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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).



October 21, 2024

My Friends in Christ,

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Seminary Ball. It was a lovely night and a beautiful gathering of the Church of Covington. I am so grateful to everyone – staff, committee members, volunteers, sponsors, benefactors, and attendees – who make this kind of gathering possible.

I am grateful for the generosity of priests and parishioners to support this great effort and the formation of future priests and especially to our five seminarians for being open to Christ's call in their lives.

I am also grateful for the joyful way so many in our local Church respond wholeheartedly with love for the priests they know and the seminarians whom they accompany with prayer. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

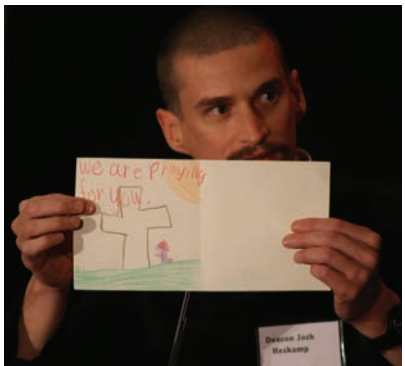
Devotedly,



+John Iffert  
 Bishop of Covington

(right) Jim Hess, director, Office of Stewardship and Mission, announces the winner of a drawing for two Cincinnati Bengals tickets for priests in attendance. Behind him is John Garvey, emcee for the evening.

(below) Bishop John Iffert (far right) interviews seated seminarians with questions gathered from seated guests.



(far left) Deacon Joshua Heskamp, seminarian in his transitional diaconate year, holds up a card reading "We are praying for you." given to him from a grade school student. Cards like this one are made for seminarians by students.

(above center and right) Guests enjoy the covered outdoor space at the 2024 Seminary Ball. The outdoor space, which included tables and an outdoor ball, was a new inclusion for this year's ball, which moved to Receptions in Erlanger from its former location in Covington.

(far left, bottom) Seminarian Andrew Pugh smiles for a photo with Deacon Brian Cox, chaplain, Northern Kentucky University Catholic Newman Club.

(left) A young couple dances in front of a mirror at the end of the night.

## 2024 Seminary Ball's 'record crowd' shares in the joy of vocations with music, dancing and dinner

**Maura Baker**  
*Staff Writer*

Oct. 18 set the stage for the 2024 Seminary Ball, held this year at Receptions event center in Erlanger. The night began with a cocktail hour and a string quartet, and a record number of over 600 guests arrived together for the ball — which plays an important role in raising funds for the Diocese of Covington's seminarian education.

The ball's program included dinner, alongside the first showing of the 2024 Seminary Ball video, which highlighted the newly implemented "propaedeutic year" of formation.

During the program, Father Conor Kunath, vocations director, remarked on the diocese's goal to have one seminarian out of each parish once every 10 years — as well as encouraged the broader understanding of vocations as they apply to everyone, whether they are called to be priests, religious, married or single.

"All of you are unique blends of God's creation that are called out into the world and into the Church to offer those gifts back to the Church," he said.

Father Kunath also remarked on the success of the vocation office's "Memorare Army" initiative, that invites individuals to pray the Memorare prayer daily in intercession for vocations. Proudly, Father Kunath said that he has seen those interested in priestly and religious vocations increase almost ten times since the initiative began.

Seminarian Deacon Joshua Heskamp, currently in his last year of study at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Penn., was also invited to address guests during the ball. During his speech, he presented two cards given to him that were made by young students.

The cards prominently featured symbolism of the cross and chalice, which Deacon Heskamp said "perfectly exemplified" the

*(Continued on page 8)*





Baker photos

**Deacons re-dedicated at solemn vespers, reminded of ministry of community**

Solemn vespers were held, Oct. 15, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, where permanent deacons, alongside their wives and priests of the diocese, gathered to pray and be re-dedicated in their vocation and ministry. In his homily during the vespers, Bishop John Iffert spoke about the Church as a community. "I always like to think of it as a school of charity. It's in our families and in the family of the Church, when we come to know how to love as God loves." "...it's in practices like these that our ministry flows," he said. "It's from our relationship with the Father through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that I have a ministry to share with you, and that you have share in ... with practices like these, living the Word of God, living in loving community, living with faith and praise and right relationship with the Father."



Keener photos

**Cemetery visitations**

Bishop John Iffert led prayer services, Oct. 19, at St. John (above left), St. Mary (above center) and St. Stephen (above right) cemeteries. The annual event brings loved ones together to pray for their beloved dead. During the service, the names of those who were buried in the cemeteries over the past year are proclaimed. In his comments, Bishop Iffert said that the reason for cemeteries is so that the living will have a place to come to remember and to pray for the dead; they need our love and prayers. After the prayer service, Bishop Iffert greets family members at St. John Cemetery. Bishop Iffert leads the prayer service at St. Mary Cemetery. Bishop Iffert sprinkles with holy water those gathered for prayer at St. Stephen Cemetery.



Campaign of Mercy



Bishop John Iffert launched a diocesan-wide Campaign of Mercy in June 2024. This campaign invites people from across the Diocese of Covington to make a Corporal and Spiritual Work of Mercy a part of their spiritual life and then to evangelize others by inviting family and friends to join in that service. Each month, the *Messenger* is featuring a work of mercy. The *Messenger* wraps up its overview of Praying for and Burying the Dead for the month of October with an interview with Mark Ruedebusch, cemetery foreman at St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell. Mr. Ruedebusch describes what it means to be a cemetery foreman. From guiding grief-stricken families to managing the upkeep of a 45-acre property, the work of cemetery foreman is vital. Scan the QR code at left to learn more!

**Cathedral Concert Series**

The Cathedral Concert Series opens its 48th season, Oct. 27, 3 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington



All Cathedral Concerts are open to the public with no admission charge. A freewill offering is gladly accepted. Visit [www.cathedralconcertseries.org](http://www.cathedralconcertseries.org) for information on this concert and the full 2024-2025 season.



**The future of Kentucky education is on the line this November**

The amendment removes financial and geographical barriers so that ALL Ky. parents may have the ability to choose the school that best fits the needs of their children.





**In the Footsteps of St. Paul**

Bishop John Iffert, Father Eric Andriot, Father Abby Thampi and 35 pilgrims from the Diocese of Covington made their first steps, Oct. 22, on a pilgrimage “In the Footsteps of St. Paul.” The group is traveling to Greece to visit historic religious sites that St. Paul was known to have visited and preached. The pilgrims will return to the diocese Nov. 2. Prayers for safe travels and spiritual renewal for all the pilgrims. Pictured here are the pilgrims as they await their flight from the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky airport.

**Growing up in a Porn Culture:  
How Social Media, Gaming and Pornography Harms Our Youth**

Presented by Dr. Mandy Sanchez, director of programming at Culture Reframed.

Sponsored by the Diocese of Covington offices of Safe Environment and Catholic Schools.

Since 2000, the internet has become the main vehicle for porn. Hardcore porn is just a click away — it is free, violent and based on the degradation and abuse of women and children. The proliferation of the smartphone, together with the growth of teen-targeted social media sites, has opened yet more avenues for teens to access hardcore porn. This presentation will explore the most popular social media platforms accessed by young people today, linking the social media, and porn industries and the harmful effects of their

exposure on young people.

**A must-see presentation for anyone who cares about children and the vulnerable in the world today.**

**Date: Wednesday, November 6, 2024**

**Time: 6 p.m. doors open;  
7 p.m. program begins.**

**Place: St. Henry District High School Drees Homes Auditorium, Erlanger**

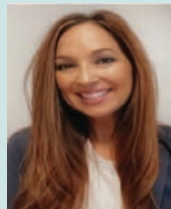
**Who: All adults (18+) are welcome!**

**Preregistration preferred, but not required. Registration link:**

**<https://forms.gle/jgeLwrkQRZiu35oX8>**

**Questions? Contact Julie Feinauer, director, Office of Safe Environment, [jfeinauer@covdio.org](mailto:jfeinauer@covdio.org)**

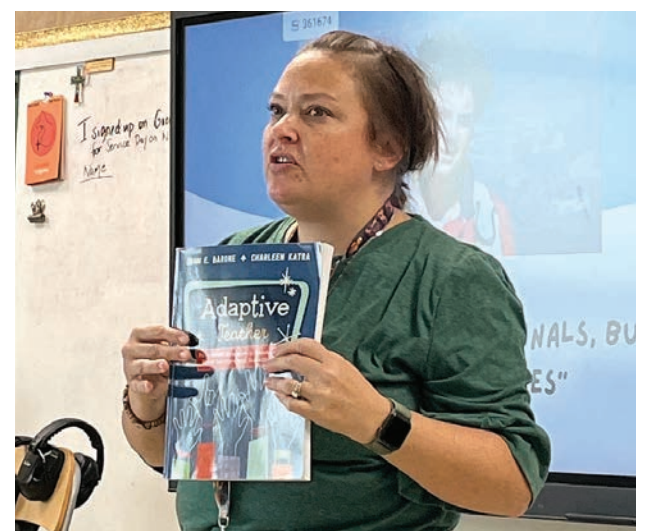
Dr. Mandy Sanchez, Director of Programming, Culture Reframed



Dr. Mandy Sanchez

Dr. Sanchez joined Culture Reframed as the Program Coordinator in the spring of 2021. She holds a doctorate in Sociology with a specialization in Criminology and

Women's Studies from the University of Hawaii and has been a professor of sociology and criminal justice since 2013. For more information about Dr. Sanchez and Culture Reframed visit: <https://culturereframed.org/>.



