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(above) 22,000 college students attended SEEK24, filling the lower bowl of the arena for opening Mass, Jan. 1.

(below) Members of the NKU Newman Club who attended the SEEK conference hold up a flag representing "Catholic Norse."



NKU students attend SEEK—participating in an electric atmosphere ‘hyped up’ on God

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Among a bus-full of other college students, including students from the University of Cincinnati, University of Louisville and Thomas More University, members of Northern Kentucky University's Catholic Newman Club spent their new year, Jan. 1–5, at the SEEK conference in St. Louis, Missouri. The atmosphere was electric, according to NKU campus minister Deacon Brian Cox. About 22,000 college students from across

the country, including 16 from NKU's Newman Club, were present for the conference, filling the lower bowl of the arena — all of them “hyped up” on God. The conference began and ended with Mass, with additional services every morning, Adoration every day from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. and opportunity for prayer offered throughout the week along with music, games (such as pickleball and cornhole arranged by attendees), vendors and celebration.

(Continued on page 10)

‘Restored In Christ’ video invites all to protect heritage

Staff report

The public phase of the “Restored In Christ” capital campaign is underway. The \$6 million campaign will restore the exterior of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, including replacement of its chimeras and gargoyles that have overlooked the city of Covington for nearly a century. During the silent phase, which began last year, donors have already gifted or pledged \$4.5 million. Bishop John Iffert is now inviting everyone in the Diocese to contribute to repair the Mother Church. “We are at a moment when we need to protect this great treasure that we have been given, this great part of our heritage,” said Bishop Iffert in a video about the “Restored In Christ” campaign. In the video Bishop Iffert describes the current condition of the Cathedral and the work that needs to be done.



“Bits of block have been cracked and broken,” he said. There are columns banded with metal bands because they have begun to split. There are places where the stone retains water, so much so that even on dry days tracings of moisture are clearly visible. There is soiling on the exterior of the Cathedral that, if not cleaned, will pit and weaken the stone allowing the moisture seep into the interior of the church. The stonework needs repairing, cleaning and the entire exterior sealed. “We do this for two reasons,” Bishop Iffert said in the video. “One, to protect people so that this building, set up as a monument, doesn’t become a hazard to anyone. And second, to prevent water from getting into the interior and destroying those great artworks, not only for the Catholic community here in the Diocese of Covington, but ... for our region — for Covington itself. We have a duty to protect the heritage that has been handed on to us.”

To view the video visit www.covcathedral.com/restored-in-christ.

Bishop Iffert removes faculties of two priests, both Missionaries of St. John the Baptist

Staff report

On Tuesday, Jan. 16, Bishop John Iffert requested the resignation of Rev. Shannon Collins as pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. Rev. Sean Kopczynski has also been removed as Parochial Vicar. Both priests are members of the Missionaries of St. John the Baptist.

Additionally, Father Collins’ and Father Kopczynski’s faculties to teach, preach or celebrate the Sacraments of the Church have also been removed for the time being. They may celebrate a private Mass for themselves, immediate family members, and members of the Missionaries of St. John the Baptist. They are not permitted to celebrate the Mass publicly.

Ultimately, this action was taken after Bishop Iffert was made aware that Fr. Collins had preached in the parish that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, as celebrated in the current Roman Catholic liturgy, is “irrelevant,” preserves “literally nothing of the old,” and that the reform of the liturgy was motivated by hatred towards traditional Catholics and the ancient liturgies of Rome; and, after both Father Collins and Father Kopczynski refused the opportunity to renounce these errors. This disqualifies these priests from being granted permission to publicly celebrate the Sacraments using the 1962 Missale Romanum and from leading a personal parish like Our Lady of Lourdes.

Removing the faculties of a priest is not something any Bishop would do lightly or without consultation. For some time now, Bishop Iffert has had serious concerns about the parish’s pastoral leadership and

has attempted to resolve those concerns in conversation and fraternal correction with these priests, who are his brothers and sons. Regretfully, he has been unable to do so. Bishop Iffert consulted the Vicar General, the Deans, the Judicial Vicar, and brother bishops before determining the action that must be taken in this situation.

Bishop Iffert does intend to provide for the pastoral and liturgical care of the people of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish with the hope that this ministry will continue in the Diocese of Covington. There are, however, obstacles.

The Diocese of Covington does not own the church building that Our Lady of Lourdes Parish has called home. The Board of the Missionaries of St. John the Baptist own the church building. The Missionaries of St. John the Baptist consider it the chapel of their public association. They are no longer willing to permit the Diocese or Our Lady of Lourdes Parish to use the building.

Bishop Iffert is actively working to resolve these difficulties and to provide faithful and true pastoral leadership for Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

To the people of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Bishop Iffert said, “I am praying for you constantly. I recognize and thank you for the sincerity of your faith and the strength of your love for Christ and His Church. That love should always lead us to walk together with the Lord in a spirit of communion, humility and respect for one another. Let us pray for one another and for the unity of the Church.”

Elementary Open Houses

Looking for a great school? **Catholic Schools Week in 2024 will be celebrated Jan. 28 to Feb. 3**, under the theme “United in Faith and Community.” Catholic grade schools in the Diocese of Covington will be hosting open houses around this time and each invite you to come and meet the teachers, parents and students.

Blessed Sacrament, Ft. Mitchell, Jan. 21, 12–2 p.m.
Holy Trinity, Bellevue, Jan. 28, 12-1:30 p.m.
Immaculate Heart of Mary, Jan. 23, 8 a.m.–12 p.m.
Mary, Queen of Heaven, Burlington, Jan. 29, 12:30–2:30 p.m.
Prince of Peace, Covington, Jan. 28, 10 a.m.–12 p.m. and April 18 4–6 p.m.
St. Anthony, Taylor Mill, Jan. 28, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.
St. Augustine, Covington, Jan. 28, 12–1 p.m.
St. Catherine of Siena, Ft. Thomas, Feb. 1, 5–8 p.m.
St. Cecilia, Independence, Jan. 28, 12–2 p.m.
St. Henry, Elsmere, Jan. 28, 12:30–2 p.m.
St. Joseph, Cold Spring, Jan. 28, 12:30–2:30 p.m.
St. Joseph, Crescent Springs, Jan. 28, 12–2 p.m.
St. Joseph Academy, Walton, contact the school office for more information or to arrange a tour. (859) 485-6444.
St. Mary, Alexandria, Jan. 28, 12–2 p.m.
St. Patrick, Taylor Mill, Feb. 4, 12–2 p.m.
St. Paul, Florence, Jan. 28, 12–3 p.m.
Sts. Peter and Paul, California, Jan. 21, 12–2 p.m.
St. Pius X, Edgewood, Jan. 28, 12:30–2 p.m.
St. Therese, Southgate, Feb. 1, 6–7:30 p.m.
St. Thomas, Ft. Thomas, Jan. 21, 1–3 p.m.
St. Timothy, Union, Jan. 20, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.
Villa Madonna Academy Elementary, Villa Hills, Feb. 4, 1–3 p.m.

Preparations for DPAA 2024

The crew from A-1 Professional Video were at the Curia, Jan. 16, to record Bishop John Iffert’s message for the 2024 Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal video. The theme for this year’s appeal is “Zeal for Your House Will Consume Me.” The video will premiere at the DPAA kick-off dinners, Feb. 15 in Maysville and Feb. 29 in Hebron.



Martin Luther King breakfast — ‘What Dr. King teaches us is a lifestyle’ says speaker

Laura Keener
Editor

As part of Greater Cincinnati’s recognition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Our Savior Parish, Covington, hosted its annual discussion breakfast, Jan. 13. Dr. Eric Jackson, professor at Northern Kentucky University, was the keynote speaker.

Dr. Jackson began with a brief highlight of Dr. King’s only visit to Cincinnati on Sept. 27, 1964. “The point of Dr. King’s conversation and speech at that time,” said Dr. Jackson, “as he spoke about solving problems such as inclusive housing, segregation in schools and work, poverty and, most

importantly, peaceful protest, his belief at the time was ... to solve racial problems, better than legislation, he claimed, is time. He noted, ‘maybe you can’t legislate integration and inclusion, but you can legislate when it comes to time based on love.’”

Dr. Jackson said that many people “try to ignore the radicalness of Dr. King. They want to wrap their heads around his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech, which is important. But he also had another side. People miss his powerful critiques and his powerful radicalness,” which, Dr. Jackson said, is found

(Continued on page 12)

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.

Bishop Iffert to celebrate Mass for World Day of Consecrated Life

In 1997, Pope St. John Paul II instituted a day of prayer for women and men in consecrated life. This celebration is attached to the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on Feb. 2. This Feast is also known as Candlemas Day; the day on which candles are blessed symbolizing Christ who is the light of the world. So too, those in consecrated life are called to reflect the light of Jesus Christ to all peoples.

World Day for Consecrated Life will be celebrated in the Church on Friday, Feb. 2, and in parishes over the weekend of Feb. 3 and 4. Please pray for all those who have made commitments in the consecrated life and be sure to thank them on their special day. May they continue to be inspired by Jesus Christ and respond generously to God's gift of their vocation.

The Diocese of Covington will honor our women and men religious with a special Mass



Mass for World Day for Consecrated Life
Feb. 3, 10 a.m.
Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington
Bishop John Iffert, celebrant
Come honor our women and men religious.

on Saturday, Feb. 3, 10 a.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Bishop John Iffert will be the main celebrant. A reception will follow in Howard Hall. All people are cordially invited to attend.

General Assembly underway — calling faithful citizens to get involved

Jason Hall
Contributor

The 2024 Legislative Session has begun. We are now in the second week and several bills of interest have already been filed. In the days ahead, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky will be providing background information and action alerts on a number of issues. But, for now, I want to alert you to some upcoming opportunities to visit Frankfort, show your support for Gospel values, and make your voice heard.

On Jan. 25, there are two overlapping rallies and action days. First, it is “CARR Day at the Capitol.” CARR, or Crisis Aversion and Rights Retention, is a proposal to help reduce gun violence that the CCK strongly supports. To learn more, sign a petition in support, and register for legislative visits on the 25th, visit our friends at Whitney/Strong online at www.whitneystrong.org/carr.

