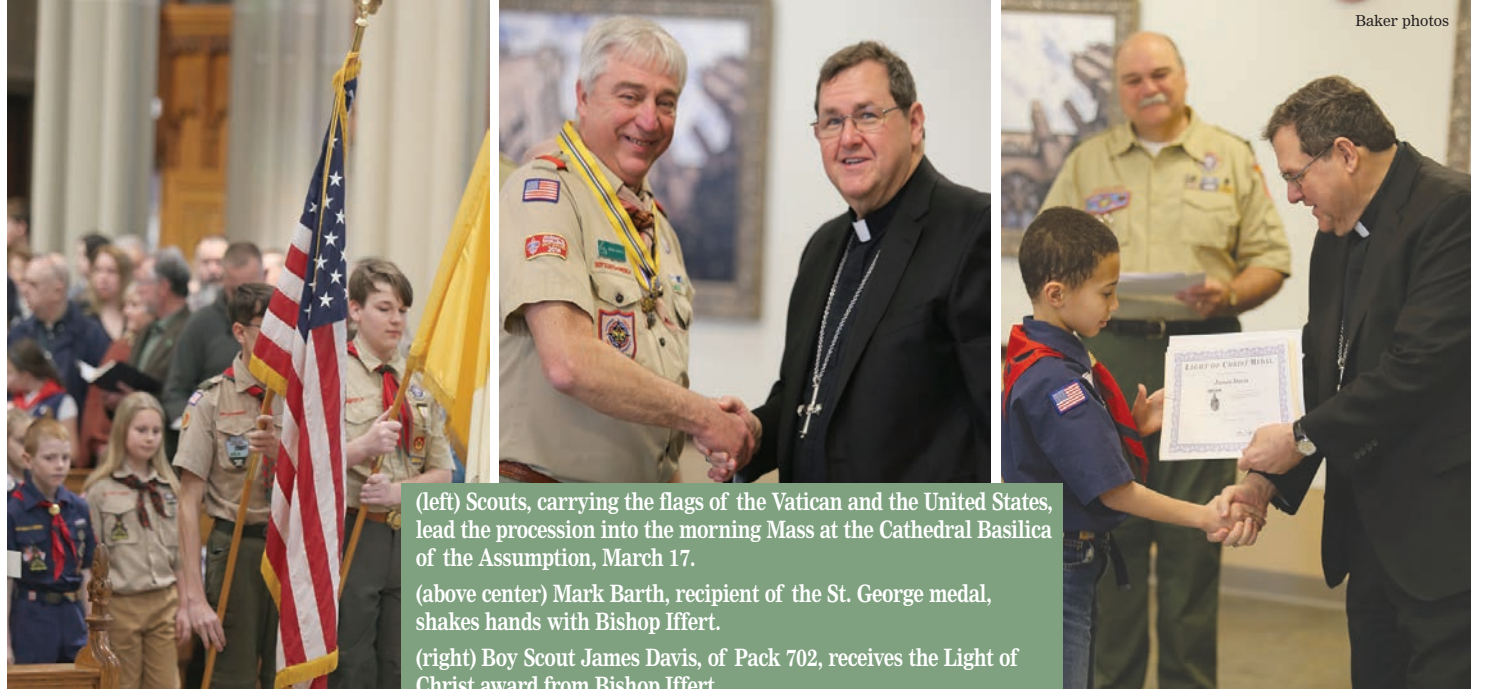
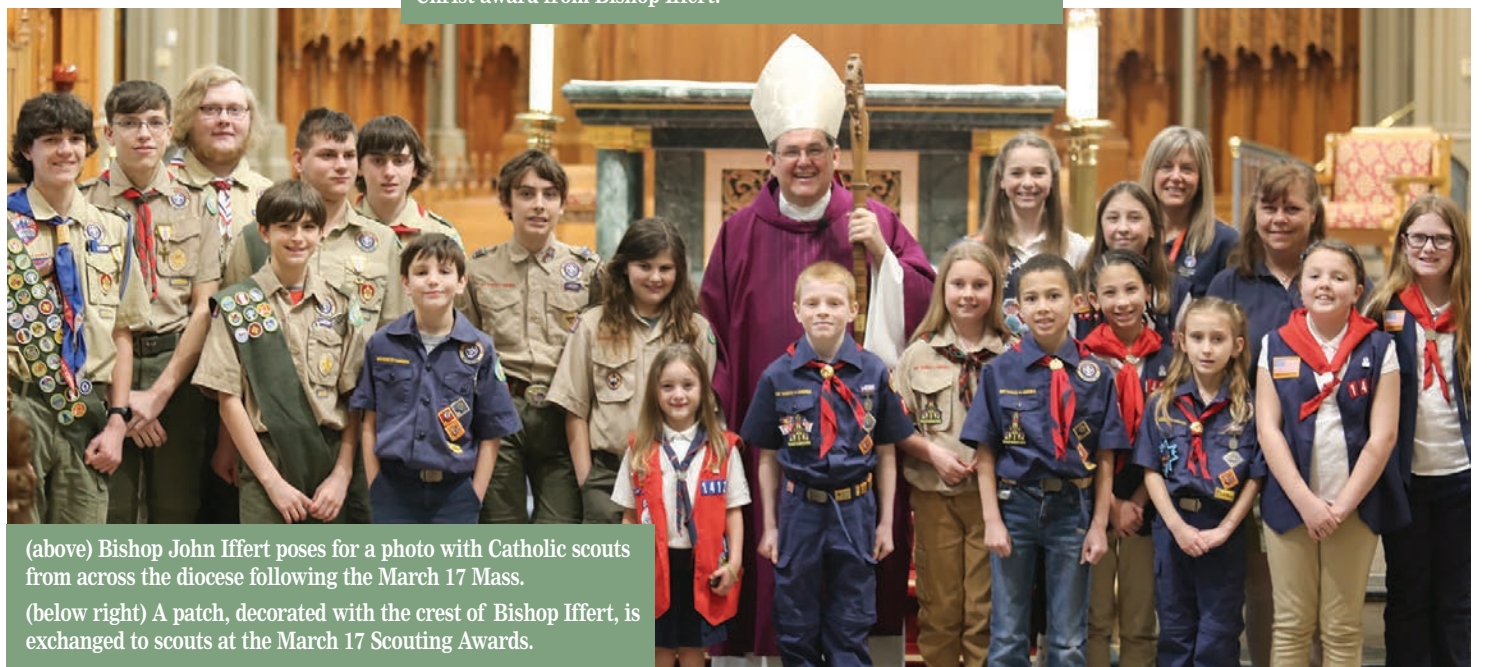


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- 3 Pro-life prayer event**
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- 3 Safe Environment audit**
- 3 Dine in or drive thru**
St. Benedict's fish fry
- 6 'We Choose Life'**
- 10 Eucharistic Revival**



(left) Scouts, carrying the flags of the Vatican and the United States, lead the procession into the morning Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, March 17.
(above center) Mark Barth, recipient of the St. George medal, shakes hands with Bishop Iffert.
(right) Boy Scout James Davis, of Pack 702, receives the Light of Christ award from Bishop Iffert.



(above) Bishop John Iffert poses for a photo with Catholic scouts from across the diocese following the March 17 Mass.
(below right) A patch, decorated with the crest of Bishop Iffert, is exchanged to scouts at the March 17 Scouting Awards.

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Catholic scouts integrate faith in all they do, says Bishop Iffert at Scouting awards

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, March 17, opened with a procession led by a pair of scouts — carrying with them the flags of the United States and the Vatican.

This Mass prefaced the Scouting Awards ceremony that would follow across the street at Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, where scouts across the Diocese — including Scouts of America, American Heritage Girls and Girl Scouts — would receive awards, medals and patches recognizing their contributions to Catholic scouting and carrying out their faith.

Eleven received certificates at the ceremony, and four were awarded medals. Three were recipients of the Pope Pius XII award, as part of a program that encourages scouts to explore vocations. A fourth award, the St. George medal, was awarded to Mark Barth, a parishioner of Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish — the only adult to receive a scouting award at the ceremony.

The St. George medal is awarded to “members of the laity and clergy, scouters and non-scouters alike, who have made significant and outstanding contributions to the spiritual development of Catholic youths through scouting.”

During Mass, Bishop Iffert thanked the scouts for their presence in his homily. “I was looking this morning again at the scout oath,” he said, “and the scout oath encourages Boy Scouts — and, I imagine,

all scouts have some version of this — to be faithful to God and country ... to serve their neighbor at all times, and to respect themselves ... to contribute to the common good of society.”

As scouts and their families moved into the next door Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium following Mass, David Cooley, co-director of the Office of the Catechesis and Evangelization, who helped organize the ceremony, welcomed them.

“We are very proud of our scouts who have worked hard to receive their patches and certificates, awards and medals,” said Mr. Cooley.

“It’s important to integrate our faith in everything we do,” Bishop Iffert said at the award ceremony, “...and scouts are a natural fit for that.”

At the end of the ceremony, scouts in attendance all received a special bishop’s patch to be sewn onto their uniform — featuring the crest of Bishop Iffert.



