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



(left) Father Mark Keene, vicar general, celebrates this year's High School Senior Mass.

(right) Senior students from Covington Latin, Covington, and Covington Catholic, Park Hills, present the gifts

(below left) Students from Newport Central Catholic, Newport.

(below center) Students from Covington Catholic, Park Hills.

(below right) John Lubert, a senior student at St. Henry District High School, Erlanger, carries his school's banner during the procession of the Mass.



'Life is a school of learning to love,' says Father Keene at High School Senior Mass

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Senior high school students from every diocesan high school joined together with teachers, administrators, parents, supporters and friends for a Mass celebrating their accomplishments as the school year draws to an end — and with it, the high school career of these students.

The Mass was celebrated April 12 at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Father Mark A. Keene, vicar general of the Diocese of Covington was the celebrant in Bishop John Iffert's stead. He was accompanied by concelebrating priests from across the Diocese, including Father Ryan Maher, rector of the Cathedral. Deacon Gerald Franzen assisted.

Students participated throughout the Mass, from carrying ban-

ners representing their schools in the procession, to the readings and presenting the gifts. Student vocalists from eight diocesan high schools also sang in the choir for the Mass.

In his homily, Father Keene reflected on the story of the fish and five loaves — how such a small offering fed “5000” men.

“We’re told that he was generous,” said Father Keene about the boy who offered the basket of fish and loaves, “...in what appeared to be an insurmountable amount of need. And, yet, somehow,” he said, “his generosity proved to be a catalyst of some sort” — for a miracle.

Father Keene, further into his homily, then asked for students to imagine themselves as the boy in the story of the fish and loaves, and that the disciples came to them and asked, “What do you have

(Continued on page 6)

Public and homeschool 2024 high school graduates — this Mass is for you!

Bella Young
Multimedia Correspondent

For the first time the Diocese of Covington will be celebrating a baccalaureate Mass for public and homeschool high school seniors.

“It is a way to celebrate them and their achievements,” said Angie Poat, diocesan youth minister.

As the graduation season draws nearer with each passing day, Mrs. Poat said she realized, “Public and homeschool seniors don’t have the opportunity to experience the capstone moment that a baccalaureate Mass is.”

Mrs. Poat said that such a Mass is a moment of entrustment and

(Continued on page 6)



Diocesan Public and Homeschool 2024 Baccalaureate Mass

High school seniors attending public schools or homeschools, and their families, are invited to attend a Baccalaureate Mass with Bishop John Iffert **May 1, 5:30 p.m.** at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

Following Mass there will be a reception (which is optional) at the Curia.

RSVP at covdio.org/youth (or by utilizing this QR code) for the reception by April 17.



Grieving the loss of a child reveals great love, deep faith and trust in the Lord

Laura Keener
Editor

Over 100 people attended this year's Memorial Mass for the Loss of Child, April 11 at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington. The Mass is organized by the diocesan Pro-Life Office and invites anyone whose child has died to memorialize their loved one and seek Christ's peace in a community of fellow believers.

As he began his homily, Father Ryan Maher, rector, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, shared some thoughts from Cardinal Fulton Sheen. Cardinal Sheen had said that there are at least two ways of looking at everything. Looking at the congregation tonight, knowing

that everyone here comes to grieve the loss of a child and has experienced all of the effective movements that come with that loss.

One could see, "Anger toward the Lord, perhaps. Frustration, suffering, maybe even being inconsolable at times. That's one way of looking at this group gathered here," Father Maher said. "Another way to see this group is to see people who are strong, people who are courageous, people who are persevering. People who, along with grief and other movements of the heart, are people of deep love. Most importantly, when I look out at this group gathered here tonight, I see people of deep faith, people who trust in the Lord."



(top right) As they enter Mass, a family writes the name of their loved in the book of remembrance.
(above left) Faye Roch, director, diocesan Pro-Life Office, places a vigil candle on a table before the altar.
(bottom center) The candles surround a statuette of The Pieta.
(above center, above far right and below left) At the beginning of Mass, worshipers placed a lit candle in remembrance of their child on a table before the altar. These candles, (right) Father Maher said, reminds us of the victory of Jesus over sin and death.



With One Heart Core Team gather for an update

Staff Report

The With One Heart Core Team met, April 10, to get an update on the initiative, now in its second year. Deacon James Fortner, diocesan chief operating officer, and Carla Molina, leadership consultant, Catholic Leadership Institute, gathered the team at the Curia's Board Room where they went over the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and the leadership development efforts to date.

So far two leadership development initiatives are nearing completion — cohort 1 of Good Leaders, Good Shepherds (GLGS) and Parish Missionary Disciples (PMD). GLGS is the leadership development program for priests. PMD is the leadership development program for parish leaders. Tending the Talents, a leadership development program for parish and Curia staff, will begin in August.

Catechetical formation is a priority in the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and the Core Team was introduced to Franciscan At Home. Franciscan At Home is a series of online workshops developed and provided by Franciscan University's Catechetical Institute. Every person in the Diocese of Covington has access, at no cost to them. Tracks have also been specifically developed for school and parish catechist certification. The diocesan Office of Catechesis and Evangelization is leading this effort.



Core Team members (above, from left) Deacon Jim Fortner, Jamie Schroeder, Jenn Ledonne, Amy Fathman, Dave Ledonne and Benedictine Sister Eileen O'Connell (below, from left) Rob Munson, Hannah Wessels and Carla Molina.



Bishop Iffert convenes team to explore Covington Latin School and Thomas More University affiliation

Staff report

With a commitment to providing advanced learners an innovative, college preparatory, classical, Catholic education, Bishop John Iffert of the Diocese of Covington announces the exploration of an affiliation between Covington Latin School and Thomas More University.

Under the plans for affiliation, Covington Latin School will become part of the University. Plans are underway to strategically align academic, financial, technological, and



human resources.

“This is an exciting time,” said Bishop Iffert. “University affiliated high schools have a proven stellar reputation in the United States. As the first private model in Kentucky and the greater Cincinnati region, this affiliation has the potential to create a new innovative approach for Catholic education while preserving a treasured tradition.”

A team that includes members of the diocesan Curia and Thomas More University will explore the process and benefits of affiliation. Mrs. Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Covington, and Dr. Kevin Reynolds, senior vice president for mission and University advancement at Thomas More University, will lead this effort.

“The affiliation between Covington Latin School and Thomas More University is an exciting one as we continue to expand Catholic education for the region,” said Dr. Joseph Chillo, president of Thomas More University. “By partnering these two storied institutions, we will be able to expand the academic and co-curricular opportunities for the students of Covington Latin while expanding the academic innovation of Thomas More. The impact that we can create by expanding these opportunities will strengthen the classical education of Covington Latin while propelling Thomas More as the regional premier Catholic liberal arts University.”

The University will begin a yearlong assessment to create a new strategic vision for Covington Latin School. As the transition team develops the new strategic plan it will engage in thoughtful conversation with the CLS community about connecting the past with the future. The affiliation is expected to begin with the 2025–2026 academic year.

With this announcement, Dr. John Kennedy’s service as Headmaster will end at the conclusion of this academic year.

“I am grateful for Dr. Kennedy’s leadership of Covington Latin School during the past four years, especially through the uncertain times of the pandemic,” said Mrs. McGuire. “Ultimately, the school is preparing for a new strategic direction and vision that will strengthen the Catholic classical education that Covington Latin has cherished and celebrated since its founding in 1923.”

In a letter to CLS parents and alumni, Bishop Iffert acknowledged that CLS will experience many changes during this transition. Several things, however, will not change. “The school’s name, Covington Latin; its motto, etched in stone above its portal door; ‘Teach me Goodness, Discipline and Knowledge;’ its tradition of service to the Bishop as pontifical servers; its reputation for graduating exceptional and ethical servant leaders and its faithfulness to Catholic classical education will be preserved,” he said.

Covington Latin School was founded in 1923 by Covington’s fifth Bishop, the Most Rev. Francis William Howard, as a Catholic, accelerated, college preparatory, high school offering a classical education. Beginning as an educational establishment for young men, Covington Latin opened its doors to young women in 1992.

Mandatory reporting vs. the triumph of evil

Bella Young

Multimedia Correspondent

In 1983 April was designated as Child Abuse Awareness month, coming on the heels of the Kentucky Adult Protection Act, passed in 1976. This act, “requires the reporting of known or suspected incidences of adult



abuse, neglect, or exploitation.”

