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Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the *Messenger* are available online at [covdio.org/messenger](http://covdio.org/messenger).



(above) The 50 year anniversary Mass for Parish Kitchen was held June 21 at Mother of God Parish, Covington. Pictured is the Church's interior, facing the altar, during three Mass's closing.

(left) Bishop John Iffert, celebrant, shares the homily for the anniversary Mass.

(right) A young girl watches from the pew.

(below) Jim Wendeln, manager, Parish Kitchen, and Amy Bauer, assistant manager, carry the gifts to the altar. Behind them are sisters Betty and Melanie Trenkamp, volunteers who served in the early days of Parish Kitchen.



Coolley photos

## Parish Kitchen returns to its birth place in thanking God for 50 years of blessings

David Cooley  
*Contributor*

The 50th Anniversary Celebration Mass for Parish Kitchen took place June 21 at Mother of God Parish, Covington. Bishop John Iffert was the main celebrant with Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys; Father Mark Keene, diocesan vicar general; Father Michael Comer, pastor, Mother of God Parish; Father Gerald Reinersman, retired, concelebrating. Deacons Jim Fortner and Scott Folz assisted.

Catholic Charities and Parish Kitchen staff, volunteers and benefactors were present to give glory to God for 50 years of feeding the hungry and welcoming the downtrodden in the heart of Covington.

"Right here in this parish, 50 years ago, people decided, at least for part of their lives, they would turn their hearts to make sure that those who didn't have enough to eat would have some security

and food; that those who didn't have enough to drink would have someone to offer them a carton of milk or a glass of water or lemonade to quench their thirst; and that those who were alone and isolated had a community that would reach out to them with accepting, neighborly affection," said Bishop Iffert during his homily.

He thanked all who have contributed to Parish Kitchen in any way and encouraged them to continue to put their trust in God and guard their hearts from pursuing worldly securities.

"Let us set our hearts on the things of the kingdom of God. ... Let us set our hearts on the will of God the Father and be His mercy for others. That is the health of the human heart as the Bible understands it," he said. "... Let us pray to God, that he will call us to greater perfection in the way that we invest our hearts."

*For more on Parish Kitchen's 50th anniversary see the Messenger's special supplement beginning on page 11.*



(above left) A sign of the plant growing in one of the beds built by Mr. Rawe. (above center) Bishop Iffert and Mayor Meyer holding the proclamation declaring June 17 "Parish Kitchen Day." (above right) The memorial rock unveiled during Mr. Jim Woeste's speech honoring Mr. Rawe.

## Parish Kitchen celebrates 50 years in the community

**Bella Young**

*Multimedia Correspondent*

What started in 1974 in the basement of Mother of God Parish, Covington, has grown into not only a full-sized kitchen, but an institution serving Covington's most disadvantaged people. To celebrate 50 years of Parish Kitchen and its mission, the doors were opened to members of the community and volunteers in the form of an open house. Within the walls of Parish Kitchen on June 17, smiles were exchanged and stories shared about the past 50 years. Despite the radiant happiness that those in attendance displayed, there was one absence weighing on the hearts and minds of those closest to Parish Kitchen.

Tom Rawe, former Board Member of Catholic Charities and Parish Kitchen volunteer, passed away on April 19, two months before the 50-year anniversary. Mr. Rawe was instrumental in building the new community garden at Parish Kitchen. Frequently seen with hammer in hand, Mr. Rawe built the raised garden beds, ensuring the best quality for Parish Kitchen. Jim Woeste, the cousin of Mr. Rawe, attests to the love Mr. Rawe had for his community.

"Tom dedicated his life to the service of others, guided by deep faith in the Lord and inspired by the life lessons of his beloved parents," Mr. Woeste said.

Upon the unveiling of the memorial rock honoring Mr. Rawe, Mr. Woeste made known his hopes for the community garden.

"This rock is a symbol of Tom's unwavering faith in God and his lifelong service to others. Every year as new seeds are planted in these garden beds to grow and produce a bounty of food, we will be reminded of Tom's hard work as literally the fruits of his labor are shared with so many."

The work of Mr. Rawe and the countless volunteers over the 50 years of Parish Kitchen garnered an official proclamation from the Mayor of Covington, in which he declared June 17 "Parish Kitchen Day" in the city of Covington. Within the official proclamation the Parish Kitchen volunteers are recognized for their outstanding service.

"Parish Kitchen is now served by roughly 300 volunteers who take daily lunch shifts, 365 days a year, to serve anyone who comes through its doors. Another 200 volunteers take turns making meals and desserts each night, or picking up donations, collectively serving more than 74,000 meals each year," read Mayor Joseph Meyer.

In attendance to receive the proclamation was Bishop John Iffert who shared a few words on the importance of

the mission of Parish Kitchen. Quoting the "Dignitas Infinita," a declaration issued by the Dicastery for the formation of the faith, Bishop Iffert said, "Every human person possesses an infinite dignity, inalienably grounded in his or her very being which prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation, the person may encounter."

Bishop Iffert continued on to show how this declaration ties into the mission of Parish Kitchen,

"That principle has been witness here at Parish Kitchen now for 50 years, for 50 years making it clear, whether you have the money for a meal or not, whether you are addicted to drugs or not, whether you are homeless or not, whether you have family and neighbors you can rely on or not, whether you have those connections to a community or not, you maintain your human dignity."

Bishop Iffert concluded his remarks and closed out the presentation portion of the evening by giving his thanks to Parish Kitchen, its volunteers and all who have supported it along the way.

"Thank you, Parish Kitchen, thank you to all of you, thank you to Catholic Charities, thank you to Mother of God Parish, thank you to the whole community that is part of witnessing that truth."



(left) The Pikeville mission group from IHM stands in front of St. Francis Catholic Church, Pikeville.



(above) Volunteers work together to build a wooden handicap ramp at a residence.

## IHM volunteers return to first Pikeville mission trip since 2019 — serving the Appalachian community

**Maura Baker**

*Staff Writer*

50 volunteers—including 29 youths and 21 adults—visited Pikeville, Ky., for a mission trip where they served the local community in various housekeeping and construction projects. These volunteers came from Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) Parish, Burlington, and this was their first trip to Pikeville since 2019 after the annual mis-

sion had to pause during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Together, the volunteers completed 8 projects. Projects included building handicap ramps at residences, painting houses and decks and cleaning Pikeville's local St. Francis Catholic Church.

Mark Jacobs, IHM parishioner, is the leader of the annual mission trip. He commented how the residents of

Pikeville were "very welcoming and appreciative" of the volunteers' work.

"In turn," he said, "our mission group got to see firsthand the positive effect their volunteer work has on those they are helping. All in all, a win-win for everyone involved—the youths and adults of NKY and the residents of Pikeville."

# Cathedral restoration project continues — assessments of broken façade proceed

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

The work to restore the outer façade of Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, as part of the “Restored in Christ” Cathedral campaign, continues into the summer months— with cranes and lifts still visible daily outside Covington’s iconic gothic-inspired basilica.

At this time, assessments of which parts of the Cathedral’s façade continue. Don Knochelmann, Director, Buildings and Properties, gave an update on the assessment’s progress, saying, “They’ve completed the assessment of the gargoyles,” the ‘water spout’ type stone creatures (or ‘grotesques’) along the façade, “to determine if any additional units need to be replaced, and there are several that are okay.” He said, “They (the contractors) are also doing an assessment of the decorative stone, the columns and arches and balustrade and all the decorative pieces on the front. We’ve identified some additional pieces of stone that need to be replaced as well.”

Currently, templates are being built for the stonework, according to Mr. Knochelmann, and that stonework which will replace the damaged areas is going to be cut custom for the Cathedral’s façade by Indiana Limestone Company, out of Bloomington, In. Many of such repairs will begin to be seen later this summer, into the early fall.



As of this time, Mr. Knochelmann is expecting that the Cathedral restoration will continue until the fall of 2025, with much of the heavy work beginning spring of next year— including the possible return of the Cathedral’s chimera, which were shipped to Boston Valley Terra Cotta in New York state for replacement earlier this year.



Photos courtesy of SHP.

(above left) A view of Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption’s surveying and construction above Madison Ave., Covington.

(above right) A decorative piece of the Cathedral’s façade labeled by a contractor.

(right) A view from the sidewalk of a crane lifting an SHP contractor to examine the Cathedral façade.

## How to participate in works of mercy during the diocesan campaign

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

With the launch at the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the diocesan-wide Campaign of Mercy is underway. During the campaign, people across the Diocese of Covington are invited to participate in Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Here are ways you can participate, according to the USCCB.



### Corporal Works Feed the hungry

There are many people in this world who go without food. When so much of our food goes to waste, consider how good stewardship practices of your own food habits can benefit others who do not have those same

*(Continued on page 5)*



### Bishop's Schedule

**July 4**  
Diocesan Curia closed — in observance of the 4th of July Holiday

**July 17-21**  
National Eucharistic Congress, Indianapolis, IN

### Official Assignments

Effective July 9, 2024

**Rev. Edward J. Brodnick**

To: Chaplain, Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria  
Term: One year  
Continues retirement

**Rev. Michael K. Elmlinger**

To: Chaplain, Covington Latin School, Covington  
Term: One year  
Continues other duties

**Rev. Thomas P. Robbins**

To: Chaplain, Holy Cross District High School, Latonia  
Term: One year  
Continues retirement

**Rev. Jeffrey D. Von Lehmen**

To: Chaplain, Holy Cross District High School, Latonia  
Term: One year  
Continues other duties

**Rev. Alexander J. Gedney**

To: Chaplain, Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport  
Term: One year  
Continues other duties

**Deacon Barry J. Henry**

To: Assistant Chaplain, Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport  
Term: One year  
Continues other duties

**Rev. A. Conor Kunath**

To: Chaplain, Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills  
Term: One year  
Continues other duties

**Rev. Jason M. Bertke**

To: Chaplain, St. Henry District High School, Erlanger  
Term: One year  
Continues other duties

**Very Rev. Baiju Kidaagen, V.C., V.F.**

To: Chaplain, Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills  
Term: One year  
Continues other duties

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

*Jamie N. Schroeder*

Jamie N. Schroeder  
Chancellor

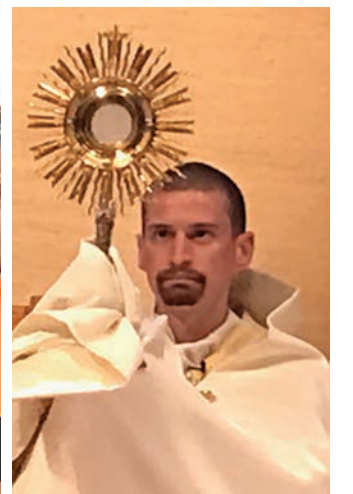


**Praise Fest 2024**  
 St. Philip Parish hosted Praise Fest 2024, June 22, at the St. Philip Parish ballfield. Praise Fest included live music from Mother of God Contemporary Ensemble (pictured above), Dan Walsh and friends, and Lee Roessler with guest Lauren Class (also pictured above). Students started off the event with a prayer and pledge, young parishioners led the rosary.  
 (right) Bishop John Iffert celebrated Mass, which included the baptism of St. Philip Parish's newest member, Skylar Marie Fayne, (right top center) daughter of Jared and Kristen Fayne.  
 (right bottom center) Father Robert Rottgers, pastor, St. Philip Parish, made his way around Praise Fest on a golf cart, decorated with papal flags.  
 (far right) A group of young people sing and sway to the chorus of "Lord I Need You" written by Matt Maher and performed at Praise Fest by Lee Roesler and Lauren Class.



## Junior High youth CONNECT at lively one-day retreat

CONNECT is a diocesan gathering for Junior High youth. It is a lively day which builds faith connections and friendships. This was the second CONNECT event of the year. It was held at St. Barbara Church and led by Bradley Barnes, campus minister at Newport Central Catholic High School.  
 "Bradley did an excellent job. He led a day of high impact games, activities, and a gospel message that generated joy and trust among the youth. By the end of the day, the youth held onto that joy and trust and surrendered their needs to the Lord in a beautiful Holy Hour," said Angie Poat, Diocesan youth minister.  
 Bradley's co-leader was John Baumann, the Youth Minister at St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring. They had the assistance of 15 college students, high school peer leaders and a Praise and Worship team. Seventy youth attended. Deacon Joshua Heskamp, seminarian for the Diocese of Covington, lifts the monstrance at the Holy Hour.



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DETAILS

## Works of mercy

(Continued from page 3)

resources.

— Having delicious food at Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner? Donate to a Thanksgiving or Christmas food drive so everyone can have something to eat.

— Research, identify and contribute financially to organizations that serve the hungry.

— The next time you make a recipe that can be easily frozen, make a double batch and donate one to your local food pantry or soup kitchen.

— Try not to purchase more food than you are able to eat. If you notice that you end up throwing groceries away each week, purchasing less groceries would eliminate waste and allow you to donate the savings to those in need.

### Give drink to the thirsty

Many of our brothers and sisters in Christ do not have access to clean water and suffer from the lack of this basic necessity. We should support the efforts of those working towards greater accessibility of this essential resource.