Also on Jan. 25 is the annual National School Choice Week rally. It will be held in the Capitol Rotunda at 10 a.m.

Two days prior, on Jan. 23, is the Kentucky March for Life. This will be a full day of events celebrating life and advocating for efforts to build a culture of life.

The day’s schedule is as follows:

- 9:30 a.m.**
“Love Them Both,” Pro-Life Mass
Good Shepherd Church, 72 Shepherd Way, Frankfort
- 11:30 a.m.**
Pray and Praise kick-off
Marchers meet at Capital Ave. and 104 E. 2nd St., Frankfort
- Noon**
“Love Them Both,” pre-rally prayer and praise
Kentucky Capitol Rotunda
- 12:30 p.m.**
Kentucky “Love Them Both” March for Life
Walk to the Capitol
- 2:30 p.m.**
Remembrance prayer service at the Kentucky Memorial for the Unborn
Historic Frankfort Cemetery
Thank you for your ongoing commitment to Faithful Citizenship!
Jason Hall is the executive director for the Catholic Conference of Kentucky. For information on the CCKY visit CCKY.org.



A Fire for inclusive education
Members from the Fire Foundation Northern Kentucky came to speak to school leaders and educators alike, Jan. 10, in Bishop Howard Memorial Hall, Covington. The Fire Foundation's mission is to provide resources and funding for education programs for children with disabilities in Catholic schools — so that all students may have access to a Catholic education. While fundraising efforts are not yet underway, the foundation is hoping to be able to operate in some diocesan Catholic schools beginning next school year. Pictured to the left is Mary Kay Laird, a member of the Northern Kentucky Fire Foundation, presenting to those in attendance at the meeting.



(above) Ephesus in the modern-day province of Izmir, Turkey, is where St. Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians

In the Footsteps of St. Paul Pilgrimage to Greece

Spiritual Reflection

On this journey, feel the spirit of the New Testament as you walk in the footsteps of the great apostle St. Paul, patron of the Diocese of Covington. Experience the places where Paul lived and preached, gaining a deeper understanding of the biblical narrative.

Highlights of the Journey

- 3-night Cruise: Sail through the enchanting Greek islands of Mykonos, Patmos and Santorini.
- Ephesus, Turkey: Explore the ancient Roman city that played a significant role in the life of Paul the Apostle.
- Acropolis in Athens: Stand in awe of this iconic symbol of ancient Greek civilization.
- Corinth: Discover the biblical town where Paul stood before the tribunal and explore the Agora and the Bema.
- Philippi: Visit the place where Paul delivered his first sermon in Europe and baptized Lydia, the first Christian.

Dates

October 22 to November 1, 2024

Cost

Base per person rates: Double \$5,490;
Single \$6,490; Triple \$5,440

Information contact

Collette
1-800-581-8942
Refer to booking #1221094

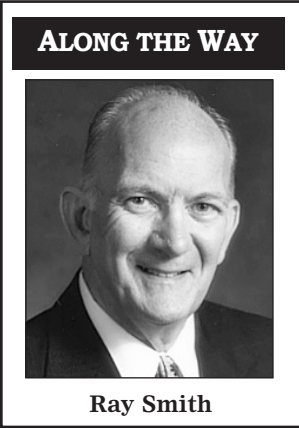


Bishop's Schedule

- | | |
|--|---|
| Jan. 20
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m. | Jan. 23 (continued)
Sacrament of Confirmation, St. Cecilia Parish, Independence, 7 p.m. |
| Jan. 21
Mass, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California, 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. | Jan. 25
1st quarter all-staff meeting, 9:30 a.m. |
| Jan. 22
Sacrament of Confirmation, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, 7 p.m. | Sacrament of Confirmation, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, 7 p.m. |
| Jan. 23
Advisory Council meeting, 9:30 a.m. | Jan. 27
Vigil Mass, St. Timothy Parish, Ft. Thomas, 4:30 p.m. |
| DPAA Solicitors luncheon, Metropolitan Club, Covington, 12 p.m. | Jan. 28
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 10 a.m. |
| Priest Continuing Education and Formation Committee meeting, 2 p.m. | Jan. 29—2 Feb.
Catholic Schools Week |

COMMENTARY

Somewhere along the way, one of my former pastors shared some rare and meaty thoughts about preserving Christmas. Since it's still the season in my heart, it just feels like a good time to recall his eye-opening, memorable thoughts that meant so much to me then and now, so here goes.



Father had the uncanny ability of cramming 20 to 30 minutes of memorable meaning into six to eight minutes — a welcomed relief for bad backs, growling stomachs or short spans of attention. You’ve heard, I am sure, many of the old slogans; “Make Every Day Christmas Day,” “Keep Christmas In Your Heart All Year Long” and so on. Father took a different approach on that long ago Sunday at our Epiphany celebration. He said that we would, no doubt, go home from Mass and start packing up our Christmas decorations, including keepsake ornaments, cherished crib sets and vintage cards from friends and loved ones, especially those who are gone. “Leave something out,” he urged. “Keep at least one ornament out and somewhere visible — a reminder that the spirit of Christmas lives year-round.” I recalled that once upon a time, we began the practice

I love the idea of fresh starts. And, typically, during this time of year, I am overflowing with energy, hope and good intentions, excited to tackle the next challenge. However, this year felt very different. Truth be told, I was having a difficult time on my drive to work for that first day back in the office.



On this sluggish first day, I came across a Word on Fire podcast featuring Bishop Barron. The topic of the podcast was the corporal works of mercy. I thought to myself, “Ok, this must be a nudge from God. He’s letting me know it’s time to get my head in the game.” With that in mind, I settled in for God’s pep talk tailored for what I was sure to encounter. St. Vincent de Paul is all about the corporal works of mercy. We regularly feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless. Some of our conferences have also found themselves involved in burying the dead. However, the commentary regarding the “visits” is what resonated most for me from the podcast. While the corporal works of mercy specifically refer-

It came in a dream

of keeping the previous year’s Christmas cards in a basket all year. Our intention was, at each evening meal and in rotation for the entire year, to select the top card and to remember those who sent it as part of our thanksgiving prayer before eating. What happened to that practice, I wondered? Did I hear, “Happy Holidays” one too many times in recent years? Has my “Merry Christmas!” greeting fallen on deaf ears far too many times? Now most often, such a greeting gets only a funny look. Lately I’ve been wondering how much battering my Christmas spirit can handle? Father continued to jolt us, but in his brief, gentle way. “Why can’t Christmas be more than just watching fruit cake get moldy?” he asked. Then he abandoned old clichés about keeping Christ in Christmas and asked us to consider five little words; “Gifts,” “Universal,” “Stranger,” “Trust,” and “Dream.” As for “gifts,” large or small, Father suggested that we give them freely at Christmas and throughout the year, without the slightest expectation of anything in return. Let Epiphany mean the giving of ourselves each day, he suggested. Let it mean change, and not just exchange, in our hearts and in our lives. As for “universal,” he stressed that the Magi represented all of humanity and that the gift of Jesus and love is for everyone. All of us are God’s children. As for “stranger,” the Magi were not known in the least. They were different — complete strangers, but nonetheless, welcomed at our Savior’s birthday party. We probably meet someone new each day. Why not extend our hand, even if it is not well received early on? As in

The BEST DAY EVER!!

ence visiting the sick and the imprisoned, Bishop Barron focused a good part of that discussion simply on the VISIT. He commented that a VISIT requires the totality of you — it is a sacrifice of your personal time “to will the good of another.” The point of the visit is not to heal, in the case of someone suffering from sickness, or to free, in the case of someone in prison. We are not there to solve the problem. The point of the visit is to simply spend time with someone. Our physical presence and the time we give to one another — to sit with them, to talk with them — sends the message that this person is worthy, that this person is loved, and that this person is never alone in their difficult circumstances. It is a beautifully simple gesture and a truly visible act of love. The home visit is core to the ministry of St. Vincent de Paul. We do struggle to make these visits at times. It’s tempting and often easier to just solve the problem for a person — pay the bill, then move on to solve a problem for the next person seeking help. However, the time and attention we give leads to a more meaningful experience and leaves a lasting impression. Our Vincentians have also shared that they often leave the visit filled with a deep gratitude, love for neighbor, and love for Christ. The visits give us the chance to see Christ, right here, right now. As I listened to the podcast and allowed my mind to wander on what this meant for me, I reflected on the time I was so blessed to spend with loved ones during the holi-

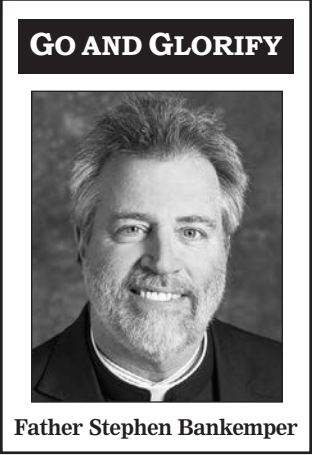
day season. In fact, that precious time was probably the reason I was hesitant to return to “real life.” We spent the prior week in Pennsylvania with the Zengels — with little nieces and nephews we don’t see often. In fact, we fully dedicated one day to our two god-daughters and nieces, Gwen and Paisley. Since there are 16 grandchildren in the family, the Zengels agreed long ago that each family is responsible for gifts for their god-children, not every niece and nephew. We decided our Christmas gift to Gwen and Paisley would be a day out. We started with an early lunch at Chick-Fil-A, followed by painting pottery at a local pottery studio, and wrapped up with some fancy hot cocoa at a coffee shop. As we drove the girls back to where we would be celebrating a family birthday that evening, Paisley proclaimed loudly, “THIS IS THE BEST DAY EVER, NOT YESTERDAY, NOT TOMORROW, JUST TODAY!” In that moment, Paisley was right, it was hard to top that day. I absolutely loved every minute we had together. And, that love was also returned to me in that moment. Jesus said, “This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Let’s spend time with one another and share our love. Let’s all strive to have the BEST DAY EVER! *Karen Zengel is executive director, Society of St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky.*

Letting go

The readings for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle B — are: John 3:1-5, 10; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 and Mark 1:14-20.