The requirement in this act became colloquially known as “mandatory reporting.” When speaking about mandatory reporting Julie Feinauer, victim assistance coordinator for the Diocese of Covington said, “Whether you are a teacher, doctor, or the cashier at a grocery store, you are still a mandatory reporter.”

In the United States it is estimated that for every case of child abuse that is reported, two go unreported. Research conducted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation showed that out of 585,000 victims, three out of every four experienced neglect, one in six were physically abused, 10 percent were sexually abused, six percent were emotionally abused, and two percent experienced medical neglect.

Mrs. Feinauer encourages people to uphold their status as a mandatory reporter: Not only because all are called to protect the sanctity and dignity of life, but because it is the law. To those who are unsure if they should report, Mrs. Feinauer says to, “think about the child that is in that situation, how must they feel? When you’re nervous, they must be 10 times as scared.”

The designation of April as Child Abuse Awareness month spurred action across the country to keep children safe. In joining that effort the National Catholic Risk Retention Group put forward the VIRTUS initiative.

Mrs. Feinauer describes the VIRTUS program as a way of, “helping to teach how to identify grooming behaviors, how to identify what to look for that stands out ... trying to create an army of individuals that keep kids safe.”

Anyone in the Diocese of Covington who works with children or volunteers in areas where children are present is required to complete the VIRTUS program and stay current with their training.

Mrs. Feinauer says she sees this training work in the community. “After these trainings people will come up to us and thank us ... I had a man come up who was elderly and he had never told anyone what happened to him. He was in tears just crying because he never knew it was okay to tell.”

Mrs. Feinauer says this moment was particularly touching because part of the VIRTUS program encourages parents to talk to their children in an appropriate manner; to make sure their children know that if something were to happen to them, it is not their fault and they should speak to a trusted adult.

In reference to the mandatory reporting laws and the hesitancy some encounter when faced with the need to report, Mrs. Feinauer uses a quote from her days as an English teacher, “For evil to triumph all it takes is for good men to do nothing.”



With praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God,
the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington
requests the honor of your presence
at
the Ordination to the Transitional
Diaconate of

Joshua David Heskamp

+++

through the power of the Holy Spirit
and the imposition of hands by the

Most Reverend John C. Iffert
Bishop of Covington

on Saturday, May 18, 2024
at 10 o’clock in the morning

Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption
1130 Madison Avenue,
Covington, Kentucky



**Bishop’s
Schedule**

April 23-26

Good Leaders, Good Shepherds retreat, Jesuit Spiritual Center, Milford

Sacrament of Confirmation, St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, 7 p.m.

April 24

Sacrament of Confirmation, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, 7 p.m.

April 25

Sacrament of Confirmation, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, 7 p.m.

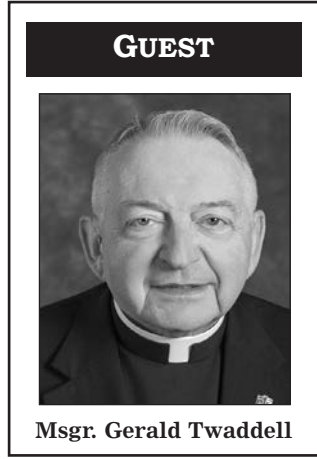
April 28

Mass and the Sacrament of Confirmation, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 10 a.m.

Cathedral Parish celebration, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington, 11:30 a.m.

Cathedral Eucharistic Triptych revisited

In the March 22, 2024 edition of the *Messenger*, Dr. Cecelia Dorger presented a wonderful discussion of the central panel of Duvneck Eucharistic Triptych in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of our Cathedral. We may



Msgr. Gerald Twaddell

hope that readers were not misled by the phrasing of the second paragraph which might imply that the Crucifixion scene is not what is central to the Eucharist. After all, in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist Christ unites us to himself as he offers the Sacrifice of the Cross to his Father for our salvation. It is the central event of salvation history and the most important event for our lives.

From one side, Melchizedek looks longingly toward that moment which he could not imagine but only foreshadow in the bread and wine he offered with Abraham. From the other, Bishop Maes sees that great event with the eyes of faith through the Host in the monstrance he holds before him. Between them, the Holy Spirit and God the Father gaze upon the crucified Son of God made man as he obeys the

Father's will, fulfilling the eternal plan to restore fallen humanity with the Spirit's grace.

Dr. Dorger rightly emphasized the image of the Father holding the cross, supporting it for his Son. Eternally the Father speaks the Word who is the fulness of the Father's Truth. And eternally the Word who reveals his name in the Book of Revelation as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation" (Revelation 3:14) affirms all the Father is and loves, and unites himself with all the Father wills.

The Father's infinite love for the Word, and the Word's infinite love for the Father are one infinite Love who is their Spirit whom they pour forth upon all creation. The Father makes known his love for the Son to mere mortals, for example at the Jordan as Jesus is baptized by John, and again at the Transfiguration as Jesus strengthens his disciples ahead of the Passion.

The Spirit is ever present too, the Comforter given by the Father. So yes, from all eternity the Son is upheld by the Father and in his human life strengthened by the Holy Spirit. No wonder, then, that at the moment of his victory over sin and death they are there with him. The gesture of the Father represented in the painting reminds us of that great Trinitarian Mystery.

A further symbolism seems to be present in the image. Not only does the Father with the Holy Spirit hold up the Savior, he also accepts the act of obedience in which his Son offers forgiveness to the whole disobedient human

race. The Father welcomes, and rejoices in, the obedience of Jesus, the second Adam, which had been refused by the first Adam. The Father's joy in his Son washes us clean of the sad stain of our disobedience.

Still another layer of meaning can be discerned in the painting. Just as the Father had told the disciples of Jesus to listen to him, we can see the Father holding the Cross bearing His Only Begotten Son out to all the world, as though to say, "Come to him. See how far divine mercy and forgiveness are willing to go for you. Come share in this sacrifice he offers for you. Receive his Body and Blood and allow his life to grow in you till the moment when you join in his risen life forever."

The Father holds out the Cross, beckoning us to welcome the greatest gift the world will ever know. Whenever we celebrate the Eucharist, we accept the Father's invitation. We climb up onto the Cross to enter into the dying and rising of our Lord and Savior. We do not just remember the past, we live his presence. We enter into the joy of our Master. We weep for his dying; we cry out "Alleluia!" for his rising. This is the Eucharistic mystery in which we share.

Msgr. Gerald Twaddell is chaplain, Passionist Nuns, Erlanger; defender of the bond, Tribunal Office, Diocese of Covington; and rector, Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel; Wilbert L. and Ellen Hackman Zeigler Endowed Chair of Philosophy; and professor, Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky.

The way to find happiness

In his message for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations this year, Pope Francis acknowledges the fact that every vocation —



Sister Constance Veit, L.S.P.

from marriage to consecrated life and priesthood — involves a call from God embracing our entire existence. Realizing that every path in life is a call from God is worth pondering.

"Each year, the World Day of Prayer for Vocations invites us to reflect on the precious gift of the Lord's call to each of us, as members of his faithful pilgrim people, to participate in his loving plan and to embody the beauty of the Gospel in different states of life,"

Pope Francis wrote. "Hearing that divine call ... is the surest way for us to fulfill our deepest desire for happiness. Our life finds fulfillment when we discover who we are, what our gifts are, where we can make them bear fruit, and what path we can follow in order to become signs and instruments of love, generous acceptance, beauty and peace, wherever we find ourselves."

I'd like to reflect on two aspects of this message — that God is calling each of us to participate in his loving plan and that our acceptance of his plan is the surest way to

find personal fulfillment.

When we speak of someone having a "calling" we generally assume this means a call to priesthood or religious life. But this is a narrow understanding of the concept of vocation.

God has a plan for each of us; he is calling each of us to a specific vocation, which may or may not involve full-time service in the Church.

Realizing that God has a plan for us — and discerning what this plan is — is essential to our personal growth as we mature from childhood to adulthood. As the pope says, it's a matter of discovering who we are, what our gifts are and where we can make them bear fruit.

Do we take into account that our personal gifts have been "received"?

This is what St. Paul was trying to teach the Corinthians when he said, "What do you possess that you have not received? But if you have received it, why are you boasting as if you did not receive it?" (1 Cor 4:7)

Looking back on my own vocation, I realize that as a youngster I didn't look at my abilities and blessings as gifts given to me by God. I didn't even understand that God had a plan for my life — I thought that life was all about my plans!

I began volunteering with the Little Sisters of the Poor and the elderly — not because I felt God calling me to religious life or because I was committed to improving the lives of elderly people in need — but simply because I thought community service would "look good" on my college applications.