**Sacramental Strategies workshop**

Jane Zembrodt, religion teacher, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood and Diocese of Covington FIRE Foundation Board member, led a workshop for catechists, Oct. 19, entitled “Inclusive Education Sacramental Strategies.” During the workshop, Mrs. Zembrodt shared how the use of sacramentals — Holy Water, saint cards, rosaries — along with other sensory aids — noise canceling headphones, squeeze balls, visual aids or simply options to stand or sit — can have a positive impact on the learning receptivity of neurodiverse students. “These are tools not toys,” Mrs. Zembrodt said. “We need to learn to teach children how to learn.” The workshop is one of the first steps the Diocese of Covington FIRE Foundation is taking to make a Catholic education a possibility for all students, including students with disabilities or learning differences.

**Mentor Workshops**

The Diocese of Covington, in conjunction with Franciscan University's Catechetical Institute, is offering In-person Mentor Formation Workshops. A mentor is someone who accompanies a learner through the

process of formation through encouragement, discussion, insight and presence. Build your parish and school community by becoming a Mentor.

**Personal Vocation and the Mentoring Relationship**

Saturday, Nov. 9, 30, and Dec. 21, 9–11:30 a.m.  
Diocesan Curia Offices, Covington, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium

Discuss the meaning of personal vocation and the pressing need for integrating personal vocation into all Catholic formation. This is a three-part Workshop.

**Building the Mentoring Relationship: Asking Good Questions**

Saturday, Jan 11, 18, 9–11:30 a.m.

St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, Meeting Rooms, PMR 1,2&3

An important part of being a mentor is getting to know the person under your care. Explore various kinds of questions related to this work of discovery. This is a two-part Workshop.

**Building the Mentoring Relationship: Empathic Listening**

Saturday, Feb 8, 22, 9–11:30 a.m.  
Diocesan Curia Offices, Covington, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium

Empathic listening is the counterpart skill to asking good questions that

enables mentors to truly understand another person intellectually as well as emotionally. This is a two-part Workshop.

Register online at <https://covdio.org/register> or scan the QR code.



**Bishop's Schedule**

Oct. 22–Nov. 2  
Footsteps of St. Paul  
Pilgrimage, Greece

Nov. 1  
Solemnity of All Saints —  
Diocesan Curia offices closed

Nov. 4  
Sacrament of Confirmation,  
St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright,  
7 p.m.



# Catholicism and Amendment 2

As Election Day nears, the debate around school choice and Amendment 2 is heating up. It is essential that we be clear about what this amendment would do and why the Catholic Church supports it.



GUEST

Jason Hall

As we have seen this debate play out, we have encountered arguments that Amendment 2 does not align with Church teaching, that the bishops are mistaken in their support and are not fulfilling the Church's mission to care for the poor and defend the common good when they encourage Catholics to vote in favor of the amendment.

This argument misrepresents both Church teaching and the record of Kentucky's bishops in promoting policies that advance the common good.

The bishops, through the Catholic Conference of Kentucky, have long supported legislators' efforts to enact a more progressive tax system that will enable Kentucky to fully meet all of our obligations. CCK also supports numerous initiatives to protect the vulnerable, lift up the marginalized, expand access to health care, and more

fully protect and respect the dignity of each and every human person.

Church teaching is clear that empowering families to make educational choice for their children is also a matter of justice.

The Church teaches that parents are the primary educators of their children. The state has an important role to play in supporting them in fulfilling that responsibility.

Pope St. Paul IV was very explicit on the policy implications of this principle when he taught that, as a matter of distributive justice, public policy must ensure a quality education for all children and also enable all parents to be "truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children."

Pope Francis has clearly affirmed this teaching. In *Amoris Laetitia*, the Holy Father's major document on the family, he recognizes the education of children to be the duty and right of parents and, with regard to government's role, says, "The State offers educational programmes in a subsidiary way, supporting the parents in their indeclinable role; parents themselves enjoy the right to choose freely the kind of education – accessible and of good quality – which they wish to give their children in accordance with their convictions."

The school choice programs the bishops support, such as HB 563 in the 2021 legislative session, are focused on helping low-income families enjoy the same options as higher income families already do. We already have school choice for those who can choose what school dis-

trict they live in, or who are fortunate enough to have access to a well-funded non-public school that can offer assistance.

Fortunately, we also have many excellent public schools serving their students well. But, there are also many children who are in environments that simply do not work for them, and whose families lack the means to get them into schools where they can thrive.

The government, and by extension all of us, have an obligation to support a robust, well-funded public education system, and also enact programs that empower parents to perform the duties that are rightfully theirs. These are not contradictory obligations, and we can't hold one hostage to the other. We have to do both.

Amendment 2 does not represent the end of the process. It is a necessary step to correct an unfortunate Supreme Court decision that prevents programs like HB 563 from providing help to low-income students in both public and private schools. I encourage all Catholics to help Kentucky take this step by supporting Amendment 2 in November.

*Jason Hall is the executive director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky*

## Bridegrooms (John 4)

A slight breeze stirs the air. Dust enters the nostrils of the woman making her way to the well at noon. This is arid land, relentlessly attacking the delicate membranes



MUSINGS

Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

of the nose and throat. The strap on the water jug digs into her shoulder. There is a dryness, a fatigue, an arid desert in her spirit, a monumental thirst. As the well comes into view, she adjusts the water jug to ease the pain of its weight. The well is promise and possibility, evoking images of crops, white for the harvest. Fruitfulness of land and of the people, Israel.

Love happens at wells. Isaac finds Rebekah and loves her; Jacob finds

Rachael at a well and labors long to marry her. Moses finds Zipporah. If there is a well, there will surely be a romance, a new bride, and there will be children to populate a new kingdom.

The thirst that assails her has been hers for a very long time. She is thirsty for love that will capture and never abandon her. Her lips crack, her throat is parched but that is nothing compared to the dryness of her spirit. How many times now has she fallen for promises from

lovers, been abandoned, rejected? Four, five?

There have been many lovers who have promised love and love then left her empty and thirsting. Only infinite love could ever satisfy this thirst that is drilled deeply in her being. What she needs is a Messiah — someone to bring her into deep abiding life with a God who cares for her and carries her and never leaves her. Is there one who can love her just as she is and give her the gift of herself? A prophet, like Moses, who will show her everything she had done and not leave after seeing her? Is there one who can see all her idolatrous exploits and still stand in conversation with her; offer life-giving water? Is there one who can love her into a glorious being made of dry and thirsty dust?

There he is, already by the well and bucketless. She sees it right away — he is a Jew and she waits to see the disapproving glance that pegs her as a Samaritan woman. What does he expect coming to the well without a bucket? Is he looking for a Rachel to draw water for him and offer to water his camels, too? He will not find one here. She waits to see rejection in his eyes.

"Give me a drink." She answers him as though he is a child ignorant of the rules. "How can you a man without a bucket and a Jew, ask me, a woman and a Samaritan for a drink!" In a somewhat playful tone he replies. "If you knew who I am you would be asking me for a drink. And I would give you living water."

What arrogance, claiming to have living water when he does not even have a bucket! Where will the water come from? She will not fall easily. No, she will demand to

be convinced, to be wooed, to be romanced. She wants to be swept off her feet, to be loved with passion and fidelity. She asks for proof. No more fleeting refreshment for her. Only eternal, infinite, forgiving, redeeming love will satisfy her desires. She needs it from the top of her head to the soles of her dusty feet. She thirsts for a love that has eluded her.