“For the world in its present form is passing away.” (1Cor 7:31)

It is possible, as we read or listen to St. Paul’s letters, to let our attention be drawn to striking words and concepts and miss more important ones. For instance, no one hears, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her,” because they are too busy worrying over, “Wives, be subject to your husbands.”



There exists the same temptation in the second reading for this Sunday, in the selection from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. As we puzzle over what Paul meant by, “Let those having wives act as not having them,

those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing,” we might miss a much more fundamentally important sentence: “For the world in its present form is passing away.”

Brant Pitre, a biblical commentator, claims that this sentence reveals Paul’s “undergirding world view,” and “makes sense of everything Paul says about marriage, divorce, etc.” The argument could be made that this sentence is even more important than that; that those who understand this sentence understand the Christian life.

It was common for first-century Jews to refer to “two worlds”: this world, or the old creation, and the world to come, or the new creation. For Paul, the Christian lives neither in the old creation or the new, but, in a way, in neither and in both.

To understand him, we might recall his words to the Galatians, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.” (Gal 2:20) Jesus’ version of that, in John’s Gospel, is describing his disciples as being in the world, but not of the world. We Christians live with one foot on earth and the other in the air, reaching toward heaven.

The word we can use to make sense of Paul’s “those weeping as not weeping, those rejoicing as not rejoicing,” is detachment. We live life knowing that this is not our permanent home, that we are pilgrims destined for something greater than this.

We marry and give ourselves to our spouses, knowing that it is only “until death do us part.” We enjoy the good things of this life without clinging to them “with excessive delight,” as Thomas Aquinas wrote. We rejoice, knowing that no joy here will completely fill us, and grieve, knowing that our grief will not last forever. We live here but direct our lives toward our eternal home. We live here, and “wait in joyful hope for the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ.”

As with everything in the spiritual life, we must teach ourselves how to do this. We must grow in our ability to recognize when we are clinging to this world, and practice letting go, practice reaching for our life with God. The opportunity is always present.

Whenever we are sad, we should check ourselves that we are not clinging to our sadness, that we are turning it over to God. Whenever we are rejoicing, we can remember to thank God for our good fortune and remind ourselves of the true and lasting joy that God wants to give us. Whenever we are grieving a loss, especially of a loved one, let us offer up our grief, offer up the person to God, and ask God to fill our hearts, not with the return of our loved one, but with the hope of being reunited with her or him in God one day.

The more we practice the spiritual discipline of detachment, the better able we will be to attach to God.

(Continued on page 16)

Resolution vs revival and slouching toward surrender

“This year is going to be different.”

We say it every year. We all said it, even if only to ourselves, as we saw the new year in.



How’s that working out for you, so far? You want to know what is almost as consistent as our resolving to change? Falling right back into the old habits and routines by mid-February, if not sooner. Sometimes way sooner. How is your January going?

Now, I am not trying to be pessimistic or cynical about resolutions. A desire to bring about greater peace or happiness is at the heart of any resolution, and those are good things. I commend everyone who is determined to improve their lives.

In this season of Eucharistic Revival within our Church, however, perhaps there’s a better way to experience transformation. While resolutions can help provide structure and direction, they ultimately depend on our own limited willpower and abilities — they do not, generally, lean on grace. Further, they often focus on external changes, such as exercising more or improving productivity — laudable goals but ones that rarely address the deeper aspects of our being.

For meaningful change to happen in our lives we may have to face the fact that it will mean allowing God to take charge, and then each of us slouching our way toward surrender.

Which, in a way, sounds about right. When Jesus said “apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5), wasn’t he telling us to lean on grace — to lean on him because God means to accompany us in all our strivings? It seems clear to me that we aren’t meant to just push along on our own steam, doomed to be disappointed by our own human frailness.

I’ve thought sometimes that what can be even worse than failures and setbacks is managing to accomplish a few significant levels of change through our own deter-

mination and self-will. Like toddlers who are proud of being able to do something new, we feel great about it — and then begin to believe we can do everything “all by ourselves.” And perhaps we can for a little while, but sooner or later determination meets with unseen or misunderstood realities.

Meanwhile, we may have opened ourselves up to the temptation to pride — believing we don’t need God’s help, or thinking that those who haven’t been disciplined and successful must simply be weak-willed losers.

Only God can do the work required for a truly transformed life. Our part is to show up, ready to receive what he offers us. He has given us all the means of grace by which we can experience real change: prayer and the sacraments — in particular, reception and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

As John Paul II asked in “Ecclesia De Eucharistia”: “Were we to disregard the Eucharist, how could we overcome our own deficiency?” (No. 60)

It comes down to the difference between resolution and revival. Both require intentionality and effort, but grace requires some interior openness and spiritual docility, as well.

Resolution focuses on what we believe we can change. Revival is about letting God change us, in any way he wills. Our responsibility is faithfulness; God’s is fruitfulness. While a new year offers an opportunity to turn over a new leaf, God extends an invitation to new life.

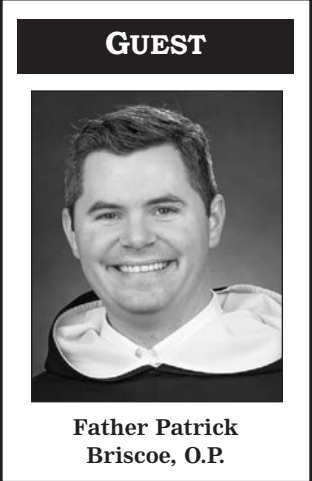
I’m not saying that attending more Masses or praying additional rosaries in 2024 will culminate in shedding a few extra pounds or becoming the efficiency guru we’ve always dreamed we could be (though it certainly couldn’t hurt!). Rather, I am suggesting that this year — especially for those of us whose resolutions have already gone sideways — let’s remember to make space for God to do greater works within and through us.

It’s still early in 2024. If you haven’t done so, make your resolutions. If you’re already feeling like a failure, tomorrow is another day. Begin again and invite God into it. Let us strive to be better in all ways, but let’s not merely settle for resolutions when God offers revival. Our grit is good, but God’s grace is better.

Kris Frank is vice president of Growth and Marketing for the National Eucharistic Congress, Inc.

Shia LaBeouf’s conversion: Let’s rejoice over the movement of grace

In August 2022, when “Transformers” star Shia LaBeouf revealed during a conversation with Bishop



Robert Barron that he had experienced a conversion and begun to attend Mass, I wrote that LaBeouf seemed to me to have undergone a genuine change of heart. He spoke regretfully of the pain and harm he had caused in his life.

More moving still was his testimony about the way that playing Padre Pio in a recent film affected him. “Pio ... saved my life, this is not just a movie or something, and I don’t mean that lightly,”

LaBeouf told Bishop Barron. LaBeouf later told OSV News that he “fell in love with Christ” as part of his preparation for the role.

Many scorned that conversation, and not altogether unreasonably. A 2020 lawsuit by his former partner, British musician FKA Twigs, accuses LaBeouf of physical, mental and emotional abuse.

Knowing his past, social media users doubted

LaBeouf’s authenticity, even challenging the possibility of a spiritual change of heart altogether. And last August, in the middle of all this discourse, I wrote: “I’d rather believe in the power of conversion and the healing grace of the Holy Spirit than live under the tyranny of constant cynicism and suspicion.”

And so it’s with that same hope that I share the news of LaBeouf’s conversion to the Catholic Church. On Dec. 31, Bishop Barron confirmed LaBeouf at the Old Mission Santa Inés in Solvang, California. Surrounded by the Capuchin Franciscan friars that LaBeouf had come to know so well during the production of Abel Ferrara’s film “Padre Pio,” LaBeouf received the Sacrament of Confirmation. In today’s world, where the noise of skepticism and secularism often drowns out the quiet call of spirituality, stories like LaBeouf’s shine as beacons of hope.

We don’t have to canonize LaBeouf. In fact, we’d do well not to ... after all, only the Church canonizes saints! We ought to pray for him. We ought to rejoice in the movements of grace that have brought him to the Church. We should hope, too, that his story will inspire others.

Our Lord’s Gospel message is about the hope of conversion at its very core. Whether we’re talking about Shia LaBeouf, politicians, our family members or friends, that’s worth remembering. To be a Christian means that,

(Continued on page 15)

Be Witnesses

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

— Pope Francis

Religious Communities in the Diocese of Covington

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

Public and Private Associations

- Franciscan Daughters of Mary www.fdofofmary.org
- Missionaries of St. John the Baptist www.msjb.info

Women religious lead through example of love

Karen Kuhlman

Messenger Correspondent

“This is how all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

The commandment given by Jesus to his disciples is taken to heart by the women religious of the Diocese of Covington. Their gifts, freely given to us, enhance our lives just as Jesus had in mind when he gave us that commandment. The women religious demonstrate their love for all of us through their many ministries among the people of God. Whether they are providing education, healthcare, nourishment or a place of comfort, they lead by their example.

Just as the laity, women religious experience illness and the difficulties that accompany aging. And the blessing of having a family or community to accompany them, to affirm their well-lived lives, makes all the difference.

The Sisters of the Monastery of Christ’s Passion in Erlanger vow to live a contemplative life in the light of the self-sacrificing love of Jesus. They keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus Christ.

Sister Mary Catherine said, “When asked how we accompany our sick and elderly Sisters, one way is to approach this subject in light of our Passion vow. Three of the four ways we fulfill our vow of promoting devotion to and grateful remembrance of the Passion of Jesus are meditating on the Passion, offering our lives of prayer, community life, self-denial and work to God. And by sharing our sufferings in the community and being of mutual help, we are, to one another, living witnesses to the crucified. Nuns of all ages and abilities can live these points of the rule. It is important to remember that, at the highest point of his redemptive mission, Jesus couldn’t move a finger: it was total acceptance and an offering of love. We show deep gratitude and respect for the sisters who have come to the point of not being able ‘to do’ and can now only accept and be a ‘Yes’ to our Lord.”