In just a few weeks, however, I discovered qualities

within myself that I never knew existed — gifts like love and empathy for the elderly and joy in making them happy — and I came to the conviction that caring for the elderly — giving my life for them — was my God-given purpose and my mission in life.

Discovering who I was, what my special gifts were and where I could make them bear fruit, led me to experience a sense of personal fulfillment and lasting joy. Despite life's inevitable ups and downs, this joy and purpose have never waned; they have endured for almost 40 years now.

Even when I was quite self-absorbed and ignorant of his ways, in his kindness God came to meet me where I was and to make himself known to me. This encounter, though completely unexpected, was very real.

When I look back at my own vocation, I often think of the words Pope Benedict XVI addressed to young people during his inaugural homily on April 24, 2005: "With great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open wide the doors to Christ — and you will find true life!"

If you think God might be calling you to a vocation of service, feel free to e-mail me at serenity@littlesistersofthepoor.org.

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

VOL. 94 **MESSENGER** No. 15
 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.

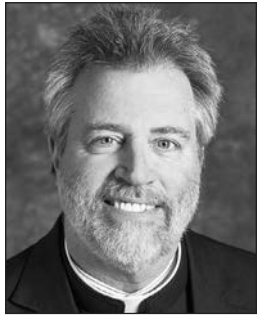
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Thy will be done

The readings for the fourth Sunday of Easter — Cycle B — are: Acts 4:8-12; 1 John 3:1-2; and John 10:11-18.

“This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own.”

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Stephen Bankemper

This remarkable statement of Jesus’ that we hear in John’s Gospel this Sunday teaches us something important about Jesus and the nature of his Passion, but it also holds an important lesson for us and our lives.

Let us begin with an insight Dr. Brant Pitre has in these lines: “What makes the death of Christ meritorious, what makes it so precious in the eyes of the Father, is not just how much Christ suffered

..., but how much He loved in freely choosing to lay His life down... He could have at any moment stopped the Passion ...”

Dr. Pitre’s implication is correct that we often — perhaps most often — focus on the amount and type of Christ’s suffering; in fact, most meditations on the Stations of the Cross are built upon that. But Pitre’s insight is not only correct, but corrective. Jesus’ sacrifice is not simply that he suffers, but that he freely chooses his Passion.

One might argue that the pivotal moment in Jesus’ passion, then, is not his scourging or crowning with thorns, or his carrying of the cross or even — one must be careful here — his dying, but his prayer in the garden, “Not my will, but thine.” This is the moment that truly shows his love of, and surrender to, the Father.

We can apply this same principle to our lives. What matters most is not the amount of our sacrifice or suffering, but the willingness with which we accept our suffering. Suffering undertaken grudgingly or with complaints or self-pity is still suffering, and worthwhile, but willingly modeling our lives after Christ’s, receiving suffering as an opportunity to show love to God is another matter altogether.

“What can I give Him?” the poet asks in a well-known Christmas poem, and finally concludes, “Give Him my heart.” We may not be able to do great things, but as Mother Teresa of Kolkata taught us, we can do even small things “with great love.”

Ironically, we put ourselves in Jesus’ position quite often. Every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we pray, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

What is God’s will? Everything that presents itself to us at every moment of our lives. This is the great insight Father Walter Ciszek shares with us in his book, “He Leadeth Me.” Nothing comes to us without passing through God’s will first, nothing bypasses God, nothing is out of his power:

So if suffering presents itself to us, we can assume it is a cross offered to us by God. Small or large, easy or hard, it is an opportunity to show love to God. We may not be able to offer a sacrifice to God as large or important as Christ’s sacrifice, but we can offer it willingly as he did, and thereby suffer as he did, doing our small part with great love.

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

Time for a reset

Potty training has, by far, been the worst part of parenting. It’s messy, it’s frustrating, and you are trying to control your temper because you know that it’s a learning process, but it is rough.



Sarah Torres

frustration, I came to the conclusion that we just needed to start over.

Realizing that something isn’t working and knowing that to be successful you need to start all over again is probably one of the most confidence destroying things, isn’t it? You must swallow your pride, pick yourself up and walk back to the beginning.

It always seems so much worse when you must include other people in what feels like a failure. To start at square one with my daughter; I had to take three days off work so she could be the center of my focus. I had to arrange for my husband and mother to take over caring for my younger daughter and keeping the house running so that every moment of my day was centered on my eldest.

Maybe that doesn’t seem like a big deal, but to my perfectionist brain having to admit to everyone around me that it wasn’t working the way I thought it should and I was going to need to try again was crushing.

Easter Monday, I woke up, took a deep breath, and put on a smile as I explained to my daughter that we were going to get to spend all day together, just the two of us. Her smile at the idea was enough to make me realize this

wasn’t quite the failure I thought it was. Three days, just the two of us, starting over again. Maybe a reset wasn’t such a bad thing.

Often, we find ourselves looking at Lent as the worse part of being Catholic. The fasting, the abstaining, and you are forced to look over yourself and reevaluate. That can be rough. At the beginning of Lent, we make so many promises to ourselves and to God about what we are going to give up and how we are going to be better. For many when Passiontide and Holy Week arrive, we come face to face with all the ways we failed to keep, including with our expectations of ourselves.

For some of us, like myself, who are very sensitive, Holy Week comes with tears. The hymns begin about our Lord being hung on the cross, about the news of his death, and tears slide down my cheeks as I approach the cross. Realizing that the innocent Son was sacrificed for us, who are in so many ways so unworthy, who continue to promise to be better and continue to fail, is overwhelming. It is almost too much to bear ... and then God gives us a reset.

Jesus lives again. Peter’s three denials are replaced by three professions of love. The Holy Spirit comes down and confessions are made. The gates of Paradise are reopened for all. We wake up every morning, take a deep breath, and put a smile on as we tell God that we are going to spend all day together. Three days in darkness, starting all over again. Maybe Lent wasn’t such a bad thing, it was the preparation, the reminder, to look at the wonder that is the Lord’s decision to let us reset.

Unfortunately, miracles were not performed over the three days my daughter and I spent together; but progress was. And I believe day-to-day progress does us more good than miracles. This past Lent, maybe no miracles happened for you, but I’m sure you made progress. If at the end of Lent, all you could see was the failure, Jesus could see the progress.

This Easter season, continue the progress, continue to reevaluate, and remember that we are never failures in the eyes of God. There is always a chance to reset.

Sarah Torres is the archivist for the Diocese of Covington, Ky

‘We Get Jesus’

You may have noticed television commercials with the tag line “Jesus Gets Us.” The commercials show images such as people hurting or crying or helping someone. The latest commercial is of people washing someone else’s feet. The commercials are touching. However, I think the message is twofold.



Deacon Peter Freeman

low him. That we are to bring the Gospel to the world by loving and serving others.

It is our role to get Jesus — to love and worship him and to obey his commandments and teachings.

The readings during Holy Week and Easter season show us that the power and command that Jesus has is

undeniable. At the end of the Gospel of the Good Shepherd, Jesus makes it clear that he didn’t have to suffer and die, “This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father.” (John 10:17-18)

To “Get Jesus” we must know that neither the Jews nor Romans killed him. They didn’t have the power to kill the Son of God. Rather, he willingly gave up his life for our salvation. This power, this kingship, isn’t Jesus being our “buddy,” or Jesus “getting us.” It is Jesus asserting his kingship over us with God the Father.

At the end of time, Jesus has promised that he will come to us again. In the book of Revelations it is written, “They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.” (Rev. 17:14)

Jesus is our powerful King. We are the called and chosen and faithful. Jesus knows us, sees us, loves us and wants us to live as he has taught us. It is up to us to recognize Jesus as our King, to obey him and to follow him. To show the world not only that Jesus gets us — but that “We Get Jesus.”

Deacon Peter Freeman is assigned to St. Philip Parish, Melbourne, Ky

In age of excess, temperance helps one experience real joy, pope says

Cindy Wooden

Catholic News Service

Exercising the virtue of temperance is not a recipe for a boring life, Pope Francis said, but rather it is the secret to enjoying every good thing.

If one wants “to appreciate a good wine, savoring it in small sips is better than swallowing it all in one go. We all know this,” the pope said April 17 at his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square.

Continuing a series of audience talks about vices and virtues, the pope focused on temperance, which the Catechism of the Catholic Church defines as “the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.”

Temperance is “the virtue of the right measure” in what one does and what one says, the pope said. “In a world where so many people boast about saying what they think, the temperate person prefers instead to think about what he or she says.”