Catholic Charities — a night of celebration and recognition

Young photos

Bella Young

Multimedia Correspondent

“I’m just kind of overwhelmed, with the impression of all the dedicated service that this represents— all the people who really are continuing the mission of Jesus,” said Divine Providence Sister Fidelis Tracy, volunteer receptionist at Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington.

Sister Fidelis was speaking to the staff and volunteers at the Catholic Charities Appreciation Dinner, March 12. A dinner where employees, volunteers and friends of Catholic Charities gather to be celebrated for their hard work and dedication. A few people were celebrated with the presentation of the annual awards, the Marcella Strategier Angel of Hope Award and the Community Partner Award.

Preceding the presentation of the annual awards, Chris Goddard, executive director of Catholic Charities, talked about the ministries of Catholic Charities. He spoke about the Parish Kitchen’s 50-year anniversary that will be coming up in June.

“Fifty years providing a hot meal seven days a week to our neighbors ... and over two million meals later we’re still going strong.”

Mr. Goddard said there will be more information about the 50-year anniversary as June draws closer. He also spoke about the counseling services that Catholic Charities provides. “...We have a wonderful mental health program, both in the agencies and in schools.” Mr. Goddard said that they will be dedicating funds to finding out exactly what it is that schools need from the counseling’s services ministry.

Following Mr. Goddard’s remarks, was a celebration of all the volunteers in attendance. Multiple groups were asked to stand and be recognized. Ranging from the youngest volunteer in attendance, a student from St. Henry District High School who cuts grass, to the larger ministries like the adopt-a-family program, jail ministry program and the mobile food pantry. The volunteers were asked to stand and be recognized to celebrate them

(Continued on page 9)

(right) Bishop Iffert and Brandy Medaugh with this year’s Marcella Strategier Angel of Hope award recipients, Dick and Rosalie Hen

(below) Divine Providence Sister Fidelis Tracy speaking to the crowd.

(below right) Bishop Iffert with a member of the Rotary Club of Covington, the recipient of the Community Partner Award.



Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child returns in April, all invited to pray for the relief of the ‘burden of grief’

Maura Baker

Staff Writer

The loss may be recent or long ago, but the loss of a child forever lingers in the heart. Jesus awaits all those suffering in grief, saying, “Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matt 5:4)

Once again, the Diocese of Covington’s Pro-Life Office will host a Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child. This year’s Mass will be held April 11, 7 p.m., at Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in Burlington. Father Ryan Maher, rector, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, will be the celebrant.

The Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child is offered for parents, grandparents, family members and friends of those who have lost a child through miscarriage, stillbirth, early infant death, abortion, illness, suicide, accident or any other reason — and all are welcome to attend.

“We have found that it’s very healing for all those who attend,” said Faye Roch, director, Pro-Life Office. “It’s a two-fold purpose. Through prayer and community support, we seek God’s healing. And we ask God to relieve the burden of grief for those who are suffering.”

The memorial Mass begins with a candle ceremony, where visitors are invited to light a candle in the memory of the child they lost — a procession with the candles following.

“That’s very beautiful, very moving,” said Mrs. Roch about the candle procession.

Following Mass will be a reception where resources like grief support groups will be available. “I’ve reached out to several hospitals, support groups and funeral homes,” Mrs. Roch said, “working on spreading the word and getting the word out.”



Attendees to the Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child are invited to place a lighted candle before a statue of Mary in memory of their child, as seen in this photo from 2023’s Mass.

Piccola photo

Join a national pro-life prayer event



The USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities is inviting Catholics to join a focused effort of prayer for the end of abortion and for the protection of women and pre-born children.

On March 26, 2024 the U.S. Supreme Court will hear oral arguments in a case that has the potential to make a major impact in the widespread accessibility of chemical abortion (abortion pills). Chemical abortions are now the most common form of abortion in the United States.

The national prayer event will begin March 25, the eve of the oral arguments, and the anniversary of St. John Paul II's landmark, pro-life encyclical, *The Gospel of Life* (*Evangelium vitae*) through June 2024, when a decision is expected.

Offer this Prayer to St. Joseph, Defender of Life daily:

Dearest St. Joseph,

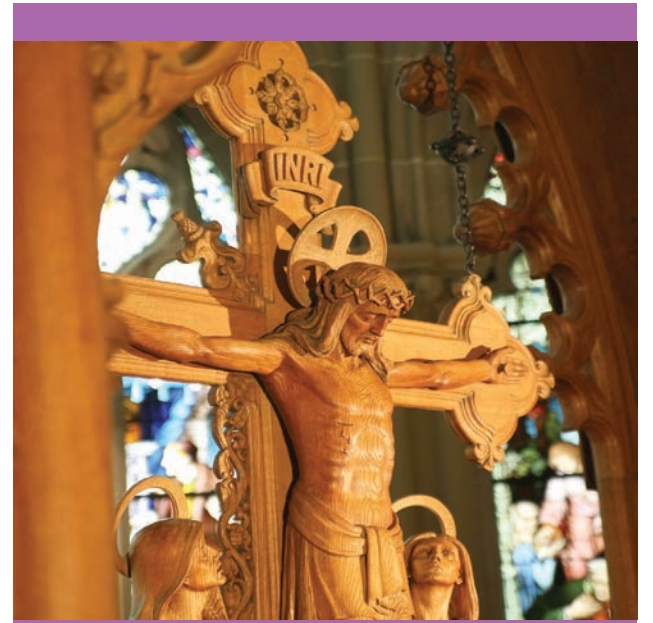
At the word of an angel, you lovingly took Mary into your home. As God's humble servant, you guided the Holy Family on the road to Bethlehem, welcomed Jesus as your own son in the shelter of a manger, and fled far from your homeland for the safety of both Mother and Child.

We praise God that as their faithful protector, you never hesitated to sacrifice for those entrusted to you. May your example inspire us also to welcome, cherish, and safeguard God's most precious gift of life.

Help us to faithfully commit ourselves to the service and defense of human life—especially where it is vulnerable or threatened. Obtain for us the grace to do the will of God in all things.

Amen.

For more information or to download a printable prayer card visit <https://www.usccb.org/prolife/nationwide-invitation-prayer>.



Holy Week at the Cathedral

Bishop John Iffert will be the celebrant at the following Holy Week services at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington:

| | |
|---|---|
| Sunday, March 24, 10 a.m. Palm Sunday Mass | Holy Saturday, March 30, 8:30 p.m. Easter Vigil , blessing of the fire, blessing of the water, reception of the Elect and Candidates into full communion with the Church, Mass of Easter |
| Tuesday, March 26, 7 p.m. Chrism Mass with distribution of Holy Oils | Easter Sunday, March 31, 10 a.m. Easter Mass — Resurrection of the Lord |
| Holy Thursday, March 28, 6 p.m. Mass of the Lord's Supper and the washing of feet | Divine Mercy Sunday, April 7 Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament after 10 a.m. Mass thru Vespers beginning at 3 p.m.; confessions available during that same time |
| Good Friday, March 29, 3 p.m. Liturgical service, reading of the Passion, veneration of the Cross, distribution of Holy Communion | |

Safe Environment audit finds Diocese of Covington compliant

Laura Keener
Editor

In a letter to Bishop John Iffert dated March 4, 2024, StoneBridge Business Partners found the Diocese of Covington “compliant with all audited Articles with the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” for the audit period of July 1, 2021 through Dec 31, 2023.

view Curia staff and school and parish personnel who are directly involved in implementing articles of the Charter.

This year auditors Courtney Brock and Cathie Cicchiello from Stonebridge Business Partners were in the diocese, Feb. 20–21, conducting the on-site audit. Julie Feinhauer, director for diocesan Safe Environment Office, coordinated the audit.

“The audit was a wonderful eye-opening experience. We realized that we are going above and beyond to help keep our children and vulnerable adults stay safe,” said Mrs. Feinhauer. “We are so thankful for those in our

parishes, schools, and agencies that work diligently every day and value our work. We could not have done this without them. Many thanks to our representatives from the Diocesan Review Board and Curia staff who were interviewed, and a special thanks to our site locations St. Barbara Parish, St. Henry Parish and School, St. Paul Parish and School, and Villa Madonna Academy Elementary and High School.”



This is the 18th such audit for the Diocese of Covington; all have found the diocese compliant.

In response to revelations of child sexual abuse by priests, in 2002 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) developed the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. The charter outlines 17 articles that all dioceses are to adhere to minimize the possibility of child abuse within the Church and to establish clear and efficient avenues of reporting child abuse. Of these 17 articles, 14 can be qualified by an audit. (Arch)dioceses and eparchies in the United States receive an independent paper audit every year; on-site audits are conducted every three years.

Stonebridge Business Partners, Rochester, New York, conducts the audits and the USCCB's Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection produces an annual report based on the findings of the audit. The most recent report — the 2022 report — is available online at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/audits.cfm>.

Since the implementation of the Charter the Diocese of Covington has participated in an audit. With an on-site, not only are documents and procedures evaluated but auditors also visit several parishes and schools and inter-



Dine in or Drive Thru a Fish Fry: Episode 5
In episode five of Dine in or Drive Thru a Fish Fry, Bella and Maura travel to St. Benedict Parish, Covington, to see what makes their fish fry so great. Check it out online at www.covdio.org/messenger.



