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Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the *Messenger* are available online at covdio.org/messenger.



Retreat attendees guard Bishop Iffert in a game of “Protect the Bishop.”

Inaugural Connect retreat helps Jr. High students build deeper relationships with God, church and each other

Bella Young
Multimedia Correspondent

Angie Poat, diocesan youth minister, and specially trained leaders from THRIVE hosted, Feb. 10, the diocese’s first Junior High “Connect Retreat.” This inaugural retreat was held in Steigerwald Hall at Thomas More University.

Connect gathered 85 middle schoolers from around the diocese to build deeper relationships with each other, God and the Church.

“The Connect day included games and music, Scripture, and testimonies shared by the college team, followed by small group discussion,” said Mrs. Poat.

Her favorite part of the day was a Holy Hour held in Thomas More’s Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, “...retreatants were open to the presence of God ... in a deeply profound way.”

Part of what makes Connect so special is the dedication of the THRIVE leaders, she said.

THRIVE is a leadership training program open to high schoolers, college students and adults, put on by Mrs. Poat in her role as Diocesan Youth Minister. A group of university students from THRIVE dedicated themselves as leaders for the Connect retreat, giving up their Saturday to be faith-filled leaders for a younger

(Continued on page 2)

The Catechetical Institute forming Catholic leaders — at no cost to individuals

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

This year, the Diocese of Covington will be partnering with the Franciscan University of Steubenville’s Catechetical Institute. With the goal of forming, supporting and equipping ministry leaders, and those whom they serve, the Catechetical Institute offers “innovative processes and tools, including a large library of high quality, online workshops, for faith formation, spiritual development and skills training for all ministries within the Church.”

The original idea for incorporating the institute originated before COVID-19, headed by the vision of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization and its co-directors, David Cooley and Isaak Isaak.

“At its most basic level, it (the Catechetical Institute) is a website, and the diocese is purchasing it for all people for at least the next three years,” explained Mr. Cooley.

Actively, anyone within the diocese is able to go online to franciscanathome.com and register for their free account via their parish. The institute has an “enormous library of workshops” accessible through the free accounts.

“This can be done at an individual level,” Mr.

Cooley continued, “but we’re hoping that it’s going to be done more as a community — with your parish, school, fellow teachers or the like. It’s an opportunity for all people in the diocese to tap into some great, high quality faith formation.”

The origins of the Catechetical Institute, according to Mr. Isaak, came from the Franciscan University’s recordings of lectures and retreats, which soon became the library of information available on the Franciscan at Home website today — and now available to the Diocese of Covington.

“I’m really excited that our diocese is able to embrace and establish this relationship with the Franciscan University,” Mr. Isaak said, “because this is going to engage our people in learning the faith.”

Mr. Cooley added, saying, “Our main hope is for the people that want to pass on the faith,” such as parents and teachers, “to have this powerful tool that’s really going to help them pass on the faith to the younger generation,” as well as bolstering their own catechesis and relationship with Jesus.

The Catechetical Institute’s presence as a tool in the Diocese of Covington falls in line with the diocese’s other efforts

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Inaugural Connect retreat

(Continued from page 1)

generation. THRIVE and Connect have a mutually beneficial relationship as the THRIVE leaders get to minister to children and the children benefit from seeing college students live the faith.

The junior high students especially enjoyed meeting Bishop John Iffert. They were able to ask him questions and have conversations they would not normally be able to have. The true highlight of Bishop Iffert’s visit was the game they played together:

The THRIVE leaders came up with the idea to put a fun twist on an original game. Originally called “Protect the President” the game was renamed “Protect the Bishop” to better fit the purpose of the retreat. The goal of the game was to throw Nerf balls and connect one with Bishop Iffert. To protect him from the Nerf balls six students were selected to “protect the Bishop.” Smiles were had and con-

nections were made as Nerf balls were flying and Bishop Iffert did his best to dodge them.

Michelle Bump, a member of THRIVE and part of the leadership group for Connect said, “The Bishop showing up, they [the students] loved that, they were very prepared for it.”

There will be a weeklong summer day camp this year serving as a follow up to Connect. At the summer camp participants will have the opportunity to deepen the relationships built by the retreatants and to fully immerse themselves in an encounter with God.

(right) Bishop Iffert answers questions from Connect Retreat attendees.

(below) Everyone at the retreat poses for a picture with Bishop Iffert.



Young photos

Pope: Christians must rekindle hope in fighting today’s forms of slavery

Carol Glatz

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Lent is a time to free oneself from slavery and take action to free others suffering from the multiple forms of slavery that afflict the world, Pope Francis said.

Even though baptism has begun a process of liberation, “there remains in us an inexplicable longing for slavery. A kind of attraction to the security of familiar things, to the detriment of our freedom,” the pope said in his message for Lent, which began Feb. 14 for Latin-rite Catholics.

Echoing the tragedy of the ancient Israelites, a modern-day Pharaoh “stifles dreams, blocks the view of heaven,

makes it appear that this world, in which human dignity is trampled upon and authentic bonds are denied, can never change,” the pope wrote.

“We need to combat a deficit of hope that stifles dreams and the silent cry that reaches to heaven and moves the heart of God,” he wrote.

The text of the pope’s Lenten message focused on God’s call to leave behind the bonds of slavery, with the title, “Through the Desert God Leads us to Freedom,” which is from the Book of Exodus (20:2).

God enables people to embark on a new journey and experience “a Passover from death to life,” the pope wrote.

“Even today we remain under the rule of Pharaoh. A rule that makes us weary and indifferent. A model of growth that divides and robs us of a future,” he said. “Earth, air and water are polluted, but so are our souls.”

And, he wrote, there are “the idols that we set up for ourselves,” such as a longing to be all-powerful, to be looked up to by all and to dominate others. “We can become

its members to “rethink their lifestyles” and to examine their role in society and the contribution they can make to its betterment.

The synodal Church looks for “communitarian decisions” that are “capable of altering the daily lives of individuals and entire neighborhoods, such as the ways we acquire goods, care for creation and strive to include those who go unseen or are looked down upon,” he said.

“Let us ask: Do I want a new world? Am I ready to leave behind my compromises with the old?” the pope wrote, inviting the faithful to “keep seeking and be ready to take risks.”

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, presented the Lenten message at a Vatican news conference.

“Traditionally, Lent is a time to review our lives and to individually face the need for personal conversion,” he said. However, the pope is challenging the faithful also to seek to change the world.

As believers and as citizens, he said, Christians should ask, “Where are we on the journey with so many siblings at home and worldwide who cry out and ask us to walk with them?”

“By embracing the gift of Lent, every Christian community can accompany its members in facing the challenges of our time,” the cardinal said, because “the hoped-for changes in the world begin with change in me and in you.”

Emilia Palladino, a professor in the social sciences department of Rome’s Pontifical Gregorian University, said “the inequalities present today are an abomination.”

There is the gap between “the haves and have-nots” and an outright denial of “human dignity and basic human rights for entire portions of humanity kept in slavery,” she said.

In 2023, she said, three out of 10 people did not have access to essential health services and an estimated 2 billion people faced hunger in order to meet expenses related to medical care and medicines, according to the World Health Organization.

As of 2023, she said, there are still 152 million children and adolescents who are victims of child labor, according

(Continued on page 14)



attached to money, to certain projects, ideas or goals, to our position, to a tradition, even to certain individuals,” all of which only paralyzes people and creates conflict.

