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Our Savior Parish, Covington, unveiled its new state historical marker, July 12, recognizing its significant contribution to the City of Covington. Scan the QR code to see the unveiling.



(top left) Divine Providence Sister Janet Bucher and Owen Lewis unveil the Our Savior School and Church historical marker, located at 246 E. 10th Street, Covington.

(above left) Jim Seaver, community engagement coordinator, Kentucky Historical Society, said that love for Our Savior Parish and School and its heritage were evident throughout the historical marker approval process.

(top right) Father Mark Keene, vicar general, blesses the historical marker.

(above center) Our Savior students and their teacher gather for a photo (from left) Jeff Stowers, Ella Blackwell Helmes, James Stowers, Divine Providence Sister Alice Marie Schmersal and James Penman.



(above) At the opening of the historical marker celebration, Owen Lewis, parishioner, Our Savior Parish, summon the deceased elders of the parish to join in the celebration with a ritual drumming.

Rosa Hollis-Bird (right), an Our Savior elementary school student who went on to finish her high school education at Notre Dame Academy, (1962) Park Hills, was among the attendees.

Our Savior Parish celebrates dedication of its state historical marker that ‘reminds us and teaches us’

Laura Keener
Editor

In the summer of 1943 — during the years of segregation (the 58 years between the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision, which legalized “equal but separate accommodations for the white and colored races” and the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision, which made racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional) — Bishop Francis Howard, the Diocese of Covington’s fifth Bishop, erected Our Savior Church and School.

Our Savior Church and School served as a mission of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, for the worship and educational needs of black Catholics. The diocese purchased two properties on East Tenth Street, Covington, converting a single-family house into a church building and a two-family house into classrooms and a convent for the Sisters of Divine Providence, who staffed and operated the school. Divine Providence Sister

(Continued on page 17)

Divine Providence Sister Janet Bucher retires after decades of service to Our Savior Parish

Macie Becker
Media Intern

Congregation of Divine Providence Sister Janet Bucher, who has been serving the Diocese of Covington and beyond for 65 years, has retired Monday, July 14. Sister Janet discerned religious life as a young adult, having “just felt a call,” she said. She often helped the sisters at her grade school, St. Aloysius. She always appreciated the sisters who had taught her, and said she felt an “inner sense”

Congregation of Divine Providence Sister Janet Bucher in Our Savior Parish, Covington, where she has served as Pastoral Administrator since 1991.



(Continued on page 17)

Students from across the Diocese worship together at annual retreat

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The Diocese of Covington Office of Youth Ministry hosted the annual High School Summer Retreat, July 12-13, at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills. These retreats are designed to help teens grow in their relationship with God and each other.

This year the theme for the retreat was aligned with the Gospel reading for the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Luke 10:25-37, in which Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

Based off the Gospel reading the 2025 retreat came to be called the Heart and Soul retreat, inviting students to open their heart and soul to Christ.

“It’s seasonal, it’s liturgical, and they get immersed into the rhythm of the Church. It is a specialized, unique retreat. It’s not one that they have received before. So, it’s very current in the moment and in tune with the prayer of the Church,” said Angie Poat, diocesan youth minister.

Fifty students from parishes across the diocese attended the two-day retreat, where they were able to take a break from everyday life, and bask in the glow of faith-filled peers, sacred celebrations and the Gospel.

“They yearn for this,” said Mrs. Poat. A sentiment that was evident amongst the students in attendance the morning of July 12 as they sang loudly and danced proudly to worship music.

“As long as I’m breathing, I’ve got a reason to praise the Lord,” sang the students as they danced together. Mrs. Poat sees a difference in the way the students praise from the first retreat to now, one she attributes to the efforts of the Eucharistic Revival and the Holy Spirit.

“I think it’s also a fruit of the Eucharistic Revival,” she said, “and these pods of young people around the Diocese who have wanted something like this, and now they have

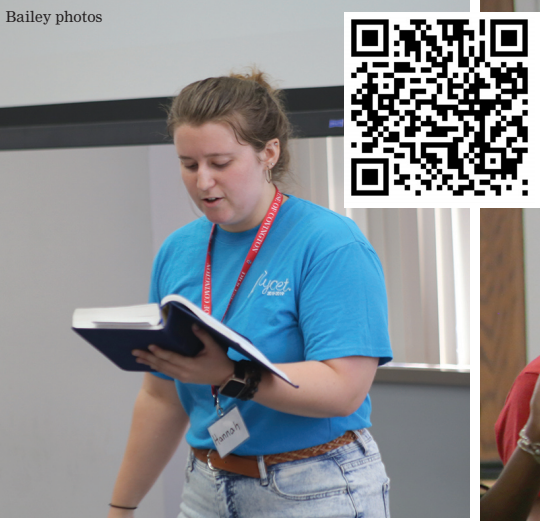
it. Each time they come their energy is growing, it’s the way that they sang and danced, you could see the growth.”

Aside from the singing and dancing, the retreat offered students a chance for reflection and renewal of their heart and soul.

“They’re hungry for authentic relationships, authentic worship and for the Word of God. When you have those

retreats allow the students to open their hearts to whatever Christ has in store for them and to see His love for them.

“I hope that they receive whatever the Lord has for them, but I also hope that they have a glimpse of the love that God has for them, that our Bishop has for them, and that we, as a Church, have for them,” she said.

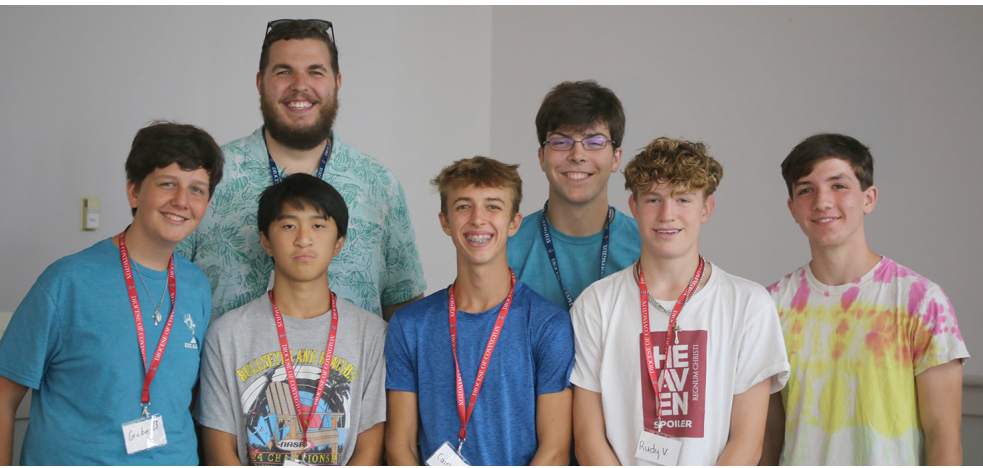


(above) Hannah Ubelhor reads from the titular gospel passage, Luke 10:25-37, as she explains the theme of this years annual retreat.



(above right) Students gather and clap their hands to worship music.

Scan the QR code to see how they praise the Lord.



(right) A group of students pose for a photo before leaving for a small group break out session.

three things together in the same place at the same time, it is life changing,” said Mrs. Poat.

While the goal of the retreat is to help students grow in their faith, Mrs. Poat hopes that these

St. Augustine Parish, Augusta, celebrates 150 years of the Sisters of Notre Dame

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The Sisters of Notre Dame celebrated 150 years of ministry to St. Augustine Parish and School, Augusta, June 28, with Mass and a reception following. Celebrating Mass was Father Joey Shelton, pastor, St. Augustine Parish.

In 1875, 150 years ago, the Sisters of Notre Dame made their way to Augusta, Kentucky, one year after landing in the United States from Germany. Upon their arrival the sisters got to work establishing a parish school for St. Augustine Parish. Since then, Father Shelton said, the sisters have dedicated their entire selves to handing on the Catholic faith, equipping young people to grow into good parents, neighbors and friends.

“We owe these women an immense debt of gratitude,” said Father Shelton. “For all that they have done — teaching during the day, visits they made after school to help a student who had fallen behind, helping families in crisis, ministering to the poor, evangelizing the community, and even caring for us when we are struggling.”

Father Shelton shared a personal instance when Sister Nance Hehman came to his assistance mere days after moving into the St. Augustine rectory in 2020, assisted by his parents. The night his parents left, Father Shelton set out to cook himself dinner in the rectory, an “image of independence,” said Father Shelton. Things quickly changed when he cut his finger deeply and realized a first aid kit was not among the things unpacked in the recent days.

“What is my very first thought,” Father Shelton asked the congregation, “Call Sister,” he answered. “In just a moment she was over with a first aid kit and had helped

me to pull myself back together,” he said.

“In every aspect of the life of the parish, from mending the pastor’s nearly amputated finger, to sacramental preparation, to service to the poor, and everything in between, Sister Nance is the glue that holds our community together,” said Father Shelton.

While Sister Nance has been serving as the parish glue for 18 years, 122 Sisters of Notre Dame have served the parish and school before her.

In the spring of 1875, three Notre Dame Sisters — Mary Paula, Mary Marzellina, and Mary Clara — made their way to the river town of Augusta to serve the educational and spiritual needs of its people. “Though those original sisters only stayed three years, plenty more would come to replace those sisters and then more to replace those sisters and then more to replace those sisters,” said Father Shelton. “But whichever sister was here,” he continued, “they brought with them the

(Continued on page 14)

(Left to right) Father Joey Shelton, Notre Dame Sister Nance Hehman and Senator Shelley Funke Frommeyer at the celebration of the Sisters of Notre Dame 150 years of service to St. Augustine Parish, Augusta. Father Shelton celebrated Mass followed by a reception to the thank the sisters for their dedicated work.



ACUE summer mission collection keeps Catholic education accessible to families in the urban core

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

In the Diocese of Covington, five elementary schools fall under the ACUE (Alliance for Catholic Urban Education) banner. Serving the Covington deanery, ACUE’s mission is to “preserve Catholic education in urban areas,” providing tuition assistance to low-income families, and with it the option for a Catholic education.

While these schools and the aid they provide are in part funded by the diocese’s 13 urban parishes, ACUE relies on donations from parishioners and community as a primary source of funds — and as a way to lessen the load on both the parishes and the diocese at large.

