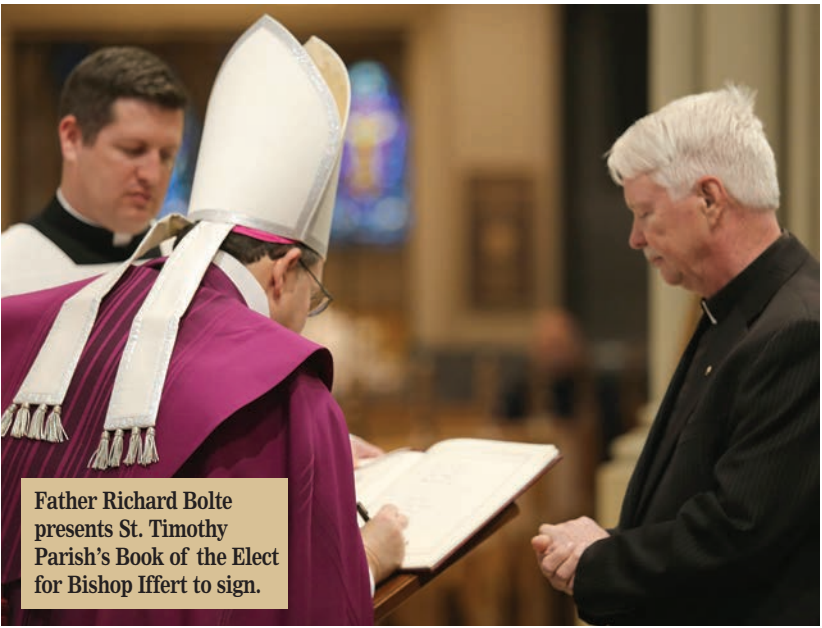


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Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the *Messenger* are available online at covdio.org/messenger.



Father Richard Bolte presents St. Timothy Parish's Book of the Elect for Bishop Iffert to sign.



Jayce Pollitt, a catechumen from St. Mary Parish, Alexandria, listens as his Godparents are questioned during the presentation of catechumens.



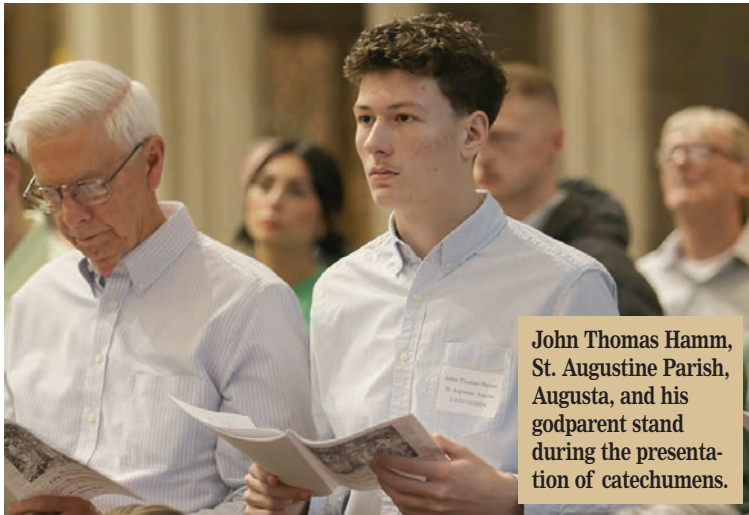
Sponsors show their affirmation by placing their hand on the shoulder of the candidate.



Bishop Iffert greets Keeton Bach, a catechumen from St. Augustine Parish, Augusta.



Bishop Iffert greets Greidys Noemi Tamayo Ramos, a catechumen from Cristo Rey Parish, Florence.



John Thomas Hamm, St. Augustine Parish, Augusta, and his godparent stand during the presentation of catechumens.

Rite of Election — knowing God's love makes all the difference

Laura Keener
Editor

In two ceremonies held at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Feb. 18, Bishop John Iffert accepted as the elect 107 catechumens and 108 candidates at this year's Rite of Election. These catechumens and candidates were sent by their pastors from 33 parishes and Thomas More University.

Catechumens are unbaptized persons seeking to enter the Catholic Church. During the Rite of Election each was called forward by name, received a blessing from Bishop Iffert and had their name inscribed in the Book of the Elect, which Bishop Iffert signed, declaring them the Elect — God's chosen people.

Candidates are baptized Christians seeking full communion with the Catholic Church. They, too, were called by name and received a blessing from Bishop Iffert.

Since August, both the candidates and catechumens have been participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults program at their parish. At this year's Easter Vigil they will receive the sacraments of initiation — baptism (catechumens), first Communion and confirmation (catechumens and candidates) — and will become the newest members of the Church.

Borrowing a line spoken by a student from Prince of Peace School in this year's Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal video, Bishop

(Continued on page 8)

‘Bam!’ DPAA kickoff in Maysville with record leadership gifts

Laura Keener
Editor

The first of two Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal kick-off dinners was held, Feb. 15, at the Limestone Center, Maysville. The theme for this year’s DPAA is “Zeal for Your House Will Consume Me.” Bishop John Iffert, Linda Rawe, general chair and Jeff Jehn, leadership gifts chair, welcomed about 100 people — priests, parishioners and Curia staff.

As in year’s past, the Maysville DPAA dinner began with a mini ministry fair, with Curia offices sharing information on the services they provide. It also featured the inaugural showing of the DPAA video.

“Isn’t that a beautiful video,” said Mrs. Rawe as she addressed the crowd. “I just love the pure joy and excitement from that little boy who didn’t know God until he attended our ACUE school, Prince of Peace. And then, Bam! Everything changed when he heard of God’s love. He is clearly zealous about church and serving God.”

Mrs. Rawe explained the purpose of the DPAA. “Through the outreach of the DPAA ministries we are evangelizing and bringing others to Christ.” Additionally, she said, when parish goals are exceeded, the funds collected over the parish goal are rebated back to the parish to help fund parish projects and ministries. “These help our parishes to prosper and grow,” Mrs. Rawe said.

Bishop Iffert began his comments in gratitude, “Thank you so much for coming out tonight and accepting our invitation to join us ... and thank you to the Southeast Deanery for hosting,” he said.

Referring to the student in the video Bishop Iffert said, “Bam! ... Zeal, that’s what zeal is all about ... that passionate commitment ... In the Christian context, of course, it means to desire God’s love and God’s will above everything else in our lives.”

The DPAA video will be shown at all Masses in all parishes of the diocese during announcement weekend, March 2 and 3. Commitment weekend, March 16 and 17, will allow everyone to make their gift or pledge while in-pew at Mass. Donations can also be made online at www.covdio.org.

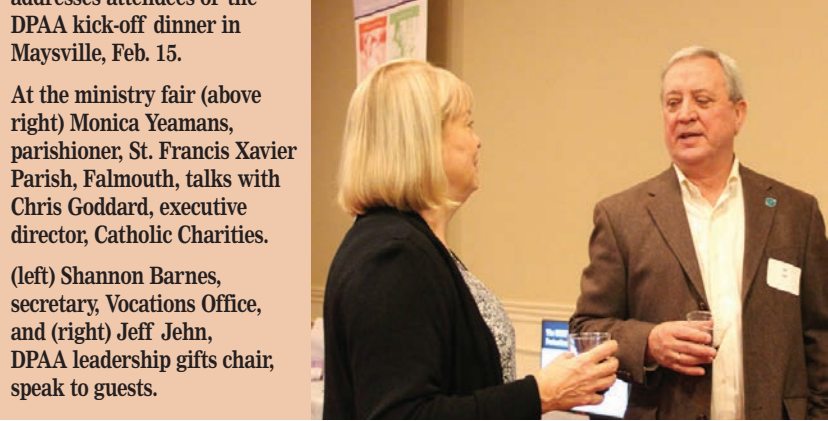
Before inviting those present to make their gift to the

DPAA, Mr. Jehn shared that the leadership gifts phase was experiencing a record-breaking year. To date, 138 leadership gift donors have contributed \$614,499 — a \$70,219 increase over last year’s recording-setting year. He also invited others to be a part of the leadership gifts phase by volunteering to be a leadership gifts solicitor. This year’s 32 solicitors helped set the pace of the DPAA by contacting the top 200 donors — people they know from their parish or business contacts — inviting them to match or increase

their previous donation to the DPAA.