She demands to be wooed. And Jesus responds with patience and persistence. He shows her to herself, peels away the layers down to her one and infinite desire. She sees her life through his eyes and despite her mistakes, it is beautiful and loved and given back to her as gift. No judgment. No condemnation.

"Sir, give me this water." Will he satisfy her thirst? Maybe he, like all the others, will leave her here with her thirst. Will he stay? He speaks again. It is not really the change of subject which it appears to be. "Go and get your husband and come back." Well then, he knows that her thirst for love is unquenched. She answers honestly. His look communicates that he knows it all, yet he does not leave. He hands her to herself, healed and loved.

She opens herself and finds that her identity is also mission. The love she has encountered cannot be held in any bucket. She leaves her bucket there with the bucketless one and runs to tell them all about this love that surpasses all understanding. And they all come, see, taste, are filled and loved with this infinite love.

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

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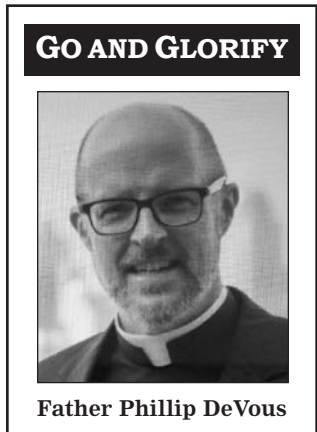
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# He wanted to SEE — do we?

The readings for the thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle B — are: Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18 and Luke 18:9-14.

Recently, I was reading a highly reviewed and lauded novel, which I found to be dreadful and cliched. There is a moment, however, where the main character articulates what I suspect is the sinister conviction lying at the heart of our age: “Every person does the amount of lying that is right for them. You have to know yourself and fulfill the amount of untruth your constitution requires.”



**GO AND GLORIFY**

**Father Phillip DeVous**

Now, the paradox inherent in the assertion of the priority of lying and self-knowledge, with self-knowledge in service to further lying, is indeed a tragic human reality. It is a reminder of the human condition, circa

2024, that we are simultaneously in thrall to ideas of deconstruction, disintegration and self-assertion. The result is a kind of comprehensive blindness, at least partially self-imposed.

In the Gospel we encounter the blind beggar, Bartimaeus. The affliction of physical blindness here is a metaphor and symbol for an even greater, more terrible blindness that we experience — the blindness of our soul to God and to Truth. Contemporary man has lost the vocabulary of the life of the spirit and a vision which allow symbols to reveal. Consequently, he has a critically diminished capacity to perceive God as well as any truth which exists outside of one’s emotional, psychological experience. And to the extent we perceive that diminishment, like the character in that dreadful novel, we start lying about what we don’t see to pretend that we see something, anything, no matter how ridiculous or destructive.

The blind Bartimaeus shows us a way out of the maze of lies by revealing to us the path of longing. Aware of his affliction, he longed for deliverance, so he cried out, “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.”

Did Bartimaeus know that the Jesus he could not see could heal him? Did he cry out in despair, in some last-ditched effort to see? We don’t know. What is shown to us is the way of faith, which always involves a longing for things to be made whole and true, even if we have little understanding as to how that might come about.

Lest we think the way of longing involved in the path of faith is something ethereal, we hear Jesus asking Bartimaeus and us, “what do you want me to do for you?” And we hear the blind man say, “Master, I want to see.”

It should be obvious that the desire to see goes well beyond the mere restoration of physical sight. The blind man, in conversation and communion with the Lord, has been drawn by the way of longing. He wants to see beyond the surfaces, to see everything with a deeper, broader, and clearer vision. The instant Bartimaeus’s sight is restored, the first thing he sees is the one whose power gave him sight: the face of Jesus Christ, the Logos, the Truth and meaning behind all things and in all things.

In this encounter Bartimaeus is a stand-in for all spiritual seekers, for all who seek to live in truth, and not by lies. He reminds us that it is possible, as Bishop Robert Barron aptly notes, “to live outside the tyranny of the ego.” I do not think it is too much to claim that when we live under the tyranny of the ego, we find ourselves living in lies and disintegrated by untruth.

It is an uncomfortable truth for contemporary man, with all his symptoms of disintegration and blindness, to discover the way of faith is the only sure way to truth.

# Friendship ministry

Over the last few years, my kids have loved the role of playing “deejay” in the car when we are on road trips. Thanks to Apple Car Play, a person can deejay directly



**VIEWPOINT**

**Karen Zengel**

from their own music list on their iPhones. It’s fascinating to listen to the differences in their selections and how their tastes in music have changed over time. While we generally take turns, I must admit that lately I favor my son’s choice in music over the girls. I may or may not allow him to have more turns on music selection.

One of my recent favorite tunes, courtesy of my son’s play list, is a song called “Find Your People” by Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors. The lyrics describe the different elements of friendship: camaraderie, acceptance, loyalty and accountability.

What we need from friendships matures over time. As young people, fun reigns supreme, so friendships are mainly based on camaraderie. However, as we gain experience in life, those three remaining components of acceptance, loyalty and accountability are foundational to building and maintaining meaningful relationships. In my younger days, I was willing to overlook blips in loyalty. In my bold youth, I rarely thought I was wrong, so I didn’t acknowledge accountability as a necessary component of friendship. I am so blessed to have found “my people” who deliver on all four facets and expect the same of me.

Friendship is essential to the ministry at St. Vincent de Paul and it is a principle of our Christian faith. Friendship is a form of communion, where we meet Christ’s own love for us. In the Society, friendships are born and cultivated through relationships with and service to our neighbors in need. It is fundamental to our ministry to help us all grow in holiness — we serve together, we pray together, we share our beautiful moments and our struggles so that we may all be lifted up and continue on our journeys to know Christ.

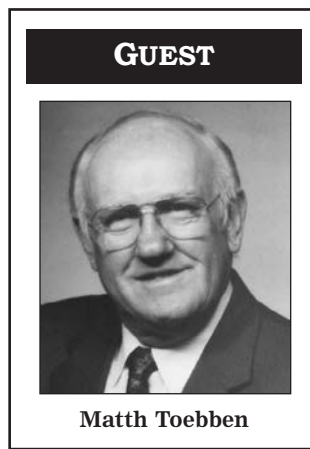
In his own mission, Christ was not alone. When he entered this world, he lived in communion with humanity. In particular, Jesus sought out a group of people, his disciples, where camaraderie was present, and even more importantly, acceptance, loyalty and accountability were taught and reinforced. At the Last Supper, Jesus asked God that the Disciples might “be one” with one another and united in perfect union with him. Jesus said, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:15). Jesus revealed that this communion — this friendship — was central to the continued spread of His teachings and Love, even after he would be gone from this earth.

Though their time together on Earth was short, thank goodness that this friendship between Jesus and his disciples ran deeper than camaraderie. Thank goodness that the disciples, His friends, remained loyal to Jesus’ commission, leading to the spread of his teachings and Love that have stood the test of time. Thank goodness for our Christian faith and ministries like that of St. Vincent de Paul that continue this tradition of friendship, providing the opportunity for all of us to find Christ.

*Karen Zengel is executive director, Society of St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky.*

# Yes on Amendment 2 is good for Ky. business

State legislators passed a bill earlier this year which will now give Kentuckians the opportunity to vote on



**GUEST**

**Matth Toebben**

Amendment 2. Voting in favor of Amendment 2 allows the Kentucky general assembly to pass educational policies such as a school choice system. Kentucky is one of two states that does not offer any school choice program to its citizens.

It is with deep concern that our children are not getting properly educated, especially within inner-city school systems where many of the children are left unable to read or write.

The future of Kentucky will look bleak if this amendment is not passed.

— If we don’t work together statewide to create a workable, competitive, and well-financed education system, the

price we pay will be catastrophic.

— If our children continue to leave school without the proper education they deserve, they will have no chance of succeeding in our modern workforce.

— Businesses will continue to overlook Kentucky because of our lack of an educated workforce. They will relocate and expand to our neighboring states which all have school choice programs.

— Without competition in the education system, we’re not going to see much change. Increased funding hasn’t been enough to increase test scores.

Parents want a choice where the money follows their child, teachers want higher pay, and all children deserve the best education they can get. Majority of school choice programs across the country have provided those results.

We must all work together for the benefit of our children and the future of our state and local communities with a school choice system that can support everyone.

We desperately need to support and vote yes on amendment 2, November 5, to save Kentucky’s future.