The Summer Mission Collection, which runs from July to the weekend of August 17, is just one of the fundraising efforts on behalf of ACUE and the Office of Stewardship and Mission — encouraging contributions during weekend Masses from not just the urban parishes, but suburban and rural parishes as well.

“Tuition assistance is our greatest thing,” according to Beth Ruehlmann, ACUE’s director of development, “We build on what’s most important — to allow the children access to the schools.”

Although ACUE school budgets are often very lean, children in the diocesan urban schools benefit from a “solid education,” said Ms. Ruehlmann, including small class sizes and “all the hallmarks of Catholic education.” Of all students who attend ACUE schools, a minimum of 90 percent move on to a Catholic High School — and a strong 99 percent of those students attend college, trade school or enter the armed forces.

“We know that the children (who attend ACUE schools) were not being served through the public schools,” she continued, “They were falling through the cracks ... those families needed an alternative, and what’s what we are. It’s important to maintain a presence in our urban neighborhoods.”

To learn more about ACUE schools, or to make a financial contribution, visit <https://covdio.org/acue/>.



Students from Holy Trinity School, Bellevue — one of five elementary schools under the ACUE umbrella that benefit from donor funding.

Immigration: The Catholic Perspective, Part 2

Aug. 18, Bishop Howard
Memorial Auditorium

6:30 p.m. Refreshments and net-
working;

7–8:30 p.m., program.

This presentation takes a deeper dive into Catholic social teaching related to immigration, followed by a presentation by an immigration lawyer on the various pathways to entering the U.S. Time for conversations in small groups will provide additional action steps that can be taken to make a difference in the lives of all those seeking a safe home in this country. Sponsored by the Diocese of Covington and the Intercommunity Sisters Peace & Justice Committee.

Bishop's Vocation BBQ

5:00 p.m.
August 3
Acree Hall,
Burlington
RSVP Required



Bishop's Schedule

- Aug. 2**
Confessions, St. Patrick Church, Maysville, 4 p.m.
Mass, St. Patrick Church, Maysville, 5:15 p.m.

Aug. 3
Mass, Holy Redeemer Church, Vanceburg, 8:45 a.m.
Mass, St. Patrick Church, Maysville, 11 a.m.
Vespers and Bishop’s annual Vocations BBQ Bash, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, 5 p.m.

Aug. 4
Opening school year Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 10 a.m.

Aug. 5
22nd annual clergy dinner, Knights of Columbus Council, Alexandria, 4:30 p.m.
- Aug. 6-7**
CCK/Province meeting, Archdiocese of Louisville

Aug. 8
Mass prior to General Election for the Franciscan Daughters of Mary Religious Order, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Oratory, Covington, 9 a.m.

Aug. 9
Deanery Pastoral Council orientation, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, 9 a.m.

Aug. 10
Mass, Madonna Manor, Villa Hills, 11 a.m.
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 5:30 p.m.

Aug. 12
DPAA Priest Committee meeting, 1 p.m.
Cursillo meeting, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington, 7 p.m.

Reporting Misconduct in the Diocese of Covington

Anyone who has experienced sexual misconduct by a cleric, employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Covington is asked to contact Ms. Julie Feinauer, diocesan victims assistance coordinator (859) 392-1515. Professional assistance and pastoral support will be provided in confidentiality and with respect.

A copy of the “Diocesan Policies and Procedures for Addressing Sexual Misconduct” is available by contacting the Chancery, (859) 392-1510 or visiting www.covdio.org and going to “Sexual Misconduct Policy.”

Informando sobre conducta inapropiada en la Diócesis de Covington

Cualquier persona que haya experimentado conducta sexual inapropiada por parte de un clérigo, empleado o voluntario de la Diócesis de Covington está invitada a ponerse en contacto con Ms. Julie Feinauer, coordinadora diocesana para dar asistencia a las víctimas. Teléfono (859) 392-1515. Asistencia profesional y apoyo moral serán ofrecidos de una manera confidencial y con respeto.

Una copia de “Normas y Procedimientos sobre Conducta Sexual Inapropiada” está disponible poniéndose en contacto con la Cancillería, Teléfono (859) 392-1510, o visitando www.covdio.org y marcando “Sexual Misconduct Policy.”

Thomas More gains full NCAA DII membership

Staff report

The NCAA Division II Membership Committee has approved Thomas More University for full Division II membership, effective Sept. 1.

“This is a historic accomplishment for Thomas More University and Saints Athletics. Over the past three years, the University has been working strategically to elevate its position as the premier regional Catholic university. As a member of the NCAA Division II and the Great Midwest Athletic Conference, Thomas More University accomplished an important strategic initiative today as we advance our regional position and continued excellence,”

says Thomas More University President Joseph L. Chillo.

Now, under full Division II membership, the Saints will be eligible for NCAA DII championship competition at the national level in the 2025-26 academic year.

To earn full member status, Saints Athletics completed three years of provisional Division II membership. In the 2023-24 academic year, the Saints began competition in the Great Midwest Athletic Conference (G-MAC) and were eligible to compete for conference championships and tournaments.

“At Thomas More, we aim to provide our student-athletes a meaningful and fulfilling collegiate experience —

one that sets them up for success after graduation. These foundational values are critically important as the University continues to provide one of the highest ROI for its graduates in the region,” said Terry Connor, vice president and director of Athletics.

Mr. Connor continues, “I am tremendously proud of my administrative team and coaching staff for their efforts throughout this transition. Now that we are able to compete at the national level, I am even more excited to cheer on our student-athletes this year and in the years ahead. I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish in DII — Go Saints!”

Over the past three years of transition to NCAA Division II, Thomas More has seen historic growth as an institution. The University has expanded its campus footprint, including the opening of a new, 34,000-square-foot academic center in 2024 and the acquisition of the Five Season Family Sports Club, home of the Saints tennis teams, in 2023. Athletic facilities have also been enhanced, including an upgraded, state-of-the-art softball complex which opened in 2024; replacement of turf and resurfacing of the surrounding track at Republic Bank Field, home of the football, soccer, lacrosse, rugby, track & field, and cross country teams; and a partnership announced in 2022 with the Florence Y’alls, which resulted in a new home field for Saints baseball and the renaming of the facility to Thomas More Stadium.

“Over the past five years, the University has experienced tremendous growth, and our students and alumni continue to be successful in the classroom, on the field of competition, and most importantly, in life,” President Chillo says.

Prior to the 2023-24 academic year, the Saints competed in both NAIA and NCAA Division III across decades of intercollegiate competition. While competing in these athletic associations, the Saints earned championships both at the conference and national levels.





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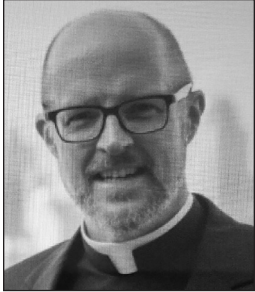
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Lord, teach us to pray

The readings for the seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C — are: **Genesis 18:20–32, Colossians 2:12–14 and Luke 11:1–13.**

For many years now I have thought the main reason people drift away from the practice of the faith is due to the total fragmentation of our attention and our capacity to pay attention to God. Attention is a sacred act for the simple reason that we become that to which we pay attention.

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

Because of our frayed and fractured attention spans, we have become less capable of paying attention to anything important, especially God. At a fundamental level, faith may be understood, at a minimum, as the attention we pay to the God who has revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ.

How do we recover that attention which is so essential to the life of faith; that in some sense IS the life of the faith? Let us turn our mind’s attention to our Blessed Lord: “Jesus was praying...”

We must take the time to pray. Prayer, which as the philosopher and mystic Simone Weil understood it, is “laboring to give our attention to God.” When I have struggled in prayer over the years, I have always found comfort in Weil’s understanding of prayer. My very labor to pay attention to the living God was itself prayer.

It is essential to note that prayer, deep prayer, is hard and we, like the disciples, turn to the Lord and pray for the gift of prayer, asking, “Lord, teach us to pray.” And the Lord answers that prayer.

“Father.” Jesus reveals to us that God is not some cold, distant first cause or prime mover, but the source of my existence and life. He is Father to each of us and all of creation. Though our heavenly Father is certainly almighty, he revealed by Christ to be in familial relation of generativity and intimacy to us.

“Hallowed be your name.” When we enter in the labor of praying, we recognize the one to whom we direct our attention is like no other. To call upon the Father is to do more than enter some kind of random chat. When we are praying, we enter a communion with the all-holy God and in so doing, His holiness becomes transformative to us. His holiness hallows us, that is, makes us holy, for prayer is one of the means by which our Father shares the divine life with us.

“Your kingdom come.” In the person of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God is at hand! The Kingdom of God is made present and personal in Jesus Christ. In prayer we come to see that a whole new manner of being, and relationship of God has come to us as we receive Jesus Christ in prayer, which is the most fundamental act of faith.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” We pray for our daily bread — the things we need to sustain life. This, however, goes beyond the earthly and material life, for what we really need to sustain us is the “bread of life” wherein we feed on the very life of God. Thus, the “true bread come down from heaven” that sustains us in the divine life of God is the Most Holy Eucharist. Every Holy Mass that is celebrated is the Father’s direct and personal answer to this prayer.

“Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone in debt to us.” This single line embodies the absolute primacy of divine mercy in our lives. Having received the divine mercy of Jesus in His paschal mystery, we are enjoined to liberally extend forgiveness to others. If we pay close attention to this petition, we get the sense that we are not forgiven of our sins if we do not forgive others. Therefore, essential to our Eucharistic Communion with the Lord is active sense of mercy sought, mercy received, and mercy extended-from God, to us, and from us to others.

“Do not subject us to the final test.” The Christian life
(Continued on page 14)

Who’s the new guy?

Now is the time of year when I pray extra prayers for the priests and parishes of our diocese. As I write this column, approximately one in five of our priests has taken up or is about to take up a new assignment, and for many of them it also means a move to a new residence. For priests and parishioners alike, the period before and after the change of assignments is filled with emotions — excitement, apprehension, anticipation and even sadness. I pray for smooth transitions.

VIEWPOINT



Jamie Schroeder

Every spring and summer, I find myself in conversations about these changes in which people make comments or ask questions like the following:

“I am afraid that this might be the year my parish is assigned a new priest, and I don’t want to lose...”

“If this is our year for a change, I hope we get...”

And after changes are announced, I hear:

“What is Father like?”

“What do his former parishioners say about him?”
“Will his leadership style fit our parish?”
“Will he make changes, and will we agree with them?”
“Will he be what my parish needs?”