Bishop's Schedule

| | |
|---|--|
| March 24 Palm Sunday Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 10 a.m. | March 28 Mass of the Lord's Supper, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 6 p.m. |
| March 25 Catholic Charities Advisory Board meeting, Catholic Charities, Covington, 5:30 p.m. | March 29 Celebration of the Lord's Passion (Good Friday), Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 3 p.m. |
| March 26 Advisory Council meeting, 9:30 a.m. Diocesan Finance Council meeting, 2 p.m. Chrism Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 7 p.m. | March 30 Easter Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 8:30 p.m. |
| March 27–29 Curia offices closed in observance of Holy Week and Easter | March 31 Easter Mass — Resurrection of the Lord, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 10 a.m. |

Trust or wishful thinking

During the season of political campaigns, it seems I say or hear frequently, "I do not trust him/her/them."



Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

Usually, the statement refers to someone's tendency to come through with promised actions or goods. And often it revolves around what I will or will not receive.

However, trusting in its deeper sense is much more profound than mere expectations of receiving something that is promised. Trust in God is more than believing I will get the answer to my prayer in the form I want it. Trust in another person is more than counting on them for

material goods or support.

Authentic trust involves love of another. When we love we accept failures and are not focused intently on receiving what we expect or being spared pain. While trust is an easy word to say, it is not an easy attitude to develop. If I truly trust someone, I must have some level of love for them.

Trust in another requires allowing them to be who they are whether it suits my desires or not. It means allowing them to be human, to fail, to be unable to do what I want them to do and then to love despite failures.

Prayer, which is an act of trust in God, is more related to covenant than to mere hope for a desired answer. Covenant reaches far into a future of unknown and unpredicted events. The wedding day, the day of making religious vows, the moment of baptism are all examples of covenant. All lead to a whole life of saying "yes" to promises made in a day of light but open to largely unknown future events.

Moses and Abraham both entered into covenant relationships with God that led to a long life of unexpected and often difficult events. Forty years in a dry and unwelcoming desert with a complaining people might have tempted Moses to turn away. Childless years in a land that was not home might have caused Abraham to choose another God. What appeared as bright promises involved

moments of painful disillusionment about what was promised. Yet both Moses and Abraham continued to trust because the bedrock of trust is love not certainty about receiving what is expected. They loved God and God's people.

Peter followed Jesus with a firm trust that Jesus would be the Messiah he and his people awaited. He also had a clear idea of what that Messiah was about to do. His trust was in a promise of nationhood, freedom, the end of oppression.

When Jesus crushed his hopes with predictions about a very different future, Peter could easily have turned away in his disappointment. Why would he continue to accompany Jesus when his trust had to all appearances been betrayed? Did he still trust Jesus? Apparently, he did since he is still with Jesus in the weeks to come.

During those days he adjusted his understanding of what the Messiah was about to do. Yet each adjustment of his understanding led to more disappointments. He continued to follow not because he was receiving what he expected, but because he loved Jesus. Love survives disappointments.

Peter was looking for peace and security. On the mountain of the transfiguration, he wanted to build three tents and stay in the peace of Jesus' glory. When Jesus invited him to descend the mountain and face a future that included dying as well as rising, Peter did not abandon Jesus but followed to the end. His trust was real because it was based in love rather than in fulfillment of expectations.

Peter also may have disappointed Jesus. He cut off the ear of one who came to capture Jesus. Clearly, he still did not understand what Jesus was saying about the path they were on. He denied Jesus three times at the moment of Jesus' great suffering. Yet, when all is said and done, Jesus entrusted Peter with the leadership of the community.

Clearly, trust is not dependent on another's fulfillment of my expectations. While trust does not demand that I be a doormat, it does require that I accept the other's inability to deliver what I expect. Trust involves forgiving failures and understanding human frailty. Trust requires that I love. Without love my expectations and my prayer become mere wishful thinking.

Divine Providence Sister Fidelis Tracy is a retired theology professor at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky.

The science of the Cross and the conquering of fear

The readings for Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion — Cycle B — are: Isaiah 50:4-7; Philippians 2:6-11 and Mark 14:1—15:47.

As we encounter the Passion of our Lord this Sunday and look upon the face of the crucified, the powerful insight of St. Augustine of Hippo puts words to the meaning of our encounter:

"Christ suffered; let us die to sin. Christ arose; let us live for God. Christ left this world to go to the Father; let not our heart cleave to anything here, but follow Him to Heaven.

"Our Head hung on the Cross; let us crucify the desire of the flesh. He lay in the tomb; let us be buried with Him and forget the things of the past. He is seated in heaven; let us transfer our desire to the things above.

"Of His kingdom there will be no end; let not fear the end of this life at all, by His wounds were healed (Isaiah 53:5)."

Palm Sunday of the Passion of our Lord gives us the chance to contemplate and to study the "science of the Cross" as the Carmelite nun and philosopher who was martyred at Auschwitz, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, called it.

Studying the science of the Cross is an ever more urgent task in our age of materialism, which understands every form of suffering as an expression of the alleged randomness and meaninglessness of existence. The materialistic convictions of our age are a significant driver of much the practical despair we see operative throughout our society. Such despair is a logical response to suffering if suffering cannot be brought up into a transcendent meaning and purpose.

Simply put, the mystery of the passion and cross of Jesus Christ is the revelation that suffering is not meaningless, that it can be redeemed and raised. It is a divine revelation that shows us that in our suffering, pain, grief and loss, God is closest to us, not farthest away. This is a great revelation, and it is one we as Christians are asked to bear to the world to bring hope to the suffering.

The passion and cross of the Lord are also a revelation to us that we should not fear death, even though death will be difficult. It is remarkable to me that so many people give up the Christian faith because of experiences of suffering and death. They seem not to have grasped that suffering and death is right at the center of our faith.

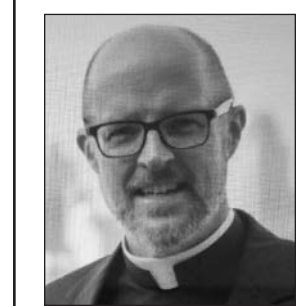
Jesus does not sugarcoat it or hide it away. He enters into suffering and death completely. We hear our blessed Lord cry out in pain for all to hear, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me!" Jesus descends into the depths of suffering and death more fully than we can comprehend to conquer the existential, primordial terror of death.

In contemplating the science of the Cross on Palm Sunday I think there is a dual grace for which it would be wise to pray: Courage in the face of death and trust in the cross of Christ in light of our mortality.

Our society has almost no taboos anymore. You can do any freaky thing you want and there's probably a govern-

(Continued on page 5)

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

Our Baptismal commitment

During the Season of Lent and Easter, it is always good to reflect on our baptism. Many of us were baptized as infants, some of us have been baptized as adults



Sister Barbara Woeste, O.S.B.

through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA, formerly the RCIA).

Our baptism is the first sacrament we receive. In baptism we die to our old self and rise to new life in Christ, symbolized by the water. (Notice the Easter symbolism of dying and rising with Christ.) We are reborn into the life of Christ, we enter the Church, the mystical body of Christ and we live as members of God's family.

In baptism we receive sanctifying grace, a shar-

ing in the life of God. We are freed from original sin which we have inherited from our first parents. If we

were baptized as adults, all our personal sins committed before baptism were forgiven.

The sacrament of baptism can only be received once as can the sacraments of confirmation and holy orders because they produce a "mark" or character on us. In theological terms, it is an ontological change in us.

In baptism we are called to live as Jesus did, as priest, prophet and king. We are called to announce God's love to others and to proclaim the reign of God as Jesus' life grows in us. This is symbolized by the anointing with the oil of Chrism at baptism.

At the Easter Vigil, we renew our baptismal commitment as we hold our lit candle and announce to all present our renewed commitment to our faith with the words of the Creed.

Yes! Easter is a time of celebration. Jesus is risen from the dead and we have been reborn into his life and death through all eternity.

Benedictine Sister Barbara Woeste is a professed member of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills and pastoral associate of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Her column was first published on the Benedictine Sisters blogspot "School For The Lord's Service."

VOL. 94 **MESSENGER** No. 12
 Official newspaper of the Diocese of Covington
 Cathedral Square • 1125 Madison Ave. • Covington, Ky. 41011-3115
 Telephone: (859) 392-1500 E-mail: messenger@covdio.org
 www.covdio.org

(UPS-403-650) Published by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, Ky.; 44 issues a year (weekly except from June 1 to mid-August, when published every other week; not published the week after Easter and two weeks at Christmas/New Year's). Subscription rate: \$19 per year; \$40 foreign. Periodical Postage paid at Covington, KY 41012 and additional mailing office Cincinnati, Ohio 45203. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MESSENGER, 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, KY 41011-3115.
Advertising deadline: Wednesday noon, 9 days prior to publication date.
Editorial deadline: Friday noon, 7 days prior to date.
Subscriptions, address changes: Contact Circulation Dept. at above address.

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Five ways to make Holy Week more holy

As we prepare to enter into the most sacred days of the liturgical year, we have a prime opportunity to make up for any shortcomings that may have been part of our



VIEWPOINT

Gretchen R. Crowe

Lent this year. Blessedly, Holy Week offers us the chance to refocus, reflect and renew as we wind down our Lenten journeys and look ahead to the promise of Easter. Alternatively, we might have had a splendid Lent and are looking for some ways to “level up” during these final few days for a strong finish. Either way, here are five ideas of how we can better emphasize the “holy” in our Holy Weeks this year.