Sister Nancy Kordenbrock of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery explained that Chapter 36 of the Rule of St. Benedict speaks to the care of the sick. The Sisters carry that forward to the elderly as Benedict reminds us that “human nature is itself inclined to be compassionate to the elderly, and their lack of strength must be taken into account.”

The Sisters provide physical and spiritual care to their Congregation at the St. Walburg Infirmary in the St. Walburg Monastery. Sister Nancy said, “Our goal is to take very good care of the sick and the elderly. We are made to live in community and blessed to have an infirmary in the monastery. Thus, the Sisters are able to do things with the rest of the community and don’t feel isolated. That is very important because they can participate in prayers, share in some meals, and participate in other activities as best they can.”

The ministries of the Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker include Taylor Manor, a nursing home in Versailles, and St. Joseph Academy in Walton. Mother Mary Christina said that the community consists mainly of sisters in their 60s and one sister in her 90s. She wants to be sure that the sisters who live at Taylor Manor keep doing what they can do.

She is inspired by the perseverance of the sisters who are dealing with the limitations of their infirmities. One sister was very active and determined to “wear out” not “rust out.” It got to the point where she could not do a lot — but what she did do was walk around and visit the residents of the nursing home.

She made a list of the residents, visited with four or five every day on her walks, and offered some little spiritual phrases or insight she had gained from Scripture. She taught school all her life and had stories to share and prayers to pray. She was just a joy! With her sisters’ encouragement, she realized, “Just because I am old, just because I am sick, I am not worthless. I’ve got something to do. So, off she would go with her walker, making her daily rounds.”

Mother Christina said, “It is important for me to let the older sisters know they are my sisters. They are such a powerhouse of prayer and keep the rest of us going through their prayers and suffering. They have so much life experience; we learn a lot from them and our residents. For our Sisters and other residents at Taylor Manor, it is important to treat each respectfully as the person they are. They may have limitations, but

they are our brothers and sisters and have so much to teach us. It may not always be easy, but being with them is definitely a blessing. One of the most memorable experiences I have ever had as a religious was at the bedside of a sister who lay dying. My other sisters and I were gathered around her bed and praying when the priest came in to give her the anointing of the sick. And as he finished the last blessing, she took her last breath.”

Holy Family Home in Melbourne is the retirement center for the Sisters of the Congregation of Divine Providence and is currently home to 31 sisters. Many others live in community with sisters in various parishes and other areas where they minister. Only when the sisters are fully retired and need assisted living or nursing care does the Congregation bring them to Melbourne to make Holy Family their home.

Sister Carleen Schumacher lives and works at Holy Family Home. She holds two positions there, one as the House Coordinator/Animator and the other as the Administrator. As the administrator, she works with the lay staff; as the coordinator/animator, she works more with the sisters.

The positions complement one another. As animator, she keeps the spirit of the house and the prayer of the house. She ensures things happen and organizes events for the Sisters, such as those with the Serra Club and the Knights of Columbus. She gets the information, puts up sign-up sheets, sees to transportation, etc. Volunteers come in every week and assist with activities such as Bingo. Sister Carleen arranges for groups to come in and entertain the community at Christmas.

Sister Carleen’s position involves a lot of organizing the Sisters’ lives for them. Several years ago, she added a spiritual enrichment program to the other opportunities. That program gives different Sisters responsibility for developing opportunities such as a faith-sharing group or a book club. The community has recently watched “The Chosen” together on Monday mornings and discuss it afterward. The Sisters’ lives are busy and full, and they enjoy these optional opportunities that bring them together and keep their minds stimulated. As animator, Sister Carleen assures that the spiritual tone is in the house and that the Congregation is faithful to prayer by bringing them together to lead them in prayer and to learn of relevant news.

Sister Carleen said, “It is beautiful to see how the Sisters care for one another without being told to do so. For example, some Sisters are visually impaired. Any time there is printed material, someone will automatically read it to them so that they can be well informed and have an opportunity to discuss the information; the Sisters are quick to come to the assistance of those in the community with physical limitations.

“As Sisters of Divine Providence, we all believe that our ministry calls us to be living witnesses of God’s love to everyone we meet. Whether that is here, where we live together in community, teach in a school, do bookkeeping, or volunteer, our job is to let others know of God’s loving providence through us.”

Notre Dame Sister Mary Patricia Bruemmer said, “The charism given by the Holy Spirit through the Church to our foundress and co-foundress was a deep experience of God’s provident care. From our spiritual foundress, St. Julie Billiart, we share a deep experience of God’s goodness in her charism. Therefore, the charism we inherited through the Church is to proclaim God’s goodness and provident care. Our elderly sisters have been, in their years of active ministry, a vital part of proclaiming this charism in their various ministries of teaching, nursing, community, social service, etc. Even in their elder years and failing health, these sisters are still in mission to proclaim this charism regardless of age or abilities.”

Through their health care ministry the Sisters of Notre Dame are privileged to continue to be in community with the elderly Sisters. They walk with their Sisters through the sharing of the Eucharistic celebration and community prayer. They listen to their elderly Sisters’ needs and concerns. They provide prayer and presence as they continue to witness and proclaim God’s goodness and provident care to their Sisters in their final days/hours.

These communities of women religious witness to us the love and care they have for each other and for the world. Their ministry of love goes on.

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

Lust, pornography poison God’s gifts of sexuality, love, pope says

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Pornography and lust undermine and rob people from experiencing God’s gift of love, Pope Francis said.

“Sexual pleasure, which is a gift from God, is undermined by pornography: satisfaction without relationship that can generate forms of addiction,” the pope said Jan. 17 at his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall.

“We must defend love, love of the heart, mind and body, loving by giving oneself to another — this is the beauty of a sexual relationship,” he said.

Continuing a series of audience talks about vices and virtues, the pope reflected on the vice or “demon” of lust, which is “a kind of ‘voracity’ with regard to another person, that is, the poisoned bond that human beings have with each other, especially in the sphere of sexuality.”

“Please note,” the pope said, “in Christianity, there is no condemnation of the sexual instinct.”

The Song of Songs in the Bible, “is a wonderful poem of love between two lovers,” he said, and the human experience of falling in love is “one of the purest feelings” and “one of the most astonishing realities of existence.”

“However, this beautiful dimension of our humanity, the sexual dimension, the dimension of love, is not without its dangers,” the pope said.

The “garden” of love “is defiled by the demon of lust,” which destroys relationships and can become “a chain that deprives human beings of freedom,” he said.

“To love is to respect the other, to seek his or her happiness, to cultivate empathy for his or her feelings,” Pope Francis said.

Lust, on the other hand, poisons relationships, he said. Toxic relationships display a sense of “possession of the other, lacking respect and a sense of limits,” and where chastity has been missing.

Lust, he said, “plunders, it robs, it consumes in haste, it does not want to listen to the other but only to its own need and pleasure; lust judges every courtship a bore, it does not seek that synthesis between reason, drive and feeling that would help us to conduct existence wisely.”

A person full of lust seeks only shortcuts and adventure and “does not understand that the road to love must be traveled slowly” with patience that, “far from being synonymous with boredom, allows us to make our loving relationships happy.”

Lust is also dangerous because sexuality “has a powerful voice. It involves all the senses; it dwells both in the body and in the psyche,” he said. “This is very beautiful, but if not disciplined with patience, if not inscribed in a relationship and in a story where two individuals transform it into a loving dance, it turns into a chain that deprives human beings of freedom.”

“Winning the battle against lust, against objectifying the other, can be a lifelong endeavor. But the prize of this battle is the most important of all, because it is preserving that beauty that God wrote into his creation when he imagined love between man and woman,” he said.

Building a life together is better than going on “the hunt,” he said, and cultivating tenderness is better than “bowing to the demon of possession. True love is not possession, it is given, serving is better than conquering.”

“If there is no love,” the pope said, “life is sad, it is sad loneliness.”

In remarks made to Polish-speaking visitors after his main catechesis, Pope Francis praised the teachings of St. John Paul II, “who with great devotion educated young people in mature love.”

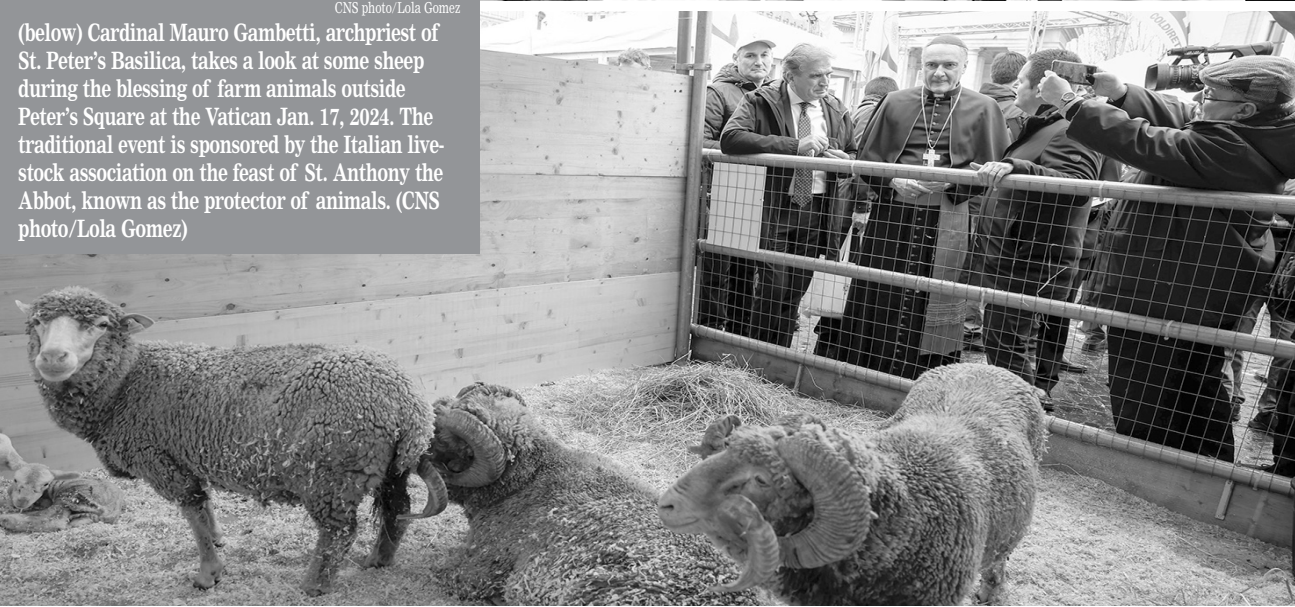
Visitors gathered in the Paul VI Audience Hall also were treated to a brief performance by marching band members, dancers and gymnasts from Rome’s Imperial Royal Circus.