“Tonight’s message is brought to you by the letter ‘C,’” said Mr. Jehn, referencing celebration and Christ by borrowing the Muppet-style introduction to the Sesame Street series. “We celebrate the ministries of the DPAA, which serves thousands of men, women and children with the love and the hope of Christ.”

The second DPAA kick-off dinner will be held Feb. 29 at Receptions, Erlanger.



(top left) Bishop John Iffert addresses attendees of the DPAA kick-off dinner in Maysville, Feb. 15.

At the ministry fair (above right) Monica Yeamans, parishioner, St. Francis Xavier Parish, Falmouth, talks with Chris Goddard, executive director, Catholic Charities.

(left) Shannon Barnes, secretary, Vocations Office, and (right) Jeff Jehn, DPAA leadership gifts chair, speak to guests.



‘Dine in or Drive Thru, a Fish Fry!’

The St. Augustine Fish Fry is adored by many not only because of the amazing food but because of the rich history and family atmosphere. To see this fish fry in action go to covdio.org and check out episode one of the Diocese of Covington’s newest video series, “Dine in or Drive Thru, a Fish Fry!”

Coming up in episode two is the fish fry at St. Joseph Academy, Walton.



(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

Dates

October 22 to November 1, 2024

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.

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



Monthly Holy Hour

Bishop John Iffert and the priests of the diocese gathered, Feb. 15, to pray a Holy Hour for survivors of clergy sexual abuse and for the sanctification of priests. The Holy Hour is held on the third Thursday of each month beginning at 3 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. The next Holy Hour will be March 21.



Parish Missionary Disciples — enlivening the faithful

The Diocese of Covington’s “With One Heart: Empowering Priests. Igniting Parishes. Enlivening the Faithful,” initiative expanded to its next strategy — the training of Parish Missionary Disciples. About 60 people — the preferred maximum of participants — make up cohort 1. The cohort met, Feb. 16 and 17, for nine hours of training led by Ximena DeBroeck and Roberto Navarro, leadership consultants from the Catechetical Leadership Institute. The goal of the Parish Missionary Disciples training is to help parish members identify those unique moments in their lives when they had a life-changing encounter with Christ, then become comfortable — enthusiastic even — in sharing that witness with others. They, also, are being asked to be leaders at their parish by helping others develop this skill. This weekend was two of six Parish Missionary Disciples training sessions. The cohort will meet for another weekend in February and then twice in March. With One Heart is the diocese’s pastoral plan and leadership development initiative designed to empower, ignite and enliven the missionary life of parishes and the diocese.

"24 Hours for the Lord"

Confessions and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

March 1, noon–midnight, St. John the Evangelist, Covington

March 8, noon–midnight, Divine Mercy Parish, Bellevue

No registration needed.



The Cathedral Concert Series concludes its 46th Season

With a Musical Celebration of J.S. Bach’s 339th Birthday, Sunday, March 10, 3 p.m., Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

Concert Organist Terry McCandless will return to offer a program of organ music by Bach, by his family, relatives, and students. Other than Cathedral musicians, Terry McCandless has appeared on the concert series more than any other individual artist, and with good reason. His programming is always a pleasure to hear, and a story to learn making him a fan favorite. Both Cathedral Organs will be heard, and Mr. McCandless’ expertise at the historic Matthias Schwab Organ adds depth to this concert experience. The public is welcome with no admission charge. A freewill offering is gladly accepted. Visit www.cathedralconcertseries.org.



Bishop’s Schedule

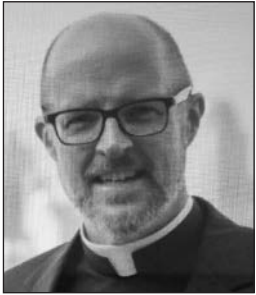
Feb. 24 Cathedral Parish pastoral plan meeting, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington, 9 a.m.	Feb. 29 (continued) DPAA kick-off dinner, Receptions Event Center, Erlanger, 6 p.m.
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m.	March 1 Confessions, St. John the Evangelist Parish, Covington, 10 p.m.
Feb. 26–28 USCCB Symposium	March 2 Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m.
Feb. 29 Catholic Charities Board meeting, 1 p.m.	
Thomas More University Executive Committee meeting, Thomas More University, 3:30 p.m.	

The glory of the Lord and consuming fire

The readings for the second Sunday of Lent — Cycle B — are: Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Romans 8:31b-34 and Mark 9:2-10.

The opening collect for the second Sunday of Lent is particularly challenging as it lays out for us the pattern of prayer and the virtue of humility necessary for our continued conversion.

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

“O God, who have command us to listen to your beloved Son...”

This aspect of listening to Jesus, as he guides us in the path to holiness through the Word, sacrament and Spirit is something that does not come easily to us informed — as we often are — by pride. Pride, of course, never announces itself so much as it obscures, by encouraging spiritual blindness and deafness to everything that is not us.

Considering that, the work of Lent — if I may call it that — is about overcoming our spiritual blindness and deafness, of driving out the shades and shadows in our spirit. As Bishop Robert Barron has said, “there are many reasons we become spiritually blind and deaf, but the most basic reason we go spiritually blind and deaf is because we see and know and perceive with a mind of fear rather than a mind of trust.”

When we fear, we cling to who we have fashioned ourselves to be according to our own lights, to what we have produced for ourselves, and we listen only to ourselves, and most especially, we listen to our fears. When we are afraid, we see ourselves as the threatened center of a hostile universe, and thus we violently defend ourselves and lash out at potential adversaries.

Fear causes us to live our lives at the surface level, for ourselves, living on the tiny island of ego, not according to our deepest identity and calling, which is found in Jesus Christ.

I suspect we all have many pet theories about what is wrong with the world and about the various crises we perceive in the life of the Church. When I contemplate the vision of our Lord in glory, which Peter, James, and John were given, it occurs to me there is only really one big crisis in the world, in the Church, and in me: The gradual eclipse of a true understanding of who Jesus is. There is no way we can contemplate the Lord in glory, as well as in his self-gift in suffering, and conclude, “Yeah, I know Jesus well enough, so I’m all good.”

Such a posture would be a not-so-subtle way of failing to listen to him, as the heavenly Father has commanded.

It is not lost on me that one of the reasons we can be reluctant to “listen to him” is because we are anxious about suffering, even if we have some desire to share in the Lord’s glory. After all, we observe that the suffering of the Lord made cowards of the apostles and the vision of the Lord’s glory “terrified” Peter, James and John.

As the theologian, Father Hans Urs von Balthasar noted in his book, “The Christian and Anxiety”: “For all

his gentleness and humility unto death on the Cross, God does not relinquish his attribute of being judge and consuming fire. Nothing is more majestic than his Passion; even his anxiety is sublime. And God never denies his attributes to those who are his light in the world. They shine like stars in the cosmos, and even their anxiety, if God allows it, bears the marks of their divine destiny.”

As we contemplate the mystery of the Transfiguration, we learn that to be ready for glory we must accept suffering and humiliation, crucifixion to the form of this present world, which is passing away.

What Christ does to share divine life with us, we must do to receive it. The great mystery of the Transfiguration, the heavenly vision of Jesus Christ in his glory, was given to assist, inspire and sustain the apostles amidst the anxiety and fear generated by Jesus’ Passion. It was a great grace given to them to sustain them in the sufferings that they themselves would undergo once they recovered their courage and began their apostolic mission to proclaim the Paschal Mystery of salvation to the world.