While I do not fault anyone for making them, I do tend to flinch when I hear these comments and questions. Curiosity and speculation are normal, but they can be damaging. This kind of thinking and discussion produces preconceptions and can set unrealistic expectations for a new priest. I’ve heard it said, facetiously, that everyone wants Jesus to be their pastor. And yet, even Jesus experienced the preconceived ideas of those around him — his disciples, the scribes and pharisees, and the Jewish people. These expectations led to misunderstanding, rejection and ultimately Jesus’ death.

Instead, openness, acceptance, trust and gratitude would serve priests and parishioners in a better way. What would happen if we adopted a different set of comments and questions?

“I trust that God and the Bishop have the welfare of both priest and parish at heart with this assignment.”

“I am grateful that my parish has been assigned a priest to continue the ministry of Word and Sacrament.”

“I will welcome whoever is sent as I would welcome Christ.”

“What is Father’s experience as he makes this transition and what can I do to make it easier for him?”

“How can I assist Father in his new role?”

“I am excited to see and be part of the new ideas Father will bring for the growth of our faith and community.”

“Do I have what Father might need and am I willing to offer it?”

I have often heard Bishop Iffert say that being a leader is very difficult in today’s world. It is true for our secular as well as religious leaders. In addition to that, and maybe partially because of it, we have a vocations crisis. So, it would make sense that we would support our priests in every way we can. Where gaps become evident, we can offer to fill in with our own skills and expertise. When we disagree, we can be charitable and discreet in addressing the issue in question. And when decisions are made, we can get on board. As I heard a conference speaker recommend once, “Be the go-to tool in your priest’s toolbox.”

Above all, we can and should pray regularly for our priests, as they pray for us, and for vocations to the priesthood. There are four prayers I pray daily for these intentions. Maybe you would like to join me in praying my favorite:

“Dear Jesus, how can we ever properly thank you for our priests? They have given up everything for us, forsaking the world to nourish our souls with the Eucharist and to heal our wounds through holy confession. Send forth your Holy Spirit right now in a supernatural torrent of grace, in a swift and sure answer to this plea, bringing consolation and courage, purity and joy to our beloved priests. As only you can do, whisper into their hearts that we love them and wrap each priest in the loving maternal arms of our Blessed Mother. Amen.”

Let us welcome the “new guys” with open minds and hearts, ready to assist as needed and appropriate. And let us pray for one another that the transitions for both priests and parishioners be peaceful, happy, and bear great fruit for the kingdom.


Jamie Schroeder is chancellor for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

Hope vs. wishful thinking

“Pilgrims of Hope” — the theme of the jubilee year. Many parish projects and events are centering around hope this year. It has been on my mind.

As a virtue hope is rather hard to define, illusive. I confuse it with wishful thinking or imagining the ridiculously impossible. What is it I am to carry with me and spread as I journey on my pilgrimage?

MUSINGS



Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

One of the dilemmas for me has been trying to distinguish between hope and wishful thinking. I say or hear “I hope so” about a wide variety of events. I hope to finish the projects on my “to do list” for the day and that I will not take too much time doing the shopping. I hope

for the cure of a friend’s cancer, for world peace, for an end to violence in our cities. That is a very wide range!

Some things are obviously wishful thinking. I hope to lose weight without dieting or exercising, to master a foreign language in a few days, to win the lottery (by the way, I do not buy a ticket). No doubt about those — not real hope, just wishful thinking.

There are other things for which I pray and hope that are clearly not within the realm of possibility, at least

within my lifetime. How many times have I prayed for the recovery of a friend or family member whose illness is deemed terminal? How many times have I prayed for world peace which clearly is not about to happen in the next few years. I regularly hope for an end to gun violence in our cities and for the end of homelessness. I hope that all who are ill will receive the treatment they need. While I know that these hopes will not be fulfilled in a complete way, this is surely different from wishful thinking.

All prayer is based in the hope that God faithfully hears and answers prayers — that God is trustworthy and wills what is good. Yet I dare to ask and hope for what has been pronounced impossible — the cure of what is deemed incurable, the success of projects that are clearly doomed. Probably many of us pray and hope for the improbable and even the impossible.

The Israelites, under the leadership of Moses, hoped to reach the promised land. They started out with miracles that assured them of success. But 40 years in a desert dashed those hopes on any number of occasions.

Sometimes they lifted their voices to Moses asking him to intercede with God for them. They still had hope. Other times they gave up on God and sought other help — turning to idols. Hope is hard to hold when fulfillment of desires is postponed for long periods.

While doing all in our power to reach longed for goals is admirable, turning away from God by placing our trust in finite means alone is a loss of hope. We must do all that we can to reach the hoped for goals, but hope involves

(Continued on page 17)

Young people are beacons of hope, said Pope Leo XIV ahead of Jubilee of Young People

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

The Jubilee of Young People is set to take place July 28–August 3 as part of the 2025 Jubilee Year: Pilgrims of Hope. Specific jubilee days within the jubilee year are meant to celebrate and recognize groups of people within the Church, highlighting them and their contributions.

The Jubilee of Young People, or youth, recognizes men and women ages 18-35 and invites them to continue on their journeys as Pilgrims of Hope.

In his 2023 message to youth for World Youth Day the late Holy Father Pope Francis said, “As young people, you are indeed the joyful hope of the Church and of a humanity always on the move.”

It is a continuation, then, of this joyful hope that will draw an estimated 1,000,000 young people to Rome, fulfilling their jubilee call to be pilgrims of hope.

“To the young people gathered here I would like to say that you are the promise of hope for so many of us,” said Pope Leo XIV in a video message during Mass at White Sox Stadium, Chicago, June 14, “...As you offer your own experience of joy and hope you find out, you can discover, that you too are indeed beacons of hope.”

The light from that beacon of hope is the radiant faith in Jesus Christ, said Pope Leo XIV, which grows brighter as people grow in unity and communion with others. Pilgrims traveling to Rome for the Jubilee of Young People will have the chance to unite and grow in that communion with others.

For those unable to travel to Rome there are many ways to engage with the local faith community and prayerfully participate in the Jubilee of Young People. Making a pilgrimage to a diocesan cathedral is recommended by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) as a way to participate and become a pilgrim of hope during the jubilee.

The Diocese of Covington’s own Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, has been designated by Bishop John Iffert as a sacred site where one could receive a jubilee indulgence, as well as St. John the Evangelist Church, Carrollton and St. Patrick Church, Maysville. A pilgrimage to any one of these sacred sites will allow those unable to attend the celebrations in Rome to have a pilgrimage experience for the Jubilee of Young People.

In addition to pilgrimages to local jubilee sites, the USCCB also recommends taking time for prayer and reflection. Specifically focusing on God’s providential graces and divine mercy, prayer is another way to celebrate the Jubilee of Young People from home.

In his video message Pope Leo XIV said, “When I see each and every one of you, when I see how people gather together to celebrate their faith, I discover how much hope there is in the world. In this Jubilee Year of Hope, Christ — who is our hope — calls all of us to come together that we might be that true living example of the light of hope in the world today.”



Archbishop Wenski leads Knights on Bikes to pray rosary at Alligator Alcatraz

Gina Christian

OSV News

Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami and some 25 Knights of Columbus saddled up their motorcycles to pray a rosary at the entrance of Alligator Alcatraz, the controversial migrant detention center recently opened in the Florida Everglades.

The archbishop posted images of the July 20 gathering to his X account, saying that he and his fellow riders — members of the Knights of Columbus’ Knights on Bikes International fraternal organization — “stopped at the entrance of Alligator Alcatraz and prayed a rosary for the detainees.”

Images shared by the archbishop showed the men standing in a circle, bikes parked and heads bowed in prayer, with the Knights of Columbus logo and a cross prominently stitched on the back of their vests.

In his post, Archbishop Wenski noted that the Archdiocese of Miami “is still waiting for approval to access” Alligator Alcatraz “to provide Mass for detainees.”

According to a recent report by organizations affiliated with Catholic and evangelical Christian churches, Christians account for approximately 80% of all of those at risk of deportation. The Christians most at risk of deportation are Catholics, 61% of the total.

Alligator Alcatraz, located some 55 miles from downtown Miami at the Dade Collier Training and Transition Airport, consists of tents with groups of bunk beds in cage-like units of chain-link fencing, and exposed communal toilets.

Water, sewage management, power and air conditioning are supplied by portable units, according to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. The facility, estimated to hold 3,000 people, has plans to be expanded to accommodate 5,000.

Alligator Alcatraz has drawn condemnation from clergy and Democratic lawmakers alike for its conditions and location — with Trump, Homeland Security Security Kristi Noem and DeSantis, a Catholic, touting the hostile environment as a security feature and immigration deterrent during their July 1 tour inaugurating the opening of the facility.

“It basically is in a swamp,” Archbishop Wenski told OSV News in a July 15 interview. “There are numerous alligators and pythons (and) boa constrictors, and tons and tons of mosquitoes.”

The tarmac on which the tents have been built “becomes even hotter because it’s reflecting the heat of the day,” he said.

Detainees have told The New York Times that the frequent rains have created leaks and insect intrusions, while access to showers, full meals and medication is limited. Illness, sleep deprivation and unrest is also in evidence, they said.

NBC 6 South Florida reported that from July 1-18, there were 34 emergency calls to 911 from Alligator Alcatraz, an average of two per day.

Speaking to OSV News July 15, Archbishop Wenski also noted that the site is “far removed from hospitals.” One government official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told the Times that most of those detained at Alligator Alcatraz do not have criminal convictions.

Records obtained by The Miami Herald/Tampa Bay Times show only a third of those currently housed at the site have criminal histories.

“There’s more questions than answers about this place,” Archbishop Wenski told OSV News July 15.

He said, “We don’t want dangerous people walking the streets freely. But the majority of the immigrants are not bad actors. They’re basically people that have tried to, through hard work, create a future of hope for themselves and their children. And as such, they have contributed to the prosperity of our nation. And some have done so for years, even decades.”

The archbishop added, “There’s no home to go back to, because home is here.”



OSV News photo/ Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski

Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami and Knights on Bikes pray the rosary for detainees at the entrance to Alligator Alcatraz, a controversial immigration detention facility in some 55 miles from Miami in the Florida Everglades, July 20, 2025.



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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.