— Find one hour this Holy Week to dedicate to prayer. “Could you not keep watch for one hour?” (Mk 14:37). Breaking from his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night he was to be handed over, Jesus asks his ever-napping disciples why they can’t manage to do as he asks for one hour. “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?” he questions them again (Mk 14:41). Can we spend one hour fully “awake” with the Lord? It could be in front

of the Blessed Sacrament. It could be going for a walk outside. It could be reading the Bible in a quiet spot in your home. Whatever it is, whenever it is, make it one solid, uninterrupted hour dedicated to prayer.

— Keep your phone in a drawer for the Triduum

We all know that far too much of our time can be consumed with mindless scrolling. For me, it’s news, quilting blogs or Instagram stories of moms being way more organized than I could ever hope to be. Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday are the holiest days of the year, and the minutes (hours?) devoted to scrolling could be much better spent curled up with a spiritual book, working in the garden or simply giving your family undivided attention.

— Make peace with your neighbor

As we prepare to enter the glorious season of Easter, now is the time to smooth over any troubles in family relationships or friendships by offering an olive branch, either in the form of an “I’m sorry,” or an “I forgive you.” Our time is too short in this life, and the beckoning of heaven is too strong, to waste time in quarrels. Forgiveness is key to the Christian life, and Jesus will help us take the first step, if we but ask. As Rachel Muha, who forgave the killers of her 18-year-old son, said, “You forgive because God asks it of us, and then God takes care of the rest.”

— Make one significant act of almsgiving

Lent is not over yet, and there’s still time to engage in

this important pillar of the season. It could be as simple as cleaning out your pantry and donating the findings to a parish food drive; making an offering to your diocesan appeal; or tithing part of that week’s earnings to a charity of choice (reminder: the annual Good Friday collection goes to help Christians in the Holy Land). There are plenty of people in need, and sacrificing a bit of your own comfort for their good is what it means to live the Christian life well.

— Go to confession

No Holy Week is complete without the graces that come from the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Don’t worry if it’s been a while; the priest is not there to judge, he is there to welcome you and relieve you of the burdens of your sin. Pope Francis has called the sacrament an “encounter of love,” and so it is. Most parishes offer confessions at various times throughout the Triduum, so check your bulletin and find a time that suits your schedule. Or you can always make an appointment. Taking time to reflect upon our sins and to confess them with a contrite heart is the perfect preparation for Easter.

So there you have it: Five ways to enter into Holy Week with more intentionality and to leave, hopefully, with more reward. If you have other suggestions, I’d love to hear them (you can find me on social media pretty much anywhere). Wishing you your best Holy Week yet.

Gretchen R. Crowe is the editor-in-chief of OSV News. Her column has been provided by OSV News.

The Year of Mercy was instructive; the Year of Prayer may be immersive

St. Philip Neri once had a penitent confess to indulging in gossip. He advised the contrite soul to bring him a chicken, and to pluck its feathers as he walked the streets of Rome. When the man showed up with the



GUEST

Elizabeth Scalia

chicken, his penance fulfilled, the great saint told him, “Now, brother, gather up all the feathers you’ve strewn about the city.”

The man’s face fell. “It’s impossible,” he protested, “they’re everywhere...”

“Yes,” Philip nodded, “as is gossip, once it is strewn about...”

During the “Year of Mercy,” concluded in November 2016, I benefited from weekly meditations on what mercy

looked like, what it did not look like and how the actual practice of mercy in our lives — be it the simple act of holding one’s tongue or something more — was both easier and harder than we believed.

The mercy of showing forgiveness to another, for instance — certainly difficult, when the hurt is huge — can truly set us free, especially when our forgiveness is unconditional. I learned that on a very deep and personal level, back then, when someone who had spread a terrible lie about me came to admit it and sought my forgiveness.

Part of me wanted more — wanted this person to endure further humiliations by telephoning everyone to whom she’d lied about me, admitting what she’d done.

But I quickly saw that such a requirement would be more vindictive than merciful and that a sincere expression of remorse — while making imperfect amends to the truth, or to the reality of my larger world — was still evidence of a heartfelt regret deserving my respectful response.

Recalling Philip Neri’s lesson to the gossipy penitent, I suddenly understood that there was nothing this woman could ever do to fully repair my reputation among those who now believed a lie, because in the depths of our hearts we all believe what we really want to believe about others, whether for evil or for good.

So those people who had always rejected her story believed better of me. Those who accepted the lie believed worse and that, I suddenly knew, was on me. Something existed within my character that made some people willing to believe an untrue thing about me.

Realizing that among some the shards of my broken reputation could never be gathered up, and that the situation could never be wholly repaired, I felt something like peace well up inside of me. That a small number of people would continue thinking ill of me might not be “fair;” but I’d already learned that in life “fairness” is an illusion — something complex and subjective on too many levels to count.

I had no doubt that over the course of my life I’d done plenty to deserve a measure of justified enmity, and decided it didn’t matter whether the contempt stemmed

from a lie or not.

Therefore, I was able to say the words “I forgive you” — and really mean them.

That whole episode has been a valuable gift to me. The woman, by her lie and then her contrition, had administered to me a dose of much-needed self-awareness — given me interior food to chew on for the rest of my life as I contemplate all the ways I hurt others, then help others, and then fail again.

There were plenty of lessons to be learned in that “Year of Mercy,” but now we are in a “Year of Prayer” — so designated by Pope Francis in anticipation of the 2025 Jubilee Year. I’d been castigating myself for getting off to a slow start, but a recent, serious bout of pneumonia gave me opportunities to make offerings of my illness and discomforts — to practice a form of prayer that we don’t much talk about in the church, but which takes a direct line through the apostle Paul’s example: “I am rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, the church” (Col 1:24).

It is a good and intimate prayer to whisper one’s agonies into the ear of the suffering, unjustly crucified rabbi-God and ask to be admitted, in the smallest way, into his unfathomable salvific act.

It is a strange privilege to look out from the cross with him and view the terrible beauty, and nearness, of paradise.

Elizabeth Scalia is editor at large for OSV. Her column has been provided by OSV News.

(Continued from page 4)

ment grant for it. But one big taboo remains: You cannot talk about death.

Our inability to confront our mortality, its reality, its meaning and its purpose is creating a very dysfunctional society and a very neurotic people. Our drive to avoid our mortality and any meaningful discussion of it is literally making us less human as we hide out from others in need or wait for the dystopian savior of Artificial Intelligence to “swoop down” and ... upload us?

As one prominent journalist and commentator — who

appears to be back on the road to the Christian faith after a long absence — recently noted, “because of our inability to talk about suffering and death, there’s a crazy amount of anxiety because we can no longer acknowledge the core truth of life, which is that it ends. Any attempt to talk about this or engage in a religious discussion, which by definition implies death and powerlessness (the Cross!), is rejected as repulsive. And it makes us cowards. So long as you’re afraid of death, you’re not going to be very effective in serving a cause greater than yourself.”

Christ suffered, Christ died, Christ arose! Let us not cleave to anything passing but follow him to heaven. Of his kingdom there will be no end; let us not fear the end of this life at all. Let our only fear be to fail to live for God and for others.

Father Phillip W. De Vous is the pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Flemingsburg, and St. Rose of Lima Parish, May’s Lick.

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.



*In the Sixth month,
the angel Gabriel was
sent from God*

to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary... then the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. — Luke 1:28

The sanctity of life in the message of an angel

Father Andrew L. Young

Contributor

The Feast of the Annunciation is celebrated every year on March 25. This feast, importantly positioned nine months before Christmas, provides us with a beautiful opportunity to reflect on the reality of Christ's Incarnation and what that means for all human life.

The Annunciation can sometimes seem like a forgotten feast. After all, it is not a Holy Day of Obligation and rarely falls on a Sunday, so unless one happens to be a daily Mass attendee or just happens to attend Mass that particular day, many Catholics probably do not even know this feast exists. Despite this fact, however, the Feast of the Annunciation is of pivotal importance for all of human history.

The Annunciation is recorded in the Gospel of Luke (1:26-38). These verses tell of the Archangel Gabriel's visit to an engaged virgin named Mary and the revelation of God's plan for Mary to be the mother of the Son of the God. We are told that after Gabriel first greets Mary, she was very troubled. But despite her fears and uncertainty about what would lie ahead as a now-pregnant, unmarried woman, she embraced God's will — and the world was forever changed.

The Scripture passage goes on to tell us that as soon as Mary gave her consent to God's plan, the angel immediately left, the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and God himself is conceived in her womb.

This awesome moment was not the beginning of a series of events that would eventually lead to God entering the world as man. It is THE moment when God stepped down from heaven and humbled himself to become one of us, to save us from our sins.

Many people wrongly think Jesus Christ's incarnation (his taking on flesh) refers to his birth. While it is certainly true that Christmas, his birthday, is the second-most important Feast of the year (surpassed only by Easter), as we know, life begins long before birth — nine-months to be exact. Christ's earthly life began at the moment of

his conception in the womb of the Blessed Mother, and that is the world-changing event we celebrate on the Feast of the Annunciation.