“Do you understand the difference?” Pope Francis asked people in the square. It means “I don’t say whatever pops into my head. No, I think about what I must say.”

A temperate person does not allow “a moment’s anger to ruin relationships and friendships that can then only be rebuilt with difficulty,” the pope said. Temperance with words is especially important in families to keep “tensions, irritations and anger in check.”

“There is a time to speak and a time to be silent, but both require the right measure,” he said.

Being temperate, he said, does not mean never getting annoyed or frustrated, Pope Francis said, but he kept repeating the phrase with “the right measure” and “the right way.”

For example, “a word of rebuke is at times healthier than a sour, rancorous silence,” he said. “The temperate person knows that nothing is more uncomfortable than correcting another person, but he or she also knows that it is necessary; otherwise, one offers free reign to evil.”

A temperate person “affirms absolute principles and asserts non-negotiable values,” the pope said, but he or she



CNS photo/Pablo Esparza

Pope Francis stops to talk with a group of children after his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican April 17, 2024.

does so in a way that shows understanding and empathy for others.

In other words, he said, a temperate person has the gift of balance, “a quality as precious as it is rare” in a world given to excess.

“It is not true that temperance makes one gray and joyless,” Pope Francis said. On the contrary, it increases “the joy that flourishes in the heart of those who recognize and value what counts most in life.”

Senior Mass

(Continued from page 1)

to fill this need?”

Father Keene continued, “The world is always full of need ... these stories tell us that generosity won’t be wasted — that God will use it in pretty amazing ways.”

“That’s something really to rejoice in,” he said, “There’s nothing as fulfilling, I think, than to be of substantial help to other people ... life is a school of learning to love.”

As the homily concluded, Father Keene quoted humanitarian Albert Schweitzer as he once addressed a group of graduates; “I don’t know what your destiny will be. But one thing I know, the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve.”

Public and homeschool high school graduate Mass

(Continued from page 1)

praise, “Giving thanks for what God has done, is doing, and entrusting what he will do in the future.”

The tradition of the baccalaureate Mass dates to Oxford in 1432, where as part of the ceremony each graduate had to recite a sermon in Latin as a display of academic excellence. Though the modern baccalaureate Mass requires no mastery of Latin or any other display of academic excellence, it is an opportunity to have the last thing done in a student’s high school tenure be a Mass meant to specifically be “an opportunity to bring them into the presence of God,” said Mrs. Poat, it’s a “beautiful experience.”

The inaugural public and homeschool baccalaureate Mass will be held at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, May 1, 5:30 p.m. You do not have to be Catholic to attend, everyone is welcome along with their families and friends.

There will be a reception afterward with, “light dinner and heavy desserts,” said Mrs. Poat. If you would like to attend the reception it is requested that you RSVP using the link on the diocesan website, www.covdio.org. It is important to note that you do not have to RSVP to attend the Mass.



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Encouragement, Eucharistic adoration key to fostering priest vocations, report shows

Gina Christian
OSV News

Personal encouragement and Eucharistic adoration are crucial in fostering vocations to the priesthood, according to data from a newly released report.

On April 15, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University released the 2024 “Survey of Ordinands to the Priesthood,” a report made directly to the Secretariat of Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The report comes in advance of the 61st annual World Day of Prayer for Vocations, celebrated this year on April 21, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, which is also known as Good Shepherd Sunday in the Latin Church. The Gospel passage (Jn 10:11-18) for the Mass highlights Jesus’ role as the Good Shepherd.

The online survey, which CARA has overseen since 2006, was completed by 392 of the 475 total ordinands for 2024 from both diocesan and religious order seminaries who were invited to participate. The ordinands represented 128 dioceses and 29 religious institutes in the U.S.

Most 2024 respondents said they had first considered a vocation when they were 16 years old, and their average age of ordination was 34, a number consistent with the range of 33-37 reported since 1999.

Two thirds (67 percent) of the ordination class is white; 18 percent Hispanic or Latino; 11 percent Asian, Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian; and 2 percent are Black or African American. About one quarter (23 percent) of the ordinands are foreign-born — coming to live in the U.S. on average 14 years ago at 22 years old — with Mexico (5 percent), Vietnam (4 percent), Colombia (3 percent) and the Philippines (2 percent) the most common countries of origin among them.

A majority of ordinands (82 percent) said they grew up with both their parents as Catholic, and 29 percent reported having a relative who was a priest or religious.

More than half of the respondents (60 percent) had completed an undergraduate or graduate-level degree prior to entering the seminary, with business, liberal arts, philosophy and engineering topping the areas of study. Between 32 percent and 42 percent had attended a Catholic elementary school, high school or college.

Most ordinands (70 percent) had worked full time before entering the seminary, particularly in education (21 percent), business (16 percent) and church ministry (13 percent).

CARA’s executive director, Jesuit Father Thomas Gaunt, told OSV News that direct encouragement of young men to consider priestly life is a “perennial factor” in vocations, with 89 percent of the respondents, or nine in 10, reporting they had received such support — usually from a parish priest (63 percent), friend (41 percent) or parishioner (41 percent).

“You could almost say that ... no one shows up at the seminary who was not encouraged,” Father Gaunt said. “We generally see that men were encouraged by one, two, three, four different people in their life.”

Eucharistic adoration also emerged as significant in vocational discernment, with 75 percent of the respondents noting they had regularly prayed before the Blessed Sacrament prior to entering the seminary. The rosary was also a favorite devotion for 71 percent of those surveyed; another 40 percent practiced lectio divina, or meditative prayer with Scripture.



OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz, Long Island Catholic

A file photo shows a priest exchanging the sign of peace during his ordination to the priesthood at St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre, N.Y. Personal encouragement and Eucharistic adoration are crucial in fostering vocations to the priesthood, according to data from a report released April 15 by Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

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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.

The Newport Central Catholic Drama Club will present The SpongeBob Musical, April 19–21 and April 26 and 27. The Gala Performance will be Friday, April 19. For more details visit: NCCGala24.givesmart.com. Additional performances: April 20, 7 p.m., April 21, 2 p.m., April 26, 7 p.m. and April 27, 7 p.m. To purchase tickets, visit: <https://link.edgepi-lot.com/s/3d801c0f/rc39T-HK0CC8M99mfNjMA?u=https://gofan.co/app/school/KY6479> Tickets may also be purchased at the door by credit card.

"A Biblical Walk Through the Mass" video presentation by Edward Sri explores the extraordinary Biblical roots of the Liturgy and reveals what it all means and why it all matters. This fascinating tour of the Mass will renew your faith and deepen your love for and devotion to the Holy Eucharist. In the St. Barbara Parish Sterling Event Center, Erlanger, April 20, 11:30 a.m.–4 p.m. A light lunch will be served. Register at stbarbaraky.org click on Biblical Walk.

Bingo social, April 21, 1–5 p.m., St. Augustine Parish, Augusta. Entry fee \$10 to play, additional bingo cards optional. Must be 18 years old or over to play. Pull tabs, split-the-pot raffle available; drinks and snacks provided. After bingo, meal provided for players. Proceeds benefit the parish's Emergency Benevolent Fund.

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.

Morality and Law will be addressed by Nik Nikas with the Catholic Bar Association, at the Undercroft at St. Agnes Church, Ft. Wright, April 24, noon –1 p.m. Attorneys and non-attorneys are encouraged to attend. A box lunch will be available for \$10. Call (859) 431-6111 or e-mail fredsumme@summecolaw.com for reservations.

Sponsored by Catholics United for the Faith, Clay Ministries, and NKY Right to Life.

Deacon Ministry information meeting May 4, 9 a.m.–noon, Bishop Howard Memorial Hall, Covington. Men interested in discerning a call to Diaconal Ministry in the Diocese of Covington are invited attend an information session with the directors of the Deacon Formation Program. Wives are encouraged to attend. Reservations are requested. Contact: Deacon Brian Cox, BCox@covdio.org, or Msgr. Gerald Reinersman, GReinersman@covdio.org, (859) 392-1500.

Diocesan Catholic Children's Home, Ft. Mitchell, Foster Care/Adoption free **Open House**, May 5, 1:30–3:30 p.m. Learn more about the need for foster and adoptive parents, mentors and respite providers. There are many ways to support children. Visit DCCHCenter.org or call (859) 331-2040 but no registration is required.

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 certificates, 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.

Thomas More Summer Theatre Workshop, July 8-19, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. This two-week long workshop is for stu-

dents (grades 10-12) to explore and enhance their performing arts skills in a fun and supportive environment. The workshop will provide a unique blend of acting, voice, movement, and stagecraft workshops. Participants have the chance to collaborate with their peers, build confidence, and create lasting memories. To register, visit <https://form.jotform.com/240565535346055>.