Festivals, prayer services, etc. Parishes, schools and Catholic organizations of the Diocese of Covington can now have their event featured on the Diocesan online calendar. Submit your event at <https://covdio.org/calendar/>.

“Shadows Of Silence: The Hidden Crisis Of The Abuse Of Catholic Sisters And Nuns,” presented by Terence McKiernan and Lucy Huh, a webinar for survivors and those who care for them, July 28, 6:30–8 p.m. This presentation examines the widespread, yet underreported phenomenon of emotional, spiritual and sexual abuse perpetrated against Catholic sisters and nuns in religious orders. For information contact: Paula Kaempffer at kaempfferp@archspm.org, Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. To register visit https://archspm-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Lkix66qhSp2il5a_9t4N0g#/registration.

Save the date! Bishop’s Vocations BBQ is happening on Aug. 3, at 5 p.m., Knights of Columbus Acree Hall, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington. It’s going to be a great time to learn more about the priesthood. If you’re interested in learning more, or if you know someone who is, we’d love for you to join Bishop Iffert at the BBQ. RSVP by July 28th to sbarnes@covdio.org. Hope to see you there!

New Beginnings, an 8-week program that provides opportunity to heal for separated and divorced adults, returns to session Tuesdays from Aug. 19 through Oct. 7. For more information or to register, visit <https://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/>.

Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Covington, is seeking adult and high school volunteers to tutor children in grades 1-9 in reading, English, and math in its Summer Academics program held in June. For information, call Brandi at (859) 630-9475, visit www.nduec.org or e-mail blenihan@nduec.org. Volunteers 18 and older must be VIRTUS compliant.

Registration is now open for the 2025-26 school year at Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Covington, Early Learning Program (for 4- and 5-year-olds) and Homework Plus Program (Grades K–8). Each program requires a one-time \$100 registration fee, with no additional monthly cost. Programs begin Sept. 2 and run through May 14. For information, call (859) 261-4487, visit NDUEC.org, or e-mail Sister Maria Therese at smtherese@nduec.org. Registration available online at NDUEC.org.

Newport Central Catholic High School announces its 2nd class of inductees into its Fine Arts Hall of Fame: Mary Kate Collopy Blank, ’06; Scott Froendhoff, ’80, (Inaugural Father Hinds /Riesenberg Service Award Winner); Cara Gilday Harker, ’95; Galadriel Stineman Joy, ’02; Danny Keller, ’94; Mike Murphy, ’66 and the “Show of Distinction,” the 2005 Production of “Footloose.” The induction ceremony is Aug. 23 at NCCHS, social hour, 5:30 p.m.; dinner and ceremony, 7 p.m. Cost \$35. Make reservations at <http://ncchs.com/events>.

Catholic Charities signature fundraising event, Cassba 2025, will be held Aug. 24, 3–7 p.m., Drees Pavilion, Covington. Enjoy breathtaking views while indulging in delicious food, desserts, an open bar and entertainment. Silent auction items and three raffles, with prizes up to \$10,000. Tickets are \$100 per person. Visit www.cassba.com.

Do you have a bike no longer used? Donate it to Pickett’s Corner a ministry of Catholic Charities. Each bike makes a significant difference in the lives of those in need. Pick up available and all repairs are done at Pickett’s Corner. Simply e-mail Pickettscorner23@gmail.com and give your name, address and phone number.



Altar servers from St. Henry Catholic Parish, Elsmere, enjoyed an evening of putt-putt and the Erlanger Skyline as a thank you for serving at the altar. Not only are they number one, but they also all got at least one hole-in-one!

Bishop John C. Iffert will celebrate Vespers at Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, to honor couples celebrating significant Wedding Anniversaries in 2025. Married couples celebrating their 1st, 25th, 50th, or 60+ Wedding Anniversary in 2025 are invited to a vespers celebration on Sunday, Sept. 7, 2025, at 2:00 pm. Anniversary couples RSVP by July 25, 2025, at 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.

The Diocese of Covington, in partnership with the Franciscan University’s Catechetical Institute, is offering two FREE workshops in October and November: In-Person workshop “Exploring CI’s Website,” Oct. 25, 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. at Thomas More University’s Steigerwald Hall, Saints Center. Brady Webb, M.A., will present a hands-on workshop exploring Franciscan University’s Catechetical Institute’s website. This training is for everyone using the CI Website for learning the Catholic faith. Register by Oct. 15, at covdio.org/register/.

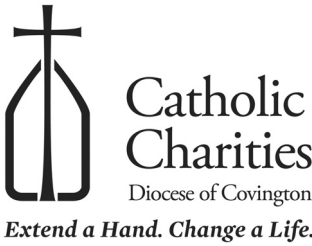
An informative workshop on updates and resources on the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults/Children (OCIA/OCIC) will be presented by Dr. William Keimig, deputy director, Catechetical Institute at Franciscan University, Nov. 8, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m., TMU’s Ziegler Auditorium, Academic Center. Register by Oct. 29, at covdio.org/register/. Questions? Contact Isaak Abraham Isaak at iisaak@covdio.org or (859) 392-1529.

The St. Henry High School Craft Show will be held Oct. 18, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. at the Athletic Complex in Florence. Over 100 local craftsmen display unique handmade items in many different mediums. There is also the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets on exciting themed gift baskets. There is a \$5 admission fee for adults. All proceeds from the raffle and the admission fee support student activities at St. Henry District High School. Overflow parking is at Boone County High School.**Fall registration is now open for Mount St. Mary’s Seminary and School of Theology.** Evening and weekend courses are available for busy adults who want to grow in knowledge and love of their faith. Earn a master’s degree, certificate, endorsement, CEUs, or take a class for personal enrichment. A 25 percent tuition discount is available to permanent deacons, lay ecclesial ministers, and Catholic school educators. Fall semester begins the last week of August, apply and enroll at www.mtsm.org. Call (513) 233-6118 for information.

The National Catholic Youth Conference is a pilgrimage for Catholic high school students, Nov. 20-22, in Indianapolis. Teens spend three days at the nation’s largest Catholic youth gathering and experience the transformative power of the Church and God’s presence through music, talks, community and sacraments. The Youth Ministry Office coordinates the overall pilgrimage (conference ticket, transportation, housing and food). Parishes and schools register as a group. For individuals not identified with a group, contact Angie Poat, apoat@covdio.org. Bus space is limited.

Parish festivals			
July 26 Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California	Aug. 15–16 St. Bernard Parish, Dayton	Aug. 30–Sept. 1 St. Cecilia Parish, Independence	Sept. 19–20 St. Benedict Parish, Covington
Aug. 1–2 St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring	Aug. 16 St. Phillip Parish, Melbourne	Sept. 5–7 St. Patrick Parish, Maysville	Sept. 19–21 St. Timothy Parish, Union
Aug. 1–3 St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs	Aug. 22–24 St. Augustine Parish, Augusta	Sept. 6–7 St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill	Sept. 21 St. Matthew, Kenton
Aug. 8–9 St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Alexandria	August 22–23 Holy Cross District High School, Latonia	Sept. 12–13 St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger	Sept. 26-27 St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright
	Aug. 23 Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California		

Partners



Our Mission

Inspired by the Gospel call of Jesus Christ to serve, the mission of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington is to promote healing, restore hope and affirm human potential through services that empower, voices that speak for justice and partnerships that strengthen communities.



“Dreams Are a Journey”
2025 Cassba

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington
Sunday, Aug. 24, 3–7 p.m.
Drees Pavilion, Covington
Enjoy drinks and small bites, meet the people behind the ministry, try your luck in one of several raffles and bid on items in the live and silent auctions. Cost \$100 per person. Visit www.Cassba.com

Catholic Charities celebrates Cassba 2025 ‘Dreams Are a Journey’ fundraiser August 24 at the Drees Pavilion

Emily Hudepohl
Contributor

“Dreams Are a Journey” reflects the path of hope, courage and healing experienced by individuals and families supported through Catholic Charities’ many programs. Whether it’s the first step toward safe housing, the leap of faith into counseling or parenting support, or the steady road back from addiction or crisis, this year’s theme honors each step taken toward making the dream of a better life a reality.

Catholic Charities – Diocese of Covington invites the community to be an integral part in fulfilling these dreams with an afternoon of celebration and connection at the 2025 Cassba, themed “Dreams Are a Journey.” This year’s gathering takes place Sunday, Aug. 24, 3–7 p.m., Drees Pavilion, Covington.

This year’s premier sponsor is St. Elizabeth Healthcare. Now in its 38th year, Cassba has become the signature fundraising event for Catholic Charities. Each year, it offers

an opportunity to highlight the transformative work being done across Northern Kentucky and the lives that are changed along the way.

One of those ministries is the Mobile Food Pantry. Hunger doesn’t end at the boundary lines of inner cities; poverty and food deserts torment the hungry in many communities across the 3,359 square miles of the Diocese, wrote Karen Kuhlmann, a volunteer, in an article about the Mobile Food Pantry in the Spring edition of Catholic Charities’ “Partners” newsletter. Thankfully, Catholic Charities’ Mobile Food Pantry visits six cities, in six Kentucky counties, bringing comfort and hope to communities.

John Hehman, coordinator, Catholic Charities Mobile Food Pantry; Gary Frodge, assistant coordinator, and a host of volunteers accompany folks on their journey towards food sufficiency. Laden with grocery items, the Pantry makes its way, six times a month, from Covington to one of the six counties of Mason, Grant, Gallatin, Bracken, Owen and Pendleton. The Pantry’s arrival eases the stress of feeding the families of those who find themselves without options.

“Records indicate that in 2024, Catholic Charities has provided food to an amazing 6,515 households. When we tally the number of individuals living in those homes, the number of people fed by the Catholic Charities’ Mobile Food Pantry adds up to a staggering 17,596 people!” said Mr. Hehman.

Mr. Hehman enjoys speaking with guests and learning their stories as they express their appreciation for the Mobile Pantry. Often in rural communities, extended families may not have the ability to buy a home of their own and opt, instead, for a mobile home on mom and dad’s farm.