The incarnation not only radically changed the life of Mary, it literally changed every aspect of human history. From that moment on, God would forever be joined to humanity in a new way. Although made in his image and likeness, we had damaged our dignity through sin; yet God chose to not only restore it to its original holiness but also to elevate it forever above all other creatures in heaven and on earth. From the moment of Christ's conception at the Annunciation forward, God and humanity would be forever joined.

That awe-inspiring fact should make us pause. It should cause us to marvel at the goodness of our God. How valuable all human life must be to him, if he went to such incredible lengths to save it.

God is the author of all life. He created the heavens and earth and filled them with many creatures. Among these creatures, however, he chose to become a human being. He chose to enter the world as all humans do, through a mother's womb.

The fact that God Himself spent nine months in the womb of his Blessed Mother points out with undeniable clarity the sanctity of the womb and the lives of all in the womb. Additionally, the fact that Christ experienced all parts of human life — birth, childhood, adulthood, loss of loved ones, suffering and his own death — points out the sanctity of life in all its stages.

The message of the beauty and sanctity of human life was clearly expressed in the events of the Annunciation and the life of Christ, but was not simply declared by Jesus Christ and then left alone. The message was delivered to the world through the cooperation of those who had a radical encounter with the Lord.

If our Blessed Mother had merely received the message of the angel but never responded, the world might have never heard the Good News. If those who witnessed the life and ministry of Jesus had come to believe in him yet never told anyone else, the Church would have never set out to "baptize all nations." Likewise, if we receive the truth of the Lord's message about the sanctity of life but do nothing to help others come to understand it, then the lies that already permeate our society will continue to advance.

St. Josemaria Escriva once wrote these words about Mary's receptivity: "Following her example of obedience to God, we can learn to serve delicately without being slavish. In Mary we don't find the slightest trace of the attitude of the foolish virgins, who obey, but thoughtlessly. Our Lady listens attentively to what God wants, ponders what she doesn't fully understand and asks about what she doesn't know. Then she gives herself completely to doing God's will."

We all share the same calling: to listen to God's will, to thoughtfully consider what he's asking of us — even questioning when necessary — and then to give ourselves completely over to doing God's will.

When it comes to promoting the Gospel of Life, there is no better example than the Blessed Mother. The Feast of the Annunciation gives us the perfect opportunity to be reminded of two fundamental lessons: the sanctity of all human life and the importance of allowing God to work through each of us to bring his message into the world. May none of us let the Feast of the Annunciation go unnoticed this year, and may it be a day when we all recommit ourselves to sharing God's message of life with the world.

Father Andrew Young is the parochial vicar of St. Joseph Church, Cold Spring.

International Day
of the
Unborn Child



In addition to being the Feast of the Annunciation, the International Day of the Unborn Child is also observed on March 25. It was established by Pope John Paul II to coincide with the Feast of the Annunciation.

He instituted the day as, "A positive option in favor of life and the spread of a Culture for Life to guarantee respect for human life in every situation."

For more information about the Pro-Life Office or to be added to our e-mail newsgroups, visit us online at www.covdio.org/prolife/ or call (859) 392-1500.

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.

Covington Lenten Pilgrimage March 23, with five stationary churches opening their doors to pilgrims 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Adoration will be held in each of the Churches, with benediction at 1:45 p.m. The churches are Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Mother of God Church St. Augustine Church, St. Benedict Church and St. John Church. You choose your starting and ending points and whether to walk or drive the route.

The Center of Spirituality at St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills, will host Sister Tonette Sperando who will speak on "Hospitality: A Gospel Way of Living," March 23, 9:30-11:30 a.m. All are invited.

St. Catherine of Siena Church, Ft. Thomas, welcomes the Kissell family for a presentation on "Learning to Trust in God While Living a Life of Suffering," March 24, 7 p.m. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., Carson Kissell will lead the Divine Mercy Chaplet, bring your rosary. Hear how Carson's gesture of redemptive suffering went viral on social media and how the family's suffering has transformed to peace and joy.

"Another Look at the Causes and Consequences of the Modern Pornography Epidemic," a webinar for survivors and those who care for them, March 25, 6:30-8 p.m. CDT. This talk will look at the differences in patterns of porn use between men and women and related differences in patterns of male and female sexual offending. The talk will serve two purposes. First, many victims hold themselves responsible for their experiences of abuse. By discussing factors which contribute to a person choosing to sexually abuse someone will hopefully help people see that this is not true. Second, is a discussion on how the rapidly growing prevalence of pornography is a risk factor for increased rates of abuse in our society.

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 Tuesdays - March 19, March 26, April 2, April 9, April 16, April 23, April 30, and May 7, 2024, Time: 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Catholic Charities - Diocese of Covington, 3629 Church St., Covington. 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.

Sisters of Notre Dame, Park Hills, Women's Retreat Weekend, April 6-April 7, the theme is "Forgiveness." Cost is \$50 for materials and meals. Commute only, no overnight stays left. For information call Margie Schnelle at (859) 392-8229.

Euchre Tournament April 12, doors open 6 p.m.; play begins 7:30 p.m., St. Paul Parish Carline Center, Florence. Cost \$30 to play; \$15 to observe. Proceeds benefit the St. Paul School 8th grade class trip to Washington D.C. Contact casdoer-ing@hotmail.com or (859) 750-5085.

Covington Latin School will host a College and Career Fair for all Diocese of Covington high school students, April 23, 5:30-7:30 p.m. in the school courtyard and cafeteria. Come learn about careers, programs and scholarships from popular colleges and local businesses.

It is time for Spring cleaning! **The Sisters of Notre Dame are in need of items for their 102nd annual 4th of July festival.** We are looking for services, sports items, jewelry, gift certifi-

cates, antiques, anything you can think of. Re-gift to the sisters. If you have items to donate call Margie at (859) 392-8229 or e-mail mschnelle@sndusa.org. Item drop offs during the day at 1601 Dixie Hwy, Park Hills or arrange a pickup.

Parents of Addicted Loved Ones, (PAL) is a support group that meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 6:30-8 p.m. at Catholic Charities, Latonia. It provides continuing education and support, at no charge, for parents with a son, daughter or spouse suffering from addiction to alcohol or drugs. No cost. Just come — 3629 Church Street, Latonia. For more information contact Client Care at (859) 581-8974.



Award winning teams

The St. Pius X, Edgewood, VEX teams competed in the KY State competition. Teams B and C, as an alliance, placed second in the state and Team E won the judge's award. Congratulations to all the teams on their hard work and amazing season.

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A Trinitarian Crucifixion — The Duveneck Mural in the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption

Cecelia Dorger, Ph.D.
Contributor

In 1903, Bishop Maes commissioned Kentuckian Frank Duveneck to paint a mural for the new Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington, Kentucky. This mural hangs in the small Blessed Sacrament Chapel on the right side of the sanctuary. Although Duveneck vowed to never paint a church mural again, after enjoying great success with canvases in Munich, the artist agreed.

The left and right panels of this triptych depict Eucharistic themes, but here we will discuss the central panel, a Trinitarian Crucifixion scene. The Trinitarian Crucifixion motif is found with some frequency in the Middle Ages, but in the early 20th Century it is a rare choice.

Duveneck's, like the medieval Trinitarian Crucifixion scenes, depicts Jesus on the cross, the Holy Spirit descending as a dove, and God the Father above the cross. In some medieval images — but not all, God the Father is holding the arms of the cross in His hands, as He does in Duveneck's.

The most striking difference in Duveneck's composition is the presence of an enormous boulder-like cloud. It separates the bleak landscape of the earthly realm inhabited by the crucified Christ, and the warm golden tones of the Heavenly realm, which God the Father occupies with a host of angels.

Duveneck became famous while painting in Munich for his loose brushstrokes. His characteristic brush work can be seen in his diaphanous fluffy clouds that populate his landscapes. The discrepancy in the way Duveneck painted the mural's cloud and the odd presence of the cloud, led me on a search.

For years I have sought out Trinitarian Crucifixion scenes — online and in museums across Europe and the United States. I have never found a Crucifixion painting with a boulder-like, opaque cloud separating heaven and earth like in Duveneck's mural. What could it mean?

Duveneck suffered much heartbreak in his life. He and one of his former students, American painter Elizabeth Boott, fell in love. It was years before they were finally free to marry, due to her privileged Bostonian family's objections over Duveneck's lower station in life. Boott's father admired the artist but thought him unsuitable for his only daughter.

The two were finally married when they were 38 and 39 years old. A year later, Elizabeth gave birth to a son, and she writes in letters that it was the happiest time of their lives. However, she caught pneumonia when the baby was a toddler. She succumbed to the illness and died only two years after they were married.

At the insistence of his father-in-law, the child was sent to a Boston relative to ensure his proper upbringing. Elizabeth's aunt wrote that when Frank met her at the Boston train station with his little boy, "the poor fellow broke down in sobs." Frank Duveneck returned to Cincinnati grieving his wife and his child.

I spoke to Msgr. William Cleves, the Cathedral's rector at the time, about this painting. He told me he had studied it many times. One day a woman came to him suffering deeply. Her teenage son died the year before in a car accident. After a year of grieving, she felt she was making some progress, but then her husband took his life.