— We take it for granted that we have access to clean water. Donate to help build wells for water for those in need

— Organize a group of children involved on a sports team (e.g. soccer) or a summer camp. — Invite them to collect bottled water to distribute at a shelter for families. If parents can be involved, ask them to accompany their children in delivering the water to the families.

— Do the same for youth and young adult groups.

— Make an effort not to waste water. Remembering to turn off the water faucet when you are brushing your teeth or washing dishes can help, especially in regions suffering from drought.

### Shelter the homeless

There are many circumstances that could lead to someone becoming a person without a home. Christ encourages us to go out and meet those without homes, affirming their worth and helping them seek a resolution to the challenges they face.

— See if your parish or diocese is involved with a local homeless shelter and volunteer some time.

— Donate time or money to organizations that build homes for those who need shelter.

— Many homeless shelters need warm blankets for their beds. If you can knit or sew that would be an extra loving gift.

— There are millions of children and families who are on the move, fleeing from war, illness, hunger and impossible living conditions, and searching for peace and safety. Engage parish groups of children, youth, young adults, and families in doing some research on the causes and challenges that these families face to survive. Contact Catholic Social Services, or diocesan offices of peace and justice for help with your research. Seek ways to provide shelter for the homeless locally, regionally, nationally or internationally.

### Visit the sick

Those who are sick are often forgotten or avoided. In spite of their illness, these individuals still have much to offer to those who take the time to visit and comfort them.

— Give blood

— Spend time volunteering at a nursing home – Get creative and make use of your talents (e.g. sing, read, paint, call Bingo, etc.)!

— Take time on a Saturday to stop and visit with an elderly neighbor.

— Offer to assist caregivers of chronically sick family members on a one-time or periodic basis. Give caregivers time off from their caregiving responsibilities so they can rest, complete personal chores, or enjoy a relaxing break.

— Next time you make a meal that can be easily frozen, make a double batch and give it to a family in your parish who has a sick loved one.

### Visit the prisoners

— People in prison are still people, made in the image and likeness of God. No matter what someone has done, they deserve the opportunity to hear the Word of God and find the Truth of the message of Christ.

— See if your parish, or a nearby parish, has a prison

ministry and if so, get involved.

— Volunteer to help out or donate to charities that give Christmas presents to children whose parents are in prison.



### Bury the dead

— Funerals give us the opportunity to grieve and show others support during difficult times. Through our prayers and actions during these times we show our respect for life, which is always a gift from God, and comfort to those who mourn.

— Send a card to someone who has recently lost a loved one. Make your own card and use some of these prayers.

— Visit the cemetery and pray for those you have lost.

— Spend time planning your own funeral Mass, read through the Order of Christian Funerals and find our hope in the Resurrection.

### Give alms to the poor

Donate money to organizations that have the ability to provide support and services for those in need. Do research and find organizations that put people in need first, rather than profit.

— Skip the morning latte and put that money in the collection basket at church.

— Find a charity that is meaningful to you and volunteer your time or donate.

— During Lent, give up eating out at restaurants. Pack your meals and donate the extra money to charities.

### Spiritual Works

#### Counseling the doubtful

Everyone has moments of doubt in their faith journey. Nevertheless, we should always remember that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life and turn to him along our way.

— Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you

may eventually become wise” (Prov 19:20)

— The Cross of Christ “the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor 1:25)

— Has someone asked you for advice? Orient your response to Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life

— Follow Christ with the witness of your life so that others may see God’s love revealed in your actions

— Accompany a friend who is struggling with believing to join a parish group for service or faith formation, share a book you found useful in dealing with your friend’s faith concern, and worship at Sunday Mass

### Instructing the ignorant

Learn about our faith and be open to talking with others about our beliefs. There is always something more to discover about our faith.

— Go on a service trip or short-term mission trip. No time? Donate to support someone on their service trip.

— Volunteer to help with religious education programs at your parish.

— Invite someone to go to Mass with you this weekend.

— Know your faith! The Diocese of Covington is partnering with the Catechetical Institute, Franciscan University, to provide everyone, free of charge, access to an entire library of online workshops. Every parish and school in the Diocese of Covington are already registered and waiting parishioners to create their own free account. Simply go to <https://franciscanathome.com/diocese-covington> to create a free account. Then choose from the dozens of courses, workshops and tracks — in English or Spanish — available through Franciscan at Home.

### Admonishing the sinner

Do not judge, but be supportive in helping others find their way and correct their mistakes. Together we can learn to walk more closely with Christ.

— In humility we must strive to create a culture that does not accept sin, while realizing that we all fall at times.

— Don’t judge, but guide others towards the path of salvation. (see Mt 7:1-2)

— When you correct someone, don’t be arrogant. We are all in need of God’s loving correction.

— We should journey together to a deeper understanding of our shared faith.

— “Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother’s eye.” (Mt 7:5)

(Continued on page 10)



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## COMMENTARY

# The higher you go liturgically, the lower you should go in service of the poor

This past week was one of the most liturgically rich of my priesthood. As part of the National Eucharistic Revival, the Marian pilgrimage was making its way through my diocese en route ultimately to Indianapolis. We processed with the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of Rochester, Minnesota, and then I celebrated a grand, festive Mass in the city's Civic Center.

## WORD ON FIRE



Bishop Robert Barron

A few days later, I said Mass in the town of La Crosse, which is just on the Minnesota side of the Mississippi River, and then processed with the Eucharist, in the company

of around three thousand people, to La Crosse, on the Wisconsin side. At the close of that procession, I handed the monstrance to my colleague, Gerard Battersby, the bishop of La Crosse, and then together we celebrated Mass for the gathered throng in the La Crosse Civic Center.

All of these prayer services and Eucharistic liturgies were marked by song, bells, incense wafting from swinging thuribles, sumptuous vestments, and litanies galore.

The day following the La Crosse Mass, I had the privilege of ordaining three young men as priests for my diocese of Winona-Rochester. The ordination liturgy, one of the most beautiful in the Church's repertoire, featured — along with everything just mentioned — the anointing of the hands of the newly ordained, a formal welcome from all of the priests present, and a ceremony of investiture.

All of it was wonderful. All of it, I'm sure, lifted up the hearts and souls of those who experienced it. But in the minds of some, this sort of grand liturgical display gives rise to a question, even a criticism: What does it have to do

with the Church's work of caring for the sick and the needy? What does any of it have to do with Jesus, who walked, simply garbed, the dusty roads of Galilee and reached out to the poor? Does the preoccupation with music, vestments, processions, litanies, etc. amount to a sort of fussy aestheticism, a fixation on liturgical foo-foo? Don't we, in fact, often hear precisely this critique from older priests in regard to younger priests?

Permit me to say that, as far as it goes, this concern is valid, for the Church, as Joseph Ratzinger reminded us, does three things: it indeed worships God, but it also evangelizes and serves the poor. And the particular genius of the Church is manifested when it manages to keep these three tasks in balance, each one correcting the others and each one leading to the others.

If I might, for the sake of this article, focus on the first and last of these essential responsibilities, the worship of God must lead to care for the poor, and care for the poor must lead to the worship of God — and this for a simple reason. Worship is all about centering ourselves upon God, assuring through gesture, word, song, procession, etc. that God is the central and ultimate concern of our lives.

But the more we love God, the more we come to love those whom God loves; and the more we love those whom God loves, the more we love the One who made them lovable in the first place. This is why St. John tells us that the one who says he loves God but hates his neighbor is a liar and why the Lord himself insisted that there are two indispensable commandments: love of God and love of our brothers and sisters.

I would like to express this as a principle: the higher you go liturgically, the lower you should go in service of the poor; and the lower you go in service of the poor, the higher you should go liturgically. The danger is a one-sided stress on liturgy or a one-sided stress on service, the first leading to fussiness and the second reducing the Church to a social service organization.

There are so many great figures in the recent history of

the Church who embodied my principle in their lives and work. One might think of Dorothy Day, the foundress of the Catholic Worker Movement. There was no one in the twentieth-century Church more dedicated to serving the poor and the hungry and to fighting against social injustice than Dorothy Day — and yet her devotion to prayer, Benediction, the Rosary, frequent spiritual retreats, and of course the Blessed Sacrament was absolute.

Mother Teresa of Kolkata was an icon of service during her long ministry among the poorest of the poor. No Catholic in the twentieth century had a more embodied commitment to and identification with the suffering than Mother Teresa — and yet her love for prayer was boundless, her attention to the Eucharist unsurpassed.

And if we turn the principle around, we might draw attention to Virgil Michel, Reynold Hillenbrand, and Romano Guardini, all stalwarts of the Liturgical Movement that was so massively influential at Vatican II. Each of these gentlemen argued that what happens at the Mass in its splendor must spill out onto the streets as a devotion to the suffering members of the Mystical Body of Christ. As older Chicago priests told me when I was newly ordained, Msgr. Hillenbrand invited Dorothy Day to Mundelein Seminary to stress precisely this relationship.

One of the sad developments in the years following Vatican II is the falling apart of what was once a unity. Now "liberals" tend to be those who worry about the poor and "conservatives" those who are preoccupied with the liturgy. But this is stupid — and dangerous for the Church. The more you are one, the more you should be the other; and vice versa. So once again, I would like to state my adage: the higher you go liturgically, the lower you should go in service of the poor; and the lower you go in service of the poor, the higher you should go liturgically.

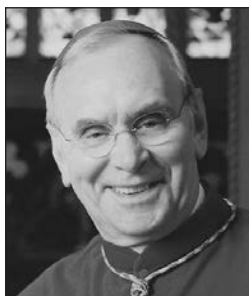
*Bishop Robert Barron is bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota and founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries. This article was originally published at WordOnFire.org.*

## Do not be afraid; just have faith (Mark 5:36)

The readings for the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle B — are: **Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24; 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15 and Mark 5:21-43 or 5:21-24, 35b-43**

An anxious parent whose 12-year-old daughter is deathly ill. A woman who has been suffering from the same malady for 12 years. What do they have in common? In today's Gospel we find out.

## GO AND GLORIFY



Bishop Roger J. Foys, D.D.

The anxious parent is a synagogue official — he is the administrator of the synagogue. His daughter falls deathly ill and with every passing moment she seems to be coming closer to death. He had heard about this rabbi, Jesus, who taught with authority, a new kind of teaching which many found challenging, but all found

intriguing. He had heard of the cures that Jesus had worked and, not knowing to whom else to turn, approached Jesus, fell at his feet, and asked for his help. Jesus sets off to the official's house and a large crowd follows.

The woman in the Gospel passage had been suffering from the same affliction, a constant flow of blood, for 12 years. She had tried everything including spending all her money on several doctors and specious cures — all to

no avail. She had also heard of the rabbi, Jesus. She was hesitant to approach him, feeling unworthy and not wanting to call attention to herself, for with her condition she was considered unclean. If only, she thought, I touch the hem of his garment, perhaps I can obtain a cure.

When she touched the hem of Jesus' garment, she experienced healing. Jesus, for his part, asked who had touched him. The apostles, looking around at the crowd, thought the question foolish. The crowds were pressing in on them all, so anyone could have touched Jesus. But Jesus knew better. He had felt power go out from him. Trembling, the woman approached Jesus and told him what had happened. Jesus' response? He said to her: "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction." (Mark, 5:34)

Moving on toward the house of the synagogue official people from his house approach to tell him that his daughter had died and not to trouble the teacher further. We can only imagine the grief that the official felt at that moment. And Jesus undoubtedly saw that grief reflected in the man's eyes. Jesus' response: "Do not be afraid; just have faith." (Mark: 5:36)

Arriving at the house of the official Jesus dismisses the mourners and tells them that the girl is not dead, merely asleep. Jesus enters her room, takes her by the hand, and tells her to get up. And so, she did — to the amazement and gratitude of her parents.

Two people in desperate straits. Two people who didn't know to whom they could turn in their distress. Two people who had heard of Jesus and approached him.

One watched life slowly leave his beloved daughter. To whom can he turn? Who can make sense of the situation?

Who can understand the sorrow filling his and his wife's hearts as they see their daughter's life ebb away?

The other a woman who has borne the same affliction for 12 long years with no relief in sight. She has done everything she could possibly imagine to be cured, to be restored. Who would understand her struggle? Who would come to help her? Who would have pity on her?

The answer in both instances is Jesus. Jesus understood their pain, their anxiety, their concern, their struggle, their sense of hopelessness and despair. Jesus, who is compassion, mercy, kindness, love. He would understand, he would answer their prayers.

And what did it take on the part of the official and the woman? Jesus tells them both — and he tells us. Faith.

To the woman who has just been healed he says, "Daughter, your faith has saved you." (Mark 5:34) To the synagogue official he says, "Do not be afraid; just have faith." (Mark, 5:36) Two people, unknown to each other, each with their own suffering. Two people who had one thing in common — faith. And that faith would bring them the answer to their prayers.

Jesus understands. Jesus is kind, merciful, compassionate. Jesus loves us. When we are discouraged, when we feel that the situation is hopeless, when we can see no light in the darkness, when we are about to give up, we remember this synagogue official and the woman suffering from the affliction for 12 years. We take to heart the words of Jesus to each of them, words he speaks to us: Do not be afraid; just have faith.

*Most Rev Roger J. Foys, D.D. is Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Covington, Ky*

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## Is my friend ‘dead’ in Christ due to her irregular marriage status?