The gift of faith is the dawn of the beatific vision. Consequently, what has been revealed to us is also that for which we now pray: “As we receive these glorious mysteries we make thanksgiving to you, O Lord, for allowing us while still on earth to be partakers even now of the things of heaven.”

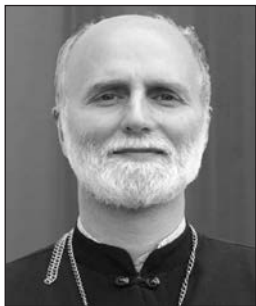
Father Phillip W. DeVous is pastor of St. Charles Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose Parish, May’s Lick, Kentucky

The journalist and the dictator 2.0

In America, Tucker Carlson, unceremoniously fired last year from his bully pulpit at Fox News, is known for his biting sarcasm and derisive cynicism.

Yet, in Russia, he recently met, in the course of a two-hour interview, the master of gaslighting and Orwellian tactics, whose cynicism is uniquely insidious. It is, tragically, at the root of wars and genocide, crimes against humanity, the murders of journalists and opposition politicians.

GUEST



Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak

The “defender of traditional values” who belittles the morals of the West, and surreptitiously strives to shake Western, especially American, democratic foundations, has for a quarter-century led Russia, guided by the goal of a neo-imperial glory. And under him, Russia indeed remains a global leader — in abortions and

divorces, alcoholism and suicide, and of course, systemic, pervasive, all-embracing state corruption.

So serpentine was his interviewee that Carlson himself was occasionally confounded, especially when he asked about the release of the imprisoned Wall Street Journal writer, Evan Gershkovich. Attempting to score political points back home, Carlson called for “the kid” to be released, receiving a barrage of sarcastic retorts.

There is a saying popular in the former Soviet Union: “Once you start playing cards with a cardsharp, you’ve already lost.” When two cardsharps play, the truth gets lost, because if one person lies and another speaks the truth, the truth is never in the middle. Actually, the truth is not a compromise between the left and the right, a middle road between speaker/position 1 and speaker/position 2. The truth is where it is. Throughout Carlson’s interview with Putin, truth was nowhere to be found.

It appears Carlson was handpicked by the Russian propaganda machine. Why? To broadly disseminate false messages? To dissuade a conservative audience from supporting Ukraine? There were threatening undertones, dire warnings to the West, particularly the United States. For Putin, Europeans don’t really count; they’re feeble and fragile. Yet his most caustic disdain is reserved for America. It oozes from every narrative and image. It is particularly noticeable when you listen to the intonations of the answers in the original Russian. As he does in real life, throughout the conversation Putin sought to disparage and undermine American democracy, while demeaning an ultimately inconsequential Europe.

And Carlson, avowed warrior for all things all-American, did nothing to challenge the world’s greatest America-hater. On the contrary, he provided a platform from which Putin could project his loathing for the West and his fabrications about it: It was America that provoked Russia to attack Ukraine. Just as Poland “provoked” Hitler to invade it in 1939.

Throughout the interview, Putin implied and celebrated a shifting world order: the decline of Western, particularly American, ideals and leadership, a “reality” to which the West must acquiesce. Soviet/Russian wisdom has been presaging the moral, political and economic decay of the “rotting” (sic) West for a full century, with Moscow in the meantime perpetrating genocide against its own people time and time again.

Lord knows, we have many problems in the U.S. They are manifold, manifest and mounting. Still, few Americans would trade their domestic trials for the Russian wonderland. Have you heard of many refugees of the “rotting West” clamoring to live in Putin’s Nirvana? One of the consequences of Putin’s war has been the exodus of a million of the best educated (and young) Russian scientists, entrepreneurs, professors, computer specialists, doctors, artists and journalists from the dictator’s paradise. They fled so as not to become cannon fodder in a wicked, ignominious campaign of genocide against a Slavic neighbor.

Yet there were no questions from Carlson about why

President Putin is sending his people to death by the tens, if not hundreds, of thousands. Or about his indictment by the International Criminal Court for being personally responsible for the abduction of 20,000 Ukrainian children. Or about Russia being ranked 164th in the World Press Freedom index out of 180 countries monitored — matters that might be of interest to a true journalist.

When speaking of Western leaders, Putin can make a cuckoo sign or knock on wood — not for good luck, but to insinuate the West’s folly and denseness. Why is the West daft? Because it refuses to negotiate with Russia. No matter the guarantees of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity that Russia promised in the 1994 negotiations after which Ukraine unilaterally gave up the world’s third largest nuclear arsenal — greater than that of the United Kingdom, France, and China combined. Those that ingeniously negotiated in the past with Russia no longer count the betrayals, and understandably no longer negotiate.

What is the Russian president’s understanding of negotiations? He repeatedly emphasizes the Russian word “dogovarivatsia” with various inflections. To come to an agreement, to cut a deal. Not once does it sound like negotiation, consultations, mutual listening. It’s more akin to bargaining or menacing — we must reach an agreement, otherwise... Putin’s neo-imperial, autocratic mindset and policy is clearly not guided by values such as God-given human dignity, freedom, or other principles which flow out of the Gospel and which are at the root of democracies and Western civilization.

There are — in Putin’s world — only interests. “Why bother about a country so far away?” he asks Americans. “Why should Germans pay for expensive gas when they can compel Ukraine to open the pipelines?” he wonders. Why do Ukrainians persist in resisting? Why won’t they surrender? For Putin, courage and valor in defending one’s dignity or protecting the innocent or doing what is right is simply not rational. It’s dippy and daft.

Even when asked a rather personal question about the significance of the Orthodox faith for him, Putin responds with the imperial “we” and references the histo-

(Continued on page 14)

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An unplanned pregnancy and God’s plan

For many years I have had the pleasure of working with local pregnancy care ministries and a new ministry within our parishes called Walking with Moms in Need. Many of those we serve are experiencing unplanned pregnancies and many feel very hopeless in their situation. These women and families have no support emotionally, financially or spiritually. There is no excitement about bringing this new life into the world and many feel their only option is abortion. I, too, had an unplanned pregnancy but with extremely different circumstances. It was 24 years ago, right before my 40th birthday that my husband and I found out that we were pregnant with our fourth child. It was unplanned.

Our oldest child was in junior high school, and we were preparing to send our youngest to her final year of preschool. I had a great job and was traveling on a regular basis; my company was moving their headquarters to Pittsburgh, and we were contemplating moving. I had also just donated all our baby gear and maternity clothes to St. Vincent de Paul, and we were looking forward to finally having all our children in the same school full time and getting rid of the expense of daycare. Like these women we serve who face an unplanned pregnancy, I had fears and was a bit embarrassed. But unlike many, I had the incredible love and support of a husband, family and dear friends. I was surrounded by a family and a faith community who lifted me up and supported me with so much excitement. This child, who is teased by her siblings as being a “surprise,” is getting married next month. As I reflect on the momentous time ahead, I can’t help to think back at what a tremendous blessing and joy she has been to not only the life of our family but also to so many more that have been a part of her growing up into a beautiful young lady. Would I be working in the pro-life ministry today had it not been for this unplanned pregnancy? We rethought

the potential of moving to Pittsburgh; we knew Northern Kentucky was where we needed to stay. We also made the decision to use my severance package and invest in me being a stay-at-home mom, something I never had the opportunity to do before. It was the best investment I could have made for our family. When it was time for me to look at entering the work force again, (this was well before the time of LinkedIn and networking on social media), I prayed to the Holy Spirit to guide me in the path where I was meant to be. A career with extensive traveling was not an option, so I needed to look for a different path. I found that path 22 years ago by opening the *Messenger* to find a position to work for the Diocese of Covington. Again, God had a plan. No matter what age a woman might be when she finds out she is pregnant, whether planned or unplanned, there is much fear and uncertainty. We fear for the health of our child, what their future might be or even whether we are suitable to raise this tiny person. It takes so much faith and hope to carry this child through nine months of pregnancy, and then much more courage and strength to raise this child or plan for their future. In all of it we must believe that God has a plan for this child that is made in his image and likeness. In the Diocese of Covington, our parishes are being called to bring hope to the hopeless with the Walking with Moms in Need ministry. It is our mission that all connected with the Catholic Church know of the resources to help those women and families in need, and be as Pope Francis says, “a sea of mercy in a world of indifference.” God has a plan for all these unborn children that he has knit in their mother’s womb. As my husband and I prepare to send our daughter down the aisle next month, although she was “unplanned,” we couldn’t imagine life without her. She has made us all better and we know this was all God’s plan. Walking with Moms in Need is a nationwide effort on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the local diocese to implement a parish-based initiative to increase support for pregnant and parenting mothers and families in need. *Faye Roch is director for the Pro-Life Office, Diocese of Covington, Ky*