Msgr. Cleves spoke in front of the painting, saying: "You see the view from above is different from the view from

below. The grieving woman at the foot of the cross is contorted in pain; alone. She sees nothing but the dead Christ. The landscape is bleak and empty of color, lacking light. What she cannot see is that above, God is holding up the cross. There is much rejoicing by the host of angels. Light and color fill the space. The grief-stricken woman at the foot of the cross has a view that is blocked by the impenetrable cloud. She cannot see the explanation for the suffering. Yet we get a view of it all."

I like to think Frank Duveneck took the commission to finally work out his own suffering. He painted the incongruous cloud, blocking the view from the earth, reminding us we cannot understand our earthly suffering. But he painted this Trinitarian Crucifixion using the device of God the Father holding the cross in His hands, reminding the chapelgoer (and perhaps himself) that God has everything in hand and a glorious heaven awaits.

The artist adapted the Crucifixion image to say something altogether new, altogether profound. The art in the cathedral provides many messages. The Cathedral is a place for refuge, a place to enter into another realm, a place to grasp hope and to put our trust in our Father in heaven.

Dr. Cecelia Dorger recently retired from a long career at Mount St. Joseph University teaching art history courses. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Louisville where she concentrated on the study of Medieval and Renaissance religious art, specializing on images of the Virgin Mary, specifically the Madonna Lactans image. She teaches sacred art courses at the Mount St. Mary's Seminary and School of Theology in Cincinnati. Her feature article first appeared in Illuminated, the digital newsletter for the Angelico Project online at <https://angelicoproject.org>.

‘It just hit me ... Jesus is real’

Bella Young

Multimedia Correspondent

During the Easter Vigil, at parishes throughout the diocese, 107 catechumens and 108 candidates will become the newest members of Catholic Church in the Diocese of Covington. The Messenger is highlighting the stories of a few of these members. In this second in a series of articles, Greg Bickers, a catechumen at St. Patrick Church, Taylor Mill, shares his path to the Church.

For most of his adult life, Mr. Bickers has battled an addiction to drugs and alcohol. During this time, he had been passively attending Mass with his wife who is Catholic, but Mr. Bickers said he doubted parts of the faith.

“I always questioned God ... All this time that I said is God real, can he take my pain away?” Mr. Bickers said.

Growing up in Pentecostal Church, Mr. Bickers said

that he was not always sure of the Pentecostal faith either. He had seen his other church

members fall to the ground, overcome by the Holy Spirit. “I never felt like that in there,” he said.

When he attended Mass, Mr. Bickers said it felt different, “When I got to the Catholic religion it was calm, it was peaceful. I just felt it.”

After a short time in treatment for addiction, on Sep. 26, 2019, Mr. Bickers said he knew he wanted to convert.

“I came home and started going to church every Sunday since then,” he said.

Mr. Bickers said he had a moment while driving, when he knew he was making the right decision. “Father Jeff (VonLehmen) said as we go through the program, we’ll start feeling Jesus more and getting closer ... I was driving and listening to a song and I just got started thinking about God, just got tears in my eyes, and I got real hot and it just

hit me. Jesus is real.”

He says attending Mass every week and learning about God has helped keep him sober.

Mr. Bickers says he takes his newfound faith and applies it to other areas of his life, specifically his work.

“My title is Substance Abuse Disorder Technician, mainly I work the front desk and help them with their medicine,” he said.

Working at a drug treatment center, Mr. Bickers said, he sees God working through people every day.

“I see guys come off the street beat, torn down, have no clue. They start going to AA, learn about God, you just see a little spark come out. The next thing you know they have a long time sober and they’re doing great,” he said.

Mr. Bickers journey has not been easy, but he is grateful that it has led him to the Catholic Church. “Everything I’ve been through, all that I had to go through to find God ... I wouldn’t change a thing,” he said.

Tolton scouting patch honors black priest and model of Eucharistic devotion

Gina Christian

OSV News

A candidate for sainthood is inspiring Catholic Scouts in Illinois to earn a new patch while deepening their relationship with Christ in the Eucharist.

The Catholic Committee on Scouting in the Diocese of Springfield, Illinois, has announced the creation of the Venerable Father Augustine Tolton Activity Patch, which honors the first recognized Black priest in the U.S.

Requirements for the patch include learning about Tolton’s life, visiting a seminary or religious community to better understand vocational discernment, modeling Tolton’s patient disposition and engaging in prayer.

Kyle Holtgrave, the diocese’s director for catechesis, told OSV News he designed the rubric for the patch so that Scouts would remain “really focused on listening to God’s call and understanding that God is constantly calling us to a vocation — not necessarily to the priesthood, but he’s calling us to something, and we need to be attentive to that.”

Holtgrave said the inspiration for the Tolton patch came from the upcoming National Eucharistic Congress, set to take place in Indianapolis July 17-21 as the culmination of the three-year National Eucharistic Revival, a grassroots effort by the U.S. bishops to rekindle devotion to the Real Presence.

The Junipero Serra pilgrimage route, one of four leading to the congress, will transit through the Springfield



Father Augustine Tolton

Diocese in time to coincide with an annual July 9 prayer service at Father Tolton’s grave in Quincy, Illinois, said Holtgrave.

“So that gave me the idea of saying, ‘Why don’t we do some kind of scouting activity where we have a number of Catholic chartered units in the diocese, and ... get them involved with the Eucharistic procession?’” he said.

With a number of Catholic scouting patches already honoring saints and those on the road to canonization, a Tolton patch immediately came to mind, said Holtgrave, adding that the award will “help Scouts learn about some of the adversities that people (have)

had to overcome, not just in society, but even in the church.”

Father Tolton — also known by the first name “Augustus” — confronted seemingly insurmountable obstacles throughout his brief lifetime, sustained by his profound faith.

Born into slavery in 1854, he was raised as a Catholic, the faith held by the Missouri-based families who had purchased his parents, Peter Paul and Martha Jane.

When the Civil War broke out, Tolton’s father escaped to serve with the Union Army but soon died of illness. His mother thereafter fled with young Augustus and his two

siblings, rowing them across the Mississippi River and eventually reaching Quincy, where they settled.

After working in a factory and attending Catholic schools (often facing harassment in the process), Augustus discerned a religious vocation. He moved to Rome in 1880 to study for the priesthood, since no seminary in the United States would accept him due to his race.

“Even in the church, he had to overcome ... the racial biases that existed in that era,” said Holtgrave. “But the Holy Spirit still prevailed and never gave up on Tolton.”

Upon his 1886 ordination, Father Tolton expected to be assigned to pastoral work in Africa, but was instead sent back to the United States, first to Quincy and then later Chicago. Despite repeated rejection, he persisted in his pastoral work, founding St. Monica Parish on Chicago’s South Side. His reverence, humility, zeal and exceptional singing voice drew both Black and white Catholics from all economic classes.

A strenuous pastoral schedule amid poverty likely hastened Father Tolton’s untimely death from heat stroke and uremia in 1897. His canonization cause was formally opened in 2011, and he was declared “Venerable” by Pope Francis in 2019.

Father Tolton’s life mirrored a love for the Eucharist — one that speaks to a new generation, said Holtgrave.

“God (is) present among us in the Eucharist, and it just does wonderful things in the natural world because of our faith,” he said. “And I think that’s what really drove Father Tolton to achieve his goal and understand, ‘I can do this.’”

“There’s going to be all kinds of barriers that our human sinfulness puts in the way, but the Eucharist will prevail, and if this is God’s will, it will prevail, and that’s what I think really comes to light with the story of Father Tolton,” said Holtgrave. “The idea is that you try to persevere and do your best, and you never know. ... And even if we, you know, if we have to overcome adversities like Father Tolton did, with the Holy Spirit on your side, you’re going to do it. You’re going to do wonderful things, and God’s going to bless you in wonderful ways.”

Catholic Charities

(Continued from page 2)

and their hard work.

In keeping with the theme of recognition and celebration, Brandy Medaugh, client care specialist and St. Joseph Apartments case manager, was invited to present the Marcella Strategier Angel of Hope Award.

“Marcella Strategier was hard working and deeply committed to her faith,” said Mrs. Medaugh, “since 2002, we have recognized members of our community in her honor.”

Before announcing the recipients Mrs. Medaugh said, “The recipients for this year’s award are true stewards of God’s love and honor this legacy.”

The recipients of the Marcell Strategier Angel of Hope Award are Dick and Rosalie Hentz. Mrs. Medaugh recalled the times that Dick and Rosalie truly embodied the memory of Marcella Strategier. “Whether it was Dick dumpster diving in front of the Fischer Homes Construction site to put together a playhouse for a special needs kid ... or Rosaline outing together a group of students to get their service hours in so that she could make a blessing bag for a mom on Mother’s Day,” she said, “they went above and beyond throughout the last several years to make sure that

everyone they know or don’t know is served with God’s true love.”

The next award that was presented was the Community Partner Award, presented by James Wendeln. In Mr. Wendeln’s remarks he spoke about the character of the Community Partner Award.

“The Community Partner Award, recognizes individuals, companies or organizations who share the values of Catholic Charities and have collaborated closely with our ministry to make a significant difference in the community.”