“Lent is a season of conversion, a time of freedom” during which Christians seek to rediscover God’s call and promise, he wrote. “It is time to act, and in Lent, to act also means to pause. To pause in prayer, in order to receive the word of God, to pause like the Samaritan in the presence of a wounded brother or sister.”

Through prayer, almsgiving and fasting, Christians experience “openness and self-emptying, in which we cast out the idols that weigh us down, the attachments that imprison us,” the pope wrote.

Pope Francis invited every Christian community to ask

CNS photo/courtesy Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

An illustration by Mauro Pallotta, an Italian street artist known as “Maupal,” for Pope Francis’ Lenten message for 2024. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development asked Maupal to help illustrate the pope’s message with a new drawing every week throughout Lent. Lent began Feb. 14, Ash Wednesday, and concludes March 28, Holy Thursday.



Raise yellow if you love Jesus
(above) Youth ministry leaders, old and young, unanimously raise yellow papers in response to the prompt “raise yellow if you love Jesus,” given during an icebreaker game at the recent THRIVE Youth Ministry gathering, Feb. 8, in Bishop Howard Memorial Hall, Covington. These gatherings, led by diocesan youth minister Angie Poat (left), aim to help inspire and bolster youth ministry in the Diocese of Covington. Feb. 8’s gathering highlighted the college students coming from Northern Kentucky University, Thomas More University and University of Cincinnati, and worked on planning and preparations for youth ministry events — especially the Junior High CONNECT retreat that was held Feb. 10. (See related article page 1.)

‘Clergy Abuse Beyond the Catholic Church: Parallels, Contrasts, and Lessons from Other Christian Contexts’

A webinar for abuse survivors and those who care for them

Monday, Feb. 26, 6:30-8 p.m., CST

Clergy sexual abuse is by no means limited to the Catholic Church. In recent years, the media has covered numerous cases in the Southern Baptist Convention and other evangelical and mainline Protestant churches, among others.



R. Marie Griffith

How does clergy abuse look similar or different in Catholic versus non-Catholic contexts? Are there lessons to be learned from looking at abuse crises across Catholic-Protestant lines or expanding more broadly to clergy abuse in non-Christian religions? This presentation offers information from ongoing research and scores of interviews with abuse survivors, advocates, lawyers, journalists and both Catholic and evangelical church leaders.

The presenter, R. Marie Griffith, will discuss what her research has uncovered so far and what she hopes the results will accomplish.

Dr. Griffith is the John C. Danforth Distinguished Professor in the Humanities at Washington University in St. Louis. She has served 12 years as director of the John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics. She previously served as a professor of religion at Princeton University and later as a professor of New England Church History at Harvard Divinity School. She is the author or editor of several books.

For information contact Paula Kaempffer, outreach coordinator for Restorative Justice and Abuse Prevention for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, kaempfferp@archspm.org.

Register below in advance of the meeting. After registering, you will receive a confirmation e-mail with the link to join the meeting.

Registration link: https://archspm-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_DHbA7m7SS0uXed3JTFweuw#/registration



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

Join Bishop Iffert 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

Official Assignments

Effective Feb. 12, 2024

Rev. Matthew A. Cushing
To: Parochial Administrator, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish
Continues other duties

Rev. Shannon M. Collins, MSJB
To: Residence, Missionaries of St. John the Baptist, Park Hills
From: Pastor, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Park Hills

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

Jamie N. Schroeder
Jamie N. Schroeder
Chancellor



Join Bishop John Iffert in Episode 7 of Around the Diocese. In this episode Benedictine Sister Kimberly Porter speaks about her work as a child grief counselor. Check it out online at covidio.org.

- Feb. 16**
Religious Superiors meeting, 10 a.m.
- Feb. 18**
Rite of Election, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.
- Feb. 19**
Presidents Day — Curia closed

- Feb. 19-22**
Bishops Summit
- Feb. 24**
Cathedral Parish pastoral plan, BHMA, Covington, 9 a.m.
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica, 4:30 p.m.

“24 Hours for the Lord”

- Confessions and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- March 8**, noon–midnight, Divine Mercy Parish, Bellevue
- March 1**, noon–midnight, St. John the Evangelist, Covington
- No registration needed.

Homelessness isn’t a crime and doesn’t belong in Ky HB 5

The Lexington Street Voice Council (a council formed by Lexington’s homeless community) hosted a luncheon at the Capitol Annex for KY Legislators, Feb. 7, to give the lawmakers the opportunity to see them as the people they



are, to hear their stories and understand the reasons they are experiencing homelessness. Over 65 Kentucky legislators shared a meal with men and women who have no place to call home; men and women who would be impacted by HB 5 that criminalizes homelessness. They heard about the childhoods of the SVC members — where they attended school and church, their favorite pet, their favorite subject in school, who had the most influence on their lives and how they traveled the path to homelessness. It was courageous of the Legislators to share this sacred time with men and women who are often the “invisible” in our society.

Some paint the face of homelessness as one of irresponsibility, addiction and criminality; those who choose to not be responsible for their basic need of shelter. Sadly, many “Think Tanks” and “Institutes” that study homelessness are quick to blame the individuals experiencing homelessness because if we blame, demonize and criminalize the people, then it is their fault.

This narrative is dangerous for our hearts and souls. It allows society to abdicate the responsibility of caring for those who are broken, disconnected and in need of community support. It allows the belief that none of us are responsible for homelessness — not the government, not the community, not the churches, not any of us who have

worked hard to shelter ourselves all our lives. Accepting that narrative, Christians and people of all faiths can dismiss the call to care for the least of these because they have chosen homelessness. It allows us to sleep well at night, pray in our churches and rationalize that the people experiencing homelessness aren’t the ones our faith or our compassion calls us to care for. One of these “Think Tanks” had provided a 1,500-participant survey to Ky. Legislators, which painted the picture that Kentucky citizens were in favor of criminalizing homelessness. The questions did not address the unintended consequences of HB 5 but framed those experiencing homelessness as addicts and criminals. The Street Voice Council, in collaboration with other groups, surveyed over 2,000 Kentucky citizens about the actual impact of HB 5 on unhoused citizens and overwhelmingly the responses were against the provisions of HB 5 that criminalized the unsheltered. It was noted in the SVC survey that it is unlawful NOW, without HB 5, for any citizen to trespass, loiter, destroy property or commit crimes. The SVC survey had over 85 percent of participants say that the addition of the provisions in HB 5 does NOT make Kentucky safer but instead burdens public safety officers to cite, arrest and jail lawful citizens who are unsheltered when there aren’t enough shelter beds for them. The results of the SVC survey were made available after the legislators shared lunch with the Street Voice Council. The question must be asked: If the majority of those on our streets aren’t addicts and criminals, then what is the basic cause of homelessness and who are they? After 24 years of hearing the voices of the unhoused, getting to know their stories and walking with them from the streets to a home, my unwavering belief is poverty is the cause and they are the poor. Whether it be the single mom with four children who was living on the brink of poverty when a car repair and health issues tipped the family into homelessness, or the

elderly gentleman who lost his wife, his support system, suffered health issues in his grief and was unable to function until one day he lost his home. There are addicts and criminals who are unhoused, just as there are addicts and criminals who are housed in all neighborhoods across the state, but the vast majority of those experiencing homelessness are NOT addicts and criminals, just poor. We all know that wages are not keeping up with rental costs. We all know affordable housing is in too short supply. The working poor who live on the edge of poverty without a safety net of family security cannot withstand the life experiences of an illness, major auto repair, or any other unexpected financial hit that can result in them losing their home. Please, please, please don’t put our fellow Kentucky homeless families, disabled/elderly citizens, struggling men and women in the picture that is painted of irresponsibility, addiction and criminality. These folks are left on the streets with nowhere to go — shelters are full, services are overwhelmed, and they are suffering. Let’s address those issues. YOUR voice needs to be heard. Reach out to your legislators and let them know we want to be: The KENTUCKY that addresses homelessness with compassion not a “stick.” The KENTUCKY that can face these problems and find solutions. The KENTUCKY that doesn’t judge and criminalize those without homes but embraces them as citizens in need. *Ginny Ramsey is director and co-founder of the Catholic Action Center, a volunteer nonprofit based on the Catholic Worker Movement located in Lexington, Ky. Information on KY Citizen Survey on the Criminalization of Homelessness and The Street Voice Council is available online at: www.catholicactioncenter.net.*