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.

Donate a bike —Change a Life! **Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington started a new ministry, Pickett's Corner in 2023.** The new ministry distributes and repairs bicycles to those in need in the area. Most people receiving a bike use it for transportation to work, store or doctor appointments. Adult-size bikes need. E-mail pickettscorner23@gmail.com if you have a bike to donate. The volunteer team will pick it up.

Bishop Brossart High School Theatre Summer Camp for students in grades K-9, a one-week camp to learn about all aspects of theatre and put on a full production musical, "The Lion King." Call the school for information.



St. Francis Xavier parishioners recognized for community service

Pictured are some of the parishioners of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Falmouth, who were recognized by the Northern Kentucky Community Action Commission's Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) at the annual gala for their time and talents given to others in the community for the 2023 year. Volunteers gave their time to local food pantries, nursing homes, schools, the Pendleton County public library, and churches among others.



Feed the hungry Becca Gerding from St. Vincent De Paul Food Pantry visited St. Joseph School, Cold Spring, to speak with the first grade classes and explain how their donations help people in need as they follow Christ The Corporal Works of Mercy. The first week of Lent was designated to feed the hungry.

‘Your pastors and parishes are grateful to you,’ says Bishop Iffert

Bella Young

Multimedia Correspondent

Servers, pastors and parents gathered at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, to celebrate Solemn Vespers and the Serra Club of Northern Kentucky Server Award. These awards, made noticeable by the characteristic blue ribbon and crucifix, signify the gratitude felt by Bishop Iffert and the priests throughout the Diocese for all the servers. In his letter in the front of the event program Bishop Iffert wrote to the servers being celebrated saying, “your pastors and parishes are grateful to you.”

The awards are provided by the Serra Club of Northern Kentucky. Founded in 1961, the Northern Kentucky Chapter of the Serra Club has “remained committed to the

ideals of personal spiritual growth and encouraging church vocations.” As written in the event program, one of the chief ways this mission is accomplished is “...to acknowledge the dedicated service of the young people who serve their parish communities as Altar Servers.”

Father Michael Elmlinger, parochial vicar, St. Timothy Parish, Union, and chaplain, Covington Latin School, Covington, spoke in his homily about what it truly means to be an altar server:

“You as servers have a unique privilege, a unique honor given to you where you are the ones who are able to stand directly in front of that altar. You are the ones who are able to announce to the world that Christ is present in that holy Eucharist,” he said.

Speaking to the 251 altar servers receiving their awards, Father Elmlinger expressed not only his gratitude to the servers but also gratitude on behalf of all the Diocesan priests.

“On behalf of all the priests, thank you. Thank you for all that you have done and will continue to do, and please keep serving with pride and keep holding the light of Christ. Keep representing the angels before our heavenly Father,” he said.

Bishop Iffert blessed and distributed the awards. The award may be worn while the recipients serve at the altar. Following the service there was a cookies and punch reception in Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium hosted by the Serra Club.

Young photos



(above left) Father Michael Elmlinger, parochial vicar, St. Timothy Parish, Union, preached the homily.
(above) Bishop Iffert speaks to a young server after giving him the award.
(left) Servers follow along in their event program.

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Whose Holy Land is it? A history of the most contested swath of land in the Middle East

Jennifer Barton and Rick Snizek
OSV News

To this day, the Holy Land remains perhaps the most hotly contested piece of territory in the Middle East, if not the world. From its Mediterranean Sea coastline to the Jordan River, with a rocky landscape in between, home to the Dead Sea — the lowest elevation on the face of the earth — a history of conflict has garnered more headlines through the years than the fact that Israel and the West Bank are home to myriad sacred and historic sites significant to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

It's been almost five months since the Gaza Strip became a target of Israel's air, sea and ground offensive launched in response to Hamas' brutal Oct. 7 attack on Israel. The surprise attack by more than 1,300 Hamas terrorists left more than 1,200 Israelis and other nationals dead, and about 250 others, including more than 30 children, were taken hostage and brought back into Gaza. During a brief ceasefire in November, 105 hostages were released; in February two others were rescued. Hamas also holds the remains of about 30 hostages who were either killed on Oct. 7 or died in their captivity.

The Israeli offensive prompted Palestinians to flee Gaza City to the south, but the situation became beyond desperate anywhere across the Gaza Strip with the United Nations estimating that a quarter of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians face starvation.

More than 30,000 Gaza Palestinians have been killed since the beginning of the war Oct. 7, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

In the endless cycle of violence in the Gaza Strip, at least 70 people were killed in a strike early morning Feb. 29 on a crowd of Palestinians waiting for humanitarian aid in Gaza City.

Why would thousands of people over centuries fight for the right to live in a country roughly the size of New Jersey?

Israel has a long and complex history, tied to the Jewish people since biblical times, hence their claim to the land. But the Jewish people have not always occupied it. The Holy Land has changed hands many times over the centuries, spurring other peoples to claim the land as their own. The main question in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains: Who has the right to the land?

It is not an easy web to untangle. It's a story of conquering and being conquered, settling and resettling.

According to biblical accounts, which the Jewish people point to in defense of their claim, even they were aliens in the land that became Judea. Though God promised a land "flowing with milk and honey" to Abraham and his descendants, it was mere generations before those descendants left that land for Egypt and better prospects for food in the midst of famine.

After decades of slavery in that country, God chose Moses to lead the Jewish people back to the land he had promised them. At that point, the Canaanites — peoples of various Indigenous populations across the Levant — had settled there and the Israelites were expected to fight, and eradicate, most of these ancient peoples to reclaim their land.

Two Israelite kingdoms, Israel (in the north) and Judah (in the south), inhabited the land that first became known as Palestine in the 12th century B.C., with written records showing the term "Peleset" was used by the 20th Dynasty of Egypt to describe the neighboring land to their north.

Even after centuries of occupation, these two kingdoms were both conquered, one by the Assyrian Empire and the other by the Babylonians, respectively. The kingdom of Israel vanished from the earth; the Judean people were exiled to the far reaches of the Babylonian Empire, and the Temple of Solomon destroyed.

When the Persian Empire conquered the Babylonians, Cyrus the Great in 538 B.C. allowed the Jewish people to return to their homeland and build the Second Temple. Construction began 521 B.C. and was completed around 515 B.C.

Following the death of Jesus Christ and the birth of Christianity, Judea, which had been a Roman ally since the second century B.C., was made a province of the Roman Empire in 6 A.D. However, in the year 70 A.D., in the course of the Jewish-Roman War, the Roman Empire besieged



OSV News photo/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa, Reuters
Palestinians inspect a mosque destroyed in Israeli strikes in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, Oct. 8, 2023, a day after a brutal attack on Israel by more than 1,300 Hamas terrorists that left more than 1,200 Israelis and other nationals dead. Hamas took more than 200 others, including about 30 children, hostage and brought them back into Gaza. More than 30,000 Gaza Palestinians have been killed since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and killed or enslaved most of the Jewish people living therein. Though many Jewish people remained in some areas of Palestine, the majority had been scattered across the Empire.

Over the centuries of Roman rule and the rise of Christianity, the Holy Land became less Jewish and more Christian. The remains of the Roman Empire had transferred to Constantinople by the time Rome fell to barbarian invasion and became known as the Byzantine Empire.

The rapid rise and spread of Islam in the seventh century led to the conquest of the Holy Land yet again. The Dome of the Rock was built upon the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, between 685-691 A.D., by the caliph 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan as a mashhad, or shrine for pilgrims. Its golden dome above the Western Wall, which existed in the time of Jesus, forms an iconic image of Jerusalem known to many the world over.

Christians would reconquer and occupy the Levant for a short-lived period of the Middle Ages, establishing the Crusader States. With the fall of Acre — in coastal northern Israel today — in 1291 A.D., Muslim caliphates gained full control of the Holy Land for centuries, eventually being overtaken by the large and powerful Ottoman Empire until its collapse after World War I.

Even while the Holy Land remained under Christian and Muslim control for centuries, Jewish people who remained there and throughout Europe faced varying levels of persecution and expulsion from places they had lived for decades. In the late 1800s, the Zionist movement — the desire of many Jews to return to "Zion" or the land of their ancestry — expanded in response to antisemitism in Europe. Jewish people began to move back to Palestine. As the Ottoman Empire had sided with the Central Powers in World War I, Allied forces conquered the Levant in the Middle Eastern theater of the war, and the Palestine area came under British control.