Q: John 6:54 states the following: “Jesus said to them, ‘Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.’” I just met a sister in Christ who has a problem.



Jenna Marie Cooper

She has a common law spouse and children, but only she has come to the faith. The others (especially her husband) are atheist. There is no holy matrimony in sight. She attends Mass but does not receive the holy Eucharist. She loves the church and is devoted. But she feels ashamed, and claims that in the eyes of the church she is dead, based on the above Scripture. Could a priest or bishop allow a dispensation where somebody

like my friend could receive the holy Eucharist? If not, is she “dead?” I’ve just met her, and am trying to help her out of the “I’m dead” realm. (Connecticut)

A: Practically speaking, the best advice you can give your friend is to encourage her to find a local parish priest with whom she feels comfortable sharing her situation.

Scenarios like your friend’s will not seem surprising or scandalous to a parish priest, or to the many non-priests who serve in other forms of pastoral ministry. While your friend might feel a little nervous about approaching a priest, you can remind her that there really is no reason for her to feel “ashamed.” The church is always happy when someone seeks a closer relationship with Christ in the sacraments, no matter what roadblocks might need to be resolved.

There are ways to work out complicated irregular marriages so that a person can regain a full sacramental life in the church, but every situation is unique and comes with its own set of concerns and nuances.

For example, was your friend baptized Catholic as

infant, but is just now returning to a more fervent practice of the faith? Or is she a non-Catholic who wishes to become Catholic?

If your friend is not technically Catholic, and if her “common law marriage” is one that has secular civil effects, then it is possible that her marriage might already be considered a valid one in the eyes of the church (though in that case she would still need to complete a process of Catholic initiation before receiving the Eucharist).

If your friend is Catholic but her common law husband is not, there could be other ways to regularize her marriage. For instance, perhaps your friend’s legal husband might be willing to exchange matrimonial consent in a very quiet, simple Catholic ceremony. Or if there was already some sort of deliberate legal exchange of consent or marriage vows in their “common law” union, it may be possible to request something called a “radical sanation” from the local bishop, which is somewhat like retroactively declaring the marriage vows valid in the eyes of the church.

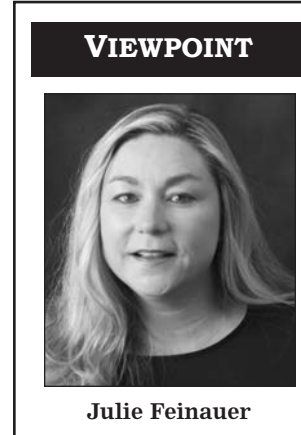
But again, it is not possible to give your friend concrete advice without being there in person to get the whole story and clarify all the details — your friend would need to work all this out with someone who is familiar with the church’s marriage law and able to apply it to the specifics of her own situation.

Regarding the concerns about being “dead,” the church and sacred Scripture often speak in terms of life and death when describing the sacraments and the spiritual life. E.g., in baptism we die with Christ so as to share in his Resurrection; and serious sins are called “mortal” because they cut us off from God, the source of all life. But this sort of language does not mean to imply that the spiritually “dead” are dead in the sense of being beyond the church’s love and concern. Even if your friend does not yet enjoy the fullness of life found in the Eucharist, she is still precious and valuable in God’s sight.

*Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osu.com.*

## Forgiveness — an act of free will

In Colossians 3:13 we read, “Bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do.”



VIEWPOINT

Julie Feinauer

Not only is forgiveness vital for the forgiven; it is also for the one who forgives. It is in forgiving that new life “springs forth” for the forgiver. If we continue to live with malice in our hearts, nothing new and good can be born.

Forgiveness is fertile soil for growth. Imagine a tiny seed planted in earth that has been spent — no nutrients remain. This is what it is like when we

dwell on the wrongful or hurtful acts of others. We are “sucking the life out” of ourselves. We cleave no fertile ground for newness to spring forth. If you really want to grow, develop and change, you must let go of transgressions.

How, you ask? The memory of the wrongdoing keeps playing like a recording in my mind — and I have no control over the play button.

Try this, live in the moment; the past does not serve you. “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past” (Isaiah 43:18). I am not telling you to forget about those who have passed, beautiful lessons learned or childhood memories. Understand though, that the past is gone, and no solid wall can be built on a foundation that does not exist.

Build your character, a solid wall of strength, in the present by forgiving and moving forward. When you choose forgiveness, the bad action or poor decision of another does not have power over your life.

Forgiveness is a choice of free will. It may feel as if you have no control, but when you think about it, choosing forgiveness is the ultimate exertion over ego, over valuing our desire in lieu of God’s command.

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

*Julie Feinauer is director of the Safe Environment Office, Diocese of Covington, Ky.*

## Peter, Paul and the messiness of Christian discipleship

We all like things neat, uncomplicated and in good order. But as we step over the threshold into the virtual world created by artificial intelligence, it seems to me that inclination may be more problematic than ever.



CALLED TO HOLINESS

Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

Over the past few weeks, I’ve seen a number of images circulating on social media. A baby dolphin, a 1901 photograph of a family with 18 children, two little boys of different races enjoying friendship — nothing controversial. The response to these images is almost universally positive. That’s because the images are created to be universally appealing.

The problem is that these images aren’t real. They are created by AI. What’s the big deal? More and more people are becoming unable to tell the difference between what is real and what isn’t. Even worse, we seem to be developing a preference for flawless and beautiful images over messy and imperfect reality. I’m grateful that God does not.

At the end of June, the Church commemorates her two most influential (and flawed) leaders: Sts. Peter and Paul. The irony of a shared feast day shouldn’t be lost on us. Despite the similarity of how their lives ended, both

Peter and Paul had their issues.

Simon walked on water, but then sank. He proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God, then cautioned him against going to Jerusalem. Swearing he would remain loyal even if no one else did, within hours, Peter denied Jesus not once, but three times. He was anything but the “rock” Jesus had called him to be — not exactly a firm foundation on which to build the Church.

In his zeal for Jewish law, Saul orchestrated the stoning of Stephen. He was ambitious and intent on rooting out members of this dangerous new Messianic cult. He was a man with a mission, en route to Damascus to arrest wayward Jews and bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. That was interrupted when Jesus appeared to him. Poor Ananias must have been terrified when God sent him to minister to Saul. It’s no wonder Paul was not readily trusted by those who were following the way.

These two men could not have been more different from each other. Simon was not well educated, and Saul was a scholar who had studied under one of the most esteemed rabbis in Jerusalem. Simon was brash and impetuous, often jumping into things mouth first. Saul was calculating and deliberative, carefully planning his next move. Simon lived in Galilee, a crossroad of cultural and religious diversity. Saul grew up in Tarsus, exposed to the full force of Greek learning and achievement and its effect on Jewish thought.

Simon and Saul also came to faith in Christ in entirely different ways. Simon’s discipleship grew organically and over time. He became “Peter” slowly. In contrast, Saul was struck blind by an unexpected mystical encounter. When he regained his sight, he was “Paul,” suddenly part

of a community he had considered heretical.

But Peter and Paul were not homogenized by Christ. Their profound differences remained even after their entire lives were personally redirected by Jesus of Nazareth. We see this in the Acts of the Apostles. While Luke acknowledges each man’s total commitment to the Gospel, he does not gloss over the tension between them or ignore the difficulty they both experienced during a significant dispute. Yet, in Christ Jesus, these two unlikely companions were brought together. So much so that iconographic tradition often depicts them embracing.

Perhaps this kind of unity was possible because below the surface, these giants of the early Church shared something else in common. Both were very broken men. Both had what we call a checkered past.

As Catholics, it’s important for us to remember that God sees our sin and brokenness. He knows our failures and fears. And he chooses the real us — not an idealized image of us — nonetheless. God risks everything on each one of us because there is nothing Jesus Christ can’t redeem. No one is beyond the power of God’s transforming grace. Simons and Sauls can become Peters and Pauls not just in appearance, but in truth.

*Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans. Her column has been provided by OSV News.*

# Jesus' heart is for all his people

Sister Kathryn J. Hermes  
USCCB

One month into the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, I am almost ashamed to admit that when I first heard that this Pilgrimage would extend from coast to coast, my heart jumped at how BIG this would be, the media attention it would garner, and how everyone would know about Jesus after a two-month Eucharistic procession. Something like a Catholic Super Bowl!

Instead, I've realized it is so much more than that. The Super Bowl is an annual experience that gathers fans across the country around a single championship game of the NFL each February. For advertisers, it's about taking advantage of our attention while millions of eyes are glued to the screen for the duration of the game. When it's over, it's over until the next year, when we do it all again.

This Pilgrimage of Jesus across our country is not about getting attention for a cause. For those who join it as it passes through their city, it isn't a two to three hour rallying of excitement and faith.

It is, instead, a gift.

As one young woman put it after participating in three days of the Pilgrimage in three different locations, "Each experience has been so different. In one place, we went through a small town and there were about 20 people in the procession. In another place, we went through a rough neighborhood; in a third place, we were hundreds and thousands of people. I just kept thinking, Jesus really comes to all people. It doesn't matter who you are. He comes to all people."

A pilgrimage, as Father Michael Fuller, the General Secretary of the USCCB, stated in his homily at the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, "is something outward that triggers something inward." On one of the loveliest days this month, faith-filled women, men, and children, teens, young adults, and the elderly, religious, priests, and bishops, all packed into the Basilica for Mass at 8:00 a.m. until it was standing room only. Sister Emily Beata, FSP shares her experience of that morning. "I looked around at the crowds of people in the National Shrine and thought how incredible and beautiful it was that each of us was bringing something to this Pilgrimage, and each of us was about to be invited by Jesus to an interior journey."

"I was able to participate in the Eucharistic Pilgrimage in Baltimore," says Zachary Keith. "Seeing the streets of Baltimore shut down for us to walk through was pretty incredible. My favorite part of the Pilgrimage, though, was when we were passing by a construction site. The workers even a few floors up paused their work as we walked by and showed an interest in the procession, curious about what was happening. There were many people in Baltimore who seemed surprised by the whole procession, and some of them even displayed their Catholic roots, pausing to pray for a moment as we went past."

These may seem like once-in-a-lifetime experiences for many, but remarkably, as Father Fuller reminds us, they are Jesus' invitations, the stirrings of grace, the powerful movements of the Spirit that transform human hearts through lifelong journeys. The language of the heart is quiet, the grace of God is patient, the movements toward the new creation sometimes subtle and unseen. But they are real and true. God works miracles of recreation all the time in souls that are open to his grace—



and the effects are literally life-changing.

I've been thinking about how, in reality, Eucharistic processions happen daily, and all of us, as we leave Mass, are part of this unending Eucharistic giving of Jesus to the world. Each of us is certainly not being sent forth from the church with a monstrance and canopy, candles and incense. As one Dominican Sister of St. Cecilia reflected (in line with Pope Benedict XVI's thinking), the first Eucharistic procession was carried out by Mary as she went forth, carrying Jesus in the tabernacle of her womb, to care for her cousin Elizabeth who needed a little extra help. As Catholics leave Mass in cities and small rural towns, our Eucharistic processions look like this Eucharistic charity of the Virgin Mary. We each bring Jesus into the lives and homes and situations of people we care about and minister too.

Sister Elinor Gardner, O.P. joined the Eucharistic caravan in Corpus Christi, which included a blessing of those incarcerated in a correctional facility along the procession route. "I thought of how in all of our works of mercy, it is Jesus who visits the sick and the imprisoned, who teaches

and heals. He unites himself to us in Holy Communion and makes us his emissaries in the world."

Our daily Eucharistic pilgrimages, yours and mine, can be as humble as Mary's: taking time to listen, offering to drive someone to an appointment, cleaning your parents' place when you visit, preparing a child for First Communion or making sure that Communion is brought to a person who is ill, inviting someone to go to adoration with you, being a friend to someone who is lonely... The list is as long and even more touching in its vulnerability and sacrifice than the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage.

In this way too, the Pilgrimage is not a grand moment of entertainment that ends after the final touchdown is scored. As one pilgrim put it, after joining the Seton Route, "I keep thinking about how Jesus is still walking with me, with us, with so many people."

May each person who joined the "official" National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, and each of us who bring Jesus daily to the world in the Marian key of the Visitation, "continue walking on this glorious adventure that Jesus is leading us on."

## National Eucharistic Procession comes to Cincinnati

### Elizabeth Ann Seton route

July 1-7

July 1

10:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Walk from Cedarville Community Park

to Green County Expo Center, Xenia

4:30 p.m.-7 a.m.

St. Brigid Church 175th Anniversary

Eucharistic Celebration

Starts at Green County Expo Center

July 2

7:30-9:30 a.m.

Holy Mass and solemn departure

process, St. Brigid Church, Xenia

9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Walk from Xenia Station to Walton

Park, Spring Valley

6-7 p.m.

Holy Hour, St. Francis de Sales Church,

Lebanon

July 3

7:30 a.m.

Morning Mass, St. Francis de Sales

Church, Lebanon

9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

Walk from Bicentennial Park in

Lebanon to Kings Mills Bike Trail

Access

5:30-9 p.m.

Evening prayer vigil, St. Gertrude

Church, Cincinnati

July 5

7 a.m.