Meanwhile, outside St. Peter’s Square, cows, horses, sheep, goats, rabbits, chickens and a donkey were resting on piles of straw, hopping or butting heads with each other as part of the annual Jan. 17 blessing to mark the feast of St. Anthony the Abbot, patron saint of animals and farmers.

Members of an Italian association of farmers and ranchers brought their animals, safely housed in large pens or enclosures, and Rome residents brought their pets, mostly dogs, for the blessing by Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, archpriest of St. Peter’s Basilica.



CNS photo/Vatican Media
(above) Pope Francis accepts a red rose from a performer after a group of dancers and gymnasts entertained him and the crowd at the end of his weekly general audience in the Vatican’s Paul VI Audience Hall Jan. 17, 2024.



CNS photo/Lola Gomez
(below) Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, archpriest of St. Peter’s Basilica, takes a look at some sheep during the blessing of farm animals outside Peter’s Square at the Vatican Jan. 17, 2024. The traditional event is sponsored by the Italian livestock association on the feast of St. Anthony the Abbot, known as the protector of animals. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)



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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Newsworthy

Newport Central Catholic announces and congratulates the following eighth grade students who obtained the top 10 scores on the High School Placement Test (HSPT) and scholarships:

St. Catherine School, Ft. Thomas: **Liam Schubert**; St. Joseph School, Cold Spring: **Matthew Gilbert, Donovan Kues, Jackson Stammen**; St. Thomas School, Ft. Thomas: **Claire Bucher, Owen Kennedy, Jake Krallman, Ava Menning, Wesley McClinton** and **Isaac Woods**.

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.

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/. 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. 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/

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/ 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 or call/text at (859) 803-8890.

Start the Lenten Season with an hour of harp music by Dr. Diane Schneider, Feb. 18, 3–4 p.m., St. Benedict Church, Covington. Free will offerings will be accepted.

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.

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.



Celebrating the lives of Knights

When a Fourth Degree Member of the Knights of Columbus dies, their family is entrusted with a Chalice and a Paten provided by the Fourth Degree. They are encouraged to prominently display these vessels that mark their dedication to serve God by serving man. After one year the family then presents the Chalice to a priest that will then use them in the celebration of Mass. The Chalice is inscribed on the bottom with the Knight’s name and the date of their passing. Both Sir Dennis Nolan and Sir James Kentley were members of the Father Flaget assembly #307 as well as Former Grand Knights of the Father Bealer Council #3908 of the Knights of Columbus. They passed away within days of All Souls Day in 2022. Their spouses, Mrs. Dennis (Anne) Nolan presented her Chalice to Father John Paul, Parochial Vicar at Saint Pius X in Edgewood. Mrs. James (Tina) Kentley presented her Chalice to Father Eric Andriot, Parochial Vicar at Saint Paul in Florence. The presentation was made on Jan. 13 at the Father Bealer Hall in Elsmere, followed by a brief reception.

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 tmukyus/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.

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.

NKU students attend SEEK

(Continued from page 1)

One of the coolest parts, according to Deacon Cox, was how the 22,000 college students went from cheerful celebration to, at the moment the Mass's celebrant was announced and the crowd was invited to stand, "you could hear a pin drop ... 22,000 college kids went from jabber-jaw-ing to complete silence."

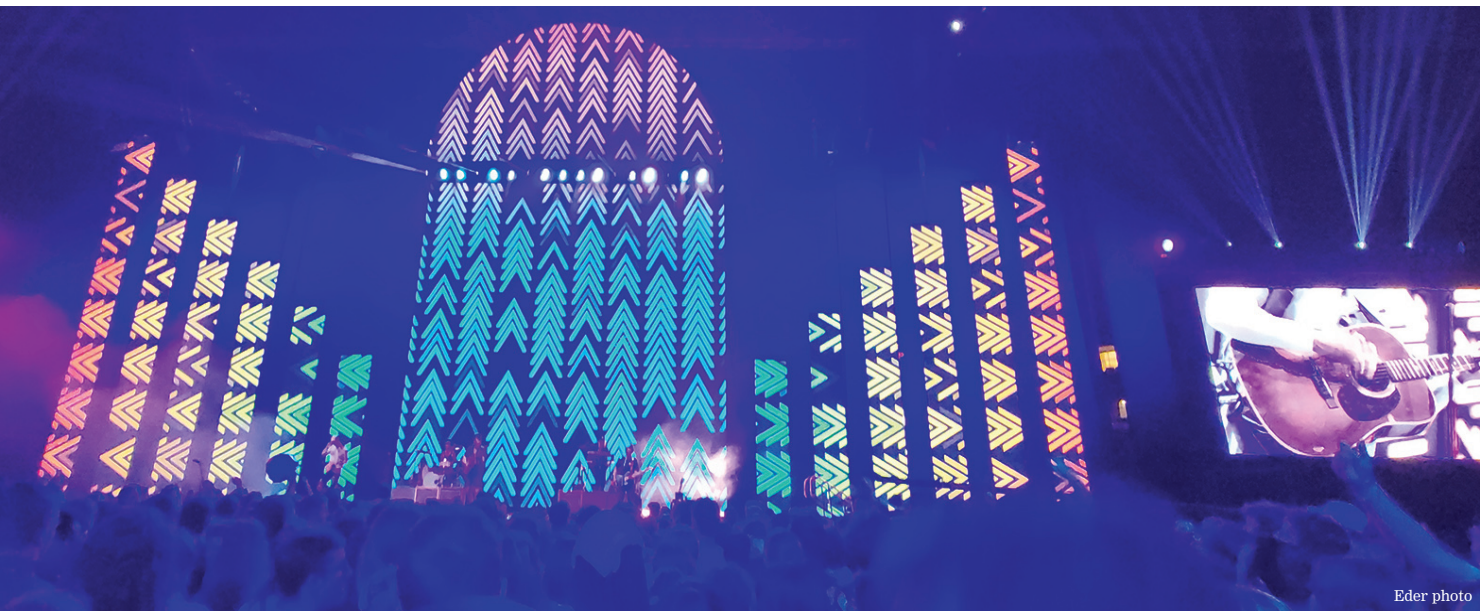
Deacon Cox stated that the students from the Newman Club who attended the conference found it was a "fantastic time," with many of them already registered for the 2025 event in Salt Lake City.

Nikki DeWard, one of the students in attendance and president of the Newman Club, cited Adoration and Mass to be among her favorite aspects of the event. "To be praying and worshipping in the same room as so many other people was something I think everyone should be able to experience. You could truly feel God's presence," she said. "You also get to hang out with your friends, you get the opportunity to talk to so many wonderful priests, sisters, brothers and overall, just so many other Catholics."

"People say, 'is there hope for the Catholic Church?'," said Deacon Cox, reflecting on the event, "and, oh, by golly, heck yeah, there's hope! When 22,000 kids get together to praise God, and when they say please stand, Mass starts, there's silence — that's awesome. Dead silence is good, because God is great."

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Eder photo



Kaelin photo



Regina photo

(above top) Colorful lights display on arena screens accompanying Catholic music played at the conference.
(above left) Young attendees of SEEK24 pause for silent prayer before a statue of the Blessed Virgin, decorated in colorful flowers.
(above right) Alongside a week of prayer and worship, community was built among SEEK attendees with recreation such as games— including an inflatable 'axe-throwing' game.

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Atlanta Consulting Group to manage Thomas More investment services

Staff report

Thomas More University announces it is partnering with the Atlanta Consulting Group (ACG) as its discretionary investment advisor, overseeing the management of the University’s endowment funds. ACG is set to assess the University’s investment policy and goals, establish an asset allocation strategy and recommend an initial investment design.

They were selected for the role through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process conducted by the Finance, Business and Capital Planning Committee (FBCPC) of the Thomas More Board of Trustees.

“We were impressed by their experience with universities and Catholic clients, and the attention that they can provide us as a client,” said Mark Goshorn, vice president for finance at Thomas More. “We look forward to working with ACG to manage and grow the University’s endowment to support scholarships, and academic and student support programs.”

A robust endowment performance is desirable to support in the overall financial strength of a higher education institution. Thomas More’s goal, established as part of the 2021 Strategic Plan – Lighting the Way, is to increase the University endowment’s value through both philanthropic gifts and investment returns. In an effort to achieve this goal, the University’s FBCPC chose to review investment advisor services and assess alternate providers in early 2023.

An RFP was issued in June of 2023 to seven firms that the subcommittee had identified, with the goal of seeking a mix of small and large firms that displayed expertise in the higher education or Catholic investing areas. The subcommittee recommended ACG for many reasons, including the promise of longevity, noting that they had “an excellent succession plan to avoid any future disruption in quality or service.” ACG services will begin based on a transition timeline that spans several months and con-



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cludes on May 31, 2024, the end of the University’s current fiscal year.

ACG is a regional, independent investment advisor, who operates as a boutique-style consultant. While the company headquarters is in Atlanta, Georgia, they have an office in Lexington, Kentucky, and other clients in the Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati area.

“We are excited to embark on this journey with Thomas More University,” said Michael Butkus Jr., partner and consultant with ACG. “We look forward to partnering with the University to help them achieve their fiscal goals while supporting Catholic education. We can’t wait to share the collective expertise and resources of Atlanta Consulting Group.”