*Matth Toebben is a Northern Kentucky businessman founder of Toebben Companies and a parishioner, St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs.*

And that way is paved with longing. It is in and through the Holy Sacraments where we, like Bartimaeus, encounter the Lord, the Logos, and the Truth. That is why we pray, “may your Sacraments ... perfect in us what lies within them, that what we now celebrate in signs we may one day possess in truth.”

It through the way of longing, the path of faith, and crying out in desire for truth that will empower us to live as a rebuke to the sinister conviction of our age—that everything is just about doing the amount of lying that is

right for us and fulfilling the amount of untruth you require to do whatever you wish.

Bartimaeus longed to see, and so he did. He longed to see not just beyond his darkness, but into the depths beyond the surfaces where all truth and life is found. He wanted to SEE. Do we?

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



## Be Witnesses

*“Wake up the world!  
Be witnesses of  
a different way  
of doing things,  
of acting, of living!”*  
— Pope Francis

### Religious Communities in the Diocese of Covington

Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg  
Monastery [www.stwalburg.org](http://www.stwalburg.org)

Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis  
[www.brothersofthepoorofstfrancis.org](http://www.brothersofthepoorofstfrancis.org)

Passionist Nuns  
[www.erlangerpassionists.com](http://www.erlangerpassionists.com)

Sisters of Divine Providence  
[www.cdpkentucky.org](http://www.cdpkentucky.org)

Sisters of Notre Dame  
[www.sndusa.org](http://www.sndusa.org)

Sisters of St. Joseph the Worker  
[www.ssjw.org](http://www.ssjw.org)

### Public and Private Associations

Franciscan Daughters of Mary  
[www.fdoofmary.org](http://www.fdoofmary.org)

Missionaries of St. John the Baptist  
[www.msjb.info](http://www.msjb.info)

## Living legacy of love

**Sister Marla Monahan, SND**

*Contributor*

“Legacy is something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past.”

The Benedictine, Divine Providence and Notre Dame Sisters each founded an all-girls secondary school in our Diocese of Covington over 100 years ago. The Marianist Priests and Brothers and the Christian Brothers founded or staffed all-boys secondary schools in our diocese. Each of those high schools continues today in some form. A few still have women religious as teachers in the school. All have great women and men teachers and administrators. So what is the legacy of the women and men religious founders and original educators?

Recently I attended an annual brunch at Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills, honoring the “Golden Girls,” those women who graduated 50 or more years ago from NDA. Some seniors were there serving as hostesses. It provided an opportunity for me to learn first-hand about NDA education today. Current students and graduates are examples of the living legacy of so many women and men religious who served our Diocese as educators and witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus.

The questions I asked these young women are questions that matter to me as someone who graduated from and later taught at NDA. What do you love about NDA? Where do you find God at NDA? How has your relationship with God or Jesus deepened because of your time here? NDA is named in honor of Mary. Any thoughts about NDA and Mary?

The responses of these young women are profound. What they love about NDA, a response from each of them individually, was their “sisterhood.” They went on to say how much they value the NDA community, their genuine and trust-filled friendships, loving relationships, and caring and passionate teachers.

The Gospel is a central focus of our Catholic schools. The responses of these students remind me of the Farewell Discourses in John’s Gospel: “Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you ... so that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and so that I may be in them.” (John 17:22, 26) These students recognize the importance of community, that we are responsible for each other and relationships are essential in our life with each other. Pope Francis, in a

recent meeting on evangelization (March 15, 2024) said people must live the experience of Christian community in order to have a “life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ.” We are called to deepen our relationship with God in our relationships with each other.

Responses to the questions about where God is found at NDA and how that relationship is deepened included “EVERYWHERE.” More specifically, God is found in friendships, the faculty, the faces of classmates, religion courses and service. One of the students said she “found the love of Jesus in the hearts of many of the kids I serve.”

In one of his homilies (July 1, 2016) Pope Francis said, “We must perform ‘works of mercy,’ therefore, because each of our brothers and sisters, whom we must love, is the flesh of Christ: God has come in the flesh to identify himself with us, and one who suffers is Christ who suffers.”

Finally, Notre Dame Academy is a school dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God. How is this expressed at NDA? One of the students said, “Mary permeates every school day.” They spoke of being influenced and inspired by Mary’s “fiat” realizing they can make a difference like Mary did and does. They appreciated the symbols and reminders of Mary, including receiving their miraculous medal as freshmen. And they spoke about recently praying to her when they were in a “tight” volleyball game. They won! They spoke of the witness of the Sisters of Notre Dame who still teach at/live at NDA, that the Sisters remind them of Mary and “lead them to Jesus.”

The living legacy of these schools is found in the current students and thousands of graduates, many of whom serve us in our education, health care, social service and other professional institutions. Many of them have careers that serve the common good, while others have established good and loving families in our diocese and beyond.

Pope Francis reminded us that “the meaning of life is found in our response to God’s offer of love. And that response is made up of true love, self-giving and service.” (November 3, 2018). The legacy of our women and men religious in the Diocese of Covington is our people. We are in good hands and the future is full of hope.

*(Thanks to the three NDA seniors who shared their wisdom for this article: Olivia Koop, Kate Lenihan, Tori Lenihan.)*





# Deacons celebrating 25 years reflect on their service to the Church

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

Five permanent deacons who were ordained together in February 1999, this year celebrate 25 years since their ordination. The *Messenger* caught up with three of these deacons to reflect on their past quarter-century of service.



**Deacon Jerry Franzen**  
Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington

Deacon Jerry Franzen has spent 21 of the past 25 years assigned as Deacon to the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

Reflecting on his vocation, Deacon Franzen recalls how the permanent diaconate began in the Diocese of Covington

in the early 1980s, and how his start came with the “Called by Name” program that formed within the diocese.

“My name was anonymously submitted at my parish as someone who might consider a vocation to the diaconate,” he said. “I didn’t want any part of it. I felt that I could do everything I wanted to do in my parish as a lay person.”

At the time, Deacon Franzen was teaching at Thomas More University. Former president Dr. Charles Bensman, a deacon who was ordained in Iowa, spoke with him on two occasions regarding the diaconate.

“Both times I told him that I hadn’t and gave him my standard answer of being able to do everything I wanted to do in my parish. I was an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, once chairperson of the Parish Council and chairperson of the Parish Worship Commission. I had also been a member of the Diocesan Worship Commission. He countered in each meeting with some reasons why I should consider the diaconate. Actually, I thought that his reasons were not solid reasons at all, but they got me to

thinking about what the solid reasons for my considering the diaconate might be. I think that my stint on the Diocesan Worship Commission showed me that I could serve the larger Church of the Diocese. Then one day I was waiting for an elevator at Thomas More when Divine Providence Sister Emerita McGann came up to me and said, ‘Jerry you should consider becoming a deacon,’ and my response was, ‘Sister, I’m working on it.’”

Deacon Franzen’s favorite part of the diaconate has changed over the year, but cites himself as a “youth ministry junkie,” and nowadays considers participating in the Mass the “most important thing [he] does each week.”



**Deacon Phillip Racine**  
St. Benedict Parish, Covington

Assigned to St. Benedict Parish in Covington, Deacon Phil Racine’s role involves him in facilitating OCIA, facilitating preparations for baptism and marriage and preaching monthly in the Church.

His vocation story began at a company he worked for, where

Deacon Racine recalls knowing three other deacons who worked with him there — “I always had the diaconate in the back up of my mind,” he said. “After I participated in ‘Christ Renews His Parish,’ I knew that I truly wanted to be a deacon and immediately called the Curia the following Monday.”

Although his vocation has come with challenges, such as in the past being assigned as Parish Life Collaborator at St. William Parish, Williamston (Which was something totally new to Deacon Racine, but he “survived with the help of Msgr. Donald Hellman, who was the Sacramental Minister to St. William” at the time), assisting with Mass is Deacon Racine’s favorite part of the ministry of Deacon, finding the Eucharist to be the “best part of [his] day.”



**Deacon Bob Stoeckle**  
St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright

Deacon Bob Stoeckle is assigned currently to his home parish, St. Agnes in Ft. Wright. There, he currently serves both as Deacon and the parish’s Pastoral Associate.

“My story begins one night when I was with the 4th degree Knights of Columbus

at St. Agnes for the closing of 40 hours,” said Deacon Stoeckle, reflecting on his call to the vocation, “Out of the blue my pastor at that time, Father John Murphy, came up to me and said: ‘I feel that you are our next candidate to become a Deacon.’ I laughed but he stayed persistent and kept in touch.”