Morning Mass, St. Gertrude Church,

Cincinnati

8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Walk from McDonald Commons Park

in Madeira to St. Cecilia Church,

Oakley

July 5 (continued)

6 p.m.-8 p.m.

Holy Hour and cookout, St. Cecilia

Church, Oakley

8:30-9:30 p.m.

Eucharistic Procession from St. Cecilia

Church, Oakley to St. Mary Church,

Hyde Park.

July 6

8:45-9:45 a.m.

Eucharistic procession from Holy Cross-

Immaculata Church, Mount Adams to

the Cathedral Basilica of

St. Peter in Chains in downtown

Cincinnati.

10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Eucharistic Festival and Mass

celebration, St. Peter in Chains,

Cincinnati



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 Sisters of Notre Dame will be holding their 102nd festival on Thursday, July 4**, and are looking for individuals or families that would like to volunteer from 11 a.m.—5 p.m. High School and middle school students can earn service hours and use them for the upcoming school year. Call Margie at (859) 392-8229 or email mschnelle@sndusa.org.

**Graduating seniors connect here** — the Newman Connection connects graduating seniors to the Catholic campus ministry at their chosen college before they get to campus. To connect, students or parents simply visit <https://signupnc.newmanministry.com/> and fill out the form.

**Bishop Brossart High School golf outings.** Get your foursomes together for a great day on the course. Both outings will be held at A J Jolly Golf Course and include 18 holes with cart, a great dinner at the course, beer and refreshments, prizes and guaranteed fun. 35th Annual Ladies Outing, June 20. 44th Annual Men's Outing, June 21. Visit <https://e.givesmart.com/events/Cs1/> to register, donate or sponsor.

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

**Summer Preview Day – July 11.** The Thomas More University Office of Enrollment is hosting a fun-filled evening for those kicking off their college search. See the

new academic center on campus, meet enrollment staff to talk about scholarships and campus life, discuss your major of interest with faculty in your field, and enjoy a tour of the TMU campus. Submit your RSVP at [tmuky.us/summer2024](http://tmuky.us/summer2024).

**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.

**Rising high school seniors can now apply for admission and scholarships at Thomas More University.** Those who plan to attend college immediately after high school in fall 2025, and complete an application to Thomas More by July 15, 2024, will receive priority scholarship consideration. It's free to apply, with no essay required, and optional to submit standardized test scores. Take advantage of this opportunity at: <https://gothomasmore.org/freshman/>.

**The 137th Annual St. Ann Novena will begin July 18 and last until July 26, at St. Ann Church, Covington.** Join in praying through the powerful intercession of St. Ann with daily Novena Prayers and Mass. Social distancing guidelines in effect at that time will be followed. St. Ann is the patroness of Christian families, mothers, grandmothers, housewives, pregnancy, pregnant women, women in labor and sterility, among others. Novena prayers begin at 7 p.m. Novena Mass at 7:15 p.m.

**Introductory online group classes for the Marquette method of Natural Family Planning (NFP)**, Tuesday, July 30, 7 p.m. For more information and to register, contact Angela Hobbs, BSN, RN, MMCP, at [angela@giftofyourfertility.com](mailto:angela@giftofyourfertility.com) or (270) 735-3883. Visit [www.giftofyourfertility.com](http://www.giftofyourfertility.com).

**Bishop John Iffert will celebrate Vespers at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, to honor couples celebrating significant wedding anniversaries in 2024.** Married couples celebrating their

2024 Parish Festivals

**Immaculate Heart of Mary**, Burlington  
July 12, 6 p.m.–midnight  
July 13, 5 p.m.–midnight  
July 14, 4–10 p.m.

**St. Pius X**, Edgewood  
July 12–13. 6 p.m.–12 a.m.  
July 14, 4–10 p.m.

**St. Thomas**, Ft. Thomas  
July 19, 6–11 p.m.  
July 20, 5–11 p.m.

**St. James**, Brooksville  
July 26, 4–7 p.m.  
July 27, 5–8 p.m.  
July 28, noon–6 p.m.

**Sts. Peter and Paul**, California  
July 27 and Aug. 24,  
Picnics  
Sept. 21, Oktoberfest

**St. Joseph**, Cold Spring  
Aug. 2–3, 6–11 p.m.  
**St. Joseph**, Crescent Springs  
Aug. 2 and 3,  
6 p.m.–midnight  
Aug. 4, 3–9 p.m.

**St. Mary**, Alexandria  
Aug. 9, 6–11 p.m.  
Aug. 10, 5–11 p.m.

**St. Philip**, Melbourne  
Aug. 17, golf ball drop and festival  
**St. Augustine**, Augusta  
Aug. 23 and 24, 5–10 p.m.  
Aug. 25, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.

**Holy Cross District High School**  
Aug. 23, 6 p.m.–12 a.m.  
Aug. 24, 5:30–12 a.m.

**St. Cecilia**, Independence  
Aug. 30–31, 7–11 p.m.,  
Sept. 1, 6–11 p.m.  
Family Day, Sept. 12,  
1–10 p.m.  
**St. Barbara**, Erlanger  
Rocktoberfest  
Sept. 13, 6 p.m. –12 a.m.,  
Sept. 14, 5 p.m.–12 a.m.,  
Sept. 15, 2–7 p.m.

**St. Benedict**, Covington  
Sept. 20 and 21, 5–11 p.m.

**St. Agnes**, Ft. Wright  
Sept. 27–29, Oktoberfest

1st, 25th, 50th, or 60+ wedding anniversary in 2024 are invited to the Vespers celebration on Sunday, Sept. 15, 2 p.m. Anniversary couples RSVP by July 16, at [covdio.org/wedding-vespers/](http://covdio.org/wedding-vespers/) or contact Lisa Taylor at (859) 392-1533 to register. Reservations are only required for anniversary couples; family members and guests are welcome to attend.

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](mailto:pickettscorner23@gmail.com) if you have a bike to donate. The volunteer team will pick it up.

**New Beginnings is an 8-week, faith-based support group that provides separated and divorced individuals the opportunity for healing and growth.** In this group, participants find new understanding of themselves and their relationships and gain courage to discover new life. Evenings, 7-8:30; location varies. Registration is required. Visit <https://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/> or call (859) 392-1500, ext.1592. Summer/Fall schedule is consecutive Tuesdays – Aug. 20, Aug. 27, Sept. 10, Sept. 17, Sept. 24, Oct. 1, Oct. 8, and Oct. 15; Time: 7 to 8:30 p.m., at Catholic Charities — 3629 Church St., Covington.



Join the men's prayer group

Participants of the St. Therese Parish, Southgate, Men's Prayer Group huddle for a photo at its last meeting. The group meets the first and third Saturdays at 7 a.m. in the church undercroft. All are welcome.

# Works of mercy

(Continued from page 5)

## Comforting the sorrowful

Be open to listening and comforting those who are dealing with grief. Even if we aren't sure of the right words to say, our presence can make a big difference.

— Lend a listening ear to those going through a tough time.

— Make a home cooked meal for a friend who is facing a difficult time.

— Write a letter or send a card to someone who is suffering.

— A few moments of your day may make a lifetime of difference to someone who is going through a difficult time.

## Forgiving injuries

Forgiving others is difficult at times because we do not have God's limitless mercy and compassion. But Jesus teaches us that we should forgive as God forgives, relying on him to help us show others the mercy of God

— Let go of grudges

— Saying sorry is something we learn as kids, but how often do we really mean it? Forgiveness transforms hearts and lives.

— Participate in the Sacrament of Penance.

— Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet.

## Bearing wrongs patiently

Do not be bitter about wrongs done against you. Place your hope in God so that you can endure the troubles of this world and face them with a compassionate spirit.

— Frustrated with someone? Step away from the situation, take a few deep breaths, pray the Our Father, asking God for patience.

## Praying for the living and the dead

Prayer is one of the most powerful ways we can support others. Joining together in prayer for the living and the

dead entrusts us all into God's care.

— Request a Mass intention for a friend or family member who is going through a tough time.

— Request a Mass intention for a friend or family member who has passed away.

— Keep your own book of prayer intentions, writing down the names of those who you are keeping in your prayers.

— Ask a friend or family member if there is anything you can pray for them about.

— Through prayer, entrust your cares and concerns for those around you to God.



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# PARISH KITCHEN

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# Celebrating 50 years



1974-2024  
Parish Kitchen

“For I was hungry, and you gave me food;  
I was thirsty, and you gave me drink.  
I assure you,  
whatever you did for the least of these,  
my brothers/sisters, you did for me.”

Matt 25:35,40

PARISH KITCHEN CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

# For 50 years Parish Kitchen testifies to the dignity of the human person

**Bishop John Iffert**  
Diocese of Covington

*Every human person possesses an infinite dignity, inalienably grounded in his or her very being, which prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation the person may ever encounter. This principle, which is fully recognizable even by reason alone, underlies the primacy of the human person and the protection of human rights. In the light of Revelation, the Church resolutely reiterates and confirms the ontological dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God and redeemed in Jesus Christ. From this truth, the Church draws the reasons for her commitment to the weak and those less endowed with power; always insisting on "the primacy of the human person and the defense of his or her dignity beyond every circumstance." (Dignitas Infinita, no. 1)*



**Bishop John Iffert**

In April of this year, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the "Universal Declaration on Human Rights," the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith issued "Dignitas Infinita." The document emphasizes the inalienable dignity of every human person and expounds several implications of that principal in social, political and economic realms. You can find the document on the Vatican website. It is an interesting and formative read, especially during this political season in our country.

One place where this insistence on the dignity of every human person is found explicitly in Revelation is the

Gospel of Matthew 25:31-46 where Jesus describes the judgment of the nations. This is the fullest treatment of the last judgment and the end times that the Gospels present from Jesus' teaching. As the Lord ushers those who find approval into the eternal kingdom he explains the criteria of judgment.

"[F]or I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matt 25:35-36, 40b)

In other words, those who will inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world notice the threats to personal dignity against their neighbor and respond with mercy.

On Monday, June 17, Covington Mayor Joseph Meyer presented a resolution to Parish Kitchen and Catholic Charities director, Chris Goddard, to mark the 50th anniversary of daily, hot meals served without question to all comers at Parish Kitchen. That resolution specifically referred to the qualities of true disciples drawn from Matthew 25, and appropriate-

ly so. For 50 years, the small staff and raft of volunteers at Parish Kitchen have been witnessing to the dignity of every human person by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and welcoming the stranger.