The recipient of the Community Partner Award is the Covington Rotary Club. Mr. Wendeln said, “This is week 200 for their assistance with the Parish Kitchen. They have donated 1,912 cases of bottled water and 28,136 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.”

The presentation of the award to the Covington Rotary Club was met with a round of applause from the audience.

In his closing remarks Bishop John Iffert challenged the audience to look for God wherever they serve, “...be prayerfully engaged in the work we are doing. Ask ourselves again and again and again, every time we serve, where did I see Christ today? Where did I encounter Christ

in the work I was doing, in the people I served?”

In his call to reflect and find God wherever they serve, Bishop Iffert equated God’s blessings to sparkles of sunlight on a lake. Imagine, he said, that those sparkles are pennies.

Bishop Iffert said, that in serving the needs of others we often grow to recognize our own spiritual poverty and our need to stoop down to retrieve these pennies of mercy.

“We ourselves are poor, we ourselves are needy, we ourselves are sometimes forgotten, we dwell sometimes on the margin, we are not self-sufficient, we are in need of a Savior. And this we learn from the people we serve,” he said.

In acknowledging personal needs as well as the needs of others, Bishop Iffert said, the abundance of the Lord’s mercy and blessings become apparent. “Christ passes with an open and free hand those gracious pennies into our life and into our world, over and over and over again, day after day after day,” Bishop Iffert said. “We poor people, all we really have to do is gather them up.”

Bishop Iffert ended by thanking the volunteers for all that they do at Catholic Charities for the people in their community; for continuing to find Jesus in all that they do.

How the Eucharist helps us turn from fear to faith: Counsel the doubtful

Father Joe Laramie, S.J.
Contributor

I was in Rome for a weeklong meeting. I was there with other Jesuits from around the world who are national directors of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network. We cel-

ebrated Mass at St. Peter's Basilica. We visited ancient shrines of saints and martyrs. Our conversations flowed from English to French, Spanish and Hindi.

And yet, Rome is a city of paradoxes. Glorious basilicas double as tourist attractions. Visitors snap selfies and

broadcast themselves on TikTok near altars and chapels. "Hey, everybody, guess where I am? Rome!" Martyrs spilled their blood on Roman streets in witness to the Risen Lord. Do today's Romans care? Do your kids? Many people doubt the historical event of Jesus. And many people are far from the Eucharist because of their doubt.

As he approaches his passion, Jesus asks, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Lk 18:8). Soon after this, Jesus makes a perfect gift of himself through the Paschal Mystery: his passion, death, resurrection and ascension. Because Jesus rose from the dead, all things truly are made new. Because of his faithfulness, we can be faithful. After a week in Rome among others who follow Christ faithfully more than 2000 years later, I can reply with certitude, "Yes, Lord! Your faithful people praise you!" (see Ps



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Counsel the doubtful. It's a spiritual work of mercy. It's a teaching of the Church. Doubt flows from fear. Faith flows from Jesus. Who does he want to counsel through you? In our secular world, faithful Catholics may respond, "Okay. How?"

I live on a college campus in Milwaukee. I've taught in high schools, led retreats for prisoners, and served in homeless shelters. In every setting, people struggle with doubt. I hear it in confession, in spiritual direction and over lunch tables. It leads to some lively conversations. "Father, I've got a question for you..." Other times, people are so deep in their doubt that they struggle to talk about it.

Doubt can take many forms — a sarcastic skepticism, serious searching, or heavy darkness. If they're willing to talk to me (or any disciple of Christ), then they're likely headed in the right direction. That means they are open to conversation, information and inspiration. As a priest, I'm not simply offering them a self-help program, I'm offering them Jesus: his words, his love, him. I want them to truly know Christ and I want them to encounter him — especially in the Eucharist.

So, where does doubt come from? We see Jesus diagnosing doubt in the Gospels and offering a remedy. Here's his diagnosis: fear. Fear is at the root of doubt. The disciples in the boat during a storm at sea began to shout, full of fear. Jesus says, "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?" (Mt 8:26). They doubt God's power as they are faced with the power of the storm. They're afraid, and they doubt. In faith, Jesus offers a pathway that is holy, beautiful and meaningful. This pathway reaches its earthly climax at every Mass, a true foretaste of heaven. But some hear Christ's message and wonder, "Is it really true?" as they are drawn into lives of glitz and glamor that our secular world offers, but always leaves them empty.

What is the remedy to fear and doubt? Jesus. And if people do not know he is the remedy, then we need to help them. That is where counsel the doubtful comes in.

In my ministry, sometimes the doubtful come to me and sometimes I come to them. I

(Continued on page 13)

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Qualifications include a bachelor's or master's degree in accounting or related field. A minimum of 5 years of accounting experience in a not-for-profit business is preferred. This is a full-time position with excellent benefits.

Notre Dame Academy is a Catholic all-girls high school sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame. NDA has a rich tradition of success and excellence. Interested candidates should submit a cover letter, resume and salary requirement to Mrs. Marilyn Slaughter at ndahr@ndapan-das.org. Resumes will be reviewed until the position is filled.

BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY FOREMAN

St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption Parish and the Diocese of Covington invite qualified individuals to apply for the full-time position of Buildings and Property Foreman. We require a motivated, personable self-starter with the ability to direct others, who possesses practical maintenance and mechanical skills and abilities. Knowledge and/or experience with plumbing, electrical, carpentry, mechanical maintenance, painting, and general safety procedures are essential elements of the job. This position will have the maintenance and upkeep responsibility for the majority of the Cathedral Square properties, including the Cathedral Basilica and its grounds, the Cathedral Rectory, the Cathedral Parish offices, the Diocesan Curia offices, and St. Mary's Park. The Foreman will lead, direct, and supervise other maintenance and custodial staff in scheduled and unscheduled activities related to the ongoing functioning and usage of the properties. The workweek will ordinarily be Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. However, the nature of the position may require the Foreman to occasionally work outside of that schedule, in order to repair, or to arrange repair for, something that breaks or malfunctions and needs immediate attention. Interested candidates may contact Stephen Kopluy, SPHR by email at skopluy@covdio.org to apply.

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Notre Dame Academy (NDA) in Park Hills, Kentucky seeks a mission-driven, qualified professional to serve as the Principal directly reporting to the President of NDA to assume duties in July 2024. The Principal is a full-time position responsible for providing visionary leadership, fostering a culture of academic excellence and ensuring the holistic development of students in alignment with the school's mission and values.

Notre Dame Academy is a Catholic all-girls high school sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame. NDA has a rich tradition of success and excellence. Interested candidates should submit a cover letter and resume to Mrs. Trish Miller at ndahr@ndapandas.org. Upon submission, candidates will receive a search prospectus outlining further details about the position and the application process. This position will be posted until filled.

How the Eucharist helps

(Continued from page 11)

might ask, "How are you doing? You seemed upset in class yesterday." Having a solid relationship — with Jesus and with those we counsel — is the essential foundation of this work of mercy. You know your kids and grandkids better than anyone. Part of effective counseling is listening. Like a good doctor, I first need to know the nature of the ailment before I offer a diagnosis and a remedy.

I know that when I'm struggling, I need to tell my story. I need to explain what's happening. And I need someone to listen to me and to care about me. Thankfully, I've had some great spiritual directors and superiors who offered me counsel in my own doubts and difficulties. St. Ignatius summarizes this approach in a few words: "Go in their door so they come out your door." This means walking with someone who is struggling — but not leaving her in her struggle. It means seeing that Jesus is on the journey with her, leading her to a place of light and peace. Jesus may want to speak words of peace and consolation through you.

Doubts come in many forms. There are theological doubts such as, "How do we know that God exists?" "Did Jesus really rise from the dead?" "Is the Eucharist really the Body and Blood of Christ?" There are moral doubts: "Why does the Church teach this about sex?" "How do we know that's true?" And there are personal doubts: "Am I worth anything?" "Does God care about me?"

You may want to share a bit about your own experience. "I wrestled with that question a few years ago." Or, "You know what helped me when I was in a situation like that?" It's okay to refer her to another resource, but don't make it too complicated. "Here's a short Bible passage that I look to sometimes for clarity," or, "Margaret is really good on this topic; maybe I can introduce you two." Don't put too much pressure on yourself; if I walk with the person one step closer to Christ, then perhaps I've done my job. Jesus will continue to walk with her and guide her in the next step.

Finally, let's simply and directly offer them a chance to encounter Jesus. "I'm going to Mass on Sunday morning. You're welcome to come. It always helps me. I usually go for coffee afterwards and I would love to have you come along." Or, "I go to Eucharistic adoration at my parish. Do you want to come? I find it so peaceful." If they aren't ready, that is okay. Jesus is always waiting for them, and he may simply be asking you to remain by their side in the meantime.

Father Joe Laramie, S.J., is the national director of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer). He is a Eucharistic preacher for the National Eucharistic Revival. His article has been made available through the National Eucharistic Revival website www.eucharisticrevival.org.

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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:

■ March bulletin: posted Sunday, March 3; due Tuesday, April 2.