In addition to his other duties as deacon, Deacon Stoeckle’s duties also include visiting St. Agnes’s parishioners who are sick or homebound, and taking the Eucharist to them. “There have been times when I took Communion to as many as 40 people in a week. I visit the hospitals and nursing homes as well,” he said. “After 25 years I find it rewarding to still have people come up to me and tell me how much they appreciate what I do for them and the parish.”

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**2024 Seminary Ball**

*(Continued from page 1)*

understanding that children have of the call to the priesthood. "Discernment begins at the foot of the cross," said Deacon Heskamp. "The foot of the cross is really drawing to a place of love, a place of grace, a place where we can just be under Jesus's gaze and let him love us."

Towards the end of the program, Bishop John Iffert interviewed the diocese's five seminarians with questions collected from guests — a new tradition started at last year's Seminary Ball.

After the fact, Bishop Iffert thanked the crowd for being there, for setting the "record crowd" and for helping support the seminarians' educations. At about \$60,000 dollars a year, it costs the diocese over half a million dollars to train a young man for the priesthood, Bishop Iffert reported. "We're grateful for all of you for supporting that formation so that they have the freedom to make a real free decision to serve Christ and the priesthood of Jesus Christ," he said. *(Read Bishop Iffert's thank you message on page 1.)*

*Back by popular demand ....*

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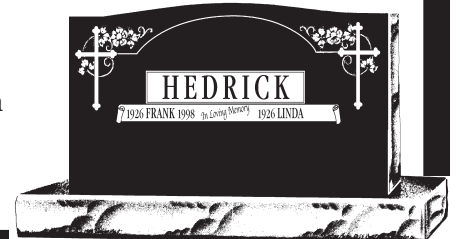
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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

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

**The Cathedral Concert Series opens its 48th season, Oct. 27, 3 p.m.** at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, as Musica Sacra Cincinnati returns to sing Schubert’s Mass No. 1 in F Major. Celebrating 10 years as conductor and musical director, Dr. Brett Scott leads this acclaimed Cincinnati Choral ensemble with orchestra. All Cathedral Concerts are open to the public with no admission charge. A freewill offering is gladly accepted. Visit [www.cathedral-concertseries.org](http://www.cathedral-concertseries.org) for the full 2024-2025 season lineup.

**High School “SUMMIT 24 Eucharistic” Retreat “Rejoicing in Hope”** at Thomas More University (Not an overnight retreat). Early bird registration by Oct. 30, at <https://covdio.org/youth/>.

Are you looking to make your faith journey a part of your college experience? Do you want to learn more about the Catholic faith in a welcoming, open environment — and make lifelong friendships while you’re at it? **Thomas More University’s Campus Ministry invites you to this special evening event, Oct. 22, 6-8 p.m., where you can meet our campus ministers, find out about the Bishop Foy’s Ministry & Service Scholarship,** and discover the many opportunities for service, fellowship, and spiritual development that we offer students of all faith backgrounds. We will encourage you to examine the meaning of life, your place in the world, and your responsibility to others ... all while having a fun and unforgettable college experience! Please RSVP by visiting: <https://tmukyus/CampusMinistry24>

**“The Psychology of Grooming — Part I,”** a webinar for survivors and those who care for them, Oct. 28, 6:30–8 p.m. CDT, with Mitch Mueller. Sex offenders engage in a variety of strategies to target potential victims and prepare to offend against them. In this talk, Mr. Mueller begins to explore the different types of offenders and the different kinds of strategies they use for their crimes. Mr. Mueller holds licenses in mental health and addiction counseling in Wisconsin and Minnesota. Visit <https://www.arch-spm.org/the-psychology-of-grooming-part-i/>.

**A Marriage Encounter Experience** will be held Nov. 1–3 at The Spiritual Center of Maria Stein. Sign up at [esharing.org](http://esharing.org) or call Andy and Melanie Reinersman at (859) 653-8464. Learn how to make your marriage better.

**St. Peter’s COF Court #1492 Annual Matching Funds Turkey Raffle:** Nov. 2nd in the Social Center of Sts. Peter & Paul School, California. There will be BINGO, raffles, and plenty of food for all. The proceeds of this event will go to Sts. Peter & Paul Parish for rectory renovations.

**St. Barbara parish’s, Erlanger, Holy Name society, will be hosting their annual “Turkeyshoot”,** Nov. 2 on the parish’s campus. 12 gauge only. Cash-only concessions will be available. For more information, call Larry at (859) 380-9260 or e-mail [turkeyshootstbarbara@gmail.com](mailto:turkeyshootstbarbara@gmail.com).

**Bingo social,** St. Augustine Parish, Augusta, Nov. 17, 1–5 p.m., bingo, pull tabs, split-the-pot raffle, drinks and snacks, with a meal following bingo. Entry fee \$10. Additional bingo cards optional. Must be 18 or over to participate. Proceeds benefit the Emergency Benevolent Fund. Weather permitting.

**Come enjoy the “How Great Thou Art,” piano concert** at Thomas More University, Nov. 21, 7-8:30 p.m., Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel. World-class, classically trained pianist Annie Takeuchi brings her talents and gifts for a special evening of sacred music and spiritual praise. Come join us as we celebrate in music this season of blessings and thanksgiving. All are welcome to attend this free concert sponsored by Thomas More’s Catholic Identity Committee.

**Carmel Manor, Ft. Thomas, will celebrate its 75th anniversary of providing compassionate care for seniors at a Mass with Bishop John Iffert,** Nov. 22, 5:30

p.m., Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. A reception will follow at the Covington Latin School forum. All are invited to attend.

**A Women’s Advent Day of Recollection** featuring the authors of “Universal Mother” — Holly Schapker and Cecelia Dorger — Dec. 7, 9 a.m.–2 p.m., St. Joseph Church, Crescent Springs. Free of charge, lunch provided. Check-in starts at 8:30 a.m. at church. Register by Dec. 3 to [mamamet@yahoo.com](mailto:mamamet@yahoo.com) or (859) 957-7595 and include name, e-mail, phone number and dietary restrictions.

**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.

**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.

**The Diocese of Covington, in partnership with Franciscan University’s Catechetical Institute is offering FREE in-person Mentor Training Workshops.** These workshops will take place through February 2025. Register at <https://covdio.org/register/>. For information contact Isaak A. Isaak, Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, (859) 392-1529 or [iisaak@covdio.org](mailto:iisaak@covdio.org).

**That Man is You, fall 2024 and spring 2025 schedule:** Mon., 8 p.m., Blessed Sacrament Parish, Undercroft, [Justin.jehn@thinkchamplin.com](mailto:Justin.jehn@thinkchamplin.com); Tues., 6 a.m., Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish at Linneman Funeral Home, [blind@cov-cath.org](mailto:blind@cov-cath.org); Wed., 6 a.m., Mary Queen of Heaven Parish, [gym,tim@ryanlandsurveying.com](mailto:gym,tim@ryanlandsurveying.com); Wed., 6 a.m., St. Agnes Parish, Murphy Hall, [hebsfarm@gmail.com](mailto:hebsfarm@gmail.com); Thurs., 6 a.m., Blessed Sacrament Parish, undercroft,

[bill@deltarealtyusa.com](mailto:bill@deltarealtyusa.com); Thurs., 7 p.m., Divine Mercy/St. Bernard Parishes, Garvey Hall, Dayton, [dmsb.nickolas@gmail.com](mailto:dmsb.nickolas@gmail.com).

**Catholic Charities volunteer opportunities:** Volunteer Receptionist — Be the welcoming face for visitors and clients. Most shifts are four hours long. Mason County Jail Ministry Volunteers - Prayer/Scripture Ministry — Join a group of inmates in the detention centers for prayer and Scripture discussions during scheduled evening sessions. Commitment is flexible; volunteers are not required to attend every week. Visit <https://covingtoncharities.org> and click on the volunteer tab, or e-mail [jwalch@covingtoncharities.org](mailto:jwalch@covingtoncharities.org).

**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.



**Serrans learn about the Notre Dame Urban Education Center**  
The Serra Club of Northern Kentucky held its membership meeting Oct. 15 at Thomas More University’s Chancellor Dining Room. Notre Dame Sister Maria Therese Schappert from the Notre Dame Urban Education Center; Covington, was the guest speaker. Pictured (from left) are: Notre Dame Sister Ruth Lubbers, Sister Marie Therese Schappert and Serra Club president Jeff Jehn.



Schaffer Wells Studio photo

**Piano students perform Acts of Mercy programs**

October brought a “double-header” program at St. Charles Community: one for Sisters of Notre Dame in Lourdes Hall, the next in the A-Level Lounge for residents. In June, these and other young pianists and a Recorder Trio shared a different Acts of Mercy program with the Benedictine Sisters at St. Walburg Monastery, and the Recorder Trio served at Lourdes Hall. Acts of Mercy programs include piano, guitar, and recorder music, combined with “sing-along” style Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.