In the early 20th century, the League of Nations instituted the "mandate" system to administer non-self-governing territories. On July 24, 1922, the League entrusted Great Britain with the Mandate for Palestine, with the body recognizing "the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine."

The Mandate for Palestine recognized the historic homeland of the Jewish people. With this official recognition and the growing Zionism movement, more Jewish people emigrated to the region, leading to hostilities between them and those already living there, particularly Arabs.

The end of World War II only exacerbated the situation, and the British chose to evacuate, ending the mandate on May 15, 1948. Israeli leaders, led by first Prime Minister

David Ben-Gurion, declared the formation of their new state on May 14, 1948. Israel was admitted to the United Nations a year later.

The Arab-Israeli War of 1948 broke out when five Arab nations — Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt, with Saudi Arabia sending a formation that fought under the Egyptian command — invaded territory in the former Palestinian mandate.

The Israeli forces repelled the attacks and eventually gained the offensive. A year later, in July 1949, separate agreements were reached between Israel and the neighboring states of Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan (called Transjordan until 1949) and Syria, establishing formal armistice lines.

In the agreements, Israel added some territory

formerly granted to Palestinian Arabs under the United Nations resolution in 1947, while Egypt retained control over the Gaza Strip and Jordan over the West Bank, respectively.

The Six-Day War, as it is known to Israelis, was waged from June 5-10, 1967, primarily against Egypt, Syria and Jordan. By the end, Israel defeated the three Arab armies and expanded its territory to four times its original size, capturing East Jerusalem, including the Old City, the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. Israel's gradual return of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt was completed in 1982.

Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, is in the West Bank, outside Jerusalem, where he was crucified and buried.

In 1994, Palestinian self-government was implemented in the Gaza Strip and Jericho area of the West Bank. Also, that year, Israel and Jordan signed the Oslo Accords — for which Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Full diplomatic relations with the Holy See were also established in 1994.

In 1995, Palestinian self-government was broadened with its implementation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. St. John Paul II visited the Holy Land in 2000.

In the ensuing years, a constant series of attacks by Hamas in Gaza lead to Israel launching a series of airstrikes on Hamas targets in December 2008, with the war ending three weeks later with a unilateral Israeli ceasefire, although it would not be the end of conflict between Israel and Hamas.

On Dec. 6, 2017, the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

For two weeks in May 2021, there was a major outbreak in violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Golan Heights and along the Lebanon border: It began with the Jerusalem District Court's eviction of six Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem.

The current Israel-Gaza War that began Oct. 7 has as its objective the freeing of the hostages still held by Hamas and ending of Hamas rule in the coastal enclave. On Feb. 26, U.S. officials signaled progress on negotiations on a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas. However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in an interview with "Face the Nation" on CBS the same day said it remained unclear if a deal can be reached with Hamas that would bring the release of Israeli hostages in exchange for Palestinians prisoners.

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Mystagogy — a time to reflect

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Lent ends and the Easter season begins with the Easter Vigil, celebrated after dusk on Holy Saturday. During the Easter Vigil, OCIA (formerly RCIA) catechumens and candidates are baptized, confirmed and welcomed as full members of the Catholic Church.

However, this is not the end of their Christian initiation — the fourth stage of OCIA begins in the period between the Easter celebration and Pentecost. This period, called “mystagogy,” is a period where “newly baptized members reflect on their experiences at the Easter Vigil and continue to learn more about the Scriptures, the Sacraments and the teachings of the Catholic Church. In addition, they reflect on how they will serve Christ and help in the Church’s mission and outreach activities,” according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The term “mystagogy” comes from the Greek “mystagogos,” meaning “person who initiates into mysteries.” While technical initiation may be completed, newly baptized and all Catholics have much to learn about their faith and are encouraged to explore deeper during the period of mystagogy through service, reflection and prayer.




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A stained glass window depicting the Holy Spirit, as seen in St. Peter’s Basilica, Rome.



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Fraction: A sign of unity



Body and Blood of Jesus Christ remains a beautiful part of the Communion Rite as it expresses a great reality. When the consecration takes place, the bread and the wine are consecrated separately, for this is how our Lord instituted the memorial sacrifice of His death on the cross. He anticipated how His death would take place: the separation of His Body and Blood and He bled to His death on the cross. The commingling at this point during the Mass symbolizes the Resurrection of Jesus when on the third day His Body and Soul were reunited forever” (*A Study of the Mass*, p. 19).

Father Luke Spannagel
USCCB

The *Roman Missal* indicates that during the singing or recitation of the Lamb of God, the priest “takes the host, breaks it over the paten, and places a small piece in the chalice, saying quietly: ‘May this mingling of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ bring eternal life to us who receive it.’”

We call this part of the Mass the Fraction or the Breaking and the Commingling. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* teaches that, “The ‘Breaking,’ from the Latin, *fractio*, is the act of breaking the bread of the species consecrated in the Mass” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 226), which is why the breaking is sometimes called the fracturing rite.

“This rite, which is simple in its appearance, is full of ancient meaning. At the Last Supper, Jesus ‘broke the bread’ to distribute to the disciples. After the Resurrection, the disciples recognized Jesus in the ‘Breaking of the Bread.’ Both in the Acts of the Apostles and in the letters of St. Paul, the Eucharistic celebration is often referred to as ‘breaking of the bread.’” (*A Study of the Mass* p. 19). Dr. Edward Sri notes several Scripture passages regarding “Breaking the Bread,” including: Mt 14:19; 15:36; Mk 6:41; 8:6; Lk 9:16; Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24; Lk

24:30; Acts 2:42, 46 (*A Biblical Walk Through the Mass*, pp. 132–33).

“Breaking Bread” is a sign of our unity, together sharing in the “one loaf.” Although for practicality many churches use smaller hosts for the distribution of Holy Communion, the symbolism of the fracturing reminds us that we are united together in Christ, not only in the Mass where we are but also with those present at Mass in every time and place.

Another sign of unity is the Church’s direction that, if possible, the faithful should receive Communion from hosts consecrated at that particular Mass. We know Christ is truly present and remains so in the hosts reserved in the tabernacle. Receiving hosts consecrated in the Mass we are participating in provides a sign of unity and also strengthens our participation in the sacrifice of Christ. (Recall from the Old Testament/Temple times that people were given a portion of the sacrifice, and their participation was completed through eating that portion.)

As mentioned above, after the initial breaking of the Host, the priest breaks off a small piece and places it into the chalice. This is called the “Commingling.” As the Diocese of Peoria explains, “Placing a piece of the host in the chalice is a very ancient custom dating back to at least the fourth century. Originally, it was designed to show unity and communion between the pope, bishops and their local Churches. Fragments of the host from the Masses celebrated by the pope or bishop were carried by the deacons to the local churches and placed into the chalices during the celebration of the Mass. It symbolized the reality that the entire [C]hurch is present at every Mass. Even though it is not practiced as such today, the commingling of the

Reminding us that the whole Christ is present in either/both the consecrated Host and/or the Chalice, Charles Belmonte writes, “Some say that the separated species signify the Victim in the state of death (the body in one place, the blood in another), whereas in reality our Lord is present in either and in both species, as he is in heaven, living and glorious. Therefore, the mingling symbolizes the re-union of Christ’s body and soul as in his resurrection. It is, however, probable that the mingling must have corresponded to the dogmatic need to show clearly the unity and indivisibility of the body and blood of Jesus Christ” (*Understanding the Mass*, pp. 179–80).

As a priest, I really enjoy thinking about the ancient custom of having the deacon bring a fragment of a host consecrated at Mass by the bishop. Sometimes after the commingling prayer, I will silently say a short prayer for the bishop. I ask the Lord to gift him with wisdom and strength to lead us well. I ask that he be strengthened through reception of the Eucharist and that his heart continue to become more like Christ’s. In that moment, this sign of unity recalls me back to ordination day, when priests promise respect and obedience to the bishop and his successors.

The Eucharist truly is our sacrament of unity — drawing each of us into greater unity with Christ and with one another.

All that from the Fraction Rite and Commingling! This rite shows us very concretely that there are no parts of the Mass without deep meaning, even gestures that may seem small. Does this mean we have to pay attention at every moment? Do your best, and realize that if you wander off, you might miss something really special.

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Seek contact with nature to change polluting lifestyles, pope says

Justin McLellan
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Humanity must have more direct contact with nature to counter the modern lifestyles that are destroying the planet, Pope Francis said.