The Incarnation and pro-life work

Several weeks ago, we packed away our Advent and Christmas decorations, but I find myself wanting to linger over the spirituality of this season, even as Lent approaches. Advent and Christmas had special meaning for me this year thanks to a book entitled “Redeemer in the Womb” (a new edition is available from Word on Fire Publishing). In the book, Father John Saward draws from Scripture, the Fathers of the Church and later writers to delve into the relationship between Mary and the unborn Savior in her womb. Father Saward explains that the original idea for the book came from a friend’s suggestion that he draw out the pro-life implications of Catholic faith in the Incarnation. Father Saward invites his readers to “reconsider a forgotten pearl from the treasury of revelation: the nine months of Jesus’ life as an unborn child in Mary.” He writes, “Since the Incarnation of God the Son in the Virgin’s womb reveals the greatness of man’s dignity, I am inviting my readers to look again, this time in the

light of the Son of God, at the womb — weeks of their own and every human life. I am going to suggest that we re-read this first chapter of the human story and find afresh its beauty, truth and goodness.” The Incarnation of God’s only Son in Mary’s womb reveals the greatness of human dignity — this statement alone should shape our convictions but I don’t think the abortion debate will be settled based on human dignity alone. Father Saward tackles the hot-button question of when life begins. Despite the assertions of many abortion supporters that it is impossible to determine the moment when human life begins, it has always been the Church’s teaching that this question does, in fact, have a precise answer: “There were no successive stages in Christ’s taking of manhood,” Father Saward writes. In Christ’s Incarnation, “the body did not come into being before the soul, nor the soul before the body ... the flesh was conceived, ensouled and assumed simultaneously ... The adventure of being human began for the eternal Son at the moment of his conception.” St. Maximus the Confessor, a theological giant of the early Church, taught that the coincidence of the eternal Word’s assumption of human nature with his conception in the Virgin’s womb confirms that the rational soul of every human person “is created immediately by God and infused into the body at the moment of conception” — a doctrine referred to as “immediate animation.” Tertullian, one of the earliest Church Fathers, had

also asserted this doctrine: “To prevent birth is anticipated murder; it makes little difference whether one destroys a life already born or does away with it in its nascent stage. The one who will be a man is already one” (cited in the Vatican’s Declaration on Procured Abortion, Nov. 18, 1974). These teachings of the early Church Fathers forcefully grabbed my attention because they reminded me of certain Catholic politicians who evoke the Church Fathers to justify their pro-abortion positions. Perhaps the most hardcore proponents of abortion will never care about theological distinctions but armed with a more thorough understanding of centuries-old Catholic teaching, we do stand a chance of winning over at least some of our fellow Catholics. I have only touched upon the first chapter of Father Saward’s intriguing book but I hope that I have opened your eyes, as Father Saward opened mine, to the awesome dignity that is ours as human beings thanks to the nine months that a divine embryo — the God-Man — spent in his mother’s womb. Respect for this awesome dignity should inspire our actions with regard to all vulnerable human life, especially the unborn. Our Advent candles and Christmas nativities may be stored away until next year, but we can remind ourselves of the Incarnation — and release its saving power — throughout the year each time we pray the joyful mysteries of the rosary.

(Continued on page 7)

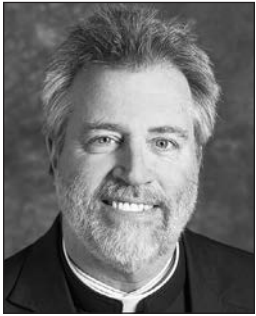
What’s the purpose of Lent?

The readings for the first Sunday of Lent — Cycle B — are: Genesis 9:8-15; 1 Peter 3:18-22 and Mark 1:12-15.

When I was a child, the most common question asked just before Lent was, “What are you giving up for Lent?” The message from this often-discussed question was clear: Lent was about “giving up.”

Some years later, I started hearing a variation of the question: “What are you doing for Lent?” It seemed that people had come to understand that “giving up” was not the only kind of Lenten practice; one could also “do” something.

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Stephen Bankemper

What I never heard was a question that seems to me now to be the most important question one could ask: “What is the purpose of Lent?”

Fortunately for us, we do not have to make this up ourselves. In many different places, in various ways, the Church tells us the purpose of Lent. I find interesting the way she describes it in the Preface for this First Sunday of Lent: “By abstaining forty

long days from earthly food, he consecrated through his fast the pattern of our Lenten observance and, by overturning all the snares of the ancient serpent, taught us to cast out the leaven of malice, so that, celebrating worthily the Paschal Mystery, we might pass over at last to the eternal paschal feast.”

I would like to start our meditation with the word “malice.” I do not hear the word used much in everyday speech, and when it is, people seem simply to mean something like “great meanness,” but the word means more than that.

Our judicial system uses the word in its more complete meaning: think of the phrase “malice aforethought;” it means that the act done was not only wrong but was chosen intentionally.

Malice, in Catholic theology, means, as one Catholic website puts it: “The evil of a conscious and deliberate transgression of the law of God. It is a contempt of the divine Author of the law, and an implicit denial of reverence toward God, who, as Creator, has a right to demand obedience of his creatures. It is the basic evil of sin.”

Thomas Aquinas, in his “Summa Theologica,” wrote: “Malice is badly disposed reason. It is commonly called bad will. A sin committed through malice ... is a kind of cold-blooded sin.”

This language is so stark and the description seems so evil that we might not see ourselves in it, but to put it more simply, any act that we know is wrong and choose to do anyway just because we want to or because we think we know better is an act of malice.

Realizing the opposite motivation can help us to understand malice — it is love. To paraphrase the words above, love is properly disposed reason. It can be called good will. An act committed through love is an act of reverence toward God. It is the basis of the virtues.

Not all sins are sins of malice. In the same section of the “Summa,” Thomas wrote, “From the standpoint of the disposition of reason towards sin, there are three types of sin: (a) sins of negligence, for example, sins that come from culpable ignorance; (b) sins of passion; (c) sins of malice.”

Sins of culpable ignorance are wrong acts that we do because we do not know they are wrong but should know they are wrong. The Church has always taught us that we are responsible for the proper formation of our conscience, that we should strive to know what is good and what is evil.

Sins of passion are those wrong acts that we do because we do not control our urges, be they physical or emotional.

Now that we know what we are trying to accomplish,

(Continued on page 7)

Beyond lunch: A calling to nourish hearts and minds

In the bustling realm of school cafeterias, where clattering trays and the lunch rush prevail there exists a profound calling that goes beyond the activity of a mere job. It’s the commitment of dedicated women and men who choose to serve our children with hot meals, friendly smiles and heartfelt connections.