# Equestrian Order promotes knights and dames from Diocese of Covington

### Staff report

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem promoted five Knights and Dames from the Diocese of Covington at the North Central Lieutenancy's annual Investiture Weekend in Lacrosse, Wi., Oct. 4-7.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is a Pontifical Order of Chivalry under the protection of the Holy See. Its origins can be traced back to the year 1099 and the time of the First Crusade. Members make a lifetime commitment to live a life of the Order's spirituality and make a commitment to the Order's mission of service and support for the Christians in the Holy Land. Today the Order numbers over 30,000 members worldwide. The North Central Lieutenancy covers the states of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

In a solemn ceremony at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Lacrosse, Dame Patricia Enzweiler, Sir Stephen Enzweiler and Sir Nelson F. Rodriguez were promoted to the rank of Commander with Star by Archbishop Jerome Listeki, Archbishop of Milwaukee and Coadjutor Lieutenancy Prior. A Votive Mass of the Immaculate Heart of Mary followed the promotion ceremony. All three members are parishioners at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

At the same ceremony, Sir David Ledonne and Dame Suanne Ledonne were promoted to the rank of Commander. Both are parishioners at Sts. Peter and Paul Church, California.



Ken Snow photos

(above) New Commanders with Star, Dame Patricia Enzweiler (front row, 3rd from right); Sir Stephen Enzweiler (back row, 4th from right), Sir Nelson Rodriguez (back row, far right).

(below) New Commanders, Sir Dave Ledonne (back row 6th from right) and Dame Suanne Ledonne (front row, 4th from right).



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# Persistence and prayer put St. Anthony School playground back on solid ground

Laura Keener  
Editor

Every day as Veronica Schweitzer, principal, St. Anthony School, Taylor Mill, pulls into her parking space on the flat, stable and freshly blacktopped playground, her heart fills with gratitude and awe. Gratitude for the generosity of Paul Naberhaus whose persistence and generosity identified and remediated the cause of a significant land slippage. Gratitude for Father Ivan Kalamuzi, pastor, whose knowledge of building projects, connections with contractors and benefactors, steady leadership and complete trust in God, led the parish and school through a three-year odyssey. And awe, in the power of prayer and divine intervention.

"I really believe it's divine intervention," Mrs. Schweitzer said. "I prayed a lot. I've prayed to St. André Bessette. I've prayed to St. Jude. I've prayed to St. Joseph. I prayed to Mother Seton. I prayed to Mother Teresa. I believe in my heart it's divine intervention because there's no other explanation for it."

For many people, Spring 2021 is barely a memory, but for the people of St. Anthony Parish and School it's one they will not forget. A snowy February morphed into a rainy March and April. The school playground, which for years was showing signs of slippage, endured a significant breach as the chain-link fence, several feet of playground and the hearts of many in the St. Anthony community tumbled downhill toward Banklick Creek.

"This is my school," said Mrs. Schweitzer. "You have concerns about the building, the structure of it and what's going to happen. How in the world can we possibly fix this problem?"

That was the question that welcomed Father Kalamuzi as he took up his first pastorate at St. Anthony Parish, July 2, 2021.

"Considering that our parish is as small as we are and our collections as small as they are, just keeping up with the regular bills in itself is a big task for a small church like this," said Father Kalamuzi.

Father Kalamuzi began to seek solutions and financial support from outside the parish. "Out of nowhere," Mrs. Schweitzer said. She received a call from Mr. Naberhaus asking about the parking lot. Divine intervention, she said.

Mr. Naberhaus is a retired engineer who admittedly has done very well in life. And while he said it is nice to be able



(above, left) Father Ivan Kalamuzi and Paul Naberhaus stand at the top of the remediated landslide. Dubbed as "the farm solution" the hill was stabilized by addressing the deteriorating former school foundation, which caused the slippage, adding draining tile and pipe and covering the entire hill with rip rap stones. (above, right) Tom Martin stands behind Paul Naberhaus who points to a picture of the original St. Anthony School building.

to write a check to help finance a project, what he really enjoys is being a part of the team to not only finance but to work through a project.

"It's one thing to go and ask for donations from wealthy people. It's another thing entirely to engage them in the spending of the money. It feels a lot different if you see the problem and you're trying to fix it. It really feels different," said Mr. Naberhaus. "One of the beauties of just having time to do this kind of thing is, God, I meet the neatest people. It's just a blessing every which way, it's a blessing to me."

Tom Martin, custodian for the parish and school, affirmed that one of the most important qualities that Mr. Naberhaus brought to the project was connections, an understanding of the project and persistence.

"At first it looked pretty overwhelming," said Mr.

Martin.

The diocesan Building and Properties Office had a local engineering company come to survey the situation. They estimated that it would cost \$400k to shore up the hillside. A second estimate came in at about \$220k.

"As we started investigating it, we kept hitting a lot of dead ends with engineers wanting to do spectacular projects that were going to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars," said Mr. Martin. "Then Paul came along and started giving us practical ideas and solutions that we might be able to cope with it."

Still the root cause of the problem remained unclear. An abandoned pipe from the neighboring Sanitation Department, which was still pressurized and releasing

(Continued on page 12)

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## St. Anthony School playground

(Continued from page 11)

water, seemed to be the logical culprit. The Sanitation Department capped the pipe, did not believe that was the cause of the problem. The parish considered litigation, but diocesan counsel advised otherwise, as the outcome would be uncertain and the cost to litigate substantial.

This decision, too, seemed to be divinely inspired as it was discovered the pipe not to be the problem. The problem turned out to be the foundation of the original school building, which, in 1952, had been filled-in, buried and covered by asphalt. Unfortunately, a side of that foundation had given way. Quietly, beneath the ground and over time, the dirt filling the foundation was washing out.

“It was like a bathtub with one side missing,” said Mr.

Martin, “as the dirt slid out, more dirt would fill in” until there was no more dirt underneath, and the asphalt collapsed.

Ralph Kempheus, a Cincinnati water drainage contractor, was ultimately able to identify the problem and stabilize the hill. Father Kalamuzi said that Mr. Kempheus has taken care of other drainage issues at the parish, but he questioned whether he could tackle such a large project.

“I engaged him to really challenge him, to see if he really is serious that he can do this work. And he said, ‘Father, I wouldn’t tell you that I can do it, if I can’t do it,’” Father Kalamuzi said.

The plan was presented to Bishop John Iffert, who

approved the project, calling it “the farm solution.” The solution began with addressing the deteriorating former school’s foundation, adding drainage pipes and finally stabilizing the entire hill with rip rap stones. The cost was just under \$80k.

It took nearly three years to remedy the landslide. Father Kalamuzi trusts that it was completed in God’s time.

“I’ve been a priest 19 years now,” said Father Kalamuzi. “On all of the different projects that I’ve done, when I chose my own path and my own timelines, they never work. And when I back off, somehow, God figures it out.”

## Dioceses slam fake ‘Catholic Tribune’ newspapers seen as part of ‘pink slime’ election ploy

Gina Christian, Kate Scanlon

OSV News

A number of U.S. Catholic dioceses and their bishops have issued statements disavowing fake Catholic newspapers that have resurfaced in swing states ahead of the presidential election to target Catholic voters on key issues.

The publications, which were initially produced ahead of the 2020 presidential election, highlight the rise of what communications scholars call “pink slime” journalism — while running afoul of both canon law on the use of the

name “Catholic” and U.S. tax code banning churches and other tax-exempt nonprofits from engaging in partisan politics.

In an Oct. 20 article, ProPublica, an investigative journalism nonprofit, noted the resurgence of the “Catholic Tribune” in several states, including Michigan, Nevada, Arizona, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Those states are among the crucial swing states in the 2024 election and will determine which candidate reaches the requisite 270 electoral college votes needed to win the presidency.

The publication, issued in direct print mailers and

available online, features a traditional-looking newspaper format, minus an actual masthead listing the publisher, editors and writers.

The digital version of the Catholic Tribune — which like its printed counterpart is tailored for each state, with a uniform design for all of its websites — appears to draw on diocesan and parish directories, social media posts and press releases for the bulk of its content, much of which is outdated on several sites. An apparently national site, AmericanCatholicTribune.com, features more current

(Continued on page 13)

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## Dioceses slam fake 'Catholic Tribune' newspapers

(Continued from page 12)

material drawn from other Catholic news outlets.