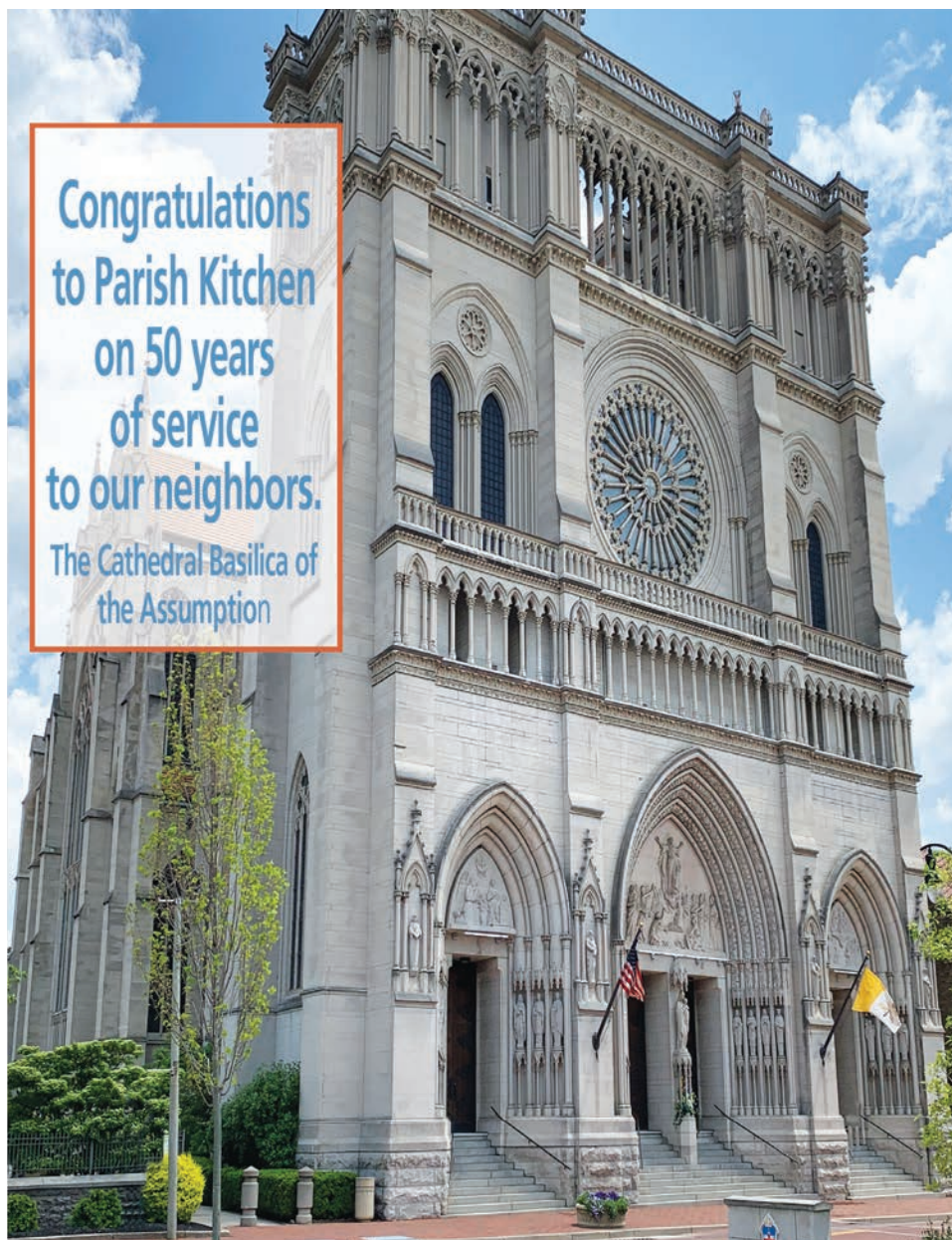
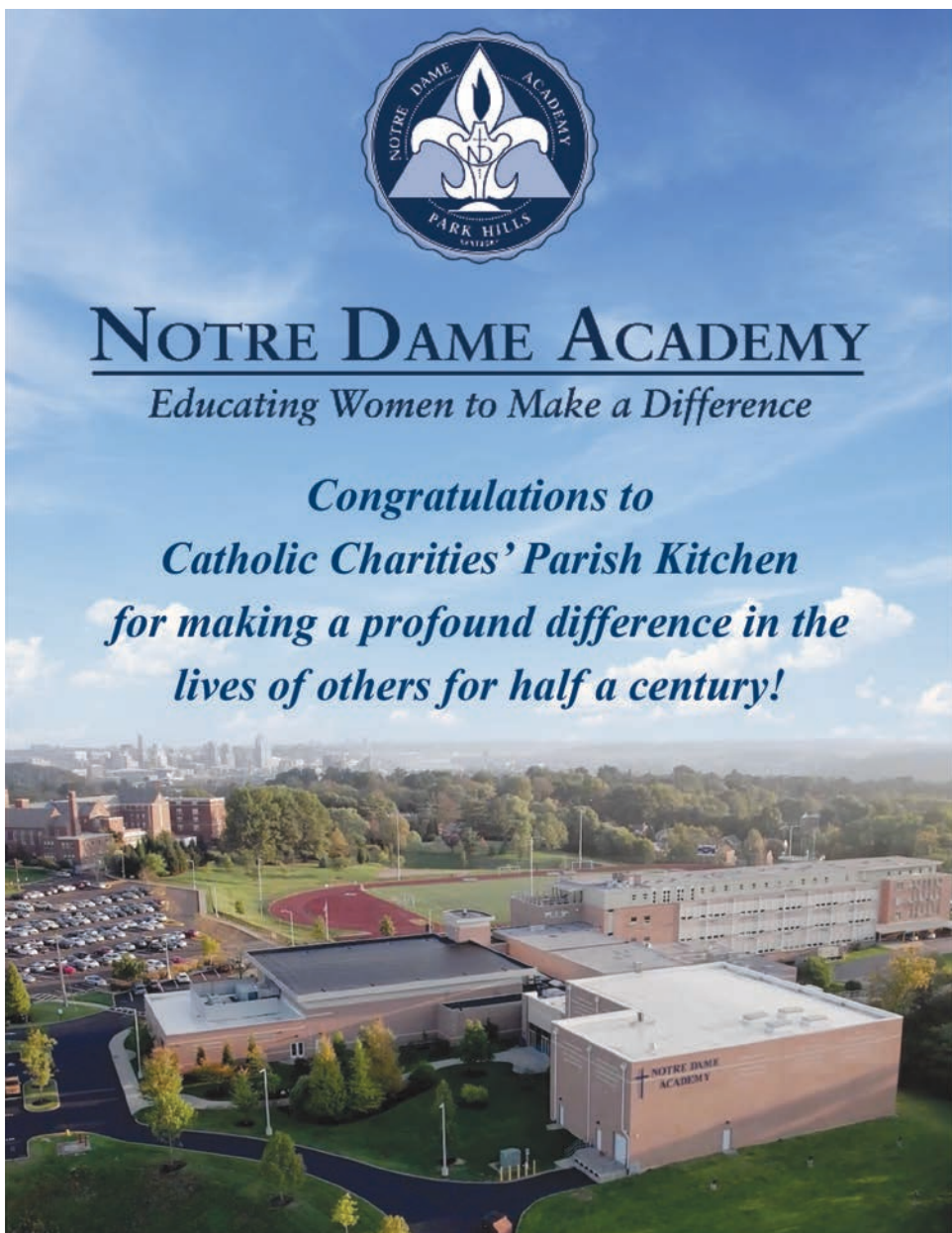
Parish Kitchen does this good service for anyone who walks through the door, without filling out forms or asking questions. It doesn't matter if Parish Kitchen visitors are co-religionists to us or if they secretly harbor anti-Catholic

ideologies. Saints and sinners are served in the same line. Arrive in a suit or in tatters and you will be fed. Citizens and refugees receive the same warm and smiling welcome. Tea-totalers and addicts each receive the blessing of another's presence for them. Every meal is topped with a sweet dessert for the upright, the criminal or the parolee.

Why would this be so? Because "every human person possesses an inalienable dignity, grounded in his or her very being, which prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation the person may ever encounter." We require food and drink for bodily integrity. So does our neighbor. Our spiritual health requires that we come to know God's goodness and grow in gratitude. Our neighbors too must be able to taste and see the goodness of the Lord in order to know God, love God and respond to God's saving will.

Congratulations and thank you to the sons and daughters of Mother of God Parish where Parish Kitchen began in 1974. Congratulations and thank you to all of those around the Diocese of Covington and the region — Catholics as well as those of other faiths — who have seen the threat to the dignity of our neighbors and responded so joyfully and beautifully for 50 years. May this most faithful witness to the dignity of every child of God help us to incorporate the principal of infinite dignity in every moral decision we make in our society.

For the Diocese of Covington, Catholic Charities and Parish Kitchen, we consider ourselves among the least of the brothers and sisters of Jesus. It is with joy, then, that we look forward to many more years of faithful service and growing friendship with others who are "the least of our brethren." During this anniversary year, please accept the invitation to receive a meal or volunteer to provide and serve a meal at Parish Kitchen. It is a place of endless blessing, testifying to the infinite dignity of both the one who gives and the one who receives.



# The mustard seed that became the Parish Kitchen

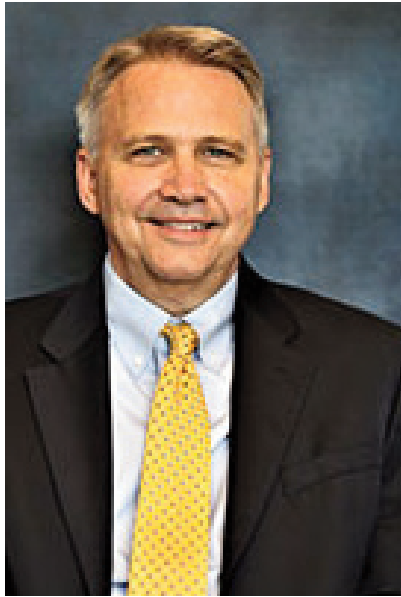
**Chris Goddard**

*Executive Director, Catholic Charities*

Fifty years ago in Covington, a mustard seed was sown when caring parishioners gave sandwiches to five hungry neighbors from the back porch of the Mother of God rectory. This seed took root, and the act ultimately led to the establishment of the Parish Kitchen ministry in the basement of Mother of God Church. After over 40 years of operation at the corner of Pike and Russell Streets, the ministry relocated to Madison Avenue in 2020 to better accommodate the increasing need to feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty.

The Parish Kitchen has grown into a large, living bush where guests can gather, and enjoy a hot lunch, a cold drink and a kind smile — all without judgment — 365 days a year. We now serve an average of 180 hot lunches a day, totaling over 65,000 meals annually.

With the new location, we have expanded our services to include necessities like socks, health and hygiene products year-round and sleeping bags and blankets during winter months. We also offer wrap-around services such as on-site nursing care provided by St. Elizabeth Healthcare and access to our newest service, Pickett's Corner, a bike ministry. Dedicated volunteers collect and repair gently used



**Chris Goddard**

bikes to donate to our patrons who need basic transportation to access work, the grocery store, their healthcare provider, and other social services.

As we look to the future, we will continue to provide the same essential services with love to meet their physical needs. Additionally, we will seek opportunities to become transformational in our work — for ourselves and those we serve.

Transformative charity means creating opportunities to engage more deeply with our guests by joining them when welcomed — eating and praying alongside them. It also involves providing opportunities for our volunteers to reflect and share their experiences, recognizing where they encountered Christ in their work and in the people they served.

Sharing a meal offers the perfect opportunity to build relationships with those we encounter, accompanying guests on their journey. Through listening and sharing, we create a community where we all benefit spiritually and emotionally, leading one another closer to Christ. We look forward to creating new opportunities to engage with

our guests and offer new volunteer opportunities to serve in the coming months, both at Parish Kitchen and across all Catholic Charities' many ministries.

As I write this article, I can't help but reflect on a powerful example of the tangible transformational work of a dear friend to many and a 14-year Catholic Charities volunteer, Chick Meyn, from whose Mass of Christian Burial I had just returned this afternoon. Chick volunteered in both prison ministry and at the Parish Kitchen. While attending the men's Saturday prayer group at St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, the Saturday following Chick's passing, I heard multiple stories of his humility, acts of love and ability to see Christ in others. St. Joseph Church was at capacity for Chick's funeral Mass, serving as a testimony to the countless lives he touched and undoubtedly transformed through his work within the community.

I will close by sharing my conversation with a father and his 7-year-old son at the Parish Kitchen open house on June 17, celebrating our 50th anniversary. The father, a volunteer at Parish Kitchen, brought his son to help him just a few weeks ago. He shared how moving it was for his son to have the opportunity to clear and wipe down tables. The young boy, joy still beaming on his face, recounted his experience with me, expressing how much he especially enjoyed speaking with the guests and how he looked forward to volunteering again. I am sure the guests were equally touched by the young volunteer's kindness. His desire to serve and engage a stranger without judgment serves as a small but powerful witness of Christ's love.

The seed that was sown 50 years ago has grown into the beautiful ministry of Parish Kitchen and will certainly continue to grow and flourish for generations to come.



**Happy Anniversary to the Parish Kitchen!**  
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**50th anniversary**

PARISH KITCHEN

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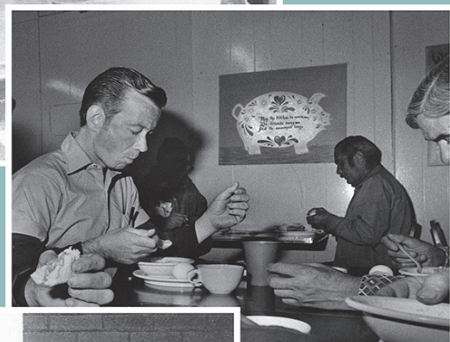
**50th anniversary** St. Barbara Parish would like to congratulate the Parish Kitchen on their 50th anniversary. Since 1974, the Parish Kitchen has served a free lunch every day in Covington to anyone who is hungry; with dignity, respect, affection, attention and hospitality.



**Dignity | Respect | Affection | Attention | Hospitality**

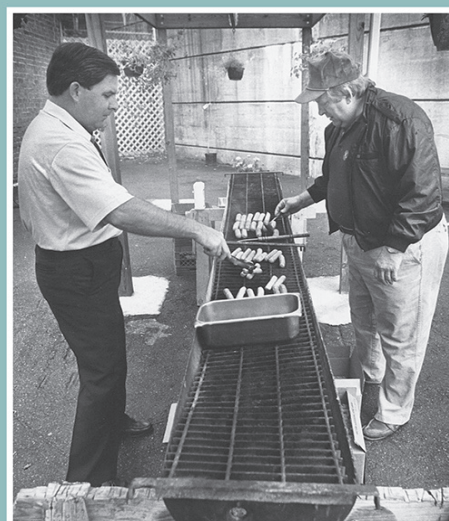
# 1974

**June 17, 1974**  
 Rev. William Henry Mertes, Mother of God Pastor, founded Parish Kitchen and opens doors to serve daily meals to the less fortunate in the Covington area.



# 80's

**1982**  
 Parish Kitchen outgrew Mother of God Parish and relocated to the Phoenix Café building on the corner of Pike and Russell Streets.



# 90's

**1987**  
 Parish Kitchen is added as a ministry of Catholic Charities, Inc.

Molly Navin is named Director of Parish Kitchen.



# 00's

**1996**  
 Major renovation occurs at Parish Kitchen.



# 10's

**2010**  
 Molly Navin retires.

**2012**  
 Dan Nolan is named director.

**2014**  
 Parish Kitchen celebrates 40 years.

**2016**  
 Troy Garrard is promoted from Assistant Manager to Manager.

**2017**  
 Maria Meyer is hired as Kitchen Manager.



# 20's

**2021**  
 Sold Pike Street building.

Created raised garden beds to provide fresh vegetables to our guests.