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Hello humankindness

Martin Luther King breakfast

(Continued from page 2)



(above left) Dr. Eric Jackson, author and professor at Northern Kentucky University, was the keynote speaker, Jan. 13, at the Martin Luther King Discussion Breakfast at Our Savior Parish, Covington. (above right) Divine Providence Sister Janet Bucher, pastoral administrator for Our Savior Parish, welcomed Dr. Jackson and attendees.

in his letter from Birmingham City Jail.

In his letter from Birmingham Jail, Dr. King advocates for civil disobedience, from which he is famously quoted, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” and supported the writings of St. Augustine, that “an unjust law is no law at all.”

Dr. Jackson refers to Dr. King as having “good religion.” “Good religion has to do with understanding the power of love and inclusion and bringing folks together for change. Bad religion is used for dividing folks,” he said.

To understand Dr. King and his impact on Civil Rights in the United States, Dr. Jackson said, one needs to understand the history of African Americans, which he identifies with three pillars “contradiction, struggle and perseverance.”

“The foundational documents, the Declaration of Independence, that ‘all men are created equal, endowed by certain rights, among those are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,’ didn’t apply to people of color; didn’t apply to Native Americans, didn’t apply to women, didn’t apply to poor people, didn’t apply to farmers. ... That’s what I mean by contradiction,” Dr. Jackson said.

Dr. Jackson identified The Underground Railroad as “the first interethnic, interracial, human rights/civil rights movement in the history of the United States. They’re not big-name people. They’re not looking for glory. Most of them are violating the law. They’re doing illegal activities because they actually believed those ideas from our Founding Fathers, that all men are created equal ... ordinary people, doing extraordinary things.”

In conclusion, Dr. Jackson said, “What Dr. King teaches is for each and every day. It is not just rhetoric, it is not just celebrating a day. What Dr. King teaches us is a lifestyle — you have to love people, despite the circumstances, despite how they look or how they talk. That’s your job. To change the world.”



(above and below) Attendees pray together and take notes during the presentation.

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Eucharistic witness: Blessed Carlos Manuel Cecilio—A Eucharistic life

Fr. Jose Gabriel Corazón-López
USCCB

Carlos Manuel Cecilio Rodríguez Santiago (also known as “Blessed Charlie”) was born on November 22, 1918, in Caguas, Puerto Rico. He was the second of five children born to Manuel Baudilio Rodríguez and Hermina Santiago Esterás. In Puerto Rico, the beginning of the 20th century was marked by significant changes at the civil, political and ecclesiastical levels.

A few months after the birth of the couple’s youngest daughter, the house and business of Charlie’s father caught fire. As a result of this incident, the family moved in with Charlie’s maternal grandparents. His grandmother, Alejandrina, would significantly influence the family, especially Charlie. We could say that his devotion to daily Mass and receiving the Eucharist were born from the example set forth by his grandmother. The whole family was nourished by her example in attending the daily celebration of Mass before going to school or work. While at school, he began serving as an altar boy and encountered anew the liturgy with which he began to fall in love. His siblings stated that the day of his First Communion greatly impacted Charlie, to the point that he even remembered insignificant details.

At an early age, Bl. Charlie’s health was affected due to what people called the “dog incident.” When he was young, Charlie fended off a rabid dog who was attacking his young cousin. While he saved his cousin, Charlie’s health was eventually affected. He began to suffer from chronic intestinal disorders, pains and humiliating situations. However, this did not prevent him from living an intense apostolic life. Charlie’s daily life was centered on the Eucharist. The centrality of the Eucharist in his life made it possible for him to live dedicated to his apostolate through his work, his letters, catechesis, various parish ministries, and the study and promotion of the liturgy.

To understand the importance of the Eucharist in the life of Bl. Charlie, it is essential to understand his concept of Christian life. He states in his writing *Faith and Life: Liturgy, the Basis of Catholic Life*:

“Catholic life is unique; it is a tremendous living participation in the new order inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ; it is a LIFE in the deepest, most authentic, and fullest sense of the word. This Catholic life does not consist of merely external and laborious imitation of Christ’s examples or a series of unconnected religious practices. Christianity, says Fulton Sheen, is a spiri-

tual biology. It is the insertion in us of the LIFE of God.”

The Christian life is the insertion of God’s life in us, or it can be seen as a unique union of our life in God. The question arises: how can this happen in my life? Bl. Charlie, in this same letter, provides the answer. It is the sacred liturgy that offers us the means of effectively realizing this unique and marvelous union in us. From this, we can understand the importance of the Eucharistic liturgy in Charlie’s life, always seen as participation in the Paschal Mystery.

The centrality of his Eucharistic and Paschal life was reflected in how he endured his illness. He took the setbacks of the day with joy and even accepted, with good humor, the humiliating situations he went through because of his condition. Above all, we can discover this experience in his “dark night of the soul.” Whenever a moment passed in which he felt abandoned by God, he would continue to walk in the darkness, aided by his faith in the Risen One. Within those moments, he sought, with all his longing, the living God he had received so many times in the Eucharist.

He found consolation in saying the word “God,” the word with the greatest meaning for him. During his struggle with the “dark night of the soul,” he constantly asked his brother: “What is the word that has a special meaning for me? [...] and when he said ‘God,’ he breathed and was quiet.”

Carlos Manuel’s experience of Easter and the certainty of what he experienced in the Eucharist made him give himself to his ministry. He did his best to educate his friends and everyone around him. Through the celebration of the liturgical mysteries, the life of



A shrine to Blessed Carlos Manuel Rodríguez Santiago in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

God is made more present in us. He felt the need to “wrest the prey from Satan” and to do everything possible so that Jesus Christ could celebrate the Paschal Mystery with and in everyone.

His life was dedicated to helping others discover or rediscover what is essential for Christians: experiencing the liturgy so that it could be fully understood, practiced, and lived in a transformative way. Because of this, Charlie developed his ministry in the Catholic University Center of the University of Puerto Rico. He also started an initiative called “Days of Christian Life,” where participants shared their experience of faith and time was dedicated to formation.

He did apostolic work in parishes and shared his passion for the liturgy through letters and in many other ways.

Carlos Manuel discovered for himself the great mystery of the Resurrection and how Easter made Christ live in him. This remarkable discovery made the liturgy, especially the celebration of the Easter Vigil, the center of his life. He understood that the ordinary means by which God communicates his life and grace is found in celebrating the sacred mysteries that have given us the fullness of life. If we want to rediscover the importance of the Eucharist in our lives, let us begin by rediscovering the Paschal Mystery. In every Eucharist, the mystery that has given us new life and has made us children of God and sharers in his divine condition continues to be made present. Carlos Manuel stated: “We live for that night,” referring to the Easter Vigil. We can say, “We live for the Eucharist,” because in it, the glorious Paschal Mystery, through which Christ offers us a share in his divine life, is made present again for us.



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Carpenters hail end of Notre Dame roof reconstruction; rector calls it ‘a work of Joseph and Jesus’

Caroline de Sury
OSV News

In a historic year for Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, which the French capital and the whole world will see reopen Dec. 8, milestones will be reported on regularly, but this one made Parisians shed a tear or two: Reconstruction of the roof structure is now completed.

On Jan. 12, in the freezing cold, a traditional bouquet of flowers was placed on top of the wooden structure of the cathedral apse. The last rafter had been placed under the snow, three days earlier.

Notre Dame Cathedral was ravaged by a devastating fire in 2019 that sent its spire crumbling down, and restora-

tion works continue.

This final structural work on the roof had been entrusted to Ateliers Perrault, a French company with roots in Anjou in the Loire Valley famous for its castles, or châteaux, in southwestern France. The company dates back to the 18th century and specializes in the restoration of historic buildings.

One of its experienced carpenters, Julien Mulvet, was in charge of the rooftop project at the cathedral. Accompanied by his young apprentice, 19-year-old Leonard Laforest, he placed the yellow mimosas bouquet at the top. “This is how it is traditionally done in the carpenters profession,” Mulvet explained to OSV News. “It is

a symbol of passing on knowledge to the youngest generations.”

“The bouquet of carpenters was arranged by the youngest of them: the Notre Dame structure is ready!” French President Emmanuel Macron said on X, formerly Twitter, on Jan. 13. “French pride,” he added.

Carpenters and workers posed for a group picture during the ceremony, and just like the president, were visibly proud at the end of the reconstruction of the medieval choir framework. The symbolic flower gesture was warmly applauded by the large number of craftsmen who were standing with their white helmets at the foot of the building and enthusiastically congratulated their comrades.

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Additional details about each of the above opportunities can be found on our website at <https://www.covingtoncharities.org/news-events/job-opportunities>. Please contact Shannon Braun directly at sbraun@covingtoncharities.org if you would like to learn more about any of these opportunities.

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“What moved me the most was that all the craftsmen who took part in this work had come from all over France for this moment,” Mulvet told OSV News, “including the small-scale craftspeople who passed on to us the skills that were used in the 12th century by the builders of the cathedral.”

“I am very grateful to those small independent craftsmen,” Mulvet explained. “Our company usually works with machines and did not master this (manual) technique. Thanks to them we learnt how to cut the beams with axes, to take account of the wood fibers by following them with the eye, much better than with a machine.”

“The quality of the work has improved considerably as a result,” Mulvet added. “The work is much more solid this way.”

Mulvet remembered how on May 25, 2023, Gen. Jean-Louis Georgelin, who was at the time in charge of overseeing the reconstruction of Notre Dame, visited Ateliers Perrault to see the assembly test of the cathedral’s choir frame. The carpenter welcomed him and offered him an ax as a symbol of the ancient technique rediscovered on the exceptional occasion of rebuilding the medieval French masterpiece.

Following the tragic death of the general during a mountain hike in August 2023, Mulvet then collaborated with Philippe Jost, who now chairs the Rebâtir Notre



OSV News photo/Sarah Meyssonnier, Reuters

Reconstruction of the medieval choir framework of the Notre Dame Cathedral is pictured in Paris Jan. 12, 2024. The cathedral was ravaged by a fire in 2019 that sent its spire crumbling down, and restoration work continues before the whole world will see the cathedral reopen Dec. 8.