“It is a good feeling to hear them speak of fighting to overcome poverty and difficulties on their own,” said Mr. Hehman. “And it is rewarding to speak with area residents who are now out of poverty

and looking for ways to help people in their communities through volunteering themselves! They see the good being done by their friends and want to be a part of it.”
Cassba attendees are a vital part of that mission, too. In addition



The Mobile Food Pantry is but one of the many programs provided by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington, and is supported by funds raised through the Cassba. Support of the Cassba helps the local Church to fulfill its mission to “Extend a Hand. Change a Life.”

to a beautiful setting and inspiring mission, Cassba features the popular Cassba cash raffle, the exclusive Bourbon Barrel Pick raffle, and the exciting Dream Vacation raffle. Guests will also enjoy both a live auction and a silent auction, each offering a variety of appealing items.

Once again, this year’s event will offer the convenient option of online bidding. Guests can visit the auction site in advance or during the event to view available items. New packages and experiences will continue to be added leading up to the event. This feature is ideal not only for those who wish to get a sneak peek at the exciting selections but also for those unable to attend in person who still wish to join the bidding fun and support Catholic Charities from the comfort of their home.

Catholic Charities serves 14 counties across Northern Kentucky and is the social outreach organization of the Diocese of Covington. Through its core areas of Child and Family Services, Counseling, Housing and Community Outreach, the agency walks alongside those in need as they journey toward stability and hope.

From providing food through the Mobile Food Pantry to offering a warm meal at Parish Kitchen, to helping a young family avoid foreclosure, to supporting a child through a parent’s addiction recovery, Catholic Charities provides services that meet people where they are, always with dignity and compassion.

Help Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington continue its mission to “Extend a hand. Change a life.” Come to the 2025 Cassba: “Dreams Are a Journey”. Tickets are \$100 each. For more information, visit Cassba.com or covingtoncharities.org.

Emily Hudepohl is the integrated communications marketing specialist for Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington, Ky.

Mother of God parishioners celebrate Jubilee pilgrimage to Ky. Holy Land

Staff report

In the spirit of the Jubilee Year, Father Michael Comer, pastor, led 53 people from Mother of God parish on a pilgrimage to “The Holy Land of Kentucky.” On July 8-9, the pilgrims were immersed in Kentucky’s Catholic roots, as well as visiting historic sites.

In 1775 the first Catholics came to Kentucky from America’s coastal colonies, settling the Bluegrass and Bardstown areas. These pioneers grew and sustained their community through solidarity and Catholic devotion, eventually gaining Father Stephen Badin as the first permanent pastor of the area. He was often the only priest in the wilderness of Kentucky, traveling near 100,000 miles on horseback during his ministry. In 1808 the Diocese of Bardstown was created, and Bishop Joseph Flaget was appointed to head this first inland diocese.



The Mother of God pilgrims’ journey took them to the Basilica of St. Joseph Protocathedral, a structure so highly regarded that it was funded by Catholics and Protestants alike, and to the Abbey of Gethsemani where Father Comer celebrated Mass in the Skakel Family Memorial Chapel.

The historical portion of the pilgrimage included a tour of Federal Hill (My Old Kentucky Home), dinner at historic Talbott Tavern, The Stephen Foster Story Outdoor Drama, the Lincoln Museum, and Abraham Lincoln’s boyhood home.



Covington celebrates Father Daniel Schomaker Day

Mayor Ron Washington of Covington officially declared July 4, 2025, as Father Daniel Schomaker Day in the City of Covington. The official act serves to honor the legacy and lasting impact Father Schomaker leaves behind at St. Augustine Parish, Covington, reading, “Many in the community consider St. Augustine campus to be an anchor of the neighborhood and would like to recognize Fr. Schomaker’s efforts to enhance the community through his incredible stewardship while assigned to St. Augustine parish.” The recognition comes after several Covington community members and St. Augustine parishioners wrote into the mayor’s office nominating Father Schomaker for the award.



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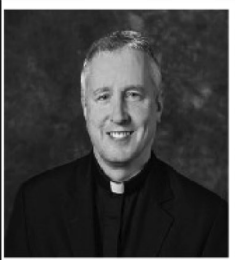
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Holy Family Church, Oldenburg: A Covington Benedictine-Franciscan bond through art and architecture

Father Jordan Hainsey
Contributor
Lasting bonds between Benedictines and Franciscans

The month of August recalls the rich bond between the Franciscans and Benedictines through the Feast of the Portiuncula, Aug. 2. In 1211, the Benedictines gifted a small, crumbling chapel in Assisi to St. Francis, who longed for a place of prayer and renewal. In gratitude, Francis offered a basket of fish each year — a humble exchange that sealed their friendship. Since those early days, Benedictines and Franciscans have remained close collaborators in the life of the Church — especially in the Covington/Cincinnati region, where their partnership has flourished since the mid-19th century.

Mission and monasticism in Covington
In 1858, Bishop George Aloysius Carrell, Covington's first bishop, invited Benedictines from Saint Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, to support the diocese's growing missionary needs. The monks established a priory and were soon entrusted with the care of St. Joseph Parish in Covington. A year later, they were joined by Benedictine Sisters from Erie, Pennsylvania, who began teaching and

Journey to Holy Family in Oldenburg!

St. Cosmas Oblate Deanery will sponsor a pilgrimage to Holy Family Church in Oldenburg, Indiana, on Saturday, Aug. 16. The day will begin at 9:30 a.m. with Morning Prayer and Mass, followed by a guided tour of the historic church and lunch.

Participants are asked to arrange their own travel. The church is located at 3027 Pearl Street, Oldenburg, IN 47036 — just 50 minutes from Cincinnati. All are warmly welcome!

To learn more about St. Cosmas Oblate Deanery, visit: <https://covoblates.org>

To learn more about the St. Walburg Oblates, visit: <https://www.stwalburg.org>

ministering in the parish school and among the growing German-speaking community. Together, the monks and sisters brought the Gospel to life, tending to both the spiritual and practical needs of the faithful. Their work at St. Joseph Parish and School became a cornerstone of Catholic life in Covington—a place where the Benedictine charism took deep root.

The Altar Building Stock Company

Working on the parish campus was a young Brother Cosmas Wolf. He had entered monastic life at Saint Vincent as a lay brother in 1853, but his artistic aptitude soon led him to Munich's Royal

Academy of Art. His rigorous training prepared him for ecclesiastical work upon his return to America—and that it did.

By 1862, Brother Cosmas had founded the Catholic Altar Building Stock Company, a workshop of skilled craftsmen specializing in church art and appointments. Located in a wood-frame building on the campus of St. Joseph, the studio served churches across what was known as the “German Triangle,” encompassing Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and St. Louis. Cosmas assembled an impressive team of artists and designers, including Johann Schmitt (a Third Order Franciscan) and a young altar server named Frank Duveneck, who would go on to become Covington's most famous painter. It was under Brother Cosmas that Duveneck apprenticed and discovered his artistic vocation.

The workshop was equipped for painting, woodworking, and stained glass. They created altars, baptismal fonts, statues, candlesticks, reredoses, pulpits, communion rails, Stations of the Cross, frames, crucifixes, croziers, chalices, and architectural ornaments. Their work, primarily in the German Gothic Revival style, featured pointed arches, intricate vignettes, steep gables, and delicate ornamentation. For many, this revival of the late-medieval style symbolized tradition, permanence, and a reverence for craftsmanship in contrast to the rise of industrial production. Commissioning a piece from the Catholic Altar Building Stock Company meant importing a visual identity that reflected shared spiritual and cultural roots.

A masterpiece in Oldenburg

Among Brother Cosmas' notable patrons was Holy Family Church in Oldenburg, Indiana. Founded in 1850 by Fr. Franz Joseph Rudolf, the parish quickly expanded, prompting him to seek help from religious sisters for its growing ministry. In 1851, Franciscan Sister Theresa Hackelmeier and three companions arrived from Vienna and established a community that would serve the parish and regional schools. By 1866, Franciscan Friars from Cincinnati began caring for the church as well. As the parish and its Franciscan community grew, plans for a larger church took shape.

In 1862, the parish commissioned Brother Cosmas to create the High Altar, two Side Altars, and the Pulpit, with paintings by Johann Schmitt. These included the central altarpiece of the Holy Family, flanked by depictions of St. Boniface and St. Louis; a gospel side altar painting of the Immaculate Conception; and an epistle side altar image of St. Joseph with the Christ Child receiving homage from St. Aloysius. Notably, the Holy Family painting echoed the composition of the sculpture Brother Cosmas had created for St. Joseph Church in Covington.

Preserving what remains

Cosmas and his team created dozens of such works throughout the United States. However, Holy Family in Oldenburg is especially remarkable: it is the only church where his work remains virtually untouched. Though the pulpit was removed during renovations in the 1960s, the altars and paintings remain in situ—just as Cosmas and his craftsmen envisioned and saw them. While time, disaster, and shifting liturgical tastes have led to the loss of

much of the company's work elsewhere, Holy Family stands as a monument not only to the enduring faith of its people but also to the unbroken bond between the Benedictine and Franciscan communities—who sought to make the Church space an incarnational reality.

In 2019, the parish undertook a major restoration of the church's interior. The walls and ceilings were cleaned, repaired, and repainted. The altars and paintings were

A living witness of faith

Today, Oldenburg's Sisters of St. Francis and the Franciscan Friars of St. John the Baptist Province remain deeply involved in the life of the Holy Family community. Through their ministries of prayer, education, and pastoral care, they continue the mission begun more than 150 years ago — ensuring that faith and beauty remain at the heart of



(above) Brother Cosmas Wolf (1821–1894) Brother Cosmas Wolf emigrated to America in 1854 and became the 79th lay brother of Saint Vincent Archabbey. A trained artist before entering monastic life, he continued his studies at the Royal Academy in Munich with the support of Abbot Boniface Wimmer. His work helped furnish churches across the United States for growing immigrant communities.

(right) High Altar in Holzhausen, Bavaria, Brother Cosmas Wolf, ca. 1857–1862 Brother Cosmas likely completed this ink wash and graphite drawing during his apprenticeship with Johann Petz while studying art in Munich. The drawing depicts an altar constructed by Petz. The combination of precise architectural schematics and a fully rendered elevation shows that Brother Cosmas was not only a master draftsman, but also skilled in both the design and construction of liturgical furnishings. This formative experience informed the many works he later created in America, including the work at Holy Family in Oldenburg.



(above) Immaculate Conception Side Altar, Holy Family Church, Oldenburg Carved by Brother Cosmas Wolf and completed with a painting by Johann Schmitt, this altar honors the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, proclaimed in 1854—just a decade before the altar and painting were created.