**2022**  
 James Wendeln is hired as Parish Kitchen Manager.



# 2024

**2022**  
 Improvements to the courtyard.

**2023**  
 Enclosed the entrance of the building.

Created a Bicycle Ministry, "Pickett's Corner."

**2024**  
 Parish Kitchen celebrates 50 years on June 17th.

# The Mobile Food Pantry serves thousands to six of Kentucky’s rural counties

Bella Young

Multimedia Correspondent

What started in August of 2020 as one drive through pantry in Bracken County, has now evolved into a fully functioning mobile food pantry system. This Parish Kitchen branch-off ministry, known as the Mobile Food Pantry, serves 6,174 households — 16,091 people — across six Kentucky counties. John Hehman, Mobile Food Pantry coordinator, has been around since the very beginning, having been tasked with the opening of six pantries across Pendleton, Mason, Bracken, Grant, Owen and Gallatin counties.

“It was a vision obviously of Catholic Charities for quite a while. We actually copied the model of the Diocese of Southwest Ohio; they have a mobile food pantry,” said Mr. Hehman.

Mr. Hehman’s task though, would not be so straightforward as complications brought on by the COVID-19 pan-

demically threatened the growth of the pantries. The pantry in Bracken County was already in development when the pandemic began, causing Mr. Hehman and his team to adapt.

“We had to make a lot of changes in order to open. The whole intention was for people to be able to come in, of course with COVID we couldn’t do that, so we started off with a drive-through pantry. People came, and we would have some people outside doing the registration and people would pull their cars around and we would put groceries in their trunk or the back of their car, of course we were all masked up,” he said.

Mr. Hehman however, realized that not everyone who would be utilizing the pantries resources would have access to a car, or even reliable transportation. Not wanting to limit the number of people who could benefit from the pantries, a proxy form was introduced.

Upon its fruition, this form allows people to pick up food for others who may not have transportation or are otherwise unable to make it. As long as the person picking up can produce the form and the other person’s I.D., they are able to pick up their food. Mr. Hehman says that he saw the impact of this form almost immediately.

“We have quite a few people who do that. In Grant County there is someone who picks up for three households. I got a heads up that in our Mason County pantry I’ve got somebody that’s going to be there that is going

to pick up for five households. We do make allowance for that because we realize some people can’t get out,” he said.

After the successful opening of the Bracken County location, the rest of the pantries opened in succession, the first walk in pantry to open was Mason County. Now, almost four years since the opening of the first pantry, pantries in all six locations are up and running.

What makes the Mobile Food Pantry unique is its operating system. Each location is open one day a month. The volunteers set up the pantry in a designated location within each county. Once the pantry closes, they load everything into a truck so they can take it to the next location.

With approximately one week between each pantry location, Mr. Hehman knows that the perishables they serve will go bad. To solve this problem, they find another food pantry within that county where leftover, perishable items are donated.

Between the six locations and all the moving parts involved in operating the Mobile Food Pantry, Mr. Hehman says it is all made possible through the help of the volunteers.

“We rely on the volunteers. Some of the busier pantries, we could have many has 22, 24 volunteers there. We will do it with whatever we have, but the more we have the better it is,” Mr. Hehman said. “It is great to see people coming out to help, we are very very blessed with the number of volunteers we have.”

Spread between six counties and built through the love of the community, Mr. Hehman, Mr. Gary Frodge, Assistant Mobile Food Pantry Coordinator, and countless volunteers, the Mobile Food Pantry serves thousands in the rural counties of Kentucky. These counties together have 2,486 families living below the poverty line, with Grant County having the highest percentage of families at 15.5 percent living below the poverty line. While the number of families, people and poverty statistics are numerable, the impact left on the lives of those served by the Mobile Food Pantry, is incalculable.



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Of serving meals with Dignity, Respect, and Affection  
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Thanks for being the hands and feet of Christ to others.

**St. Agnes Parish**

# Fixing bikes and changing lives, Pickett's Corner pays homage to Alan Pickett

**Bella Young**  
Multimedia Correspondent

Pickett's Corner, a bicycle distribution and repair ministry, has been a hub of community in Covington for over a year. Giving away and repairing bikes for members of the community who lack access to reliable transportation pays homage to the ministry's namesake, Alan Pickett, former executive director of Catholic Charities.

Prompted by the announcement of Mr. Pickett's retirement from his eight-year tenure as executive director, Jim Volz, current board member of Catholic Charities, knew something had to be done to honor the legacy of Mr. Pickett.

"Hearing Alan (Pickett) retiring, and he is an avid biker, we started saying we have to do something in his honor," said Mr. Volz.

While the premise was always to aid in providing transportation, Mr. Volz explains that they were not initially planning on giving away bikes.

"We thought we would just be repairing bikes but as soon as we showed up, we understood 'oh my they could really use the bikes,'" he said.

Mr. Volz followed where the Lord was calling this ministry to go. "We found a good team of people — we go pick them up (bikes) and fix them up in our garage and we give them away."

Pickett's Corner sets up at Parish Kitchen to distribute bikes from 11a.m. to 1 p.m., every other Wednesday, though people begin lining up at 10 a.m.

"They know we are there. We put some signage out and they know we are there every other Wednesday so the line forms, we get there at 11 and they are already in line by 10 and so the line has never ended. The words out," said Mr.

Volz.

The ministry has taken off giving away 250 bikes last year, with plans to give away more this year. "This year we set a soft target of 400 but we are going to go well over that, we are already at 150," he said.

In the week that Mr. Volz and his team, which now consists of 10 people, are not at Parish Kitchen they are driving around collecting bikes from people's garages so they can fix them and give them away.

"The easiest ask you can ever do," said Mr. Volz "is ask to clean somebody's garage out of old used bikes," they're happy to give them away."

Once Mr. Volz and his team have the bikes they split them amongst themselves to bring home so that they can repair the bikes at their leisure, in their own garage.

On the team is Mr. Pickett, "Alan Pickett ... he is a very active volunteer. We told him 'you are going to have to do something in your retirement you might as well join us.' He really enjoys it," Mr. Volz said.

All the volunteers, including Mr. Volz and Mr. Pickett, enjoy the ministry of Pickett's Corner, not because

they love repairing bikes, but because of the opportunity to encounter Christ in the people who need the bikes.

"We're humbled by them, many of them are very spirit filled people. We take that time to at least wrap them in prayer," he said.

It also is not lost on the team of volunteers that the work they do could change someone's life. "We see it in their face, the happiness it brings them ... some of these people are in recovery programs that part of the deal is that they have to go out and get a job. This enables them to go out and get that job," said Mr. Volz. "It enlarges their circle of travel from a couple of miles to 5-10 miles. We know it changes lives and we have gotten to know people that have come back."



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**Thank you, Parish Kitchen, for 50 Years of Serving the Community!**

**COV CATH COLONELS**



## A ministry within a ministry, how St. Elizabeth nurses make a difference for guests at the Parish Kitchen

Bella Young

Multimedia Correspondent

While Parish Kitchen, Covington, is best known for feeding the hungry, there is another vital ministry happening within its walls, and it is that of the St. Elizabeth Health care nurses. Mary Ann Riggs is one of three retired nurses that donate their time and efforts to ensure that the Parish Kitchen community has access to basic healthcare.

This ministry, born out of a recognition to the lack of healthcare services within walking distance, has been operating even before the move to Madison Avenue.

Mrs. Riggs is a retired cardiothoracic, transitional care nurse that volunteers for this ministry. She explains that part of their role is not to provide major medical care but to serve as a touchpoint for those who do not have access to medical professionals.

"A lot of counseling ... a lot of these people don't have doctors, and they don't have a clue, but they will come in and say that their vision is blurry, and they don't feel right and that's a good sign they could be diabetic," she said.

Mrs. Riggs said they also refer people to cost effective health professionals.

"HealthPoint is down there, and we do refer a lot of people there if there is something we can't do ... if they don't have a doctor we will hook them up with somebody who will see them, that won't charge them an arm and a leg, and are close by. Just refer them to who they need to be referred to and set up appointments for people, give bus passes to get to their doctors' appointments," she said.

In addition to referrals and health counseling, which is the majority of what the nurses do, Mrs. Riggs says they

also have regulars come in for routine blood pressure and sugar checks.

"We have regulars come in and want to get their blood pressure checked every week, and that's fine because they at least are wanting to keep control of it ... We used to have somebody who came to get his blood sugar checked. He would always come in and ask if we could check his sugar, he was on a medication for it, so he wanted to make sure he was taking care of it and eating right," she said.

The full extent of their medical services includes blood pressure and sugar tests, oxygen stats, weight and basic first aid such as bandaging and cleaning wounds.

"If somebody has an ache or pain, we have Tylenol or we have Benadryl if they have an allergy, but nothing extensive. We have had people come in with open sores and we clean those up and dress them," she said. "Being in (a place) where people are eating you are kind of limited with what you can do."

Mrs. Riggs says that the ministry of the nurses, "does the heart good." Not only because they are tending to the sick, one of the corporal works of mercy, but also because their clientele is so thankful for their services.

"These people appreciate everything you do. It is not like they come in and their insurance has them covered and they expect entitlements and all that goes on at the hospital. These people are so appreciative, because they have nothing, and they know that you are there on a volunteer basis and care about them and want to help them," she said. "It is so heartwarming to work in that environment."

## A Heart for Service: The Sisters of Divine Providence and the Parish Kitchen

Kathleen Carroll

Contributor

In July 2004, Sister Carleen Schumacher found herself at a crossroads. Having just completed a decade-long term on the provincial council of the Sisters of Divine Providence, she sought a new direction. With nearly 30 years of teaching behind her, Sister Carleen yearned to work more directly with the poor. Her search led her to various agencies in Covington, all with the sort of mission she was seeking. Another CDP, Sister Joan Boberg, was the director of Catholic Charities; she suggested that Carleen look into working with the Parish Kitchen.

The director of the Parish Kitchen, Molly Navin, needed an assistant, and after an interview in which "we just clicked immediately," Sister Carleen hoped fervently to fill that role. Her prayers were answered, and she started soon after.

"Working there from 2004 to 2009 was not just a job; it was a calling," she reflects.

Ministry at the Parish Kitchen was deeply fulfilling. Sister Carleen helped Molly manage day-to-day operations, but the essence of her work was being present for the people. Sister Carleen's tasks often involved setting up tables and mopping floors, but once the daily volunteers came to serve, she was free to mingle with the patrons. These interactions were the most rewarding part of her day.

"The people we served gave me far more than I could ever give them. Their perspective taught me a lot about the importance of gratitude," she says.

# Thanks for all you've done



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PARISH KITCHEN CELEBRATING 50 YEARS



(above left) Sister Carleen Schumacher at the Parish Kitchen in 2005. "It's not just an expression," she says, "I received so much more than I gave."

(above center) As Executive Director for Catholic Social Services at the time, Sister Joan Boberg felt it was important to volunteer at the Parish Kitchen whenever she could. "She didn't like to support an agency unless she knew exactly what went on there," says Sister Carleen. "And she always felt good about supporting the Parish Kitchen."

(above right) Sister Fran Moore still volunteers at the Parish Kitchen, preparing bread and desserts on Wednesday and serving whenever and wherever needed.

Despite having so little, those who came to the Parish Kitchen for a meal never complained. Sister Carleen fondly recalls one patron: "We knew he was sleeping under the bridge, but he always expressed how blessed he felt. 'God is good; God is good,' he'd always say. His positivity was infectious."

Every small gesture the staff made, like putting out extra bread, was met with overwhelming gratitude by their clients.

"This experience made me realize how much we often take for granted and how important it is to appreciate what

we have," she said.

Over time, the Parish Kitchen became like family to Sister Carleen. Some knew she was a Sister, but many didn't; what mattered was the connection they shared.

Sister Carleen's decision to work at the Parish Kitchen was influenced by her lifelong desire to help those in need. Growing up, she was drawn to stories of people struggling and wanted to make a difference. Her teaching career in inner-city schools gave her firsthand insight into the challenges faced by families with limited resources, fueling her passion for the work at the Parish Kitchen.

"The Parish Kitchen serves a vital role in the community, because it welcomes everyone — men, women, families with children. You don't have to show an ID or prove that you're in need. Everyone is welcome," she said.

Another CDP, Barbara Rohe, began her journey with the Parish Kitchen in the early 1980s, volunteering to prepare and serve meals when it was still located on Pike Street. Initially, she feared recognizing someone from her inner-city Covington upbringing. However, as time went on, she became more comfortable and was often blessed with grateful remarks from those she served.

"The Parish Kitchen is a place of Christianity in action!" she exclaims, reflecting on her experiences there.

Sister Fran Moore, a more recent volunteer, also speaks highly of the Parish Kitchen. For the past three years, she has prepared bread and dessert trays for Wednesday lunch, served on the first Friday of each month, and substituted when needed.

"I love the interaction with the guests who come for lunch. There is a variety of ages, genders, and ethnic backgrounds, and many people respond to staff as friends," she shares.

Sister Fran acknowledges the challenges of seeing regular guests living in difficult circumstances and feeling helpless in improving their lives. However, she finds it humbling to see how well they adapt and cope.

"The Parish Kitchen is one of the most visible and concrete expressions of Jesus's mandate to feed the hungry and love one another," she says. "It is definitely a gem in our diocese and a highly valued and respected part of Catholic Charities."