Fasting and covenant

My childhood recollections around Lent include my father’s reaction to the meatless meals. He believed every meal should include meat and potatoes. I, on the other hand, preferred both cheese and fish to meat and delighted in noodles. He said that I should be obliged to eat meat during Lent. That would be a fitting sacrifice for me. I am reflecting on how much Lent was and is focused on sacrifice. However, the liturgical readings, especially the ones from the Old Testament, appear to place the emphasis of Lent on covenant rather than sacrifice. We hear about the covenant with the family of Noah, the Mosaic covenant at Sinai, the covenant with Abraham and one which will be written on our hearts. Of course, covenant is about relationships. To prosper and endure relationships demand handing oneself over, promising fidelity into an unknown future, making room for the needs of another. All of that eventually requires sacrifice. During Lent our choices are geared toward being able to enter into and be faithful to covenant relationships. Sacrifice is not an end in itself but is meant to

Getting to know Jesus

Who is Jesus? That is an appropriate question as we get into Lent this year. The Gospel selection from the second Sunday of Ordinary time, John 1:35-42, tells us who Jesus is and how to find him. It begins with Jesus’ walking past John the Baptist who tells two of his own disciples that Jesus is “The Lamb of God.” John’s two disciples left him to follow Jesus. Jesus notices them and asks what they want. They basically want to find out more about Jesus. They call him “Rabbi,” or teacher. Jesus invites them to “come and see.” After spending the day with him, Andrew, one of the two, introduces Jesus to his brother Simon, as the “Messiah.” We learn that Jesus is the Lamb of God, he is our teacher and is also our Messiah. But there’s more to the story. Notice how this

knowledge of Jesus is made known. First John introduced Jesus to Andrew and another disciple, prompting them to want to know more about Jesus. After spending time with Jesus, they understood that he is the Messiah. Andrew then found his brother Simon and led him also to Jesus. Digging a little deeper we see what happens when they meet Jesus. Andrew and the other disciple left John and become followers of Jesus and begin to believe in him. Their lives are changed. Andrew reaches out to his brother Simon so that he also could believe. And when Simon meets Jesus, he is changed too, and Jesus changes his name to Peter. He became the rock and foundation of the Church Jesus started. That’s just like our faith journey. At some point early in our lives someone, probably our parents or a teacher, introduces us to Jesus. We are taught about Jesus and become his disciples, as Andrew and Peter did. We formally become his disciples at our Baptism when original sin was wiped away from our souls, forever changing our lives. Sisters and brothers, as we start our Lenten journey our challenge is to get to know Jesus better. Then to lead others to Jesus, as John the Baptist did with Andrew, and Andrew did with Peter. As Christians we are called to transmit Christ’s light through the way we live our discipleship, radiating Jesus’ unconditional love, mercy, forgiveness and humble service to all in our society. *Deacon Michael Keller is assigned to St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton, and Transfiguration Mission, Perry Park.*

fiacial acts. If the itch reminded them to correct their prickly relationships with others, then it was an appropriate sacrifice. If the hairshirt made them irritable, then it was not the kind of sacrifice Lent calls for. If eating less meat is an act intended to heal our scarred earth, then it is appropriate. No Lenten sacrifice that is merely painful deprivation and not an attempt to make me more loving is an appropriate Lenten choice. My father’s remarks remind me to explore the nature of my Lenten practices. As Lent begins, I ask myself, what Lenten practice can I choose that will strengthen my covenantal love for creation, for my community, for my neighborhood for the world. What will immerse me not just in the suffering of Christ but in the salvific nature of the dying and rising of Christ. Will my sacrifice bring more saving love to the world? *Divine Providence Sister Fidelis Tracy is a retired theology professor at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky*

We Choose Life



Pro-Life Office

of the Diocese of Covington

Mission Statement

The Pro-Life Office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, guided by our bishop, promotes the sanctity and legal protection of human life from conception to natural death through prayer, pastoral care, public policy and education.

Lenten Pro-life Prayer

Father of all mercy,
We thank you for this season of grace and light.
We know that sin has blinded us.
Draw us ever closer to you, in prayer and penance.

Since you, O God, are light itself,
Give all your people a clearer understanding
Of what is sin, and what is virtue.

Grant, in particular, that we may see
as never before,
The profound dignity of every human life,
Including the vulnerable unborn children.

Give us grace to defend
Our brothers and sisters in the womb
By our prayers, our words,
And our self-sacrificing actions.

We pray through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Practices and prayers for a pro-life Lent

Kevin Dowd
Contributor

“The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living being.” (Gen 2:17)
Although the Scripture readings in recent weeks go on to speak about original sin, personal sin and the grace of redemption, we begin with this important line about God as the author of life.

On Ash Wednesday, we were reminded with the imposition of ashes on our foreheads that “dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return.” The dust exists only because of God, and being formed into a human person, it has life only because of God. Every Lent, therefore, is a pro-life event. We turn from sin and towards God, who is life itself!
In our age, the dignity of every human person from conception until natural death is under attack in what St. Pope John Paul II called a “veritable ‘culture of death.’” (“Evangelium Vitae,” “The Gospel of Life,” #12) Human life is valued according to a person’s status or usefulness to society, not according to their inherent dignity as beloved sons and daughters of God, who breathed into them the gift of life from the very heart of the Trinity.

Perhaps, then, this Lent we might consider bringing this pro-life aspect of the season to the forefront. We could imbue our prayer, fasting and almsgiving with a very intentional pro-life message and meaning. Here are 10 suggestions:
— Pray for women in crisis situations or who have unwanted pregnancies, that they will recognize the wonderful position they are in as mothers of new and unique human lives, cooperators with God the Mother who brings all life into the world (see Isaiah 49:14-15, where God is described as a Mother never abandoning her child).
— Help them to experience their situation as wonderful by refraining from all judgment and stigma and offering only love and support no matter what the circumstances.

— Donate to charities that provide direct assistance to women in difficult situations, taking care of the medical, physical, emotional and spiritual needs of pregnant women and their families.
— If you are a man and you get a woman pregnant, stand by her. Be responsible and don’t leave her on her own. Support her. For all of us, let’s encourage a culture of men who are responsible and unselfish.
— Don’t judge women who have had an abortion. God’s mercy and understanding are perfect. Pope Francis emphasized this during the Year of Mercy by extending the sacramental power to forgive abortions to all priests — a power which he has extended indefinite-

ly. Instead of judging, support ministries like Project Rachel that assist women who have chosen abortion and regret it.
— Continue to support and defend the dignity of every life after birth, whether wealthy or on welfare; whether gay or straight; whether black or white, Latino or Asian or Middle Eastern; whether long-time resident or recent immigrant; whether fully functional or having special needs; whether able to work or requiring assistance; whether Catholic or Muslim or Jew or atheist; whether old and sick or young and healthy. Pro-life means ALL life.