These unsung heroes understand that the two minutes a student spends in the lunch line isn’t just about nutrition; they are moments laden with potential. A smile exchanged; a caring question posed — these seemingly small gestures weave a tapestry of support that extends far beyond the confines of the cafeteria.

It’s a calling that transforms lunchtime into a conduit for genuine connections. Students aren’t just recipients of hot meals; they are greeted with interest in their lives. “How was your game last night?” “How’s your mom?” “What college did your sister get into?”

These questions transcend the transactional nature of the lunch line, turning it into a space for camaraderie and shared experiences.

A story of a little boy whose journey through the lunch line revealed not just nourishment for his body, but solace for his soul. This young child, burdened with the

weight of disappointment, confided to the cafeteria staff his sorrow: St. Nick would not visit his home this year.

His innocent heart heavy with longing, he entered the cafeteria, his spirit dampened by dashed hopes. But the next day dawned with a glimmer of unexpected joy. As he shuffled through the lunch line, a kind soul whispered to him, “St. Nick must’ve thought you lived here,” and presented him with a stocking brimming with treats and treasures.

In that moment, the cafeteria transformed into a haven of warmth and magic, where dreams were nurtured and spirits lifted.

In those brief minutes, the cafeteria staff becomes more than servers of food. They become confidantes, mentors and friends. They tie shoelaces, offer encouraging words about an upcoming test, and provide a warm presence that goes beyond the hustle and bustle of academic life.

For those who have embraced this calling, it’s not just a job; it’s a vocation, one that is driven by a profound desire to contribute to the well-being of our children’s day. It’s a commitment to nourish not only bodies but also hearts and minds.

As students pass through the lunch line, they receive more than just a meal; they encounter a community of caring individuals who have chosen a path of service. This choice radiates through every interaction, brightening the day of those they serve.

It’s a calling that turns ordinary moments into extraordinary connections, making the school cafeteria a place where nourishment goes beyond the plate.

Laura Hatfield is the School Lunch Program director for the Diocese of Covington, Ky

Together weTHRIVE!

Statistics reveal the trend that teenagers and young adults consider themselves spiritual, but not religious. Many recognize God as a creator, who set the world in motion, like a master clockmaker, distant and absent from daily life.

Subsequently, a personal relationship with God and participation in a Church community is undesirable.

I am proud to give testimony that reveals a different picture. Since beginning the role of Diocesan Youth Minister in June, I have personally encountered hundreds of young people who are deeply religious, spiritual and seek relationships within the Catholic community.

They have raised thousands of dollars to attend the National Catholic Youth Conference, they arise early to attend Mass before school starts, they participate in works of mercy and service, lead music, retreats, attend Holy Hours, March for Life, use prayer APPS, mentor younger youth, pray rosaries and lead virtuous sporting events.

They attend youth ministry events sandwiched between school, homework, extra-curriculars, sports, jobs and family obligations. These young people, like the first Christians, are counter cultural.

Sometimes we do not “see” them because they do not want to bring attention to themselves. However, I assure you they exist. They are in parishes, schools and pockets around the diocese. They all need our help to THRIVE! It is hard to live a holy life in a secular culture.

THRIVE! is a diocesan Youth Ministry initiative to grow and support youth ministry that is unified, sustainable and rooted in the joy of the Gospel. A thriving ministry will be unique to each setting. There is no one model that works for every parish, school, retreat or ministry.

Comparing one ministry or location to another often leads to disunity and despair. Thus, THRIVE! provides support, networking and ministry tools, rooted in Christ and peer relationships, to keep both the minister and the ministry moving forward.

THRIVE! ministry events are held monthly, typically open to high school, college and adult leaders. The agenda includes prayer, praise and worship, networking, focus groups and an applied ministry topic and experience.

A student from St. Henry District High School, said of the last THRIVE!, “It was exactly what I needed!”

An adult from St. Mary Parish noted, “Wow!! Another amazing THRIVE! night. I learn so much and I love getting to meet more of this faith-filled youth-loving community ... so impactful.”

Join us and help diocesan teens THRIVE! through your prayer, financial sponsorship and personal witness. “Planted in the house of the Lord we shall flourish and bear fruit!” cf. Ps 92:14-15.

Consult the youth ministry section of the diocesan website (www.covdio.org/youth) for specific ideas and events.

“...although it is never easy to approach young people, two things have become increasingly evident: the realization that the entire community has to be involved in evangelizing them, and the urgent requirement that young people take on a greater role in pastoral outreach.” Pope Francis, “Christus Vivit,” (Christ Is Alive!)” 202.

Angie Poat is the diocesan Youth Minister for the Diocese of Covington, Ky

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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.fdoofmary.org
Missionaries of St. John the Baptist www.msjb.info

Embracing challenges — and hope

Karen Kuhlman
Messenger Correspondent

In his 2015 encyclical, “*Laudato Si’*,” (on care of our common home), Pope Francis encouraged everyone, not just Catholics, to pay more attention to the climate crisis. He emphasized that he did not want “*Laudato Si’*” to be a secret and wants parents, families, dioceses, religious orders and institutions to learn about it and commit to making changes. “Most important,” Pope Francis said, “is they become familiar with ‘*Laudato Si’*.”

Pope Francis noted that people in poor countries and island nations are the most affected by climate change. He proposed that by changing some of our habits, we can reduce the impact of our lifestyles and do less harm to the planet.

Sister Kay Kramer is a member of the Congregation of Divine Providence of Melbourne, Kentucky. She is a nurse midwife and nurse practitioner with St. Elizabeth Hospital and sits on the Congregation’s international council.

Sister Kay said, “The Congregation took Pope Francis’ words to heart and committed in 2019 to study the encyclical. We worked on that and then committed to the *Laudato Si’* Action Platform. The platform comes from the Vatican’s Dicastery for Human

Development and is under their direction. When you sign up to participate, there is never a demand that you take particular steps or participate in 10 actionable steps in a year. There is none of that. It is simply a matter of pulling up the information and discovering a list of the categories in which people can participate.”

Following a year of studying the document, the Congregation committed to studying the global water crisis. The topic fits the Sisters of Divine Providence well, as they were already involved via their property in Melbourne. They had entered into a conservancy for their woods with the state of Kentucky and Northern Kentucky University for their wetlands. The Sisters began to study their water usage and discovered ways to reduce the waste and misuse of water. Included was their determination not to buy bottled water because of the additional burden plastic bottles placed on the earth.

Sister Kay said, “Those were the areas we tackled in our first year. We also committed to cutting down on waste by learning about recycling. Now, as much as possible, we follow the 5Rs of waste management — Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose and Recycle. As we learned more about the connection between eating meat and the methane crisis, we committed to decreasing meat consumption and becoming more plant-based in our diets for 2024.”

Underlying all this is the commitment of the Congregation of Divine Providence to learn more about what is happening to the poor worldwide and what can be done to mitigate their suffering. We in the Diocese of Covington have been, to an extent, protected from some of the effects of climate change experienced in other parts of the world. But Kentuckians have also experienced weather the likes of which we have never seen. A deadly tornado struck Mayfield, killing 80 people in its path in Western Kentucky in 2020. Torrential rain waters flooded areas of Eastern Kentucky in 2022, taking the lives of 44.