Respecting and loving the earth as well as seeking direct contact with nature “are values that we need so much today as we discover ourselves increasingly powerless before the consequences of irresponsible and shortsighted exploitation of the planet,” he told members of the Italian Catholic Movement of Adult Scouts.

Meeting with the members, dressed in their scouting uniforms, at the Vatican April 13, the pope said people in modern society are “prisoners of lifestyles and behaviors that are as selfishly deaf to every appeal of common sense as they are tragically self-destructive; insensitive to the cry of a wounded earth, as well as to the voice of so many brothers and sisters unjustly marginalized and excluded from an equitable distribution of goods.”

“In the face of this, the Scouts’ sober, respectful and frugal style sets a great example for all,” he said.

Pope Francis highlighted the group’s recent charitable efforts, such as donating an incubator for infants to an emergency care center in Lampedusa, Italy, a landing point for migrants coming into the country.

The incubator, he said, “symbolizes the joy of a child coming into the world, the commitment to ensure that he or she can grow well, the expectation and hope for what he or she may become.”

“We live in a time of a dramatically falling birthrate,” the pope said, noting that the median age in Italy is 46 while the median age in nearby Albania is 23. The falling birthrate shows that humanity “seems to have lost its taste

for creating and caring for others, and perhaps even its taste for living,” he said.

Sending the incubator to the Lampedusa reception center “further underlines that love for life is always open and universal, desirous of the good of all, regardless of origin or any other condition.”

The scouts also helped build a nautical carpentry workshop in Zambia which he said is aligned with the human vocation of transforming God’s gifts “into instruments of good,” particularly in a world “where there is so much talk, perhaps too much, about producing weapons to make war.”



Pope Francis greets members of the Italian Catholic Movement of Adult Scouts during a meeting at the Vatican April 13, 2023.

CNS photo/Vatican Media

the pope encouraged the scouts to “take charge” of the current climate crisis and from there, to deeply consider “the specific place that human beings occupy in this world and their relations with the reality that surrounds them.”

Citing his 2015 encyclical “Laudato Si’, On Care for Our Common Home,”

the pope encouraged the scouts to “take charge” of the current climate crisis and from there, to deeply consider “the specific place that human beings occupy in this world and their relations with the reality that surrounds them.”

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Pope Francis grants plenary indulgences for National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, Congress participants

Maria Wiering
OSV News

Participants in the National Eucharistic Congress and related National Eucharistic Pilgrimage now have opportunities to receive plenary indulgences, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, announced April 9.

“It is with gratitude to the Holy Father that we receive his Apostolic Blessing upon the participants in the National Eucharistic Congress, and for the opportunity for Catholics in our country to obtain a plenary indulgence by participating in the events of the Eucharistic Revival,” he said in a USCCB statement.

According to the statement, Archbishop Broglio, who also leads the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, had requested that a plenary indulgence be available to Catholics who participate in the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage and that “he or another prelate be designated to impart the Apostolic Blessing with a Plenary Indulgence” to the faithful joining the National Eucharistic Congress.

The requests were granted in two separate decrees by the Apostolic Penitentiary, an office with the church’s cen-

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tral administrative body known as the Roman Curia, which grants the use of indulgences “as expressions of divine mercy,” the statement said. Both decrees were approved by Pope Francis.

The congress and preceding pilgrimage are efforts of the National Eucharistic Revival, a three-year initiative of the U.S. bishops that began in 2022 to inspire greater understanding of and love for Jesus in the Eucharist. Held in Indianapolis July 17-21 at Lucas Oil Stadium, the congress aims to bring together tens of thousands of Catholics for liturgies, devotions and well-known

Catholic speakers.

Beginning the weekend of May 17-18, 24 young adults in four groups are traveling thousands of miles to the congress from starting points in California, Connecticut, Minnesota and Texas. Pilgrims in this National Eucharistic Pilgrimage plan to travel — often by foot — with the Eucharist in a monstrance, with stops along the routes for Mass and Eucharistic adoration at local parishes and national shrines. The “perpetual pilgrims” anticipate thousands of Catholics from across the country will join them at pilgrimage events or journey with them for segments of the routes.

Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minnesota,

chair of the board of directors of the National Eucharistic Congress, told OSV News that the “tradition of giving an indulgence for pilgrimages and important celebrations is ancient.”

“We are grateful to the Holy Father through the Apostolic Penitentiary that offers this blessing to those who are seeking to grow in greater purity of heart through the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage and Congress,” he said. “These events will be great moments of conversion which this indulgence points to as we seek to be free from the effects of our sins. We are grateful for the Holy Father’s blessing on these events.”

He added, “Pope Francis himself said that (the) ‘National Eucharistic Congress marks a significant moment in the life of the Church in the United States’ and he prayed that the National Eucharistic Congress would guide men and women throughout our country to the Lord who, by his presence among us, rekindles hope and renews life.”

According to the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “Indulgences are the remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. The faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains the indulgence under prescribed conditions for either himself or the departed. Indulgences are granted through the ministry of the Church which, as the dispenser of the grace of redemption, distributes the treasury of the merits of Christ and the Saints.”

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National/World

Court hears Catholic-led challenge to state abortion mandate

ALBANY, N.Y. — Religious groups in New York challenged the state’s abortion mandate in arguments before its highest court April 16, arguing over the qualifying criteria for exemptions based on religious beliefs. The case, *Diocese of Albany v. Vullo*, involves women religious, Catholic dioceses and faith-based organizations protesting the mandate to cover abortion in their health insurance plans contrary to their religious convictions. New York’s Department of Financial Services introduced the mandate in 2017, eventually narrowing exemptions to religious groups primarily focused on teaching religious values and serving and hiring those who share their faith. However, that criteria excludes Catholic organizations like Catholic Charities, which serve all, regardless of faith. The case, now before the New York Court of Appeals, was brought by public-interest law firms, Becket and Jones Day, representing various Catholic, Anglican/Episcopal, Lutheran and Baptist groups, after the U.S. Supreme Court vacated prior New York state court rulings and ordered the mandate reconsidered in light of its recent jurisprudence on the First Amendment’s free exercise clause. Noel Francisco, a former U.S. solicitor general who argued the case for Jones Day, said the mandate put the state in the position of deciding who is authentically religious and is “not a question this court should answer.” Laura Etlinger, an assistant solicitor general for the state, argued that the burden of the mandate “is constitutionally tolerable” if rules “are objective and uniformly applied.”

Catholic report calls for improvements to app used by asylum-seekers

WASHINGTON — A report released April 17 by Catholic migrant advocates sheds light on accessibility challenges encountered by asylum-seekers utilizing CBP One, a mobile app managed by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to secure asylum appointments and legally enter the United States. Since January 2023, over 64.3 million appointment requests — inclusive of the multiple appointments that can be made by a single person — have been made through the app by migrants in Mexico, as CBS News reported in February, with nearly 450,000 asylum-seekers being admitted into the U.S. over that time. But a report released April 17, conducted by Jesuit Refugee Service USA and Boston College School of Social Work, underscores the plight of asylum-seekers waiting in Mexico for their appointments. It highlights challenges such as the need for smartphones to access the CBP One app, access to Wi-Fi, and digital literacy, which can exacerbate already vulnerable situations. Father Alejandro Olayo-Méndez emphasized the pervasive violence migrants endure, as exemplified in the report by one mother from Honduras’ harrowing account of fleeing gang threats to protect her family. The report’s recommendations include improving the CBP One app’s accessibility and addressing digital literacy barriers. By enhancing these aspects, the report contends, the U.S. can mitigate humanitarian concerns and expedite the asylum process, thus improving the well-being of migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Baltimore Archdiocese’s proposal could cut city parish locations

BALTIMORE — Catholics who worship at parishes in Baltimore City have the opportunity to weigh in on the proposal for *Seek the City*, the archdiocesan process underway for nearly two years to change the footprint of physical locations in the city while emphasizing a Eucharistic vision and a renewed vision for the city church in Baltimore. Geri Royale Byrd, director of the *Seek the City to Come* process, said the team and consultants are still listening, still taking feedback. The Archdiocese of Baltimore follows other dioceses around the country that have looked at the number of parish sites in light of changing demographics, and the human and capital resources to continue ministering effectively. Priests from the 61 parishes at 59 worship sites in the study area — all of Baltimore City and some close-in parishes in Baltimore County — were briefed on the latest proposal April 9, moving the process from the draft stage to a time for recommendations to Archbishop William E. Lori. *Seek the City* organizers have pointed out that there are far more seats available in the pews in the city than people attending Mass, and there are more funerals than baptisms.