The Parish Kitchen's role in the community goes beyond providing meals; it fosters connections, gratitude and a sense of belonging among those it serves. For the Sisters of Divine Providence, the ministry has been a fruitful partnership, embodying a true spirit of service and community.

*Kathleen Carroll is director of Communications for the Congregation of Divine Providence, Melbourne, Ky.*

Congratulations to Parish Kitchen on 50 years of service, feeding our neighbors in need. St. Vincent de Paul NKY proudly celebrates this remarkable milestone with you.



Congratulations Parish Kitchen

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## 50 Years — 50 Stories the living history of the Parish Kitchen's community of healing and hope

*The Parish Kitchen is more than a building or a social service — it is a community of people whose experiences, emotions and faith have, over the last 50 years, created a loving, supportive place for healing and hope. To celebrate its milestone 50th anniversary, the Parish Kitchen gathered stories of 50 of its staff, volunteers and guests. Here's a sampling of their stories.*



**Amy Gibson**

**Amy Gibson** has a network of friends and family in Covington, all of whom are there to help her through during difficult times. Right now, she is bouncing from place to place, staying with various friends and family members.

"It's pretty rough," she says, "but you just gotta take it day by day." With an unstable living situation, she appreciates the dependability of Parish Kitchen. She is grateful that the place is open every single day, reliably serving up filling meals. Amy also credits The Lord's Gym, down the street from the kitchen, with easing the chaos of her life. She's able to meet friends, participate in Bible Study at the gym, and have lunch at Parish Kitchen, all within a block radius.

Amy is currently struggling to get work that meets her needs. Health issues prevent her from finding a job that she could do for long hours. "I could work, but my back is really painful. If they don't let me sit, I can only tolerate it for so long," she says. "but I'm just trying to get going." She hopes that the kitchen, the gym, and spiritual education can help build her strength.



**Dick Wendlen**

**Dick Wendlen** moved around from station to station at Parish Kitchen, but once he told assistant manager Amy Bauer that he "didn't mind" doing dishes, he has been put on dishwashing duty. He doesn't mind, because it keeps him busy the whole shift. "You do it once, and then you do it a second time, you just get more comfortable with it. And you get to talk to people at the

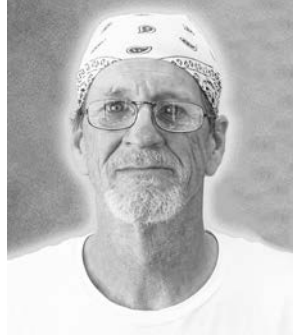
tables, you know. I really enjoy coming down here."

For the last 45 years, Dick has been a member of the Knights of Columbus, raising money for a great number of philanthropic efforts.

The work at Parish Kitchen feels a little different. "You actually get to see the people you're helping." With the

many different fundraising events that Dick has helped to organize, he doesn't feel the same kind of connection he gets at Parish Kitchen. Seeing and talking to guests has always made a major impact on him.

When asked what his favorite meal was at the kitchen, he quickly answered with a least favorite — He hates when they serve spaghetti, "cause it's a bear to try to get those plates clean!"



**Doug**

**Doug** went through, as he described it, "35 years of hell" with a serious drug addiction. After experiencing so much physical, mental, and emotional anguish, in 2016, he started a journey to get clean. "I always thought police was my problem," he says, "what I found out since I haven't been putting drugs in my body, I don't have encounters with them. And it's amazing." He's been

living sober in a place of his own, has a steady job, and a better relationship with his family. The police officers who once disciplined him, according to Doug, recognize and respect his turnaround. "Cops pat me on my back and tell me, 'Well, I know what you're doing. Just keep it up.'" Reflecting on his difficult recovery process, Doug credits his faith, as well as Parish Kitchen. "It's a blessing to have it ... I know no matter what, there's always somewhere in town to get a meal. And I have sent many people here myself." He says that he owes a lot to Jim Tucker, a retired officer and frequent volunteer at the kitchen who went the extra mile for him. Doug makes a conscious effort to give back what he's been given, helping out the former or recovering addicts in the community. "I just want to continue to do the next right thing."



**Jenny**

**Jenny** says that when she was homeless, Parish Kitchen saved her life. It's the little things that are offered at the kitchen that make a big impact. Items like socks, blankets, gloves, and soaps helped Jenny when she needed it most. The space itself is a respite from the cold or rain when there is nowhere else to take shelter.

"They think of everything," Jenny says.

Fortunately, her situation has improved since she began visiting.

"Even though I'm no longer suffering, and I work and I'm not homeless anymore or on drugs, I still come here. I love this place." She currently has a job as a housekeeper at the Holiday Inn, and is proud to have a place at a sober living facility.

The atmosphere keeps her coming back. Kindness, understanding, and hospitality that the volunteers show give Jenny a sense of warm belonging. "I can't tell you how many times I've come over and just, you know, talked to people. It's good to have the community." If things continue to get better, she would love more than anything to give back. "God's gonna want me to give back what He's given to me. You know what I mean? That's how it works."



**Jim Tucker**

**Jim Tucker** was a police officer in Covington for 22 years before retiring in 1998. He then went on to serve another 11 years in Ludlow in the Kenton County Sheriff's Department. When he began working at Parish Kitchen, he was a patrolman for a few years before his retirement. Jim developed a good relationship with Molly Navin, former director of the kitchen, and expressed interest in helping other ways — wrapping forks, cleaning tables, and serving food to the community.

"I got to know folks, not as guests, but I got to know them through my police work. Some of them arrested, some of them I helped in other ways," Jim says, "so when I started working at the kitchen, I got to know them as people."

The fact that he was a long-time cop does not make any difference in regards to the relationship he has with guests.

"You don't judge. They're just people, you know. And they are people that need to eat." Past complications with the law are checked at the door, and what remains is respect, trust, and tenderness. Jim's favorite dish is named after his daughter, who is also a patrolling officer at the kitchen.



**Julie Fortner**

**Julie Fortner** and her family have been a part of the Parish Kitchen for generations. Her mother started serving back in 1978, she would join in when she needed extra help. When the work was done, Julie used to play basketball with guests on the court by the old location.

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Congratulations to Parish Kitchen on 50 Years



PARISH KITCHEN  
CONGRATULATIONS ON 50 YEARS

**PARISH KITCHEN CELEBRATING 50 YEARS**

“I kind of grew up knowing all about the Parish Kitchen because my mom would go there once a month. So, when I got older, I knew that I wanted to do some volunteer work, naturally the Parish Kitchen was my first choice.”

Nearly 50 years since she started, her mother still volunteers if ever Julie needs a substitute. Just like her mother, Julie has included her own children in the Parish Kitchen community. She and her husband would bring their children on Thanksgivings and Christmases. They brought in little gifts for the guests, and had conversations with them as a family.

After those holiday visits, the children left with an important lesson: “Everybody is important. We’re all children of God, and we all need to be treated with respect and honor.” Most all of Julie’s children have volunteered here.



**Larry Johnson**

visits the Parish Kitchen.

“It gives you that hope to keep pushing forward.”

Larry has undergone a tough battle with stage 3 cancer of the throat. His doctors removed parts of his wrist and tongue in order to reconstruct his throat after removing the cancer growth. After several surgeries, radiation treatment, and partially losing his sense of taste, Larry lost about 60 pounds.

“I still gotta eat,” he says, “so I forced myself to eat.” He credits the filling meals at Parish Kitchen for rebuilding his strength. “I get choked up talking about it ... So this place, in tough times, I can always count on them.”



**Sadie**

**Larry Johnson** has been attending Parish Kitchen for the last four years. He visits not just for the food, but for the service.

“They make it very comfortable, and it’s a safe place,” he says of the kitchen. He appreciates the place for its dependability. When he is hungry, the kitchen is there. He feels like someone is fighting right in his corner after his many

all the things — like swimming, playing. You know, just taking care of her every day,” she says.

She’s more ready than ever to take on the challenges of motherhood, after overcoming the challenge of kicking a drug addiction. Pregnancy made Sadie desire a fresh, clean start. She attended a rehab facility in Southern Kentucky, and is building her strength at a recovery center here in town.

She’s very grateful for the resources that the Covington area has to offer. One thing that sticks out to Sadie is that the dignity she’s gotten at Parish Kitchen never changed, regardless of her condition. She first visited the kitchen before the start of her pregnancy and addiction recovery.

“I had track marks all over my arms, picked face, skinny. Just horrible. And they were just so nice to me. Like, they don’t treat me any differently than they did before ... They always had a smile.”

Sadie enjoys her serving job at a Waffle House, where she and her baby can also eat free.



**Jim Young**

“Years ago, Jim started taking a group of students to the kitchen on the first Saturday of the month to serve meals.

According to Jim, the students were surprised by the positivity of the environment, and enjoyed talking with guests. “When the kids volunteer and serve, the guests like that. You know, they like seeing young faces, smiling faces.” Volunteering is an opportunity to open minds and eliminate any preconceived notions about the less fortunate.

When Jim’s students get involved with the kitchen, they bring family and friends together to help alongside. A mother who began chaperoning one of Jim’s student visits is still volunteering a decade later. A couple of St. Joe’s students organized a big clothing and toiletry drive to honor their late grandfather, who also volunteered at Parish Kitchen.

**Jim Young** taught junior high science class at St. Joe’s in Cold Spring, and outside the classroom, he wanted his students to get an education at Parish Kitchen. “I think that we can get isolated in our own little worlds,” he says,

“Coming here to the Parish Kitchen allows us to see another aspect of life here in Northern Kentucky.



**Maynard “Chicago” Henderson**

Battling a drug problem, Maynard had what he describes as a divine intervention. “I called on the Lord Jesus, and when I called on the Lord Jesus, my life has gotten better ... I treat people with love.”

When he was homeless, Maynard shyed away from the kitchen at first. He didn’t want people to see the condition he was in. Back in 2016, Maynard overcame his apprehension; he has been visiting the kitchen ever since.

“They’re real charitable. They helped me out of this.” With improved mind, body, and spirit, he has a job at Fairhaven homeless shelter, and at Lord’s Gym. He hopes to attain financial stability, and a Christian based, sober-living situation. “Now I’m trying to give back as opposed to take away. God has been good to me, man.”



**Norb Baumann**

and there is something we can do here, now,” he says. “I am proud to say that Parish Kitchen is fulfilling that need.”

When he volunteers at the kitchen, Norb is consistently moved by the whole operation, from the management staff, to the servers, to the people that grill food on cookout days. He is “very impressed with how organized they are in terms of keeping people scheduled and finding replacements when needed ... It just amazes me at how lovely they are to all of the people who come in here.”

He is just as moved by guests; their generosity and the sincere thanks they give to volunteers. Norb sees God through the eyes of the folks he can serve, especially when he notices a guest saying a silent prayer before the meal.

Follow Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington on Facebook for more on its series of 50 Years — 50 Stories.

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*Little Flower*

Thank you, Parish Kitchen for your 50 years of service to our community. “For I was hungry, and you gave me food.” May you have many more years of fruitful service.

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**Follow this QR code to visit the Parish Kitchen webpage, at**  
[https://www.covingtoncharities.org/parish-kitchen.](https://www.covingtoncharities.org/parish-kitchen)

# Siblings show spirit of service since founding days of Parish Kitchen

Carol Branch  
Contributor

As Parish Kitchen celebrates 50 years this year, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington recognizes a pair of siblings who have demonstrated a special spirit of service from the start. Melanie and Betty Trenkamp, lifelong members of Mother of God Parish, began volunteering when Parish Kitchen was in its infancy stages, operating out of the parish as the vision of its then Pastor Father Mertes, who saw the need to help feed the hungry in Covington's urban core.



(from left) Betty and Melanie Trenkamp, lifelong members of Mother of God Parish, have been volunteers at the Parish Kitchen since its earliest days.

When Catholic Charities took over the administration of Parish Kitchen, the sisters said it "helped secure things," so the worry of relying entirely on volunteers or donations was no longer there.

The seeds of Parish Kitchen were planted at Mother of God Parish in 1974. In 1981, a three-story building at Pike and Russell streets a block from the church that formerly housed a bar was leased and renovated. It was later purchased and further renovated and would also become home to Welcome House. This location would serve as the longtime home of Parish Kitchen until the move to its current, more modernized location at 16th and Madison in Covington in July 2020.

Melanie and Betty helped prep and cook meals and were on a serving team originally on Mondays. Over the years, nieces and nephews would join them in the prep work — peeling potatoes, helping stir the pots or folding silverware in napkins. Even great nieces and great nephews became involved.

Betty said it was a "no brainer" getting involved in Parish Kitchen and staying involved over the years, as "it is what we were called to do. I

"People came together. It was amazing to see," said Betty, 69, recalling the humble beginnings of Parish Kitchen, which relied 100 percent on volunteers and donations. Added Melanie, 75, "Those who came through the doors were never asked anything other than, 'Are you hungry?' If they were hungry, we gave them food."

Melanie was 25 and Betty 19 when they first started volunteering with Parish Kitchen. They recalled serving simple soup and sandwiches in the early days.

"It was truly grassroots," explained Betty. "We put soup in a pot and served sandwiches. We had no idea how many would come."