Some climate-caused catastrophes connect to how humans

unwittingly misuse the earth’s bounty. For example, our palates have adapted to previously unfamiliar foods, creating a demand for imported ingredients that we now savor. Americans have learned to love the tasty avocados, often an ingredient in delicious Mexican cuisine. However, satisfying the skyrocketing demand for avocados comes with a hefty price tag for our planet: 25,000 acres of forest land in Mexico are destroyed annually and replaced with agricultural land to fulfill orders from the United States for the fruit.



OSV News photo/Eloisa Lopez, Reuters

Plastic bottles float on the heavily polluted San Juan River, a tributary of Pasig River in Mandaluyong City, Philippines, June 21, 2021. Pope Francis warns the clock is ticking on the dangers of climate change — and both a paradigm shift and practical action are critically needed to avert looming disasters in nature and human society. The pope released his new apostolic exhortation “*Laudate Deum*” (“Praise God”) Oct. 4, 2023.

Sister Kay said, “According to a report from the New York Times, those orders amount to over one million metric tons of avocados and carry the stunning price tag of \$3,270,000,000 (3.27 billion dollars) annually!”

In the fall of 2023, Pope Francis followed up his encyclical “*Laudato Si’*” with the apostolic exhortation “*Laudate Deum*” (“Praise God”). He stressed that the time to act is now and that we must act now.

We are beginning to witness the realities and results of a slow-moving crisis. The remedies are likely to be slow-moving as well. Climate scientists have told us that the best we can do now is to lessen the impact of climate disasters by helping people prepare for them. And begin to adopt sustainable lifestyles ourselves.

So much of how we and those in other countries live is unsustainable. How do we encourage ourselves and others to explore Pope Francis’s encyclicals and accept that the time to act is now?

Sister Kay said, “Jesus told us, ‘Whatever you did for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me.’ If we truly believe in those words from Scripture and live more simply and sustainably, we can contribute to helping others have what they need. If we live simply and share more, we can help others, so their struggles are not so great. Catholic social teaching is very much a part of ‘*Laudato Si’*’ — the belief that we have to really focus on the life and dignity of another human person. Embracing ‘*Laudato Si’*’ and ‘*Laudate Deum*’ is a way for us to deepen our commitment to our belief in the life and dignity of each person. And even in the face of our challenges, we need to be hopeful and stay hopeful, especially in the face of climate change.”

Sister Kay Kramer invites all interested in learning more about ways to put “*Laudato Si’*” and “*Laudato Deum*” into action in their lives to contact her by e-mail at kkramer@cdpkentucky.org.

The purpose of Lent

(Continued from page 5)

we can choose practices that will aid us. Again, we do not have to make these up. The Church has encouraged certain practices as effective helps to “casting out the leaven of malice,” turning from sin, and growing in love of God.

Fasting, among other things, helps us learn to control our passions. Prayer helps us to know God more intimately. Reading Scripture and studying our faith are helps to drive out ignorance and know good from evil. Almsgiving helps us grow in love for our neighbor and for God.

It is easy through the mere repetition of Lent to fall into the trap focusing on the practices of Lent and forgetting why we are doing those practices. Fasting is not a goal; it is a means to a goal. To paraphrase Paul, if I fast constantly and give away all of my wealth as alms, but do

not turn from sin and grow in love, I am nothing, I have gained nothing.

What sense does it make to celebrate the freedom from sin that Christ won for us if we continue to act with malice? To celebrate the reconciliation with God that Jesus won for us if we do not strive to love God more deeply?

Let us engage Lent mindfully. Let us keep Holy Week and Easter in mind as we make our Lenten observance, so that we might celebrate them well and truly, and let that celebration lead us one (or more) step(s) closer to the eternal end for which Jesus died and rose.

Let us pray for each other and help each other.
Father Stephen Bankemper is pastor, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Ky.

The Incarnation and pro-life work

(Continued from page 4)

In a few weeks, April 8, we will celebrate the liturgical feast of the Annunciation, another opportunity to heighten awareness of the connection between Christ’s Incarnation and the pro-life cause.

Jesus living in Mary, through the power of your Incarnation help us to rediscover the beauty, truth and goodness of every human life from conception until natural death and to celebrate the Gospel of Life each day of the year!

Sister Constance Veit is the communications director for the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States and an occupational therapist.

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

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

Bishop Iffert and the priests of the Diocese of Covington will pray a Holy Hour for survivors of sexual violence and for the sanctification of priests, 3 p.m., every third Thursday monthly, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. All are welcome.

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.

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. Contact the NCC School Office at (859) 292-0001.

Upcoming Covington Cursillo retreats at the Jesuit Spiritual Retreat Center, Milford: Men’s weekend, Feb. 29–March 3; Women’s weekend, April 4–7. For information contact Vince Lonnemann at vjlonne@gmail.com or, (513) 708-4926.

Bishop Brossart High School Girls softball and volleyball Euchre Tournament, March 2 at BBHS cafeteria. Doors open 5:30 p.m.; tournament begins 7 p.m.; \$25 pre-registration by Feb. 24, \$30 at the door; \$10 optional skin game. Food, soft drinks and water included in admission. Cash bar available. Contact Kari Bezold (859) 391-5119 or kariebb1@gmail.com.

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.

Holy Cross District High School, Covington, 26th annual mulch sale. Students will deliver mulch to your home, business or rental property anywhere in Kenton, Boone and Campbell Counties and will put it anywhere on your property, starting March 30 and continuing for at least four weeks. Call (859) 392-8999 for information.

St. Augustine Parish, Covington, will celebrate Tenebrae, Spy Wednesday, March 27, 6 p.m. All are welcome.

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 covidio.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.



BINGO with a CDP

A kindergarten student from St. Philip School, Melbourne, plays BINGO with Sister Ruth Nadicksbernd during the school’s visit to Holy Family, Covington.



St. Edward School welcomes Bishop Iffert

(top left) Bishop John Iffert celebrated Mass with the students, teachers and staff of St. Edward School, Cynthiana, Feb. 1. Father Niby Kannai, pastor, concelebrated. Following Mass, Bishop Iffert visited the school (above), and the students performed a skit (top right) about their patron saint, St. Edward.

Fish Frys

Fridays, Feb. 16–March 8

St. Mary Parish, Alexandria, 4:30–7:30 p.m.

Fridays, Feb. 16–March 15

St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright, 5–8 p.m.

Fridays, Feb. 16–March 22

St. Augustine Parish, Augusta, 5–7 p.m.

St. Bernard Parish, Dayton, 5–7 p.m.

St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, 4:30–7 p.m.

St. Edward Parish, Cynthiana, 5–7 p.m.

Father Bealer Knights of Columbus, 605 Lytle Ave., Elsmere, lunch 11 a.m.–2 p.m., dinner 4:30–8 p.m.

St. Francis Xavier Parish, Falmouth, Knights of Columbus, 4–7:30 p.m.

Holy Cross District High School, Covington, 5–8 p.m.

St. Joseph Academy, Walton, 4:30–8 p.m.

St. Joseph Parish, Camp Springs, 4–7:30 p.m.

Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger, 4–8 p.m.

St. Paul, Florence, 4:30–7:30 p.m.

St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, 5–8 p.m.

St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas, 4–7:30 p.m.

St. Timothy Parish, Union, dine in 5–7:30 p.m.; drive thru 4:30–7 p.m.

Friday, March 22

Our Savior Parish, Covington, starts at 12 p.m.

Fridays, Feb. 16–March 29

St. Augustine Parish, Covington, 4–7 p.m.

St. Benedict Parish, Covington, 4:45–7 p.m.

