican, as well as the "constitutional principle of consensually regulating relations." Asked at a Jan. 9 press conference whether church leaders had already received an invitation to talks on transforming the Church Fund, bishops' conference spokesman Father Leszek Gesiak said that he had "not heard that any signal has reached us. If it does reach, we will, of course, respond," Polish Catholic Information Agency KAI reported. However, Gesiak noted that while the Church Fund makes headlines because of the new government, a lot of "simplifications, sometimes turning into quite hurtful opinions, far from objectivity" are spread in the media regarding church funding. "Despite attempts at clarification," he said, a "whole mythology has been created" about financing of the church.

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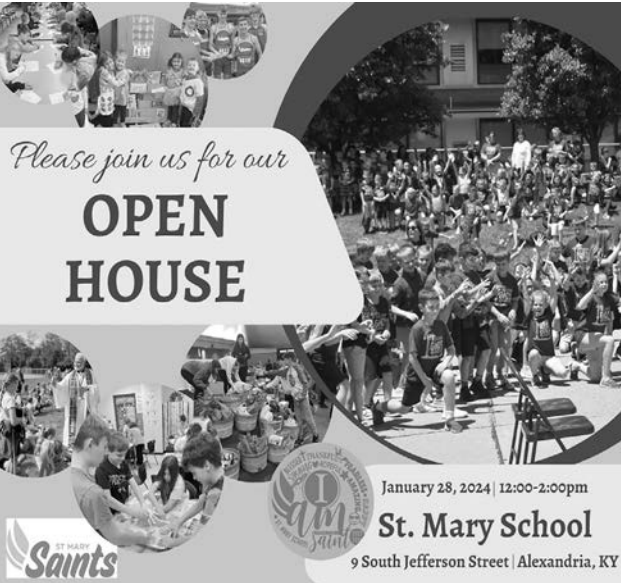
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