— Be a voice and a vote for life by opposing the death penalty, assisted suicide and euthanasia. Be present to those who are sick and dying, and who may feel useless and a burden. Show them there is no such thing. They matter to the end. They matter eternally.
— Take steps to protect the dignity of every person, including supporting workers and unions; visiting prisoners and agitating for prison reform so that we lock up only those we truly need behind bars to protect society, and never imposing inhumane punishments such as solitary confinement; caring for people in other countries who are enduring the scourge of war and violence, poverty, famine, and natural disasters.

— Teach children about the God-given dignity of every person, be involved in their lives and teach them good moral values, and support (and provide for your own children) age-appropriate sex education based on good science, medicine and morals.
— Continue to take care of people’s needs directly (feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give medical care to the sick, shelter the homeless, welcome the immigrant and the refugee, etc.) and also indirectly (protect the natural environment as a gift from the God of Life for the sustenance of life, work against racism and sexism, campaign and vote for candidates who reflect these pro-life values).

Lent should be a time of conversion. Our culture needs to be converted desperately, and each of us needs conversion as well. We move the culture best when we turn away from sin in our own lives and turn to Christ more perfectly.
Let’s see if we can do better. Then, by Easter, by the grace of God working in us and with us, we may become more credible witnesses to the Gospel of Life.

Kevin Dowd is an adjunct professor in theology at Anna Maria College, Paxton, Mass., and speaks nationally on topics including bullying, inter-faith dialogue and how to include religion in public school curricula. This article is reprinted with permission from the “The Word is Life,” an online service of “Living with Christ” magazine.

Contemplation and Action

Ellen Curtin
We Choose Life Committee

How are we meeting Christ’s challenge to let our light shine in the world? As we reflect on our faith and actions this Lent, the Catechism of the Catholic Church is an excellent resource.
In particular, the CCC can help us discern what pro-life needs we can serve, whether in person or through donations or by speaking up publicly, especially where we can influence legislators to enact pro-life laws.
The Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities for the US Catholic Bishops’ Conference singles out several areas where the sanctity of human life is under attack. Here are some relevant CCC paragraphs to help you reflect on these concerns.
Abortion, 2268–2269, 2270–2275
Assisted suicide, 2268–2269, 2281–2283
Conscience protection, 1782, 1790, 1800

Contraception, 2367–2370
Euthanasia, 2268–2269, 2276–2278, 2324
Stem cell research, 2274–2275, 2295
IVF/reproductive technology, 2375, 2377
Eldercare/Palliative care, 2276, 2278–2279
One paragraph that unites all these issues is 2258, a quotation from “Donum Vitae,” (“Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation”) from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Feb. 22, 1987), which addresses biomedical issues from the Roman Catholic Church’s perspective:
2258 “Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.”

A story of hope from El Salvador

In Sandra Amaya’s home in Morazán, El Salvador, everyone helps with the chores. Early in the morning Sandra lights the firewood to cook, prepares coffee and sweeps the chicken coop. Oscar, her eldest son, helps make breakfast before walking nearly two hours to his high school. Nine-year-old Gamaliel grinds corn and, after having breakfast, goes to school accompanied by his father Santos and his little brother, Caleb.

Santos, Sandra’s husband, is a farmer; but longer droughts and unpredictable rains have reduced his harvests and, therefore, his income. Seeking to earn extra money, Sandra began selling bread, tamales and empanadas. When she heard about a Catholic Relief Services project on raising chickens, Sandra didn’t hesitate to join. She learned about preparing food for chickens and that they eat better if they are in a pen. She also learned how to vaccinate



A traditional dish from El Salvador. It is a vegetarian dish where cauliflower is battered and fried until golden and crispy, then served with tomato sauce.

Rellenos de Coliflor (Cauliflower Fritters in Tomato Sauce)

- 1 medium head cauliflower, cut into bite-sized florets
- 3-4 large eggs, separated
- 1 teaspoon flour
- Vegetable oil for frying, enough to cover the cauliflower pieces
- 1 cup of water
- 3 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1 green chili pepper, finely chopped
- 1/2 small onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 tablespoon vegetable bouillon powder
- Salt to taste

- In a large pot, boil cauliflower until tender, about 2 minutes. Remove and drain.
- Beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form. Add flour to the egg yolks and mix until just blended. In a large bowl, fold the egg whites into the yolk mixture. Add the cauliflower and coat entirely.
- In a large pot over medium-high heat, heat the vegetable oil until very hot. Add the pieces of coated cauliflower and fry until golden brown all over. Remove and set aside.
- In a large pot, add water, tomatoes, chili pepper and onion and stir to combine. Add the vegetable bouillon powder. Heat to a simmer. Add the cauliflower and continue simmering for 3 minutes. Add salt to taste. Serve immediately.
- Makes 4-6 servings

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



and take care of them if they get sick. As soon as Sandra received some chickens from the project, she began to apply her knowledge. Now her family has access to their own eggs, which saves them money on food, especially now that prices are so high. In addition, her family eats healthier because they can eat a variety of foods, instead of just beans or tortillas with salt. Sandra wants to keep learning and Santos supports her. “I made the decision to be a promoter because I wanted to have new knowledge; no one can take knowledge away from you,” she says. “I discussed it with my husband and he agreed.” When she travels far to attend a training, Santos takes care of the children. Upon her return, Sandra enjoys supporting other families by teaching them everything she learned. Our Catholic faith teaches us how important it is to live in community for our growth and fulfillment. We believe that all people should participate in society, seeking the well-being of all, especially that of our sisters and brothers in need, just as Sandra does.

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Rite of Election — knowing God's love

(Continued from page 1)

Iffert opened his homily exclaiming, “Bam! Now I know who God is.”

“I love it,” Bishop Iffert said. “There are moments of life where it feels like that, isn’t there? There are moments in life when we don’t know what to do. You get confused. You’re not sure of the path forward. You’re not sure where to go. You’re not sure what God is calling you to do. You’re not sure if the voice you’re hearing is God or not. And then suddenly, something will happen. Someone will speak a word, or you read a particular Scripture, or there’s calmness, or there’s a moment of encounter with God in prayer, or you meet someone who changes your worldview. Bam! I didn’t know that about God, and suddenly I do.”

For the catechumens and candidates present at the Rite of Election, Bishop Iffert said, maybe that describes your experience. “Or maybe it’s not true at all. Maybe you always have known about Jesus. Maybe you have always been a friend of God. Maybe you always tried to live your life according to the Gospel teachings of Jesus. But now you hear a call, an invitation, to continue that life of devotion to Christ in the Catholic Church, where you can encounter the fullness of the proclamation of the Gospel message of Jesus. You can encounter the fullness of Jesus’ gift of him-

self in the sacramental life of the Church, the tradition that descends from the apostles.”

Or maybe, Bishop Iffert continued, “you have your fits and starts ... I’m trying. Sometimes you’re faithful. Maybe you had a time where you have drifted away from your friendship with Christ. But now something calls you back. Faithfulness. Bam! Everything is changed.”

Regardless of the journey that has brought everyone to the current place in their faith life, one truth remains the same, “we are not alone with the hardships of life; we are accompanied by the one who loves us and unites himself to us,” Bishop Iffert said. “For one reason Jesus enters into this life and walks with us with all of this suffering — so that We. Might. Know. God. Bam! In the cross of Jesus Christ, everything changes. In his suffering and his offering for us, a new relationship with God is opened up for us. That is what this moment of conversion in your life is all about. That is what responding to this call to deepen your relationship with Jesus is all about ... your coming here today has one purpose, that you might come to know God. That we, as brother and sister together, might come to know God and God’s love for us.”



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All candidates are asked to send an application and resume to:
Mike Holtz at mike.holtz@hchscov.com Subject: Facilities Manager

HOLY CROSS HIGH SCHOOL

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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.

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.