The first meal they served, there were five guests. In six months' time, there were 30 to 50 people coming regularly for an afternoon meal. The number of guests would keep growing as word spread in the community and the needs of the disenfranchised increased. As donations also increased, soups and sandwiches were replaced by more substantial, nutritious dishes. Many of those recipes are still used today.

attribute that to our parents," she said. "Our parents were really good people who taught us to be givers. When you have more, you give, and that is what we do."

Their parents' example was strong. They described how their dad, who owned a grocery store, would give odd jobs to poorer children in the neighborhood and pay them or give them food. He also fed the garbage man lunch every day. Their mom would freeze gallon milk jugs filled with water in the summertime and set them out for the garbage men, so they would have cold water to drink on hot days.

Melanie is retired from Remke Markets, where she worked for 46 years. Betty is a retired principal from the Diocese of Covington. The pair recalled a few favorite Parish Kitchen memories.

One was Friday gift-wrapping sessions during Christmas season spearheaded by longtime (1987-2010) Parish Kitchen manager Molly Navin. Another

was when a guest informed them, he would no longer be coming to Parish Kitchen for meals because he had found a job and could afford his own food now that a paycheck was coming in.

Asked what they are most proud of about their involvement, Betty was quick to explain, "I feel blessed to have been a part of this. For me, this has been a religious experience. And that is more than proud. I think the blessings I have received may be greater than the blessings going out the door. I was very shy as a child, so getting involved and volunteering opened me up to putting myself out there, and gave me skills I could use to help others," she said.

Shared Melanie: "I'm most proud of the fact that I actually volunteered to get involved and started with this to try to make a difference in the community because there was such a need. As an individual you can't do that on your own, but to be part of a team and be able to carry out something this enormous, I'm very proud of being one of the beginners. I'm grateful to have been part of a such a wonderful team of volunteers who helped get this idea off the ground."

The siblings' spirit of giving at Parish Kitchen has spanned five decades. And while they are no longer preparing meals or serving on the food line, Melanie and Betty still give back, donating baked goods and treat bags for guests to enjoy.

Are they surprised Parish Kitchen has lasted so long? "A little bit," Melanie replied. "There's always that question when you start something this big that relies on volunteers, is it going to be able to sustain itself, or is it going to be so overwhelming that we can't keep up with it. You wonder if people will still continue to support it. I'm grateful it's still around for people because now, more than ever, the need is so great."

Added Betty: "I'm not surprised. I know the poor will always be here, but I also know that there are good people committed to serving others who will always be here, too."

For 50 years, Parish Kitchen has nourished countless stomachs and spirits and brought people from all walks of life together. Following are words from the closing statement of a written history of Parish Kitchen from the Catholic Charities archives. They sum up Parish Kitchen perfectly.

"The adventure with the Holy Spirit has been worth every hour of struggle and work and worry. It has united volunteers and parishes of various denominations into one expression of charity. For all these years, the Parish Kitchen has been a symbol of the presence of Christ in our community, and, in its continued record of service, we have a living witness to the Gospel."

## After 50 years, Parish Kitchen is just getting started

**Support Parish Kitchen's 50th anniversary by making a special donation to help plan for the next 50 years. The anniversary fund will help provide:**

- Construction of a multi-purpose garage and storage building. Not only will this multi-purpose building help address the lack of storage at the Parish Kitchen, but it will also house the Mobile Food Pantry truck and provide space for Pickett's Corner bike supplies.
- Hire a care coordinator. Often our guests need more than a daily meal. A care coordinator will help the Parish Kitchen to expand support to guests.
- Upgrade the fire alarm system at the Parish Kitchen. To help keep all our staff, volunteers and guests safe.
- Installation of an elevator. For better utilization of our second floor by expanding services such as bible studies, mental health sessions and other agency program services to all guests, including guests with limited mobility.
- Cover rising food costs. Make your secure gift online at <https://www.covington-charities.org/> and click "Give A Gift" or contact Jennifer Abdrabbo at [jabdrabbo@covingtoncharities.org](mailto:jabbrabbo@covingtoncharities.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:**

- June bulletin: posted Sunday, June 2; due Tuesday, July 2.

The monthly e-mail reminder of a new bulletin posted will come from system@pub.virtus.org.

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

**VIRTUS Training:**

- Thursday, 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
- Tuesday, Aug. 27, 6:30-9 p.m., St. Francis Xavier Parish, parish hall, Falmouth

*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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### Mental Health Agency Counselor

We are seeking a full-time counselor for our agency's mental health program. The position includes general counseling services to individuals, couples and families. This is 40 hours a week, some evening hours. Necessary qualifications include MSW or master's in clinical counseling and State Licensed (preferred) or license eligibility, experience with assessment, diagnosis, and treatment and solid record-keeping and organizational skills.

### Jail Ministry Coordinator

We are seeking to hire a part time (16 hours a week) Jail Ministry Coordinator. General responsibilities include: Develop and maintain resources that address needs of the incarcerated, the newly released, and their families; Provide a diocesan framework for the recruitment, certification and training of volunteers to participate in jail/prison ministry; coordinate and lead the jail ministry advisory committee and engage with members to provide support to jail ministry volunteers; participate in the Northern Kentucky Reentry Team; and monitor and provide support to the family support group. Necessary qualifications include bachelor's degree in a human service field; Experience in pastoral ministry preferred; Ability to network and coordinate activities with community partners dedicated to working with prisoners, ex-offenders, and their families; Knowledge and understanding of community resources in Northern Kentucky; Strong boundaries, communication skills and excellent with details.

### Parish Kitchen, Weekend Staff

Parish Kitchen is a special ministry that serves a free lunch daily in Covington to anyone hungry. We are looking for one or more individuals to work part-time on weekends who feel a call to serve within the context of this ministry, and who are capable of working with the population we do. This is a paid position, working selected Saturdays and Sundays from 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. to help prepare a meal, supervise volunteers who assist serving between 11:30 – 1:30 and clean up after closing. Ideally, two Weekend staff work together to oversee all aspects of this operation. Prior experience in one or more would be a strong plus: food service, ministry, and social work. You may be scheduled as few as once a month, or up to 4 or 5 times per month, depending on your availability and need.

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

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# Hey! High schoolers — register now for the ‘Fully Alive’ retreat

Laura Keener  
Editor

Angie Poat, diocesan Youth Minister, is casting a wide net to capture and captivate youth and youth ministry leaders. But time is running out for high school-aged youth to register to attend the diocese’s inaugural “Fully Alive” retreat.

The retreat is being held at Thomas More University, July 13 and 14. It is not an overnight and attendees do not need chaperones. The Diocesan Youth and Young Adult ministry have arranged for volunteers to oversee the retreat. And while there is a small amount of wiggle room for late comers, the deadline for online registration has been set for July 5 at [www.covdio.org/youth](http://www.covdio.org/youth).

“It can either jumpstart a youth ministry, strengthen one that already exists or just (for individuals to) continue to go deeper in the faith,” said Mrs. Poat.

The retreat is open to everyone, not just those who are a part of an existing youth ministry or parish or school group. It is also geared toward those who are trying to ignite or start a new youth group or school or peer ministry and want to attend a retreat together before school begins.

The retreat, as well as its theme “Fully Alive,” is derived from and builds on the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC), which was held in Indianapolis in November 2023. Over 200 teens from the Diocese of Covington attended NCYC and several of these teens are now ready to dive deeper or be peer youth leaders in the diocese. They will be attending Fully Alive.

Hannah Ubelhor, who is now co-leading the Diocese of Covington’s YCET retreat team, knows the importance of youth retreats. She attended YCET retreats when she was in high school and was a part of the YCET peer-to-peer team.

“I was involved in many different retreats that really had an impact on me,” said Ms. Ubelhor, “not only on my relationship with God but also with others. Retreats are such good bonding experiences with people.”

Ms. Ubelhor is also helping to lead the Fully Alive retreat. While the Fully Alive retreat will offer many of the traditional elements of typical retreat — Mass, adoration, inspirational speakers and praise and worship music — with this high school retreat “you can definitely expect a lot of fun,” said Ms. Ubelhor.

“You’re doing activities, you’re getting to know people. There will be small groups ... discussing certain topics like being fully alive, and on this particular retreat, focusing on joy and being not afraid to be yourself and to share God’s love with those around you,” she said.

Mrs. Poat and Ms. Ubelhor have been working with a team of college and high school students who are also planning and leading the Fully Alive retreat.

“I’m just so excited to see how they’re all going to work together and, again, just be themselves ... it’s about making relationships and meeting new people all for the goal of getting to know Christ better,” said Ms. Ubelhor.

To register for the Fully Alive retreat visit [www.covdio.org/youth](http://www.covdio.org/youth).

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

**Kenya bishops plead for calm amid storming of parliament, deaths and injuries**

NAIROBI, Kenya — The Kenyan capital descended into chaos June 25 as protests over legislation dubbed a finance bill left several dead and dozens injured. The country's bishops called for peace and urged the president not to accede to the measure aimed at raising revenue by levying additional taxes. The bishops spoke June 25 moments after mostly young protesters overwhelmed riot police and stormed parliament buildings, where legislators had just passed the bill. Reports indicated that at least five people died and over 30 were injured in the protests. Once parliament approved the bill, after a third reading, it was sent to Kenyan President William Ruto for him to either sign it or send it back to parliament. On June 26, it was being reported that the president said he was rejecting the finance bill, which had proposed increasing taxes on basic commodities such as bread, cooking oil, and phone and internet usage. The bishops spoke on June 25, moments after mostly young protesters overwhelmed riot police and stormed parliament buildings, where legislators had just passed the bill. Reports indicated that at least five people died and over 30 were injured in the protests. "The country is bleeding and therefore we invite the Government to reflect on this matter with the seriousness it deserves," Archbishop Maurice Muhatia Makumba, president of the Kenyan bishops' conference, said June 25.

**Pope launches project to get Vatican to run solely on solar power**

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis appointed two special commissioners to start work on building an agrivoltaic system on a

Vatican property outside of Rome that could supply the whole of Vatican City's energy needs. "There is a need to make a transition to a model of sustainable development that reduces greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, establishing the goal of climate neutrality," he said in an apostolic letter issued "motu proprio," on his own initiative. The Vatican published the letter June 26. "Humanity has the technological means needed to tackle this environmental transformation and its pernicious ethical, social, economic and political consequences, and among these, solar energy plays a key role," he wrote. The pope called for the building of an agrivoltaic plant on Vatican property about 11 miles outside of Rome in the area of Santa Maria di Galeria where an array of short wave directional antennas of Vatican Radio are located. Agrivoltaic systems are a series of solar panels that coexist with crops, livestock or both, such as by having panel arrays on top of greenhouses, interleaved among fields or elevated above them so they can still be used for agricultural purposes.

**Many Iowans in Sioux City Diocese have 'lost everything' in historic flooding**

SIoux CITY, Iowa — Numerous communities throughout the 24 counties of the Diocese of Sioux City in northwestern Iowa have been affected by historic flooding as heavy rains have led to swollen rivers and lakes. The massive water amounts have flooded and closed roadways, destroyed homes and businesses and affected the lives of thousands. Seventeen counties within the diocese were included in Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds' disaster declarations. The National Weather Service's forecast area in southeast Minnesota, northeast Iowa and southwest Wisconsin reported a 48-hour record rainfall over the June 22-23 weekend. Severe storms, flooding, straight-line winds and tornadoes began in the region June 16. "As numerous areas of our diocese have been devastated by historic flooding, we have thousands of people who are in need. We realize homes, vehicles, possessions and perhaps liveli-

hoods have been lost. People of all faiths are suffering. The faithful of the Diocese of Sioux City and I are praying for those affected by the flooding and will be assisting where we are able," Bishop R. Walker Nickless of Sioux City said in a statement. The bishop established a flood victims relief collection, to be taken in all diocesan parishes July 6 and 7. On June 24 Reynolds announced that President Joe Biden has approved Iowa's request for a major disaster declaration for Iowa counties where there is significant damage.

**'Lots of pain' as families lose everything in New Mexico wildfires, says parish volunteer**

ROSWELL, N.M. — A volunteer at a New Mexico parish told OSV News June 20 he's seeing 'lots of pain' in the faces of those displaced by massive wildfires in that state's central region. "There are families that have lost everything completely," said Juan Carlos, a member of San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist) parish in Roswell, New Mexico. "There are families that have lost family members." At least two people have been killed and thousands have been evacuated due to the South Fork and Salt fires in the state, which broke out June 17, destroying some 1,400 structures and ravaging more than 23,000 acres. Hundreds of firefighters have been battling the two blazes, the causes of which remain undetermined. Authorities evacuated the picturesque mountain village of Ruidoso, with survivors temporarily sheltering in Roswell. Carlos told OSV News he and fellow parishioners are providing basic necessities, support and a sense of accompaniment amid immense shock and grief. Carlos even organized an impromptu volleyball match for those he's helping, telling OSV News the game provided "a little joy for these people in so much need." His volunteer efforts to help the fire victims were simply an expression of his faith, he said, adding, "What I do, I do for the Lord, not for myself. And I know where my payment comes from. The Lord will reward me."



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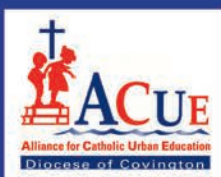
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