(above right) Holy Family Church, Oldenburg Founded in 1850, the current church was completed in 1862, with altars and paintings crafted by Brother Cosmas Wolf and the Covington Altar Building Stock Company. This present-day photo highlights the enduring beauty of their work, restored in 2019.



(above) St. Joseph Parish, Covington Built in 1854, St. Joseph Church stood just steps from today's Cathedral Basilica at the northwest corner of E 12th and Greenup Streets. It served as an epicenter for the Benedictine monks and sisters, a growing immigrant community, and the workshop of Brother Cosmas Wolf. The parish was closed and razed in 1970 due to declining membership and the rise of more accessible neighborhood churches.

(left) 19th-Century Lithograph, Holy Family Church, Oldenburg Lithographs were often used to adorn church walls, raise funds, or share the beauty of sacred spaces with distant supporters. This 19th-century print of Holy Family Church captures the original paint scheme, pulpit, altars, and sanctuary appointments in remarkable detail.

The Portiuncula Indulgence: A Little Chapel with a Big Grace



Tucked in the valley below Assisi lies the tiny chapel of the Portiuncula, the “Little Portion,” where St. Francis of Assisi undertook his God's call to rebuild the Church. In 1216, while praying there, Francis received a remarkable gift: permission from Pope Honorius III to offer a plenary indulgence to anyone who visited the chapel on August 2 with a contrite heart. Celebrated on Aug. 2, the Feast of Our Lady of the Angels of the Portiuncula recalls this extraordinary grace. Originally tied only to the Portiuncula itself, the indulgence was later extended to Franciscan churches and chapels, and now to any parish or cathedral church—offering the faithful the opportunity to receive a full remission of temporal punishment due to sin. To receive the Portiuncula indulgence on August 2, the faithful must: — Visit the Cathedral, a parish, or Franciscan church or chapel — Make a sincere Confession and receive Holy Communion — Pray the Creed and the Our Father — Offer prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father This simple yet profound devotion — born in a humble chapel — remains a powerful reminder of God's mercy and St. Francis's desire to bring souls home to the Church.

As iconic British Catholic bioethics center closes, fellow academics dub move a ‘tragedy’

Simon Caldwell
OSV News

One of the most highly respected Catholic bioethics institutes in the world is to close amid a funding crisis. The Oxford-based Anscombe Bioethics Center, which serves the Catholic Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland, will close on July 31 “on financial grounds,” according to a July 2 statement. The director of the center, Professor David Albert Jones, said the decision was made by the Catholic Trust for England and Wales, the center’s “corporate trustee.”

June 20 and members of British Parliament voting overwhelmingly in favor of decriminalizing abortion up to birth only three days earlier. “Despite the efforts of many people of good will, assisted suicide Bills continue to make progress both in Scotland and in England and Wales, albeit by narrow majorities,” Jones said. Professor David Paton, chair of industrial economics at Nottingham University Business School, told OSV News that “the timing of this move is particularly worrying, coming as it does whilst parliamentary efforts are ongoing

bioethicist, after it moved to Oxford in 2010. It has published many books and papers on such matters as euthanasia and assisted suicide, in vitro fertilization, prenatal diagnoses, destructive experiments on human embryos, organ transplantation and donation, and abortion. That kind of research “provided invaluable resources for laity, academics and clergy alike,” Paton said in an email to OSV News. Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney has worked closely with the center, and Cardinal Willem Eijk of



OSV News photo/Toby Melville, Reuters

The city of Oxford, England, is seen in a June 16, 2023, photo. The Oxford-based Anscombe Bioethics Center, which serves the Catholic Church in the United Kingdom and Ireland, will close on July 31, 2025, “on financial grounds”, according to a July 2 statement sent by email to Our Sunday Visitor and posted online.

Announcing the closure with “immense sadness,” Jones said it was the “earnest hope” of staff that “some means may be found to continue to make available the resources that the center has generated, and also to continue the vital work of bioethical research and education that fully respects the dignity of the human person.” He said: “Even where it has not been possible to prevent an unethical law from being passed ... the center has maintained a witness (to) the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. “We have been able to give advice to professionals, carers, and patients about how to act ethically despite the establishment of unethical practices within healthcare.” He said: “Much of the focus of the work of the center over the past year has been the attempt in Scotland and in England and Wales to decriminalize ‘encouraging and assisting suicide’ in the case of people deemed to have a ‘terminal’ illness. “Our work has been cited in Parliament and we have helped inform many people who are concerned about this issue,” he said. The closure of the center comes in a dark time for bioethical issues in the U.K., with an assisted suicide bill passing in the House of Commons by a narrow majority

to try to reverse the recent moves to decriminalise abortion up to birth and to legalise assisted suicide.” In a written message sent to OSV News, he said that the Anscombe Center “was one of the leading bioethics research centers not just in the UK but in the world,” and he called it “a real tragedy” that the center is closing. While the center “will no longer be in a position to provide new resources,” Jones said in his farewell statement, “we urge people to make use of the resources we have already made available and to engage with the Scottish Parliament and with the House of Lords as these bodies continue to debate dangerous and ill-thought-out legislation.” He added that generous donations through the years had “helped prevent repeated attempts to legalize euthanasia or assisted suicide in Britain and Ireland from 1993 to the present.” Signing the statement “in sorrow but with gratitude and in steadfast hope,” Jones added: “We give thanks to God, and to our patron St Raphael, for all that has been done through our work.” Founded in 1977 at the London Catholic Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth originally as the Linacre Center for Health Care Ethics, the center changed its name in honor of Elizabeth Anscombe, a Catholic philosopher and

Utrecht in the Netherlands is among those prominent Catholics to have given the annual Anscombe memorial lecture. The Catholic bishops of England and Wales were approached by OSV but declined to comment. Lay Catholics, however, have expressed their disappointment at the closure of the center. In a July 3 email to OSV News, David Alton of Liverpool, a Catholic member of the House of Lords, said that the Anscombe Center “has been an invaluable resource in providing sound, coherent analysis of ethical dilemmas which confront legislators on an almost daily basis. “Parliamentarians, policymakers, academics and campaigners need access to reliable and rigorous thinking,” said Alton, who is not affiliated with any political party. “The Anscombe Center has consistently provided this and its closure will leave a significant gap.” Paton, for his part, said, “Questions also need to be asked about why the closure was announced as a fait accompli without any public effort to try to find alternative sources of funding to enable the center to stay open in some form,” adding, “I hope that it might still prove possible to find a way to save the center.”

Texas judge sets new execution date for Robert Roberson, despite bipartisan intervention

Kate Scanlon
OSV News

A district court judge on July 16 set a new execution date for Texas death-row inmate Robert Roberson despite an effort by a bipartisan group of Texas lawmakers to reexamine the evidence used in his conviction and death sentence.

Judge Austin Reeve Jackson set Roberson’s new execution date for Oct. 16, a year after he was originally scheduled to die and despite an ongoing appeal in the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals.

Roberson was scheduled Oct. 17, 2024, 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, Nikki Curtis.



OSV News photo/Texas Department of Criminal Justice/Handout via Reuters

Death-row inmate Robert Roberson is seen in an undated photo. A Texas judge July 16, 2025, set Oct. 16 as a new execution date for Roberson, despite questions from a bipartisan group of state lawmakers regarding the evidence behind his conviction connected to a diagnosis of shaken baby syndrome in the 2002 death of his then 2-year-old daughter.

But the Texas Supreme Court granted him a stay. Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network told OSV News the judge’s “regrettable decision” is “a sad display of a vengeful pursuit of death. It must not be confused with a pursuit of justice.” “The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals is currently considering new evidence, which has never been reviewed, that points toward Mr. Roberson’s long-held claim of innocence,” she said. A group of Republican and Democratic state legislators have argued that Roberson’s conviction was based on outdated science. They called into question whether a crime was committed at all, 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. Roberson’s defense attorney, Gretchen Sween, said in a statement, “Texans should be outraged that the court has scheduled an execution date for a demonstrably innocent man.” “Everyone who has taken the time to look at the evidence of Robert Roberson’s innocence — including the lead detective, one of the jurors, a range of highly qualified experts, and a bipartisan group of Texas lawmakers - has

reached the same conclusion: Nikki’s death was a terrible tragedy,” Sween said. “Robert did not kill her. There was no crime.” Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton’s office did not immediately respond to a request from OSV News for comment. Last year, members of the state House panel issued a subpoena for Roberson’s testimony before the state House of Representatives, an unprecedented legal maneuver that was criticized by the governor’s office. The Texas Supreme Court halted the execution in response, but later denied the lawmakers’ request. “Texas nearly executed Mr. Roberson last year, despite this overwhelming evidence of innocence,” Vaillancourt Murphy said. “He would not be here today without the moral courage that was demonstrated by a bipartisan group of Texas legislators last year who fiercely advocated on behalf of Mr. Roberson right up to the very last moments before his scheduled execution.” “This bold witness was a glimmer of hope in a state that has, for many years, been insistent on death - leading the nation in state executions,” she added. “What I saw in the action of those legislators last year was a defense of the dignity of life. What we are seeing today is the utter disregard of it.” At the time, the lawmakers argued 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 — has not worked as intended, such as in Roberson’s case. Shaken baby syndrome used to be diagnosed with

symptoms such as unexplained bleeding or swelling in the brain. However, diagnostic criteria has changed as studies have found that shaking a baby hard enough to cause symptoms would likely also result in a broken neck, the Texas Tribune reported. Additionally, Curtis had demonstrably been sick prior to her death, including having a fever of 104.5. She was prescribed medications that are no longer used to treat children. “Mr. Roberson’s daughter Nikki died a tragic death at a young age. She will never be forgotten,” Vaillancourt Murphy said. “Make no mistake, we do not honor Nikki’s life by pursuing a now-debunked hypothesis of shaken baby syndrome. The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals should be given its due time to evaluate all of the evidence in this case. There is no reason the state should be moving forward with scheduling Mr. Roberson’s execution as his appeal remains pending with the CCA.” Pope Francis revised the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 2018 to clarify the church’s teaching that capital punishment is morally “inadmissible” in the modern world and that the church works with determination for its abolishment worldwide. “As Catholic advocates for the dignity of every human life, we will continue to urge Governor Greg Abbott and the state of Texas to honor the sanctity of life by turning away from this needless state-sanctioned death,” Vaillancourt Murphy added. “Our work will not be done until we realize a vision of justice in which every person — innocent or guilty, incarcerated or free — can live without the fear of the state’s claim on their life.”