Life Learning Center, Covington, will host the Gabi Deaton “Black Balloon Project Art Exhibit,” March 2, noon–3 p.m. In addition to remarks from Gabi, Tami Bobblitt, who lost her son Chase to a fentanyl overdose in 2021, will also speak.

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.

Join popular singer and Catholic educator Mike Davis as he presents “Come Watch With Me: The Perfect Storm” at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Burlington, Saturday, March 2, 2024, at 7 p.m. This will be a powerful evening of prayer, meditation and music as visitors walk the Via Dolorosa focusing on the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no cost to attend.



Harp concert

Over 90 people attended an inspirational harp music concert by Dr. Diane Schneider at St. Benedict Church, Covington, Feb. 18. Dr. Schneider uses vibration therapy to treat anxiety, pain, sleep and digestive problems.



Donuts with dudes

(above and below) Middle school students at St. Agnes School, Ft. Wright, showed their gratitude to their dads and role models for all they do for them with a “Donuts with Dudes” event. Recognizing how their heroes model St. Joseph and reflect God’s love, they offered tribute in song and sentiment after celebrating Mass together on Friday, January 26th. It was a morning of sweet treats and sweet memories.



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.

The 2nd annual Lenten Pilgrimage of five historic Covington churches is March 23, 9 a.m.–2 p.m., rain or shine. Start your journey at any time, at any one of these Covington churches — Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, St. Benedict, St. Augustine, St. John the Evangelist and Mother of God. The route will be clearly marked. Walk (or drive) any or all the 4.3-mile pilgrimage. For questions, e-mail: CovLentenPilgrimage@gmail.com.

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 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.

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. Barbara Parish, Erlanger, 4:30–8 p.m.; drive-thru closes 7:30 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. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill, 4:30–7:15 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.

Fridays, Feb. 16–March 29

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

Fridays, March 8, 15 and 22

- St. Matthew Parish, Kenton, 4:30-7:00 PM.

Friday, March 22

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

Communion in the Body of Christ — pray for the living and the dead

Father Connor Danstrom
USCCB

One of the most common requests a priest receives is, “Father, will you pray for me?” As a university chaplain, I have given out more than a

requests or exhortations to “storm heaven” with prayers for certain people or situations, I feel an interior agitation at the thought, “Does a good outcome here really depend on me praying the right way? If I don’t intercede for this right now, might God’s will be thwarted because of my

(Mark 14:33-34) As I answered the invitation from Jesus to accompany him in his anguish, I felt my own heart open up to him. I was humbled by the Lord’s own humility, wanting the comfort of the prayers of his closest friends in that most difficult hour. And in having this empathy for Jesus and what he was suffering, I experienced his closeness to me in my own anguish and uncertainty.

Repressed feelings and unarticulated fears all came rushing out as I felt this new closer communion with the Lord. I knew he was with me, and that I was with him, and that we loved each other deeply.

Although what we were feeling was not enjoyable or nice, I felt a deep confidence and hope that was new and lasting. I felt genuine comfort, i.e., the fortitude that comes from being in communion. And all this because I had chosen to be with Jesus, just as he had asked his disciples to be with him on the sorrowful eve of his Passion.

I think when we pray for each other, something similar happens. We are forced to acknowledge our poverty, both the person requesting prayers and the one doing the praying.

Sometimes when we are praying or asking for prayers, we are facing circumstances that have no earthly solution. Prayer is an act of surrender, but it is a hopeful one, like a drowning man ceasing to flail about and instead letting himself be carried safely to shore. And it unites us to Jesus who unites us to the Father and to each other.

Nowhere is this more palpable than at the Mass. In the offering of the Eucharist, we are drawn into communion with Jesus in the most intimate way possible on earth, and we are thereby united to all members of the Lord’s Body in heaven and on earth.

I recall offering the funeral Mass for my grandmother a few years ago, and more recently for my own father, and as I offered this most essential prayer of the Church, the source and summit of the Christian life, I knew myself to be somehow accompanying my loved ones to heaven. I couldn’t grasp the mechanics of how my participation added anything to God’s work of salvation — he certainly could accomplish this all on his own — but I enjoyed being included, and I myself felt the comfort of being with the Lord and the ones for whom I was praying.

In the beginning God said, “It is not good for man to be alone” (Gen 2:18). The Church’s command that we pray for the living and the dead is a reminder that we need each other. The Church is the Body of Christ, and it is in this body that we receive the fullness of his grace. Let us cherish the prayer requests we receive from our brothers and sisters in Christ as opportunities to draw closer to one another, through the very heart of Jesus.



few blessings to students on their way to a big exam, or before a trip to Mexico, or on a birthday. From ordinary daily challenges to life’s heaviest crosses, people crave the consolation of intercessory prayer.

“Father, please pray for us. We’ve been trying to get pregnant for a long time, and we just had a miscarriage.”

“Father, please pray for my biopsy tomorrow. I’m hoping for a good result so I won’t have to have surgery.”

“Father, please pray for my son. He’s been looking for work for a while now, and he’s starting to get anxious.”

Praying for those who need prayer is not just the work of the priest, though. It is one of the seven spiritual works of mercy that every Christian should practice: “Pray for the living and the dead.”

And I’m grateful, not only as a professional pray-er, but as someone who receives the abundant graces obtained through the prayers of those who pray for me.

I must confess, however, that I have not always been comfortable with the idea of intercessory prayer. Particularly when I receive emails with “urgent” prayer

laziness or ignorance?”

According to the theology I learned in seminary, it’s impossible for us to change God’s mind because he is immutable. And even the suffering we endure because of sin is somehow instrumentalized in his providence to bring about his loving will.

Our prayers for one another are not needed in order for God’s will to be accomplished or for him to give us his loving care. He will love us perfectly even if we ignore him completely. Then why does the Lord command us to “pray always without becoming weary,” like Jairus begging Jesus to heal his daughter (Luke 8:40-56)?

Last year, while on a silent retreat, I was drawn to meditate on the Agony in the Garden. I had a deep desire to be close to Jesus, and at the same time, I was feeling deep fear and anxiety that was hard for me to articulate or manage on my own.

As I simply spent time with the scene in prayer, I was struck by how vulnerable Jesus was with his disciples. “He took with him Peter, James, and John, and began to be troubled and distressed. Then he said to them, ‘My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch.’”

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CHA says article ‘perpetuates myth’ Catholic hospitals’ pro-life stance ‘constrains’ care for women

Kate Scanlon
OSV News

WASHINGTON — The head of the Catholic Health Association of the United States called it “extremely disappointing” that a USA Today article published Feb. 17 “suggested that Catholic health care’s long-standing commitment to providing care that recognizes the sacredness of each individual — from conception to natural death — somehow constrains care.”

Mercy Sister Mary Haddad, president and CEO, made the comments in a Feb. 19 statement issued in response to an article by KFF Health News in the daily newspaper alleging Catholic hospitals “constrain medical care” in the U.S. because the church’s health care directives “are often at odds with accepted medical standards, especially in areas of reproductive health.”

The article “perpetuates the myth that because Catholic health care providers do not perform elective abortions and remain committed to protecting and upholding the dignity of every human life, our hospitals somehow do not follow accepted medical standards,” Sister Haddad said.

KFF Health News, formerly known as Kaiser Health News, describes itself as “a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues.”

In one example, the KFF Health News article cited a story that a nurse midwife shared about a woman who was hospitalized after her water broke too early in her pregnancy for her unborn child to be considered medically viable and who was denied an abortion because the unborn child still had a heartbeat. According to the article, the woman “was hospitalized for days before going into labor ... and the baby died.”

That event purportedly took place before the Supreme Court’s June 2022 Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision that reversed its previous abortion precedent calling it a constitutional right. Another instance in the article mentioned a woman who sought a sterilizing procedure after Dobbs from her Catholic provider, but had to go elsewhere because the provider declined it. The hospital’s directives on such procedures, however, did not change as a result of Dobbs.