Shia LaBeouf’s conversion

(Continued from page 5)

at a fundamental level, we long for others to meet Christ as we have met him and to change.

In order for those we love to change, we have to give them space and allow room for the designs of the Holy Spirit to work.

Faith is transformative, but not according to the designs or ideals we have on a purely human level.

Faith is transformative according to the plans of Divine Providence, according to God’s plans, which so often elude our understanding.

LaBeouf’s story encourages us to reflect on our role in supporting converts. Are we, as a community, prepared to welcome them with open arms? Do we offer guidance, understanding and the companionship they need as they navigate this life-changing journey? After all, conversion is not merely a one-time event but a continuous process of growth and integration in the Body of Christ.

And LaBeouf’s conversion should prompt us to think about our own conversions. “Sometimes even Catholics have lost or never had the chance to experience Christ personally: not Christ as a mere ‘paradigm’ or ‘value,’ but as the living Lord, ‘the way, and the truth, and the life’ (John 14:6),” says Pope St. John Paul II. Jesus Christ calls each of us to know him, to love him and for that knowledge and love to grow ever more complete.

LaBeouf has also shared that he hopes to be ordained a deacon. We’ll see whether or not LaBeouf pursues holy orders. But in the meantime, we’ll pray that the Church will be edified by his conversion.

Father Patrick Briscoe, O.P., is a Dominican friar and the editor of Our Sunday Visitor.

Dame public institution responsible for overseeing the reconstruction.

“We worked so much together that we became close,” Mulvet told OSV News. “We respect each other enormously.”

Symbolically, it was Jost, along with the cathedral’s rector-archpriest, Father Olivier Ribadeau Dumas, who put the last two wooden handmade dowels at the top of the structure.

Their hammer blows resounded in the cold, as they fixed the last rafter of the choir; a beam 40 feet long and weighing 770 pounds.

“It was a great

moment,” Father Ribadeau Dumas told OSV News. “A moment of resurrection of this oak framework after it had collapsed during the fire on April 15, 2019.”

Father Ribadeau Dumas lives at the very foot of the cathedral where he frequently comes to meet the craftsmen.

“I found these carpenters particularly wonderful,” he told OSV News. “They worked with great peace, strength and joy, aware that they are not working for an ordinary house, but for a church, to make it available for worship and visits.”

“I told them that their job was that of Joseph, and of Jesus!” Father Ribadeau Dumas added with a smile. “Their teamwork was a sight to behold. It was truly beautiful, and for me, as a priest, beauty says something about God. There is a spiritual dimension to this work and this spirit of fraternity that unites so many craftsmen around Notre Dame.”

On Jan. 15, Mulvet was supervising the final details of the finishing work on the site, before leaving it. The weather was still cold, but the sun was shining on Notre Dame Cathedral. The craftsmen responsible for the lead roofing had already taken over and begun their work.



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USCCB affirms pope’s description of surrogacy as turning a child into ‘an object of trafficking’

Maria Wiering
OSV News

Pope Francis told diplomats Jan. 8 that he finds surrogacy “deplorable” and would like to see the practice universally banned.

“I deem deplorable the practice of so-called surrogate motherhood, which represents a grave violation of the dignity of the woman and the child, based on the exploitation of situations of the mother’s material needs. A child is always a gift and never the basis of a commercial contract,” he said in an annual New Year’s meeting with members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See. “Consequently, I express my hope for an effort by the international community to prohibit this practice universally.”

The remarks made headlines among major U.S. secular news outlets, prompting calls to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the conference’s spokesperson and Executive Director of Public Affairs Chieko Noguchi told OSV News.

“As Pope Francis stated, with surrogacy, an unborn child is turned into ‘an object of trafficking’ because it exploits the birth mother’s material needs and makes the child the product of a commercial contract. This is why the Catholic Church teaches that the practice of surrogacy is not morally permissible. Instead, we should pray for, and work towards, a world that upholds the profound dignity of every person, at every stage and in every circumstance of life,” Noguchi said in a Jan. 8 media statement.

Gestational surrogacy is the practice in which a woman carries and delivers a baby for an individual or couple, sometimes for compensation. The gestational carrier is impregnated through in vitro fertilization, a practice the church also proscribes.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “Techniques that entail the dissociation of husband and wife, by the intrusion of a person other than the couple (donation of sperm or ovum, surrogate uterus), are grave-

ly immoral. These techniques (heterologous artificial insemination and fertilization) infringe the child’s right to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage. They betray the spouses’ ‘right to become a father and a mother only through each other.’”

Pope Francis has denounced surrogacy before, including in a 2022 meeting with members of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe, during which he said, “The dignity of men and women is also threatened by the inhumane and increasingly widespread practice of ‘womb renting,’ in which women, almost always poor, are exploited, and children are treated as commodities.”


In 2016, Pope Francis briefly reflected on surrogacy in “Amoris Laetitia” (“The Joy of Love”), a post-synodal apostolic exhortation that followed the 2014-2015 synods of bishops on the family, noting, “History is burdened by the excesses of patriarchal cultures that considered women inferior, yet in our own day, we cannot overlook the use of surrogate mothers and the ‘exploitation and commercialization of the female body in the current media culture,”” citing a catechesis he gave at a general audience in April



OSV News photo/Gleb Garanich, Reuters


A nurse and newborns are seen in the Hotel Venice in Kyiv, Ukraine, May 14, 2020, which is owned by BioTexCom, a surrogacy agency. Pope Francis told diplomats Jan. 8, 2024, that he finds surrogacy “deplorable” and would like to see the practice universally banned.

2015. The commercial surrogacy industry was valued at \$14 billion globally in 2022, and is projected to reach an estimated value of \$129 billion by 2032, according to a November 2022 Global Market Insights report. Surrogacy laws vary by country. Surrogacy was just one of many topics Pope Francis touched on in his Jan. 8 meeting with members of the diplomatic corps. After thanking them for their “efforts to foster good relations between the Holy See and your respective countries,” he reflected on areas of war and political tension throughout the world, including Israel and Palestine and Russia and Ukraine.



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Letting go

(Continued from page 5)

If this all sounds difficult and a little negative, listen to the beautiful way Paul expresses it to the Philippians: “I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” (Phil 3:12) That is worth meditating on for a long while. Paul goes on: “One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature be thus minded.” (Phil 3:13b-15a)

Yes, the form of this world is passing away; that can cause us consternation, or we can realize the great mystery embedded in it and find our true place in the world as Christians.

Father Stephen Bankemper is pastor, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Ky

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CatholicTV features Covington’s Cathedral on ‘Catholic Destinations’



The Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is again receiving national attention. The CatholicTV Network, in its series “Catholic Destinations” recently released its documentary featuring Covington’s Cathedral.

In October 2021, Bishop Robert Reed, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Boston, and a team of producers and videographers from CatholicTV Network visited the Diocese of Covington. Over the course of three days, the team recorded nearly

every inch of the inside and outside of the Cathedral for its “Catholic Destinations” series.

From those recordings, the Stations of the Cross and, also, the praying of the rosary, both led by Bishop Reed, have been produced and earlier released.

All programs of the CatholicTV Network are available online at CatholicTV.org or by downloading the CatholicTV app to AppleTV, Fire TV, Roku, or Samsung Smart TV.

National/World

Bishop Rolando Álvarez released, exiled from Nicaragua after over 500 days of detention

MEXICO CITY — Bishop Rolando Álvarez of Matagalpa has been released from prison and sent into exile along with 18 imprisoned churchmen as the Nicaraguan government expelled its most prominent critic, whose presence behind bars bore witness to the Sandinista regime descent into totalitarianism, along with its unrelenting persecution of the Catholic Church. Vatican News confirmed Jan. 14 at 10:41 p.m. Rome time that with the exception of one priest who remained in Venezuela, all released priests, including Bishop Álvarez and Bishop Isidoro Mora of Siuna, have arrived in Rome “in the last few hours” and are “guests of the Holy See.” Nicaraguan independent media 100 percent Noticias posted a photograph on X, formerly Twitter, of the two freed bishops concelebrating Mass in Rome. Independent Nicaraguan media reported Jan. 14 that the churchmen had departed Nicaragua on a flight for Rome after the government reached an agreement with the Vatican for their release and exile. Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez of Managua — who left the country in 2019 — also confirmed the news at his weekly Mass in Miami. “‘Get up quickly.’ The chains fell from his wrists,” Bishop Báez said on X, formerly Twitter, quoting Acts 12:7. “With great joy, I

thank God that my brother bishops, priests, and seminarians are out of prison. Justice has triumphed. The power of the prayer of God’s people has been displayed.”

Two US prelates call for ‘immediate and total’ ceasefire in Gaza Strip

SAN DIEGO — Two U.S. prelates are urging an “immediate and total” ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, which has experienced more than 100 days of war, while condemning Hamas and urging the release of Israeli hostages taken by the group. In a Jan. 17 joint statement, Cardinal Robert W. McElroy of San Diego and Archbishop John C. Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico, said the “tens of thousands” of deaths resulting from the Israel-Hamas war and the risk of wider escalation “calls us as Americans to press for a national policy which is focused unswervingly” on ending the conflict. Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing some 1,200 people, taking 253 hostages, and sexually assaulting numerous women and girls, most of whom were brutally killed. Israel declared war the next day, and Palestinian authorities report more than 24,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in Gaza. The casualties, the ensuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the risk of a wider escalation demand that the conflict be ended immediately and all hostages returned, said Cardinal McElroy and



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Archbishop Wester. “Our country has a powerful voice on these issues,” they said. “Let it echo Pope Francis’s call amidst suffering on all sides ‘No to weapons, yes to peace.’ For this will be the only true pathway for justice in the land that so deeply reflects the presence of God.”