Court allows ban for some hormones, surgeries for transgender minors

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court temporarily allowed Idaho April 15 to enforce a ban on certain types of medical or

surgical gender reassignment procedures for minors who identify as transgender. State officials asked the high court to allow them to enforce the law while legal challenges to it play out. The court, on ideological lines, granted that request, however, they exempted the plaintiffs who brought the case. But the justices’ main focus did not appear to be the Idaho law itself, but rather the question of universal injunctions, or when a single judge issues a wholesale ruling beyond the parties involved in the case. “In recent years, certain district courts across the country have not contented themselves with issuing equitable orders that redress the injuries of the plaintiffs before them, but have sought instead to govern an entire State or even the whole Nation from their courtrooms,” Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in his concurring opinion. “A rising number of universal injunctions virtually guarantees that a rising number of ‘high-profile’ cases will find their way to this Court,” Gorsuch wrote. Idaho’s law is part of a broader push by some Republican-led states seeking to restrict such physical or hormonal interventions and also to ban student athletes who identify as transgender from competing in school sports on teams that do not correspond to their biological sex.

Religious, civic leaders urge calm after second Sydney stabbing

SYDNEY — Australian religious and political leaders have called for calm and unity after the attempted murder of an Assyrian Orthodox clergyman at his church’s altar in Sydney’s western suburbs, just days after a separate knife attack claimed six lives in Sydney’s Bondi Junction mall. Assyrian Orthodox Bishop Mari Emmanuel, who rose to prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic for his fiery YouTube sermons, was stabbed at 7:10 p.m. April 15 at the altar of Christ the Good Shepherd Church in Wakeley, an independent church he established in 2015. In a now-removed livestream, a man in dark clothing could be seen approaching the altar and stabbing Bishop Emmanuel multiple times before congregants rushed up to stop the attack. Terrified screams could be heard before the stream was ended and deleted. The 16-year-old attacker was quickly restrained by the congregation, some of whom were injured in the attempt. The attacker in turn suffered severe injuries from the angry crowd that quickly formed, with police later confirming social media photos and rumors that at least one of his fingers was severed. Paramedics treated Bishop Emmanuel at the scene, later taking him to Liverpool Hospital where he was reportedly recovering well from non-life-threatening injuries. New South Wales Premier Chris Minns confirmed the stabbing was a “terrorist act” April 16.

New York bill expands hate crime criteria to protect houses of worship

ALBANY, N.Y. — Legislation in New York state would

expand the state’s criteria for a hate crime to include trespassing on houses of worship. The New York State Catholic Conference said in a memo April 9 to Empire State lawmakers that it strongly supports Senate Bill S7040 and Assembly Bill 6929, which, if passed, would add trespassing on a house of worship to the state’s parameters of a hate crime. “Current geopolitical events, culture wars and societal divisions have led to a significant increase in attacks on religious groups,” the NYSCC said. “This dangerous trend threatens the sacred right to religious freedom. Worshipers are living in fear as people are hurt, or worse. Churches, synagogues, and mosques have been desecrated and damaged. We must do more to put an end to this horror and protect religious liberty. This proposal is a good first step, and we applaud the sponsors for introducing it.” There was a 90% increase in hate crimes in New York between 2020 and 2022, per state data. The New York Police Department reported an additional spike in hate crimes following Hamas’ Oct. 7 attacks on Israel, with many such incidents of hate crimes directed at Jewish New Yorkers, and a quadrupling of online hate speech directed at New York’s Jewish and Muslim communities. The NYSCC memo urged the Legislature to “enact this critical piece of legislation” adding that “religious bigotry and hate cannot go unchecked.”

Vatican warns of potential religious freedom violation in court case

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican Secretariat of State sent a formal statement to the French Embassy to the Holy See reaffirming that Pope Francis had sent a top Vatican official to investigate a French religious congregation and warning that interference by a French civil court in an internal church matter could be a “serious violation” of religious freedom. Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office, confirmed April 13 that the Vatican had sent an explanatory “note verbale” to the embassy highlighting several points in connection to a French civil court decision made public April 3. The ruling by the one-judge tribunal of Lorient in France ordered 79-year-old Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, retired prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, and the two religious who assisted him in the investigation to pay a former nun more than \$194,000 for material damages, more than \$10,000 for “moral prejudice” and more than \$10,000 in legal costs for “abuse of rights” and “lack of impartiality” in their decision to dismiss her from her religious community. That community, the Congregation of the Dominican Sisters of the Holy Spirit, was also ordered to pay the former nun \$36,000 as a “duty of relief.” The defendants were appealing, according to *La Croix*, the French Catholic daily newspaper. Any final judgment from the Lorient tribunal, Bruni wrote, “could raise not only significant issues concerning immunity, but if it ruled on internal discipline and membership in a religious institute, it could also constitute a serious violation of the fundamental right of religious freedom and of the right of free association of Catholic faithful.”



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Curia employees are the ‘hands and feet of Christ’ during Curia Day of Service

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

A rainy April 10 did not stop more than 30 Diocese of Covington Curia employees, accompanied by religious vocation promoters from several communities of women religious, from venturing out into the community for a Curia Day of Service.

These individuals set forth to spend their morning volunteering at seven local nonprofits. These nonprofits included the Brighton Center, Newport, an organization which helps individuals and families with financial stability and independence; the Care Closet, which provides clothing to children in need; DCCH Center for Children and Families; Disabled American Veterans; Housing Opportunities of Northern Kentucky (HONK), which rehabilitates homes so that low-income families can enjoy the benefits of home ownership; Redwood, which cares for disabled individuals and children; and St. Vincent de Paul.

The morning began with Mass followed by a time of reflection before volunteers dispersed to their respective organizations.

Peggy Daly, a staff accountant for the diocesan Finance Office, was one of the volunteers who went to the DCCH Center, where her and five other colleagues spent the morning “weeding their hearts out” outside, she said. “We felt like we were helping them with tasks that weren’t at the top of their list,” said Ms. Daly, who commented on the DCCH’s primary mission of helping the children in their care, “hopefully, we made the grounds pretty so they can enjoy that ... we saw so many positive things they do there.”

Mrs. Angie Smorey, administrative assistant, Department of Catholic Schools, volunteered at Redwood. She commented how “impressed” she was about the facility, which serves disabled individuals from infants to adults. “I ended up in the two year old room,” she said, “and it was adorable. We had a dance party, we read books and played with blocks ... overall, it was a nice day.”

“As we came out,” said Mrs. Smorey, “I think we were all grateful and appreciative that we had the opportunity to go out into the community, help others and view firsthand what some of these organizations do.”

Deacon Jim Fortner, COO, noted the personal connection he and his fellow volunteers had at their organization, Disabled American Veterans. Deacon Fortner, who has three children involved or previously involved in military service, said that everyone he volunteered with had a similar connection. In addition to those personal connections, “the friendship and camaraderie we had, just in the two hours we spent together,” he said, “it’s just beautiful.”

Volunteers at the DAV spent their morning crafting paper “forget-me-not” flowers used to raise money for the organization and raise awareness for veterans.

“If you’re a veteran that’s disabled now,” said Deacon Fortner, “you need help — mentoring and handling, and that’s what they do.”

For those that volunteered with HONK, the morning was spent in the basement of a Ludlow home the organization is rehabilitating, sealing the basement against water damage. “We didn’t get to see the people that were going to live in the house,” said Dave Cooley, co-director of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, “but we did pray about them and thought about them, and we even got to write a blessing of good luck to them on the board that’s going to be covered — but will be there.”

“The neat thing was meeting the people that worked for HONK,” he said, “seeing how passionate they are about this kind of work and helping people out, and they’re just very knowledgeable about what they’re doing and take their work very seriously ... they’re very passionate about making sure that they’re giving whoever is going to live there the best that they can give them — there is no cutting corners.”

As the morning concluded, the volunteers returned to the Curia for lunch and a “reflection,” where they got to share with one another the work that they did and end the service day with prayer.

“It was really inspiring,” said Mr. Cooley, “to learn about all these different places. It’s good for the Curia to learn about these ministries that are out there ... it just makes you want to help.”



(above) Benedictine Sister Cathy Bauer, and Curia employees Peggy Daly, Mary Murrin, Peggy Piccola and Allison Miller stand before the DCCH Center for Children and Families’ sign prior to gardening work on the center’s lawn.

(below) (left to right) Laura Hatfield, Karen Guidugli, Carrie Schuler, Liz Champ and Deacon Jim Fortner form an assembly line crafting paper forget-me-not flowers to support Disabled American Veterans.