“The fact is that Catholic hospitals in the United States are held to the exact same clinical standards of care and adhere to the same policies as every other hospital in the

country,” Sister Haddad said. “Contrary to what was reported in the article, Catholic medical providers who care for pregnant women follow guidelines set forth by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG),” she said, adding that the article “relies on the opinions of two individuals to make the sweeping claim” that the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Services, or ERDs, “contradict ACOG guidelines.”

“There is nothing in the ERDs that prohibits a Catholic health care provider from providing medically indicated care to a woman who is suffering from serious or life-threatening conditions during pregnancy,” Sister Haddad said.



Sister Mary Haddad

Since Dobbs, states across the country have alternately moved to restrict or expand access to abortion, creating a new legal and political landscape for the procedure, impacting in some cases how hospitals approach abortion.

The Catholic Church opposes abortion, outlining its teaching in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that human life “must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception.” Because abortion takes the life of an already conceived child, it is “gravely contrary to the moral law,” the catechism says.

The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services reflect that teaching; however, that document also states that “operations, treatments, and medications that have as their direct purpose the cure of a proportionately serious pathological condition of a pregnant woman are permitted when they cannot be safely postponed until the unborn child is viable, even if they will result in the death of the unborn child.” That guidance forbids direct abortions but permits “indirect abortions,” procedures where the immediate purpose is to save the mother’s life, where the death of the unborn child “is foreseen but unavoidable.”

Sister Haddad said that while there “has been a renewed focus on abortion following the 2022 Dobbs decision, the very complex and nuanced treatment decisions physicians must consider in the care for a mother and her baby during pregnancy complications are often over-

looked and misconstrued to foster distrust.” “The abortion debate does not always account for the various ethical and clinical decisions that are required to ensure the best possible outcomes for both the mother and baby,” she said.

The KFF Health News also claimed that “more and more women are running into barriers to obtaining care as Catholic health systems have aggressively acquired secular hospitals in much of the country.”

“Four of the 10 largest U.S. hospital chains by number of beds are Catholic, according to federal data from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality,” it said. “There are just over 600 Catholic general hospitals nationally and roughly 100 more managed by Catholic chains that place some religious limits on care, a KFF Health News investigation reveals.”

Sister Haddad, however, said the article “incorrectly states that Catholic hospitals are rapidly expanding across the U.S.”

“The number of Catholic hospitals has remained relatively stable during the past three decades, increasing by six percent since 2000 in the face of unprecedented challenges impacting all aspects of health care,” she said.

According to KFF Health News, nearly 800,000 people have only Catholic or Catholic-affiliated birth hospitals within an hour’s drive, citing “pockets of the Pacific Northwest, the Dakotas, and the Midwest” as examples. But Sister Haddad said that the presence of Catholic hospitals in underserved areas is a core part of their mission.

“The article is correct that Catholic hospitals are often the only medical facilities serving rural areas,” she said. “This is due to our long-standing commitment to care for patients in need, especially women, children, and those in underserved communities. When other health care providers decide to leave rural markets for financial reasons, Catholic health systems often remain or step in to ensure rural residents continue to have access to high-quality, life-saving care.”

Sister Haddad said she also had concerns about the article’s “implied attack on the role of spirituality in health care.”

“The authors make a point to report about a blessing that occurred in a hospital, which apparently was included to underscore the false premise that Catholic teaching and science are incompatible,” Sister Haddad said. “On the contrary, Catholic hospitals see our faith as a call to ensure everyone has access to quality, compassionate care, regardless of one’s religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or other identity.”



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Local priest travels to Rome, Brazil and back home in ministry to young adults

Bella Young
Multimedia Correspondent
Recently, a reader asked that the Messenger highlight extern priests and religious order priests that have assignments or are ministering in the Diocese of Covington. Here is the second feature article in the series.

Father Matt Summe was born in Ft. Mitchell Kentucky as the eighth of 10 children. He says growing up with nine other siblings was not challenging but rather helpful.

“I learned a lot about things that would be helpful later on in my own ministry; understanding people, working through situations, being flexible, learning how to do what you have to do,” he said.

It was even his brother who helped guide him to studying chemical engineering at the University of Kentucky.

During his collegiate studies he remained a devout Catholic, continuing to attend Mass at the Newman Center and Christ the King Cathedral in Lexington. During one particularly late night in the Cathedral, Father Summe was talking to God, “I went in there one night and I was praying before the tabernacle and I said, ‘I never really asked you what you want from me. I’m sure it’s the same thing I want.’”

After that prayer, Father Summe found the novena to The Sacred Heart of Jesus.

“I prayed it, and on the ninth day God was super clear, he said, ‘I want you to be a priest.’”

Father Summe, however, was not so sure about this calling. He said it was during a time of great turmoil in his life. He was dating, living in a fraternity house, studying for a lucrative field. Surely, God does not want him to give that all up.

“It was not what I intended ... I had to have a coming to Jesus’ moment,” said Father Summe.

It was with the same kind of clarity that God called him to be a Legionary of Christ.

“I was coming out of Mass at the Newman Center with a friend of mine and there were two legionaries that had come to see him and just like God told me that night in the Cathedral, ‘Go to the Legionaries of Christ,’” so that is what he did.

Once Father Summe was certain of God’s plan for him, he said he wasted no time. Only six months passed from the moment God called him to the priesthood to the day he entered seminary. If Father Summe had it his way, he would have gone even sooner, though he abided by his parents’ wishes for him to finish his current semester.

He entered the Legionary of Christ novitiate, a two-year program where seminarians can discern if the priesthood is their true calling. It was here where Father Summe earned his associate degree in Classical Education. He continued his education in New York, earning his Bachelor of Philosophy.

After graduation, Father Summe completed an internship in southern Brazil where he worked with youth and schools. He was later relocated to a more northern part of Brazil where he continued his ministry to young adults.

Upon his return from Brazil he attended the Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum, a pontifical university in Rome. His studies at university earned him a graduate degree in philosophy and a Bachelor of Theology. While he was finishing up his classes in Rome, he was sent to Atlanta to be the assistant secretary to the territorial directorate.

Father Summe said that it is unusual to be assigned while completing your studies but that he was assigned under extenuating circumstances. After completing his work in Atlanta, he returned to Rome where he was ordained in the presence of all nine of his siblings, he says this is a true testament to how close he is with his family.

His first assignment after ordination was to Houston where he was a Superior to the new legionary community. Father Summe says this was a very difficult and stressful time as the community was going through a sort of crisis and his work did not stop with them. He continued to run schools in Houston and San Antonio, offering guidance and ministry to them.

During this time, he also ran adult ministry in Houston. His time in Houston eventually ended and he was sent back to Brazil to continue the work he started there.

Father Summe says that going back to Brazil was a full circle moment. The first time he went he was in the middle

of his education to become a priest and he returned a short while after his ordination. He also helped resolve an issue at the same school he had been assigned to on his first visit.

“It was a transitional period where the school would either be shut down or reformed. I was there to help guide them through that.” While he was there, he was the Chaplain for the RC Men’s Sector and Chaplain for Familia.

Once his work in Brazil had come to an end he returned to the Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati area. He continues his young adult ministry and is currently director for the Regnum Christi Movement for the Cincinnati area and a chaplain in Indianapolis.

In the Diocese of Covington, Father Summe is an adjunct philosophy professor at Thomas More University, teaching his first semester there. The class he is teaching is entitled “Finding Meaning in a Chaotic World.” He says that his experience ministering to young adults has given him a leg up when teaching because he knows where his students are in life, he is able to meet them where they are. He can also be found celebrating Mass most



Photo courtesy of Archdiocese of Cincinnati
Father Matt Summe

Sundays at St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood.