Catholic groups applaud enhanced Child Tax Credit in framework tax deal

WASHINGTON — The chief congressional tax writers announced Jan. 16 a framework for a bipartisan, bicameral deal that would enhance the Child Tax Credit, a provision some Catholic organizations have long sought as a pro-family and anti-poverty effort. The framework for an agreement between House Ways and Means Chair Jason Smith, R-Mo., and Senate Finance Chair Ron Wyden, D-Ore., also includes provisions to increase the low-income housing tax credit, another effort sought by Catholic groups. Wyden said in a statement that 15 million children “from low-income families will be better off as a result of this plan, and given today’s miserable political climate, it’s a big deal to have this opportunity to pass pro-family policy that helps so many kids get ahead.” It was not immediately clear what the ??legislative vehicle for the tax deal may be, or if it could earn enough support from both chambers to reach the president’s desk. But Catholic advocates of the Child Tax Credit applauded the inclusion of an enhanced credit in the deal. Brian Corbin, executive vice president for member services at Catholic Charities USA, told OSV News that the Child Tax Credit is “part of the toolkit to break poverty in America.”

Kenyan cultic pastor in ‘starvation massacre’ charged with murder and terrorism

NAIROBI, Kenya — Paul Mackenzie, the self-proclaimed Kenyan pastor who shocked the country and the world after he drove his followers into mass “starvation suicide” has been

charged with murder and terrorism. On Jan. 17, Mackenzie, the leader and founder of the Good News International Church, and 30 of 94 of the co-accused were arraigned in the High Court in the coastal city of Malindi. He faces charges of the murder of 429 people — most of them children — whose bodies were found buried in shallow graves in a remote forest-ranch in the coastal county of Kilifi. As the pastor appeared in court, Bishop Willybard Kitogho Lagho of Malindi, Kenya, said the charging was “a wake-up call for the citizens, state and faith leaders to guard innocent Kenya from cartels using religion to achieve or cover economic and political ambitions,” Bishop Lagho told OSV News on Jan. 17. The emergence of the deaths in April shocked the bishops — along with their countrymen — prompting a strong condemnation and a warning for Kenyans to beware of cultic preachers. Director of Public Prosecutions Renson Ingonga said there was enough evidence to prosecute all the suspects held in connection with the deaths. He handed down 11 charges among the suspects including murder, manslaughter, assault, causing bodily harm, radicalization, terrorism, child cruelty and torture. The crimes were committed between January 2021 and September 2023.

Pope refines Vatican norms for spending, awarding contracts

VATICAN CITY — Continuing the long-running updating of laws and norms regarding Vatican expenditures and processes for awarding contracts, Pope Francis issued two documents Jan. 16. The shorter document, on “the limits and modalities of ordinary administration,” said that when an expenditure does not exceed 150,000 euros (about \$163,000) or amounts to less than 2 percent of the office’s average annual budget for the past three years, the expenditure does not require the approval of the prefect of the Secretariat of the Economy. The other document, which is much longer, is an updating of the 2020 “Norms on Transparency, Control and Competition of Public Contracts of the Holy See and Vatican City State.” Included in the update is an expansion of the list of people and companies with which Vatican offices are not allowed to sign contracts.

Excluded from bidding on Vatican jobs are those: who have committed “serious violations” of the obligation to pay taxes; who have been found “in breach of obligations relating to the protection of the health and safety of workers, according to the law or applicable collective agreements”; and those who are “resident or established in jurisdictions with a high risk of money laundering, financing of terrorism and/or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as identified by (Vatican) Supervisory and Financial Information Authority in the performance of its institutional activities.”

Northern Ireland parents strongly reject idea of teaching about access to abortion in schools

DUBLIN — Almost three out of four people who responded to a public consultation have rejected a proposal by the British government that would require schools in Northern Ireland, including Catholic schools, to teach students how to access an abortion. In November, Irish bishops warned that the plan would “impose abortion ideology” on faith-based schools in the region. Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris has insisted that he will update the requirements for Relationship and Sexuality Education, or RSE, in the curriculum. Heaton-Harris claimed the regulations will make “age-appropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate education on sexual and reproductive health and rights, covering prevention of early pregnancy and access to abortion” a compulsory component of the curriculum for students. The results of the consultation were published Jan. 5 and revealed a total of 13,461 responses. The results show that 73 percent of respondents disagreed with the government’s RSE program. In total, 92 percent of respondents agreed that parents or carers should always be informed about the specific nature and content of any RSE program. And 96 percent said parents and carers should always have access to any school RSE policy or program for review. Director of the pro-life charity Precious Life, Bernadette Smyth, described the response to the consultation as “unprecedented.”

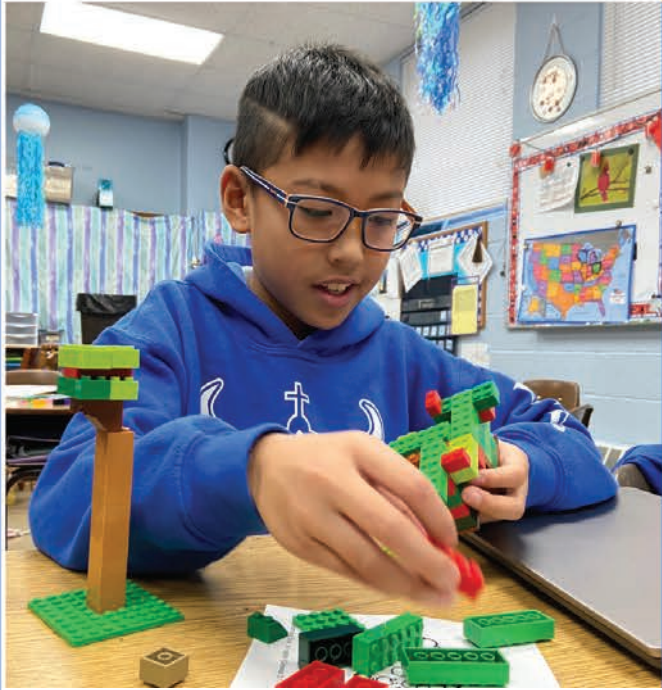
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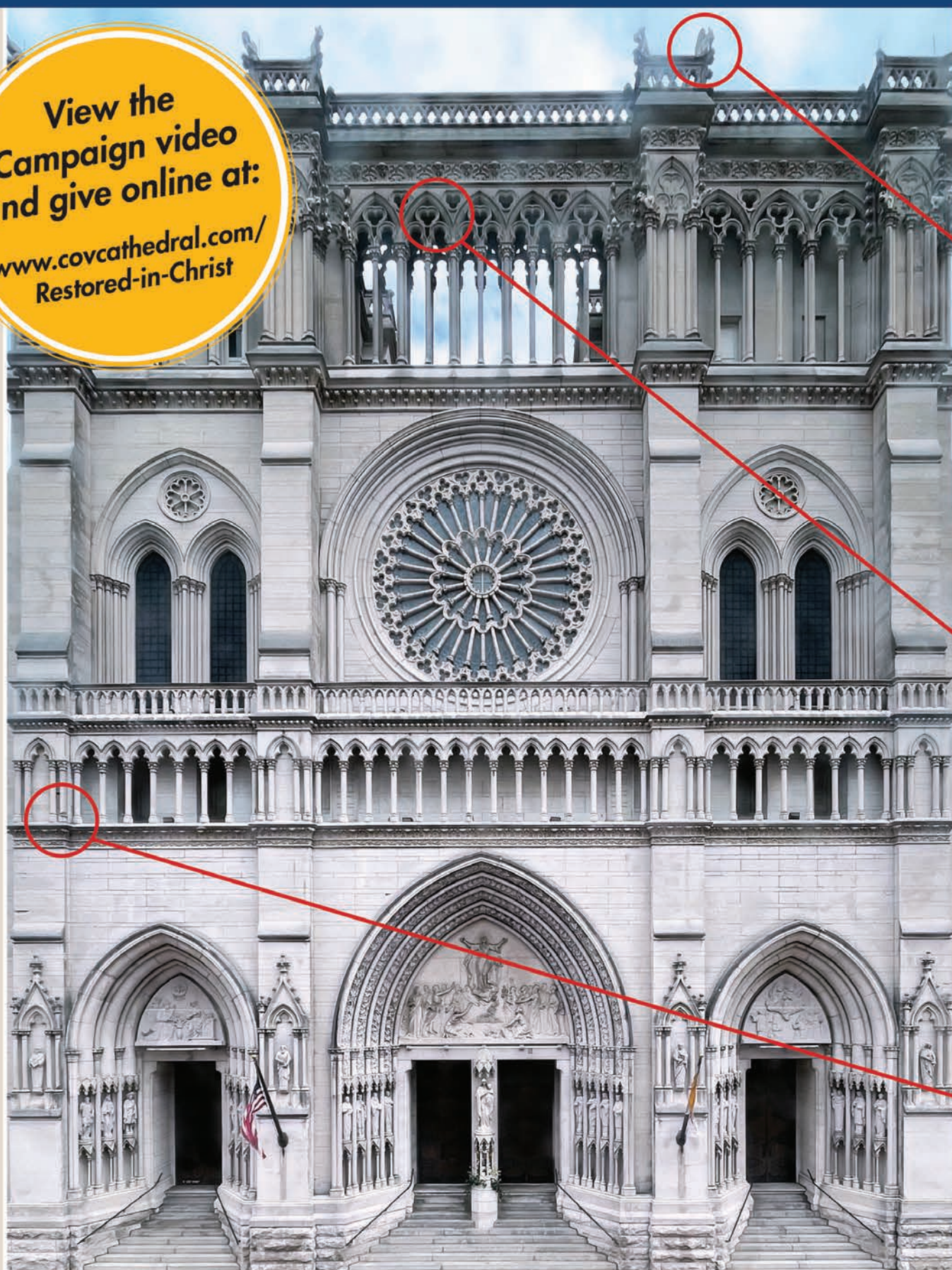
K-6 OPEN HOUSE
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4
1 p.m.

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Restored in Christ Campaign

View the
Campaign video
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The goal of the Restored in Christ Campaign is simple: to raise \$6 million 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. I invite you to join us in restoring the sacred home to so many known affectionately as "America's Notre Dame."

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

To learn more about giving opportunities contact:

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