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150 years of the Sisters of Notre Dame

(Continued from page 2)

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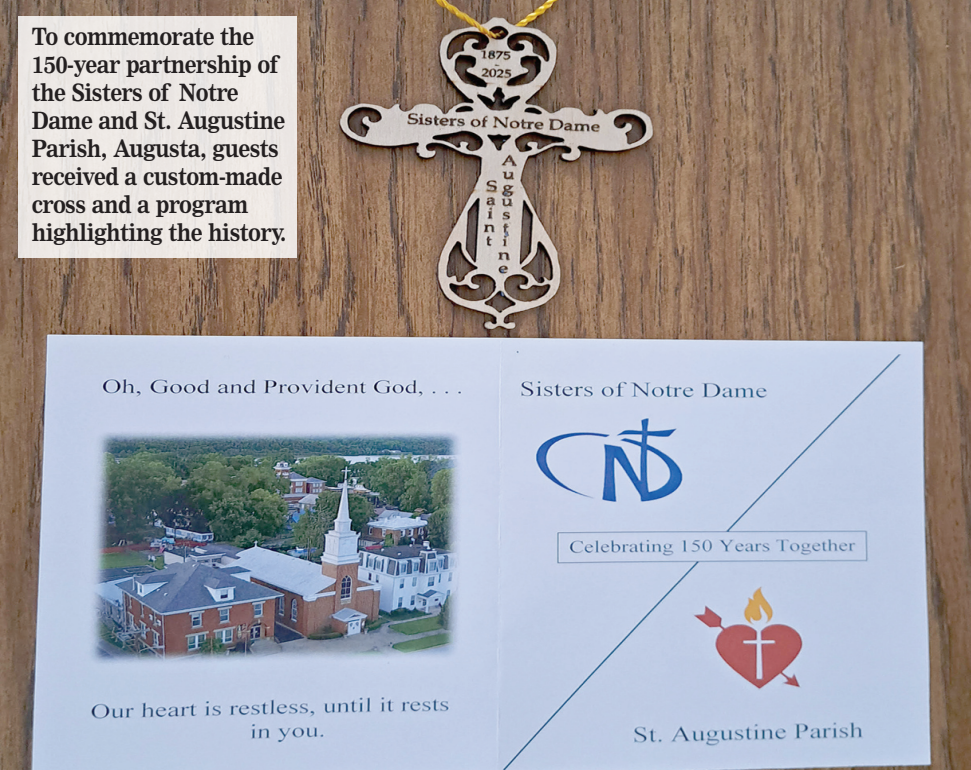
It is not just what the sisters have done and continue to do for the St. Augustine community that lends them a debt of gratitude, said Father Shelton, “it is who they are.”

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Dame have done, but who they are: prophetic women, who by their very lives remind us that the Kingdom of Heaven is near. These women have, for 150 years, been ambassadors of heaven among us,” said Father Shelton.

Concluding his homily Father Shelton said, “We owe these women a gift of gratitude for who they are, mighty


prophets of the Most High, who through their vocation to religious life have reminded us and continue to remind us that the Kingdom of God is at hand. So, for all that they have done and for all they are we say, ‘thank you’ to the Sisters of Notre Dame.”




(above) Cakes are more than just delicious; their decoration often tells of the love between the host and the honoree. The cake at the 150-year celebration shared the logo of the Sisters of Notre Dame and the flaming heart of St. Augustine linking the two in a sweet confection.

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Lord, teach us to pray

(Continued from page 5)

is a life of spiritual warfare against the forces of the world, the flesh and the devil. We must turn to the Lord and ask him to deliver us from evil and give us the grace of final perseverance in our communion and friendship with Him as we navigate life's trials and sufferings. It is precisely this grace for which we pray when we say, “that through the powerful working of your grace (that) these most sacred mysteries may sanctify our present way of life and lead us to eternal gladness.”

Father Phillip W. DeVous is the pastor of St. Charles Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish, Mayslick, Ky.

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Bulletins:

■ July 2025 bulletin: posted Sunday, July 1; due Tuesday, Aug 5.

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

www.virtusonline.org, enter your user id and password.

If your account is suspended contact your primary location where you volunteer or are employed. Your primary location contact information is found under your Contact Tab.

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■ Tuesday, July 29, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Aug. 6, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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

■ Tuesday, Aug. 19, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Aug. 19, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Sunday, Aug. 24, 1–3:30 p.m., St. Edward School, Cafeteria, Cynthiana

■ Thursday, Aug. 28, 6:30–9 p.m., Diocesan Catholic Children’s Home, Miller Building Training Room, Ft. Mitchell

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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Compensation will be commensurate with qualifications and experience. **Interested candidates should submit a letter of interest and a comprehensive resume or C-V along, including compensation history and at least five references with email contacts, to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR at skoplyay@covdio.org.**

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St. Catherine of Siena parish in Ft. Thomas, KY (Diocese of Covington) seeks a Coordinator for its Family Catechesis program. This is a vital part-time position (20 hours), assisting the pastor to help parents in the spiritual formation of their families. (Currently using A Family of Faith by Sophia Institute.) The CFC will administrate the program and where needed offer instruction. Prior experience with family catechesis desired, but others with parish catechetical experience will be considered. Must be a Catholic in good standing, organized, able to work without direct supervision and work with others. A background check and compliance with diocesan safe environment program required. Interested candidates should send a resume to Fr. Stef Bankemper at sbankemper@covdio.org.

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(Continued from page 1)

Dignitaries attending the marker unveiling included Father Mark Keene, vicar general, Diocese of Covington; Ronald Washington, mayor of Covington; Jim Seaver, community engagement coordinator, Kentucky Historical Society; and Divine Providence Sister Barbara Rohe, provincial superior, Congregation of Divine Providence,

"The thing that always shone through in our communications was that there was so much love that Sister Janet

"It's so nice to see the historical marker here put in just a few days shy of your retirement," said Mr. Seaver. "It's a very fitting tribute for all the good work you have done for this community through the decades. Sister Janet, thank you so much."

(Continued from page 5)

What about the followers of Jesus on Good Friday? They had hoped for the establishment of an earthly kingdom. What now? Their vision of what the future held is completely dashed. Why not just go back to their previous endeavors, to their work and family and accept that it was all over? But they seemed to retain some hope. They stayed together and waited. Mostly out of fear but surely

The hope that typifies our pilgrimage is not focused on some specific object or condition. It is typified by trust that whatever the result of our prayer and desires, the place or state we come to is the place where God is pres-

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

(Continued from page 1)

"And now I'm 85 years old, I feel like it's time to move on," said Sister Janet. She will continue doing women's jail ministry and visiting students at Holy Cross District High School, Covington, as she had before her retirement. She has always lived by the belief that community is important, saying, "it's good to be present in the neighborhood," and she will continue to do so in her retirement.



Into the mystery: How virtual reality is reimagining Catholic evangelization

Darren Ally
OSV News

The experience begins with a luminous church window framing a radiant image of Blessed Carlo Acutis hovering inches before your face.

As angelic music plays and hues of blue transform your immediate surroundings, reality itself shifts, as you are transported into a portal between heaven and earth.

A celestial voice beckons you to choose from four objects related to the soon-to-be-saint: a set of rosary beads, a soccer ball, altar bread and wine, or a laptop.

The moment your selection is made, the story of Blessed Carlo Acutis awakens around you, in a living canvas of faith and technology.

One of the big highlights of the Catholic youth festival, Purpose Fest 2025, held in Sydney in July was undoubtedly the world premiere of the Carlo Acutis virtual reality

experience — formally titled “Carlo Acutis: A Light in the Digital World” — which offered attendees a snapshot of the faith and the future.

Hundreds of young people clamored to be the first in the world to step into the groundbreaking virtual reality journey that transports attendees into the life and spiritual legacy of the young man to be canonized Sept. 7 by Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican, along with another young Catholics’ favorite — Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati.

Aligned with the church’s mission to adapt to changing cultural contexts without compromising the Gospel, the Archdiocese of Sydney now stands at the forefront of evangelization through innovation as they premiered this world-first virtual reality encounter into Blessed Carlo’s faith journey and his devotion and love for the Eucharist.

Developed by the director of the Sydney Center for Evangelization, Daniel Ang, the Carlo Acutis VR experi-

ence — was the result of months of teamwork dedicated to presenting the timeless Gospel in fresh and compelling ways.

“Virtual reality will never replace the richness of real, embodied life in the church,” Ang shared, “but it can be a new frontier for creativity and encounter; a space in which the truth is sought and where beauty can be contemplated in a fresh and really impactful way.

“To be honest, I was a bit nervous as it was my first engagement of VR as a project, and finalized only in the hours before the conference, but it was all worth the risk.”

“Seeing people’s faces as they stepped into the VR world for the first time,” Ang continued, “was amazing: walking through the streets of Milan where Carlo Acutis shared his faith, standing in the bedroom where he built his website about Eucharistic miracles, sitting in a small chapel like one where he might’ve prayed the rosary, or kneeling in a cathedral where he would he would have received the Eucharist.”

Ang described it as “powerful,” adding that it was “just a joy to see people learn about Acutis’ life and witness. Beyond the novelty, the most satisfying part for me was that people came to know Blessed Carlo’s life more deeply and I hope in that way he becomes an inspiration for discipleship in our own time.”

After trying the experience for himself, Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney shared his own thoughts.

“The Carlo Acutis VR experience was very clever. It was a fun and powerful way to encounter this young saint whose life shows how faith and technology can go hand in hand. A good reminder that holiness is possible in every age — even our digital one,” he said.

Sisters Annabelle and Angelina Toma and best friend Rose Zoori from Sydney’s suburb Wetherill Park had little knowledge of Blessed Carlo before trying on the VR goggles — the gateway to the experience.

“We know he has something to do with the internet and that he is going to be a saint,” suggested Annabelle.

“I hope this doesn’t hurt my eyes,” said Angelina as one of the many assistants adjusted her headset.

As the experience began, onlookers laughed as the three friends clutched at air and whooped with delight. It was a 10-minute experience that left them emotional and inspired.

“It was like stepping into his shoes,” shared Annabelle. “I feel like I know so much about him. To see his devotion come alive through virtual reality made his story so much more real and inspiring.”

“It’s more engaging for young people like us to experience something like this, than read it in a book. It’s a great way to connect with the youth,” said Angelina.