A story of hope from Uganda

Adolf and his wife, Florence, are farmers in Akwangagwel, Uganda. The couple is dedicated to fighting hunger so that their family and others in their community can build thriving lives. They do this by farming, which helps their family to eat three nutritious meals a day, and by assisting others in their community to grow successful crops.

Each member of their household has an important role, like gardening, cleaning, preparing meals and caring for the animals. In the evenings, they enjoy spending time together as a family. Adolf is thankful for the free time to sit and relax with his children.

In the area where they live, the climate is very dry. Lately, the rainy season has been coming later than it used to. And sometimes, it rains too much all at once and causes flooding.



Bamia (Okra Stew) *From Uganda*

- 2 T fair trade olive oil

1 large onion, chopped

1 16 oz bag frozen cut okra

2 garlic cloves, chopped

2 t ground cumin

1 t ground cinnamon

1/2 t ground allspice

1 can diced tomatoes

2 can vegetable stock
- Heat olive oil in large pot. Sauté onions until brown. Add okra, garlic and spices. Once okra is lightly browned, add tomatoes and vegetable stock. Simmer, uncovered, for 40 minutes or until okra is soft and stew thickens.

Makes 4-6 servings

Lenten Recipe Provided by CRS (Catholic Relief Services) Rice Bowl, this recipe is meat-free for Lent.

Florence and Adolf Omara.



“It rains so heavily and destroys things,” Adolf says. “So, the goodness of rain is taken away.”

In addition, people come through their community and steal their food or tools. It makes it difficult to farm with these challenges — and that means food is harder to come by.

To overcome these obstacles, Adolf and Florence joined a Catholic Relief Services program where they learned new farming methods that help them grow crops even when it is hot and dry. They planted seeds that grow quickly, so that they can still have vegetables to harvest, even if there isn’t much rain. This provides enough food to eat and to sell at the market for extra income.

“I have seen my children are happy because they are well fed,” Adolf says.

Because of the successful life that he and Florence have built, they are sharing the knowledge they learned with their neighbors. As a leader in his community, Adolf works with others to increase their harvests, improve the land and build a safe and thriving community.

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Laziness is a symptom of ‘acedia,’ a dangerous vice, pope says

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

The vice of “acedia,” often translated as “sloth,” can cause laziness, but it is much more than that; it is a lack of caring for anything and being bored with everything, even one’s relationship with God, Pope Francis said.

“The demon of acedia wants precisely to destroy the simple joy of the here and now, the grateful wonder of reality; it wants to make you believe that it is all in vain, that nothing has meaning, that it is not worth taking care of anything or anyone,” the pope said at his weekly general audience Feb. 14.

Holding his audience on Ash Wednesday, Pope Francis prayed that God would accompany and bless people through their Lenten journey, but his main talk was a continuation of his series on vices and virtues.

People spend too little time talking about “the capital sin” of acedia, he said, and even when they do, they refer to it as sloth or laziness.

But “in reality, laziness is an effect more than a cause,” the pope said. “When a person is idle, indolent, apathetic, we say he is lazy. But as the wisdom of the ancient desert fathers teaches us, often the root is acedia, which from its Greek origin literally means a ‘lack of care.’”

Pope Francis described acedia as “a very dangerous temptation that one should not mess around with,” because it makes a person “feel disgust at everything; their relationship with God becomes boring to them; and even the holiest acts, those that in the past warmed their hearts, now appear entirely useless to them.”

Acedia can sometimes feel like depression, but it is a vice that tempts people to let go of caring for themselves and for others, he said. “For those caught up in acedia, life loses meaning, praying is boring (and) every battle seems meaningless.”

“It is a bit like dying in advance and it’s awful,” the pope said.



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pope Francis talks to visitors during his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican Feb. 14, 2024. Pope Francis continued his general audience talks about vices and virtues, looking at the vice usually called “sloth.”

When a person feels acedia creeping in, he said, they need to try to cultivate “the patience of faith” with a few small steps.

“In the clutches of acedia, one’s desire is to be elsewhere, to escape from reality,” the pope said, so to fight it “one must instead have the courage to remain and to welcome God’s presence in the ‘here and now,’ in the situation as it is.”

Take a breath, he said, set smaller goals and “persevere

by leaning on Jesus, who never abandons us in temptation.”

The pope ended the audience encouraging Catholics to live Lent “as an opportunity for conversion and inner renewal in listening to the Word of God and in caring for our brothers and sisters most in need,” including by praying for those suffering because of war and violence in Ukraine, Palestine and Israel.



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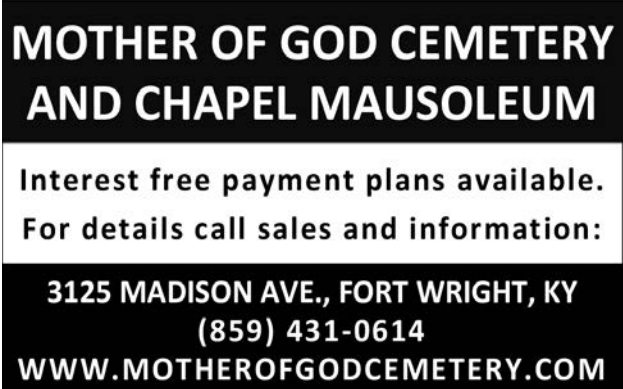
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The Communion Rite

Father Luke Spannagel
USCCB

Although we may be familiar with the Mass’s Communion Rite, perhaps it is helpful to step back and ask, “What exactly are we doing?”



Many of us have been receiving Communion for some time, but have we ever stopped to wonder why we do so? As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says, “Since the celebration of the Eucharist is the Paschal Banquet, it is desirable that in accordance with the Lord’s command his Body and Blood should be received as spiritual food by those of the faithful who are properly disposed. This is the sense of the fraction and the other preparatory rites by which the faithful are led more immediately to Communion” (*GIRM*, 80).

When we talk about the Eucharist, we usually think about four things: the True Presence of Christ’s Body and Blood; the Sacrifice of the Cross; the Sacrament of Unity among people; and the Paschal or Heavenly Banquet.

The True Presence reminds us that Jesus is really there. The Sacrifice reminds us that the Mass is the one perfect Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross and shows how much Jesus loves us.

The True Presence of Jesus and his Sacrifice open the door to restoration, healing, and true unity. These truths also point us toward heaven, where we will experience the fullness and perfection of unity and love.

The image of the heavenly banquet calls to mind celebration, eating and drinking. As Jesus instructed us, we receive his Body and Blood by eating and drinking. That is what the Communion Rite is all about: the point of all the prayers, gestures, and words is that we receive Jesus the Lord in Holy Communion.

Continuing with Charles Belmonte, “The early Christians always likened the Eucharist to the life of the soul. St. Augustine writes: ‘It is an excellent thing that the Christians around Carthage [in North Africa] call baptism itself nothing else but salvation, and the sacrament of Christ’s Body nothing else but life. By apostolic tradition, the churches of Christ hold that without baptism and participation at the Lord’s table it is impossible for any man to attain either the kingdom of God or salvation and life eternal. The Scriptures give testimony to this.’ This is the very same body and blood which, by being immolated, restored our friendship with God. Christ’s sacrifice and the Paschal Meal are intimately linked. Our Mother the Church encourages us to participate in one and in the other; if we are properly disposed, of receiving our Lord’s Body and Blood. These will be our nourishment for the journey to our Father’s home” (*Understanding the Mass*, pp. 166–67).