Yet interspersed with news of clerical appointments, college panel discussions and Mass intentions are articles — overwhelmingly without bylines or original reporting — that urge readers to take action at the polls on issues such as abortion and religious liberty.

ProPublica observed that a print version of the Wisconsin Catholic Tribune actively sought to “undermine Vice President Kamala Harris and prop up former President Donald Trump.”

Catholic voters are a key demographic in the swing states, and nationally, they are often more evenly divided than other Christian voters. For example, in 2020, about 49% of Catholic voters supported Trump while about 50% supported President Joe Biden, according to data from the Pew Research Center.

Pennsylvania, with its 20 electoral votes, is a state both candidates have campaigned in heavily, and will likely play

a key role in whether Harris or Trump is elected to the White House. Exit polls in 2020 showed that 30% of respondents who voted in Pennsylvania’s election that year identified as Catholic.

Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania all supported Trump in 2016, leading to his election as president, but those same Rust Belt states voted against him in 2020 to support Biden.

An Oct. 21 Washington Post-Schar School poll found Harris and Trump in tight contests in each of the seven battleground states, which also include North Carolina and Georgia.

Several bishops and dioceses have slammed the Catholic Tribune newspapers for deceptively claiming to represent the church’s interests, among them the Wisconsin Catholic Conference, the Archdiocese of Detroit and the Diocese of Reno, Nevada.

In a statement posted to its website, the Archdiocese of Detroit said it was “aware that the Michigan Catholic Tribune, a newspaper falsely identifying itself as Catholic, is being mailed to parishioners in some areas” of that state.

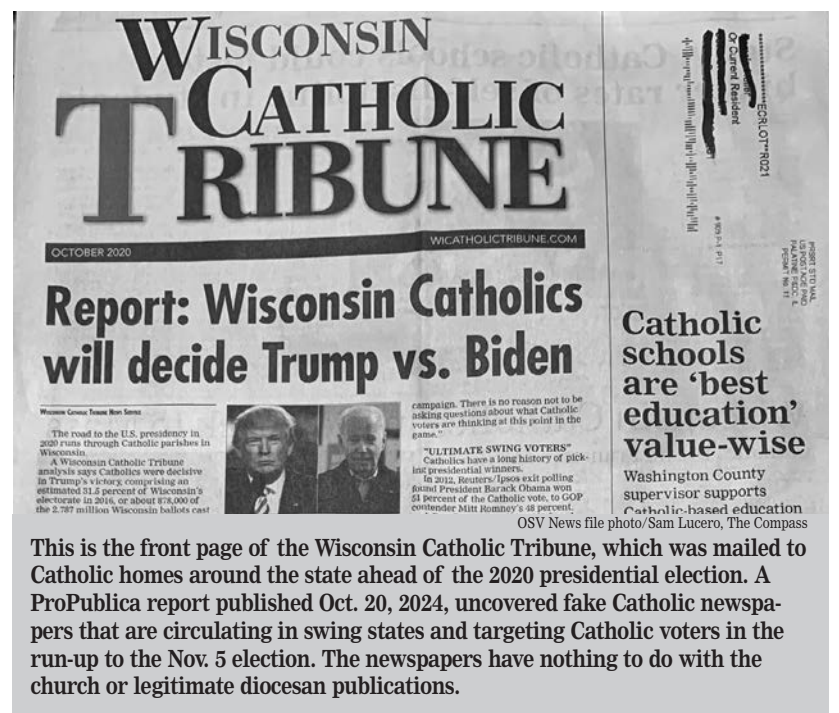
“This publication is not endorsed by, nor is it affiliated with the Archdiocese of Detroit,” said the statement, noting that the archdiocese had not shared any mailing information with the publication’s organizers.

In addition, the archdiocese pointed out that, to its knowledge, the Tribune “does not have the proper authorization required by Canon (Church) law to call itself Catholic.”

Canon 216, which the Archdiocese of Detroit cited in its statement, specifies that while “all the Christian faithful have the right to promote or sustain apostolic action even by their own undertakings, according to their own state and condition ... no undertaking is to claim the name Catholic without the consent of competent ecclesiastical authority.”

The Internal Revenue Service prohibits “all section 501(c)(3) organizations” from “directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office.” Failure to comply could result in an organization’s loss of tax-exempt status as well as tax penalties.

Through tax documents and business filings,



This is the front page of the Wisconsin Catholic Tribune, which was mailed to Catholic homes around the state ahead of the 2020 presidential election. A ProPublica report published Oct. 20, 2024, uncovered fake Catholic newspapers that are circulating in swing states and targeting Catholic voters in the run-up to the Nov. 5 election. The newspapers have nothing to do with the church or legitimate diocesan publications.

ProPublica said it had “traced the papers to a Chicago-based publishing network led by former TV reporter Brian Timpono.”

Over the last two decades, Timpono and other partners have assembled several networks of “pay for play” news, where advertising, political partisanship and — in the case of Timpono’s Journatic enterprise — admitted plagiarism and overseas outsourcing using false bylines have clouded the news stream.

Timpono, who has not yet responded to OSV News’ email and voicemail requests for comment, has long been on the research radar of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at the Columbia Journalism School.

Since 2019, Priyanjana Bengani, a fellow at Tow, has tracked the spread of “partisan outlets masquerading as local news organizations” with algorithmically generated stories as a tactic of electoral disinformation.

With many legitimate local news outlets folding due to lack of funding, such “pink slime” publications (borrowing a former U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist’s term for commercial meat filler) have steadily expanded to fill the vacuum, particularly ahead of elections, Bengani said in a 2019 article.

In a 175-page report, the Tow Center detailed the case of Metric Media and its Catholic Tribune sites as an example of prolific pink slime journalism.

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# Praying to the Holy Spirit can help couples stay united, pope says

Cindy Wooden  
Catholic News Service

Because the Holy Spirit specializes in love and unity, Catholic couples should pray regularly for the Spirit to be present in their marriage, Pope Francis said.

"Where the Holy Spirit enters, the capacity for self-giving is reborn," the pope said at his weekly general audience Oct. 23, continuing a series of talks about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and its members.

While the pope explained the gifts the Holy Spirit gives to a couple through the sacrament of marriage, he repeatedly told visitors and pilgrims that the unity and love of parents are important for children's growth and happiness.

"How beautiful it is to hear a mother say to her children, 'Your father and I...,' as Mary said to Jesus when they found him at the age of 12 in the temple, and to hear a father say, 'Your mother and I...,' as if they were one," Pope Francis said. "How much children need this unity — dad and mom together — this unity of parents, and how much they suffer when it is lacking! How much children suffer when their parents separate."

But "to correspond to this vocation, marriage needs the support of the one who is the gift, indeed the quintessential giver," the Holy Spirit, the pope said.

Pope Francis said marriage preparation courses should include "spiritual preparation," particularly a discussion about the Holy Spirit's role within the Trinity and how invoking the Spirit's assistance can help couples.

St. Augustine, starting from "the revelation that 'God is love,'" taught that that implies there is "one who loves, one who is beloved and love itself that unites them," the pope

said. "The Father is, in the Trinity, he who loves, the source and origin of everything; the Son is he who is beloved, and the Holy Spirit is the love that unites them."

No one would say that "such unity is an easy task, least of all in today's world," the pope said, but it is the plan God has for a husband and wife, so "it is therefore in their nature."

Asking the thousands of people present in St. Peter's Square to join him in praying for peace, Pope Francis said that "early this morning, I received the statistics regarding deaths in Ukraine: it is terrible! War does not forgive; war is a defeat from the beginning."

The pope also told the crowd that "the investments that yield the most today are in weapons manufacturing. Profiting from death!"

"Let us pray to the Lord for peace, may he give peace to



Pope Francis greets visitors as he rides in the popemobile around St. Peter's Square before his weekly general audience at the Vatican Oct. 23, 2024.

all, to all of us," he said. "And let us not forget Myanmar; let us not forget Palestine, which is suffering inhumane attacks; let us not forget Israel and let us not forget all nations at war."