Father Summe says if he could choose one word to sum up his life it would be sent. He says God continuously sent him to where he was needed most. To Brazil, Rome, Atlanta, Houston and Cincinnati, he said he believes he was sent to all those places for a reason. God knew that those were the places where he could do the most amount of good.

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The journalist and the dictator 2.0

(Continued from page 4)

ry of the 10th century and Volodymyr the Great, Grand Prince of Kyiv, which happens to be the capital of Ukraine. With this question, Tucker Carlson attempted to expose at least a trace of humanity in the Russian president — without success.

For Putin, Christian faith is an ideological device, part of the imperial scheme. In a 30-minute historical disquisition he explained what he believes kept Rus’ together and what should be a model for today: “a unified,” i.e., colonial territory, “tight economic ties,” i.e., those that subjugate “lesser peoples,” and “a common,” i.e., imposed, language, “one,” i.e. unquestioning, formal, faith and ... “the power

of the prince.”

Putin’s tedious and tawdry ancient and medieval history lesson was immediately debunked by numerous historians and fact-checkers. Its genocidal leitmotivs were precisely identified by the Yale historian of tyranny, Timothy Snyder. The historical determinism Putin exhibits would be laughable if it were not in the mind of a genocidal tyrant.

By letting Putin’s lies go unchallenged, Tucker Carlson was revealed as this generation’s Walter Duranty, The New York Times reporter who covered up Stalin’s deliberate murder-by-starvation of millions of Ukrainians in 1932-33. The Times, while never returning Duranty’s Pulitzer Prize, would later acknowledge the “consistent underestimation of Stalin’s brutality” in Duranty’s dispatches from

Moscow. At the peak of the Terror Famine, which Ukrainians know as the Holodomor, when people were dying of hunger en masse — over 15,000 per day — Duranty wrote: “To put it brutally, you can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs.”

My hero and mentor, Patriarch and Cardinal Josyf Slipyj, who spent 18 years in the Soviet Gulag for his refusal to betray the Catholic Church and Ukrainian people, often repeated “What will history eventually say about you?” This is a question for both the journalist and the dictator.

Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak is the metropolitan-archbishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia and the president of Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, Ukraine.

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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Bulletins:

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

www.virtusonline.org, enter your 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

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Myth: Catholic hospitals’ pro-life stance ‘constrains’ care for women

WASHINGTON — The head of the Catholic Health Association of the United States called it “extremely disappointing” that a KFF Health News article in USA Today Feb. 17 “suggested that Catholic health care’s long-standing commitment to providing care that recognizes the sacredness of each individual — from conception to natural death — somehow constrains care.” Mercy Sister Mary Haddad, president and CEO, made the comments Feb. 19 in response to the article’s allegation that Catholic hospitals “constrain medical care” in the U.S. because the church’s health care directives “are often at odds with accepted medical standards, especially in areas of reproductive health.” The article “perpetuates the myth that because Catholic health care providers do not perform elective abortions and remain committed to protecting and upholding the dignity of every human life, our hospitals somehow do not follow accepted medical standards,” Sister Haddad said. The Catholic Church opposes abortion. The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services reflect that teaching; however, that document also states that “operations, treatments, and medications that have as their direct purpose the cure of a proportionately serious pathological condition of a pregnant woman are permitted when they cannot be safely postponed until the unborn child is viable, even if they will result in the death of the unborn child.”

Papal preacher takes to social media during Lent

VATICAN CITY — The cardinal accustomed to preaching to popes and officials of the Roman Curia is now taking his Gospel message directly to the faithful through social media. For six days during Lent, the Vatican was releasing brief — approximately two minutes long — spiritual reflections by Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher of the papal household, through its channels on X, Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. As of Feb. 20, the second day of the initiative, only

videos in Italian and Spanish had been published online. “In the world there are few words capable of being said in one minute that are enough to fill a day and, in fact, a life: those that come from the mouth of Jesus,” Cardinal Cantalamessa said to begin his first video in the series, noting that he hopes the brief reflection would be like a spiritual “chewing gum” which viewers could return to throughout their day. The cardinal preaches to the pope and members of the Roman Curia most Fridays during Advent and Lent. He also is the preacher at the Good Friday Liturgy of the Lord’s Passion attended by the pope in St. Peter’s Basilica.

Russian Catholics stage ‘quiet commemorations’ for Navalny

MOSCOW — A senior Russian Catholic has urged church leaders abroad to commemorate the opposition leader, Alexei Navalny, as armed police dispersed citizens mourning his death at age 47 in a remote prison camp. The Catholic, who asked not to be named, spoke as Navalny’s family requested handover of his body, amid international revulsion at the veteran dissident’s suspicious death. In an OSV News interview, she said fellow-Catholics in Russia had long feared Navalny’s end was being “brought closer” by his harsh detention conditions, which included 27 punitive spells in solitary confinement over three years. She added that some church members had defied police pressure and requested prayers in his memory, while grieving his death as “a pain and tragedy, and a loss of hope.” “Although not all Catholics agreed with everything he said and did during his short life, no one would deny his courage,” said the Catholic, a university lecturer who also works with Caritas. Navalny’s death at the strict-regime IK-3 arctic Syberian penal colony in Russia’s Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Region, where he was serving a 19-year sentence, was reported Feb. 16 by the Tass Russian news agency, which said the Federal Penitentiary Service had attributed it to “sudden death syndrome.” Navalny’s mother was told she must wait at least 14 days to see the body of her son, and his wife, Yulia, said she would continue his fight against the Kremlin.

Speaking Feb. 16 in Rome, the Vatican’s Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin said news of Navalny’s death has caused “sadness” and surprised the Holy See, adding that he had personally hoped the opposition leader’s plight could be “resolved differently.”



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Lent is a ‘campaign of service,’ Bishop Iffert says at Ash Wednesday Mass

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The Lenten season began, Feb. 14, with Ash Wednesday — a holy day observed as the first day of Lent. A Mass was held at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, celebrated by Bishop John Iffert.

The Mass joined the Cathedral’s community and guests with students from Covington Latin School and Curia employees, all present to welcome to Lenten season.

As part of the Mass, the congregation was anointed with ashes in the sign of a cross on their forehead by Bishop Iffert and concelebrating priests as a demonstration of faith and acknowledgement of mortality, with the priest saying, “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” while marking with the ashes.

In his homily, Bishop Iffert described the Lenten season as a “campaign” — one of service and Christian charity. Different from political and military campaigns that we are used to, Pope Francis “invites us to see this campaign, this assertion of activity, as an opportunity to pause,” says Bishop Iffert. “Pause, and to remember — to remember the God who loves us.”

This year, Ash Wednesday fell on the same day as the Feast of St. Valentine — Valentine’s Day — and such a day, Bishop Iffert said, “is also the beginning of our campaign of service and Christian charity.”

The Lenten campaign mirrors Jesus’s 40 days in the desert, which mirrors the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness, Bishop Iffert continued. “For years they went on a campaign of pausing in the development of

their nation, their kingdom — and they remembered that all that mattered was their relationship with their God,” he said.

“Today, we set out on a campaign of service. A campaign intended to help move out from our lives the attachment to all that is evil ... our power is in our ability to recognize God’s love for us,” Bishop Iffert continued, “...to recognize that and to take a pause from it all, renounce it, invite the love of God into our lives to make us the men and women we are called to be — men and women after God’s own heart.”

He concluded, saying, “Happy Valentine’s, everyone. You are loved by one who sees you from the moment of your creation and knows you and loves you. That is your strength. That is the source of our salvation.”

Baker photos



(far left) Father Ryan Maher, rector, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, anoints a member of the congregation with ashes.

(left) Bishop John Iffert accepts the gifts from Matt Krebs, dean of students, Covington Latin School and Dr. John Kennedy, headmaster.

(right) Bishop John Iffert preaches the homily at the Ash Wednesday Mass, Feb. 14, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

(below right) A young woman sits in the pew after receiving ashes on her forehead.



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