For more background on sacrifice and eating, Belmonte looks back at the relationship between sacrifices and banquets: “The ancient sacrificial custom required that part of the victim be given back to the person offering the sacri-

fice. Thus, he became, symbolically, God’s guest. That which was just a symbol in the pagan rites and a figure in the Jewish offerings is a reality in the Holy Mass. After we have offered to God his Son Jesus Christ in sacrifice, God offers Him to us as spiritual food” (*Understanding the Mass*, p. 165).

In the ancient sacrifices, whenever a person would offer a sacrifice to God, he always got “a little something” to take back with him. Generally, this was a portion of the sacrifice.

In the case of receiving Jesus in the Mass, we get back the whole Christ — Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. What an exchange! There is no better deal in the world.



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

SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

The Athenaeum of Ohio/Mount St. Mary's Seminary & School of Theology (MTSM) in Cincinnati is seeking a proven financial professional with strong communication skills to fill the key role of Senior Accountant. This is a full-time salaried position with excellent benefits.

Responsibilities include preparing the annual budget, preparing and recording monthly journal entries, account reconciliation and analysis, review endowment investments and serve as liaison to investment managers. Prepare annual GAAP financial statement in collaboration with external auditors.

Qualifications include a bachelor's degree in accounting or related field, CPA preferred. A minimum of 5 years of accounting experience in the not-for-profit sector (fund-based accounting). Experience with Blackbaud Financial NXT is a plus.

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Chaplain to Sisters of Divine Providence found vocation in missionary work

Bella Young
Multimedia Correspondent

When asked to sum up his life in one word Father John Converset, chaplain, Sisters of Divine Providence, took some time to think. He recalled all the times he felt called to do God’s work — experiencing history unfold in South Africa during the height of its demands for equality and freedom and experiencing, at the age of 13, the desire for missionary work and the priesthood. After some reflection, Father Converset said the one word to sum up his life is, “called.”

Father Converset’s early experience with the faith was a good one. He comes from a large family with seven siblings, a staunchly Catholic father and a mother who was thoughtful in her faith, finding ways to see the good every day. He even had an aunt that was a nun. Although his parents were good role models and he had a family member living a consecrated life, it was a visitor to his class in grade school that inspired his vocation.

“A priest came to my class, and he was talking about his missions and showing pictures of priests outside in boats with small groups ... I thought, I could do that,” Father Converset said. It was this priest, a Comboni Missionary, who influenced Father Converset to attend seminary.

He began seminary at the age of 13 when he entered the Comboni Missionaries. He graduated from Sacred Heart Seminary in June of 1962. He said he knew what he was doing was right, “God was calling me for this.”

He continued his education at San Diego University where he graduated *magna cum laude* with a major in philosophy and minors in history and languages. He was ordained in Rome in July of 1971 and was sent, at the age of 26, on his first assignment to South Africa in January 1972.

In his first year in Africa, he was assigned to Acornhoek Parish and as pastoral associate at Waterval Parish. It was in these parishes that he picked up the African language of Sepulane. From 1974-1977 he was parish priest and superior at Waterval Parish. During this time, he was also chair of the Diocesan Council of Priests and a member of the National Priests Council.

He arrived in Africa during the worst years of apartheid. He watched as people were ousted from their homes, and forced to exploit themselves to survive, children dying from disease. There was no infrastructure and what was once a community in harmony was now a people divided. He was there as young people revolted.

“It was psychologically very tight,” he said. He could not live in the areas that his parishioners lived, he had to live in a white neighborhood. The government, he said, had a name for Roman Catholics, “Roman Danger.” It was this government who decided the renewal of his visa every three months. “We were on a very tight

leash,” he said. Between 1978 and 1982 he was the director of Ongoing Formation, for the Comboni Missionaries – South African Province and the Diocese of Lydenburg-Witbank. During this time, he was also the organizer of personal directed retreats. His tenure as retreat organizer, he said, was a time of immense spiritual growth, helping people find their way to the Lord.

“I could see God working day to day ... who could say God isn’t real when you see him work?” he said.

Father Converset left Africa in 1982. For the next 10 years he held many administrative roles for the Comboni Missionaries – North American Province, he held a post in Holy Cross Parish in Los Angeles, and did work in Kitchener, Ontario. In 1993 he became the Provincial Superior for the Comboni Missionaries – North American Province. However, it would not be long before he was back in Africa.

In 2000, he was assigned to the Comboni Study Centre in South Africa where he was assistant formator, formator and local supervisor. Though he returned to South Africa 12 years after apartheid had ended, he said not much had changed.

“Essentially poor people get cheated. There were millions of refugees who came to South Africa thinking it was a land of wealth and it wasn’t,” he said.

In Dec. 2001, he was assigned to the Provincialate in Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa. He was also the presenter of the charism workshop with the Comboni staff of Year of Ongoing Formation. Father Converset said this post brought him much fulfillment; he enjoyed watching God work through people.

In 2010 he became the director of the JPIC (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) Office of the North American Province of the Comboni Missionaries. During this time, he was also representing the Superior General of the Comboni Missionaries with VIVAT International, a non-governmental organization in consulting status with



Father John Converset stands in front of the Sisters of Divine Providence residence.

the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Non-governmental organizations cannot bring or block any motions, only countries in the UN can do that. However, they can lean on countries with whom they are close, to advocate for motions and legislation that are important to them. Through his work in this role, Father Converset said he was able to incorporate Catholic Social Teaching into many pieces of legislation that made its way through the UN.

Recently, in 2021, he found his way to the Diocese of Covington as chaplain to the Sisters of the Congregation of Divine Providence in Melbourne. While in this post he remains a member of the Comboni provincialate community in Cincinnati. He says he has grown quite fond of the sisters.

“They are very wonderful people with great stories,” he said. He has a deep sense of community not only to the Comboni Missionaries but to the Sisters of Divine Providence.

Father Converset has lived a “called” life. Though his calling changed many times, taking him from Africa to Canada, to Mexico, to the Diocese of Covington, when God called his name, each time he answered.

CHANCERY SECRETARY

The Diocese of Covington invites qualified, actively-practicing Roman Catholics to apply for the position of Chancery Secretary. This position fulfills vital logistical and operational functions, and requires a motivated self-starter with a love for the Church, an interest in service, and a demonstrable history of maintaining confidentiality. Other requirements include experience and comfort with using Microsoft 365 software, helpful and pleasant communications skills regardless of the medium, and exceptional attention to detail. Interested candidates may send a letter of interest along with a comprehensive resume, including compensation history and at least five appropriate references with email contact information, by email or fax to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR, skoplyay@covdio.org, fax 859/392-1589.



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The Catechetical Institute

(Continued from page 1)

for unity, hoping to contribute to the With One Heart's projects goals of forming leadership and faith formation in the Diocese of Covington.

While the website is accessible for personal exploration now, the near future holds the creation of set "learning tracks and courses catered to the diocese's needs," according to Mr. Isaak and Mr. Cooley.

Beginning late March, "orientations" will also be held as training about the Catechetical Institute for parish staff and all who have

responsibility for building up the body of Christ, such as, DREs/CREs, family and youth ministers, OCIA directors and those in similar roles. This first training will be held March 23, in Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium in the Covington Curia.

The orientation is free, and doors will open at 7:45 a.m. Presentations are set to begin at 8 a.m., and RSVPs are due before Feb. 20. For questions regarding this orientation or the Catechetical Institute, contact Mr. Isaak Issak, iisaak@covdio.org, Mr. Dave Cooley, dcooley@covdio.org or Ms. Angie Poat, ap oat@covdio.org.