Rose agreed: “I think with the modern teenagers, they’ll love this because it’s new, fun and it’s associated with games. This is just a stepping stone into the right direction.”

Sister Elizabeth Foley, of the Secular Institute of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, bridged tradition with innovation as she also slipped on the goggles.

“It’s tapping into a whole new world, isn’t it?” she said, excitedly grasping at air for the next few minutes.

Removing the goggles from her veil, she looked at the streams of young people immersing themselves in the world of Blessed Carlo and smiled: “I really enjoyed it. This is their world. I’m an old lady, I’m into Facebook, but for the young people, that’s going to attract them and help them to come to love God, and that, for me, is the most important thing.”

It is the most important goal for the archdiocese too, a hope that through these new forms of expression, the message of Christ remains vibrant and accessible, regardless of the medium.

“These cultural opportunities for spreading the Gospel remind us that while the Christian faith is eternal, it is not immobile,” Ang said.

“I think VR can deepen their understanding of holiness in everyday life but also crucially awaken spiritual curiosity for many students and others besides, provoke a sense of intrigue and desire to know more about the faith or its great witnesses, which is vital step on the path toward mature discipleship,” he added.



OSV News photo/Giovanni Portelli, courtesy The Catholic Weekly

Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney and students try out the Blessed Carlo Acutis virtual reality experience at the Purpose Fest 2025 in Sydney July 2. Hundreds clamored in Sydney to be the first in the world to step into the groundbreaking virtual reality journey that transports attendees into the life and spiritual legacy of the young Blessed Carlo, who will be canonized Sept. 7 at the Vatican.



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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Judge blocks defunding of some, but not all, Planned Parenthood groups

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on July 21 extended an order blocking enforcement of a provision in the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act,” which President Donald Trump signed into law July 4, that would have stopped Planned Parenthood from receiving Medicaid payments for a year. U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani in Boston extended her previous order, set to expire the same day, partially granting Planned Parenthood’s request for a preliminary injunction while its lawsuit against the Trump administration proceeds. Talwani’s order appeared to chiefly hinge on making a distinction between Planned Parenthood affiliates that offered abortion and those that did not. The injunction prohibits the government from defunding 10 Planned Parenthood Federation of America member groups who will not provide abortion services as of Oct. 1, 2025, or whose total direct state and federal reimbursements for Medicaid expenses in fiscal year 2023 did not exceed \$800,000, and mandates their funding continue under these conditions. Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, argued in a statement the order “prolonged the forced taxpayer funding of Big Abortion,” while Planned Parenthood expressed disappointment that only some of its member groups were covered by the order while litigation continued.

Federal court blocks WA mandatory reporter law over lack of confession protections

TACOMA, Wash. — A federal court on July 18 temporarily blocked a new law in Washington state requiring clergy to report child abuse or neglect without exceptions for clergy-penitent privilege. The state's Catholic bishops previously sued in response to Democratic Gov. Bob Ferguson's approval of Senate Bill 5375, which designated members of the clergy as mandatory reporters, or people required by law to report suspected or known instances of child abuse or neglect. The version of that legislation signed into law did not include an exception for sacramental confessions, an exception that most other states with similar requirements for clergy have. The order from the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington at Tacoma said the court concluded the plaintiffs were likely to succeed on the merits of their Free Exercise Clause challenge and met the requirements to issue the preliminary injunction. Mark Rienzi, president and CEO of Becket, a religious liberty law firm representing the state's bishops, said in a statement, "This ruling confirms what has always been true: In America, government officials have no business prying into the confessional." The law was originally scheduled to take effect on July 27. It is also the subject of an investigation by the Justice Department.

Syrian Christian leaders say Islamist government can't protect them or Druze

AMMAN, Jordan — In southern Syria, Christian and Druze leaders are pleading for international protection after a week

of sectarian violence killed over 1,000 people in Sweida. Father Toni Butros, a Greek Catholic priest, posted a video on July 20 describing “massacres” against civilians and demanding help from the U.S., Europe and the Vatican. Churches and homes were torched, a pastor and 12 family members killed, and Druze civilians hunted down — often by Syrian troops themselves. An American citizen of Druze origin from Oklahoma was among eight men, all family members, rounded up and killed in an execution-style attack. Patriarch John X, the Greek Orthodox primate, one of Syria’s most senior Christian clergymen, called for an end to the bloodshed, while observers say Islamist-led President Ahmed al-Sharaa has lost control of his forces, relying on militias with jihadi ties. Nadine Maenza of the International Religious Freedom Secretariat called the violence a test of Syria’s future: “Stability requires reform. Minorities must have a role in their own security and governance.” Meanwhile, Christians emphasized that they “are not minorities” but “are the people of this land.”

Kidnapped Nigerian priest who served in Alaska is now free

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria — A Nigerian priest kidnapped by Boko Haram in June has been released, OSV News has learned. Maria Lozano, press contact for Aid to the Church in Need International, told OSV News in a July 21 statement that the organization “thanks God for the release of Father Alphonsus Afina.” Lozano added that “this good news has been confirmed to our foundation by local church sources.” Father Afina, assigned to several parishes across Alaska from September 2017 through 2024, had been abducted June 1 along with an unspecified number of fellow travelers while in Nigeria’s Borno state, near the northeastern town of Gwoza. Bishop John Bogma Bakani of Maiduguri, Nigeria, had identified the Islamic extremist group Boko Haram as responsible for the kidnapping.

Pope celebrates Apollo 11 anniversary with peek at the heavens, call to astronaut

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Peering at the sunlit skies through a Vatican-owned space telescope and calling the last surviving member of the Apollo 11 spaceflight mission was how Pope Leo XIV celebrated the anniversary of the first crewed moon landing. U.S. astronaut Michael Collins flew the command module around the moon while Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin became the first humans to land and walk on the lunar surface. Pope Leo, who would have been 13 years old when the lunar module, the Eagle, touched down, called the 95-year-old Aldrin late July 20, “sharing with him the memory of this historic achievement — a testimony to human ingenuity,” the Vatican press office said. Pope Leo and Aldrin together “reflected on the mystery of creation, its greatness and its fragility,” the press office said July 20, releasing a photo of the pope and Aldrin with his wife, Anca Faur, taken during their

video call. Aldrin then posted on his X account, @TheRealBuzz: “Anca and I were grateful and touched to receive the highest blessing today, from His Holiness, Pope Leo XIV on the 56th Anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing.” “What an honor! We prayed for good health, long life, and prosperity for all humankind,” the astronaut wrote. Earlier in the day, Pope Leo visited the Vatican Observatory, the headquarters of a team of Jesuit astronomers and scientists, located on the grounds of the papal summer villa in Castel Gandolfo.

Pope condemns Israel's attack against church, calls for end to 'barbarity'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The “barbarity of war” and forced displacement of people have to end, and civilians and places of worship have to be protected, Pope Leo XIV implored. “Tragic news continues to arrive these days from the Middle East, especially from Gaza,” he said after reciting the Angelus with those gathered outside the papal palace in Castel Gandolfo July 20. “I again call for an immediate end to the barbarity of the war and for a peaceful resolution of the conflict,” he said. “I renew my appeal to the international community to observe humanitarian law and to respect the obligation to protect civilians, as well as the prohibition of collective punishment, the indiscriminate use of force and the forced displacement of the population,” he said. He expressed his “profound sorrow for the Israeli army’s attack on the Holy Family Catholic Church in Gaza City” July 17, which killed three Christians and seriously wounded others.

US to withdraw, from UNESCO over Palestine and UN development goals

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on July 22 said the United States would withdraw from the U.N. cultural agency UNESCO, a group that has partnered with the Holy See on human development and cultural heritage projects. Tammy Bruce, the State Department's spokesperson, said in a July 22 statement continued membership in UNESCO was "not in the national interest," and cited UNESCO's recognition of the State of Palestine and focus on the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals as being problematic. Mary Ellen O'Connell, a professor at Notre Dame Law School who specializes in international law and conflict resolution, expressed concern about the decision, telling OSV News, "Leaving UNESCO will deal another blow to the reputation of the United States as a world leader in what matters—peace, human rights, health, the environment, and now culture." Among the agency's most well-known work is the UNESCO World Heritage Sites program, which recognizes significant historic and cultural landmarks for protection and preservation, including more than two dozen sites in the United States, such as Independence Hall, the Statue of Liberty, the Grand Canyon, and La Fortaleza and San Juan National Historic Site in Puerto Rico. Catholic sites and cathedrals, including Vatican City and Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, are among the World Heritage sites around the globe.

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138th annual St. Ann novena highlights the major Councils of the Church

Laura Keener
Editor

The major councils of the Church were highlighted at St. Ann Church, Covington, as the mission celebrated its 138th annual St. Ann Novena, July 18–26. Father Aby Thampi, pastor, welcomed a variety of diocesan priests and deacons to preach each night of the novena. Father Eric Boelscher, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, was celebrant and homilist on evening five; his topic was the Lateran Councils.

A quick show-of-hands survey determined that attendees were not adept on their knowledge of the Lateran Councils, alleviating any fact-checking, Father Boelscher humorously acknowledged. The Lateran Councils are five ecumenical councils that were held at the Lateran Palace in Rome over the course of about 400 years — First (1123), Second (1139), Third (1179), Fourth (1215), and Fifth (1512-1517).

It was a time, Father Boelscher said, when Church leaders couldn’t agree on almost anything. The first three councils occurred in quick succession because of this inability. And while there was an abundance of issues to discuss, during the fourth council Church leaders were determined to at least agree on the basics and were able to formally define the doctrine of transubstantiation, stating that in the Eucharist, the bread and wine are substantially changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.

“There is one thing we need to agree on, we all need to be real clear about who this is on the altar at each Mass. And once we get that, every promise and problem will be taken care of. All we are supposed to do is go and tell everyone we have seen the Lord,” Father Boelscher said.

Every evening of the novena has been recorded and is available for viewing on the “Saint John and Saint Ann Churches” Facebook page.



(far left) The prayer intentions of the faithful realized by lighted vigil candles glow before a relic of St. Ann and a statue of St. Ann and her young daughter, Mary.

(left) Father Eric Boelscher was the celebrant and homilist for evening five of the 13th annual St. Ann Novena, Covington.



(below, from left) Father Aby Thampi, pastor, St. Ann Mission, Covington and Father Boelscher bless worshipers with a relic of St. Ann.



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