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Faithful urged to pray for religious liberty with novena

WASHINGTON — The U.S. bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty is encouraging Catholics to take part in a Nov. 15-23 novena ahead of the feast of Christ the King, celebrated this year on Nov. 24. The feast day, which falls on the last Sunday of each liturgical year, is "a fitting moment" in the liturgical year to promote the church's teaching on religious freedom, because the feast was "born out of resistance to totalitarian incursions against religious liberty," according to the committee's foundational document, "Our First Most, Cherished Liberty: A Statement on Religious Liberty," first issued in 2012. "We also urge that the Solemnity of Christ the King ... be a day specifically employed by bishops and priests to preach about religious liberty, both here and abroad," the document says. "To all our fellow Catholics, we urge an intensification of your prayers and fasting for a new birth of freedom in our beloved country. We invite you to join us in an urgent prayer for religious liberty." The novena can be found at <https://www.usccb.org/Christ-the-King-2024-novena>. For each day there is a dedicated intention, to be followed by an Our Father, a Hail Mary and the Glory Be and a prayer to Christ the King. Pope Pius XI instituted the feast of Christ the King to the in 1925 with his encyclical "Quas Primas" ("In the First") to respond to growing secularism and atheism.

Coalition promotes life-affirming health care for 'maternal and fetal' patients

WASHINGTON — A coalition of medical and pro-life groups on Oct. 22 launched what they called the Women's Healthcare Declaration, which they said calls on policymakers, medical boards, and other health care entities to enact pro-life policy

that also enhances "the medical standard of care for pregnant women and women facing miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, an incomplete abortion or any other life-threatening condition related to pregnancy." The declaration comes two years after the Supreme Court's 2022 Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization decision that reversed the court's previous abortion jurisprudence and led to some states implementing near-total bans on the procedure. Despite the changed legal landscape, some reports indicate the number of abortions in the United States has increased since Dobbs, and some polls suggest voters in states with ballot referendums on abortion are poised to reject similar laws. Concerns about maternal mortality are prevalent, Dr. Christina Francis, board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist, and CEO of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, told reporters. She argued women and physicians "need to know that every state in the country allows physicians like me to intervene immediately to treat miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, post-abortion complications and other potentially life-threatening pregnancy complications at any point in pregnancy."

Lawmakers scrutinize 'shaken baby syndrome' conviction of death row inmate

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas lawmakers held a hearing Oct. 21 on the fate of a Texas man whose scheduled execution was halted the previous week after an unprecedented legal effort by members of a state House panel who questioned the evidence behind his conviction. Robert Roberson was scheduled Oct. 17 to become the first person in the U.S. executed over a murder conviction connected to a diagnosis of shaken baby syndrome in the 2002 death of his then 2-year-old daughter. But that conviction, a group of Republican and Democratic legislators argued, was based on outdated science, arguing evidence instead suggests that the chronically-ill child likely died from complications with severe pneumonia. They argued such a mistake was a common misdiagnosis at the time. At issue in the case is Texas' junk science law, which was intended to

allow a person convicted of a crime to seek relief if the evidence used against them is no longer credible. Lawmakers seeking to delay Roberson's scheduled execution issued a subpoena for his testimony before the state House of Representatives, an unprecedented maneuver that was criticized by the governor's office. The Texas Supreme Court halted the execution in response. Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, said in a statement shared with OSV News that the group hoped the hearing "ultimately leads to Robert Roberson's removal from death row," saying the case reveals "the absurdity and arbitrary nature of this deadly system of capital punishment."

'Terrorists burned everything, but not our faith,'

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso — In an early October massacre, at least 150 people, including many Christians, were killed in northeastern Burkina Faso's town of Manni, in what turned out to be a brutal terrorist rampage. Days after the massacre, Aid to the Church in Need, a pontifical charity working for the cause of persecuted Christians globally, learned that the attack had occurred Oct. 6. Manni is home to a large Catholic community, and many Christians, as well as Muslims, were killed in the massacre, ACN said on the organization's website. Sources told ACN that the terrorists first cut mobile phone networks before attacking the local market, where many people had gathered after Sunday Mass. "They then opened fire indiscriminately, looted shops and set fire to several buildings, burning some victims alive. The same sources reported that the next day, the perpetrators returned to attack medical staff and kill the many wounded in the city's hospital," ACN said. A new incursion took place two days later, when the terrorists again invaded the town of Manni, massacring all the men they could find. Many of the victims were residents from nearby villages who had sought refuge in Manni after being driven out of their homes by terrorists. "The situation is beyond horrific," one of the local sources told ACN. "But even if the terrorists burned everything, they didn't burn our faith!"



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## Remembered as prophet for the poor, dispossessed, Mexico says goodbye to slain priest

David Agren  
OSV News

MEXICO CITY — Slain Father Marcelo Pérez was buried in his birthplace amid indignation and demands for justice.

Father Pérez, an Indigenous Tzotzil priest in the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas, was remembered for protecting the poor and dispossessed, while seeking dialogue where possible and always denouncing injustice in an increasingly violent region.

“Father Marcelo took special care of the poorest, the weakest, the most unprotected, and he protected them from abusive people, from powerful people, from people who feel they own society and the land and who do not mind harming the lives of others to enrich themselves or to acquire greater political power to get everything they want,” retired Bishop José Raúl Vera López of Saltillo said during an emotional open-air Mass attended by hundreds of villagers in San Andrés Larrainzar.

“He was especially concerned about people whose dignity was damaged by unfair treatment from authorities or from abusive people. This, dear sisters and brothers, is what the Lord Jesus Christ tells us today,” said Bishop Vera, who was coadjutor bishop in San Cristóbal de las Casas when Father Pérez entered the minor seminary.

“This is why he died as a prophet with his word, which is the word of God.”

Mourners at his burial shouted, “Viva Padre Marcelo!” and, “Marcelo, friend, the people are with you.”

But the impact of Father Pérez’s death hit hard in Chiapas and drew widespread condemnation from Catholics across the country, along with many in Mexican society. Father Pérez had endured threats, and previous assassination attempts for his work mediating disputes, attending to victims of violence and confronting political

bosses and criminal groups.

His murder came as the southern state of Chiapas — long rife with poverty, inequality and discrimination against Indigenous groups — convulsed with drug cartels violence, which has emptied villages and sent hundreds fleeing to neighboring Guatemala.

Father Pérez was shot dead after celebrating Mass in San Cristóbal de las Casas on Oct. 20. Security camera footage showed the priest leaving the church, climbing into his car and being shot through the window by an assailant who fled the scene.

Chiapas Gov. Rutilio Escandón announced Oct. 22 that a suspect had been arrested. President Claudia Sheinbaum announced earlier the same day that the federal prosecutor’s office would investigate the crime.

Sheinbaum, who took office Oct. 1, used her Oct. 22 morning press conference to highlight the “perception of insecurity” survey from the state statistics institute, INEGI, which she said showed an improved security situation.

“In the country, people feel more secure than in 2018” — when her predecessor and mentor, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador took office — and even more so “than in 2013,” she said.

She said of the situation in Chiapas: “It’s important to work to ensure that a situation like this does not happen again, that there are no displacements and to pacify, and to avoid extortion and crimes that are occurring.”

The president’s reaction reflected a tendency from the ruling Morena party to downplay violence, even as it spread into previously placid parts of the country.

Father Pérez, however, spoke out on violence in Chiapas throughout his priesthood — and especially as violence intensified in Chiapas.

He told reporters covering a march for peace convened Sept. 13 by Chiapas’ three Catholic dioceses, “In many communities and municipalities, violence is really unbearable.”

Father Pérez was born in San Andrés Larrainzar, an Indigenous Tzotzil town known for the San Andrés Accords signed in 1996 by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation and the Mexican government after an uprising by the Zapatistas for Indigenous rights.

He entered the minor seminary as a teenager and was ordained in 2002. He was a rare Indigenous priest in a diocese with more than 400 married Indigenous deacons, who were ordained by Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia — who promoted an autochthonous church in Chiapas — to better serve remote communities without priests.

Father Pérez served early on in his priesthood in the municipality of Chenalhó, scene of a notorious 1997 Acteal massacre of a pacifist Catholic group known as Las Abejas that claimed 45 lives. But after eight years in the divided community, he achieved community participation “without ideological differences or political positions in liturgical assemblies,” Jesuit Father Pedro Arriaga, told OSV News.

He later worked to find peace during his next assignment in Pantelhó, where an armed group revolted against a local strongman — leading to a warrant being issued for his arrest.

He always strove for peace, but it wasn’t without risks. Would-be assassins rigged his car’s electrical system to explode, but it malfunctioned, according to Father Arriaga. Another time they loosened the wheels. He was urged to leave the diocese, but Father Pérez refused to flee.

“There were constant threats,” said Father Arriaga, a former diocesan spokesman in San Cristóbal de las Casas.

He remembered Father Pérez as “prophetic,” describing him as “always being on the side of the poor, very radical and not afraid to make statements to the press.

“He considered death as a possibility for denouncing this situation.”



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