Christians rekindle hope

(Continued from page 2)

to the International Labor Office. Some 40,000 of them are working in mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo, extracting coltan, which is needed in making smartphones, tablets and computers, tools that end up being a form of addiction for others.

In 2021, she added, 28 million people were trapped in forced labor and 22 million into forced marriage in addition to the countless victims of human trafficking, according to a United Nations

report.

This is where the lack of hope wields all its power, she said, because the enormity and breadth of these problems act as a depressing justification for inaction.

"But we can change what little we have been given: a lifestyle more respectful of oneself, others and the environment; re-learn solidarity and fraternity, first of all in our own homes; working together to build a healthy work environment, promoters of the common good and not slaves to profit at all costs," she said.

Protecting God's Children for Adults Safe Environment Trainings

For all employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Covington who in any way provide a safe environment for children.

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site; the background check is posted on your account and you receive a copy if you request it during the registration process. You will sign up for a VIRTUS training class during theregistration.

Step 3: Your account becomes active when your background check, VIRTUS session and Acceptance Form are posted on your account. You will receive 12 bulletins per year. You will receive e-mail notices at system@pub.virtus.org unless your computer program blocks them.

Bulletins:

■ February bulletin: posted Sunday, Feb. 4; due Tuesday, March 5

www.virtusonline.org, enter you user id and password. If your account is suspended contact your primary location where you volunteer or are employed. Your primary location contact information is found under your Contact Tab.

VIRTUS Training:

■ Thursday, Feb. 29, 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Feb. 29, 6-8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Auditorium Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, March 5, 6:30-9 p.m., Diocesan Catholic Children's Home, Miller Building - Training Room, Ft. Mitchell

■ Thursday, March 19, 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, March 19, 9-11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

Note: If your **Training Tab** is missing or you cannot access your account, contact your parish, school or institution.

For other difficulties, contact Marylu Steffen at (859) 392-1500 or msteffen@covdio.org

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Knights launch ‘Novena for Peace and Healing in Ukraine’

LVIV, Ukraine — As Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine reaches the two-year mark, the Knights of Columbus are calling for nine days of prayer to end the bloodshed. The national chaplains of the Knights in Ukraine, Metropolitan Archbishop Mieczyslaw Mokrzycki of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Lviv and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Bishop Mykhailo Bubniy of the Archiepiscopal Exarchate of Odesa, recently announced a “Novena for Peace and Healing in Ukraine.” In their joint appeal, the bishops invited “the brotherhood of the Knights and people of good will around the world” to begin the novena on Feb. 15, nine days ahead of the second anniversary of Russia’s full-scale violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty on Feb. 24, 2022. The war has been declared a genocide in two collaborative reports by the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights. Szymon Czystek, director of international growth in Europe for the Knights of Columbus, previously told OSV News that his organization’s members are “doing heroic work, and they are willing to risk their lives to bring aid to people in places like Avdiivka and ... other villages that (are) close to the front line.” To date, the Knights have provided close to \$22.4 million in aid to Ukraine, even as their organization, along with the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, was outlawed by a Russian occupation official in the Zaporizhzhia region.

Cardinal who survived torture is ‘living martyr,’ pope says

VATICAN CITY — The Albanian cardinal who endured decades of imprisonment, torture and forced labor during his country’s crackdown against religion is a “living martyr” who continues to serve Christ at 95 years old, Pope Francis said. “Today, allow me to greet in a special way a living martyr,” the pope said at the end of his general audience in the Vatican’s Paul VI Audience Hall Feb. 14, the feast of St. Valentine, who was martyred in Rome in the third century. Thousands of visitors gathered in the audience hall applauded when the pope

indicated and named Cardinal Ernest Simoni, who was seated with other special guests to the pope’s left on the stage. The priest had been arrested while celebrating Mass on Christmas Eve 1963 and was sentenced to death by firing squad. He was beaten, placed for three months in solitary confinement under inhumane conditions, then tortured because he refused to denounce the church. He was eventually freed, but later arrested again and sent to a prison camp, where he was forced to work in a mine for 18 years and then 10 more years in sewage canals. The crackdown in Albania “was perhaps the cruelest, the cruelest persecution,” the pope said at the general audience. “Now at 95, he continues to work for the church without being discouraged. Dear brother, I thank you for your witness,” Pope Francis said.

Nigeria’s Mass attendance among highest in the world

MAKURDI, Nigeria — Nigeria is one of the countries in the world with the best Mass attendance. As many as 94% of self-identified Nigerian Catholics surveyed said they attend weekly or daily Mass, according to a study published in early 2023 by Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. The World Values Survey, which conducted the poll, doesn’t survey all countries in the world, but among those asked, Nigerian Catholics had the highest Mass attendance, followed by Kenya (73%) and Lebanon (69%). At the same time, both Christian Concern and Open Doors, organizations that track Christian persecution in the world rank Nigeria as one of the worst countries for Christians to live in after North Korea, and followed by India, Iran, China, Pakistan and Eritrea as top countries for Christian persecution. Father Moses Iorapuu, director of social communications for the Diocese of Makurdi, said that Christianity should continue to grow in an environment as hostile as Nigeria, because “this is the mystery of our faith: The blood of the martyrs remains the seed of Christianity.” Nigeria’s Intersociety advocacy group said over 100,000 unarmed and defenseless citizens have died directly or indirectly outside the law in the hands of security forces in the past eight years, between August 2014 and December 2023. Emeka Umeagbalasi, director of Intersociety, said the killings are part of a government agenda to “Islamize Nigeria.”

Attorney calls for Congress to investigate 5 aborted babies’ fate

WASHINGTON — Lawyers for Catholic pro-life activist Lauren Handy, who is facing a lengthy prison term for violating the federal Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, are seeking to halt the destruction of the bodies of five unborn babies that Handy recovered from a Washington abortion clinic in 2022. In a letter to Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Martin Cannon, senior counsel for the Chicago-based Thomas More Society, asked Jordan to help stop the scheduled destruction of the remains and investigate their abortion deaths as evidence of a federal crime. “I feel strongly that a congressional investigation is imperative here,” Cannon wrote. Handy recovered the remains of the unborn babies from a medical waste truck driver outside Washington Surgi-Clinic and believed they were the result of full-term abortions. In the letter, Cannon asserted that “the age and condition of the deceased newborns raise serious questions about whether they were legally aborted,” and the body of evidence makes it “more likely than not that some babies” at the facility are “in fact born alive and left to die.”

Notre Dame Cathedral’s reopening in December

PARIS — The reopening of Notre Dame Cathedral, scheduled for Dec. 8 will be “six months of celebration and praise,” archbishop of Paris said in a pastoral letter. The iconic cathedral will reopen in five years and 10 months from the devastating fire in 2019. Archbishop Laurent Ulrich gave some details in his Feb. 2 letter on how the reopening will look like, emphasizing it will not be a one-day celebration, but several months of joy. The archbishop announced the reopening celebration “deserves an octave: from Dec. 8 to 15, every day, we will have a solemn celebration with a particular theme.” But the festive “reopening” time will last until June 8, when Pentecost falls in 2025. That way, the archbishop said, “Many will be able to say: ‘I was at the reopening!’” At the end of November 2024, a large popular procession will take place in the streets of Paris, to return the statue of the Virgin Mary to the cathedral currently housed in the church of St. Germain l’Auxerrois, directly across from the Louvre Palace.

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