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:

■ Wednesday, May 15, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, May 15, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, June 18, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, June 18, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, July 18, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, July 18, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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

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

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

■ Wednesday, Aug. 7, 6–8 :30 p.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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National/World

Pope: Medical advances must serve those most in need

VATICAN CITY — Cutting-edge science and medical research cannot benefit only the privileged few but must be placed at the service of those most in need, Pope Francis said. Meeting with the staff and patients from the Vatican-owned Bambino Gesù pediatric hospital in Rome March 16, the pope stressed the importance of “excellence in biomedical research,” but said it must be done “with special attention to the most fragile, such as patients with serious, rare or ultra-rare diseases.” The pope wrote, “So that science and expertise do not remain the privilege of the few, I urge you to continue to make the fruits of your research available to all, especially where they are most needed,” praising the hospital for its training programs with doctors and nurses from Africa and Asia. The pope was greeted with applause and cheers from the many children present as he entered the Paul VI Audience Hall using a wheelchair. Vatican News reported that among the approximately 200 children and parents were children from countries at war, such as Ukraine and Gaza, who are receiving treatment at Bambino Gesù that they were unable to get in their home countries.

In fight to end human trafficking, educating migrants about risks ‘essential’

WASHINGTON — Ask women religious leaders on the front lines of the fight against human trafficking and the exploitation of cheap migrant labor, and one hears less about government programs and more about educating the migrants. “It can happen to anyone anywhere,” Maryknoll Sister Abby Avelino said at a March 6 webinar sponsored by Georgetown University’s Initiative on Catholic Thought and Public Life. She is the international coordinator of Talitha Kum, the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons. “(It) is horrendous — a big crime against humanity,” said Sister Patricia Ebegebulem, a Sister of St. Louis, who operates a shelter for trafficking victims in Nigeria. Sister Licia Joseph, a Sister of Mary Immaculate, who has served on the Canon Law Council of the International Union of Superiors General, called it “the modern form of slavery.” Sister Patricia advised would-be migrants, “Make sure you’re migrating properly with the correct documents so people don’t take advantage of your vulnerability. Make sure you know exactly where you’re going. Traffickers are very, very cunning.” In January, Sens. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., and Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., introduced bipartisan legislation to make human traffickers pay for their crimes in court and prevent victims from having to endure a forced arbitration process. So far, that bill is stalled in the Senate.

Safety concerns keep Burkina Faso Catholics away from Mass

BURKINA FASO — The majority of Christians in Burkina Faso are now shying away from Sunday services and instead praying at home after a series of deadly attacks by Islamist militants targeting churches and killing scores of worshippers. The latest attack by insurgents on a Catholic church in the northeastern part of the country on Feb. 25 left at least 15 people dead. Local church officials said that gunmen on motorcycles suspected to be Islamist militants raided the church during Sunday worship in Essakane village, close to the border with Mali, indiscriminately shooting at worshippers, including little children on their parents’ laps. “People are devastated and are ... avoiding Sunday Mass for fear of further attacks,” said Father Jean-Pierre Sawadogo, vicar general of the Diocese of Dori, where the attack took place. “The church is under attack, and we ask for your prayers during this difficult time and prayers for those who died and were wounded during the recent attack,” the priest said. Martin Ouedraogo, a former catechist in the Diocese of Dori, said continuous attacks by jihadist groups affiliated with Al Qaeda and the Islamic State on Christians has instilled fear in them about expressing their faith in public. Those from Muslim backgrounds experience more violence and rejection from their families and communities.

Rome biblical and Eastern institutes merged with Gregorian University

ROME — At the request of Pope Francis, three Jesuit-run institutions of higher learning in Rome — the Pontifical Gregorian University, the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Pontifical Oriental Institute — will formally become one university in May. Jesuit Father Arturo Sosa, superior general of the Jesuits, informed the three March 15 that “the new general statutes of the university, which permanently incorporate the

Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Pontifical Oriental Institute, will come into effect on 19 May 2024, which is Pentecost Sunday,” said a press release March 18 from the Gregorian University. Pope Francis had told a group of students from Jerusalem in January, “There are too many ecclesiastical universities in Rome. You should agree to make some form of unity: unity in study plans. Come to an agreement, talk.” And, in fact, in December 2019 he had ordered the Biblicum and the Oriental Institute to formally become part of the Gregorian University while keeping their names and their areas of expertise. With the new statutes they become academic units of the university, the press release said.

Pope calls for release of religious brothers kidnapped in Haiti

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis called for the release of two religious brothers, members of the Congregation of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, who are still being held hostage in Haiti. “I have learned with relief that in Haiti, a teacher and four of the six religious brothers of the Frères du Sacré-Cœur Institute, kidnapped last February 23rd, have been freed,” the pope said after praying the Angelus in St. Peter’s Square March 17. “I ask for the release as soon as possible of the other two brothers and all those people still being held hostage in that beloved country, so fraught with violence.” The kidnappings took place as Catholic religious have become targets for ransom in Haiti by armed gangs. In January, a group of six religious sisters were freed less than a week after being kidnapped by armed assailants. “I invite all the political and social actors to abandon any personal interest and to engage in a spirit of solidarity in the pursuit of the common good, supporting a peaceful transition to a country that, with the help of the international community, may be equipped with solid institutions capable of restoring order and tranquility among its citizens,” the pope said about the crisis in Haiti.

Papal preacher: Hope helps ‘crippled’ hearts rise up, leap for joy

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Hope is patient, concrete and extraordinary in that it can change everything, the papal preacher said.

Hope “is the opposite of impatience, of haste, of ‘everything immediately.’ It is the antidote to discouragement. It keeps yearning alive,” Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa told Pope Francis and members of the Roman Curia during a Lenten meditation in the Paul VI Audience Hall March 15.

Reflecting on Jesus’ words from St. John’s Gospel — “I am the resurrection and the life” — Cardinal Cantalamessa said there are two kinds of resurrection: the resurrection of the body and the “resurrection of the heart that must take place every day!”

The resurrection of the heart is the rebirth of hope, he said.

“Strangely, the word ‘hope’ is absent in Jesus’ preaching,” he said, “even though all his preaching proclaims that there is a resurrection from death and eternal life.”

The reason there are no words about hope in the Gospel is simple, the cardinal said: “Christ first had to die and rise again. By rising again, he opened the source of hope; he inaugurated the very object of hope, which is a life with God beyond death.”

The rebirth of hope in one’s heart is like what happens to the man crippled from birth whom Peter heals at the gate of the temple. Peter gives him neither silver nor gold but commands, “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, (rise and) walk,” and the man leaps up, jumping and praising God.

“Something similar could happen to us, too,” because of divine hope, carried by the word of God, which says, “Get up and walk,” the cardinal said. The heart can go from being paralyzed by difficulties to getting up and entering “the heart of the church at last, ready to take on, once again and joyfully, the tasks and responsibilities assigned



to us by providence and obedience.”

“These are the daily miracles of hope,” Cardinal Cantalamessa said. “It puts thousands of people spiritually crippled and paralyzed back on their feet, thousands of times.”

“What is extraordinary about hope is that its presence changes everything, even when outwardly nothing changes,” he said.

It does not let people lay back and dream about an imag-

inary world, he said. “On the contrary, it is very concrete and practical,” always finding there is something that can be done to improve every situation.

Hope, however, is also patient, he said. Quoting St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans, difficulties produce endurance and “endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

At audience, pope looks at virtue of prudence, prays for peace

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

“War is always a defeat,” Pope Francis said, urging people at his general audience to pray that leaders in war-torn nations would have the courage to negotiate for peace.

“We must make every effort to discuss, to negotiate to end war. Let’s pray for this,” the pope said at the end of the audience in St. Peter’s Square March 20.

Although he began the audience by telling the visitors and pilgrims that he was still unable to read his full speech and would have an aide read it for him, Pope Francis took the microphone at the end of the gathering to greet Italian speakers and to pray for “the populations of the tormented Ukraine and the Holy Land — Palestine and Israel — who suffer so much from the horror of war.”

Continuing his series of audience talks about virtues and vices, the pope’s text said virtues have never been the concern of Christians alone, but “belong to the heritage of ancient wisdom.”

The pope’s main text focused on the virtue of prudence, which is not caution or hesitancy, he wrote.

“The prudent person is creative. He or she reasons, evaluates, tries to understand the complexity of reality and does not allow him- or herself to be overwhelmed by emotions, idleness, pressures and illusions,” the text said.

St. Thomas Aquinas, the pope noted, described prudence as “right reason in action.”

“In a world dominated by appearances, by superficial thoughts, by the triviality of both good and bad,” he wrote, people need to cultivate the virtue of prudence to direct their actions toward what is good for themselves and for others.

If life were always easy, the pope’s text said, prudence would not be necessary, “but in the midst of the wind and waves of daily life it is another matter; often we are uncertain and do not know which way to go. The prudent do not choose by chance: first of all, they know what they want, then they weigh up the situation, seek advice and with a broad outlook and inner freedom,

they choose which path to embark upon.”

Prudence is especially important for people who govern or are in other positions of authority, he wrote, because they must listen to different points of view and “try to harmonize them,” working for the good of all.

The Gospel of Matthew says that before Jesus sent his

disciples on mission, he tells them to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” the Pope Francis wrote. The passage indicates that “God does not only want us to be saints, he also wants us to be intelligent saints, because without prudence, it just takes a moment to make a wrong turn.”



Pope Francis greets a family at the end of his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican March 20, 2024.

CNS photo/Vatican Media