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Concert at St. Mary’s Park honors Bishop Foys 80th birthday

Laura Keener
Editor

On a hot and humid evening, over 200 people gathered, July 25, at St. Mary’s Park, Covington, to celebrate the 80th birthday of Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys. The concert celebration was hosted by Bishop John Iffert and included live music by the Pete Wagner Band with Nancy James.

“It is my pleasure to be able to welcome you,” said Bishop Iffert as the concert began. Quoting from Psalm 90, Bishop Iffert said, “Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures.” (10)

“There is no surprise to us that Bishop Roger Foys is strong,” Bishop Iffert said. “He led us here in the Diocese of Covington for 20 years, a quarter of his life. Before those 20 years, he spent another 20 years as vicar general at the Diocese of Steubenville. For half of his life Bishop Foys has been carrying the weight of leadership at a diocesan level in the life of the Church. We pray that we will have many more birthdays to celebrate with you, Bishop Foys.”

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the birthday cake accompanied by six Margaret Mary Foys Ciesla scholarship recipients. The Margaret Mary Foys Ciesla ACUE Scholarship Fund was established by Bishop Foys and is named in honor of his sister, who died from pancreatic cancer not long after his installation as Bishop of Covington. Another highlight was a musical tribute by the Bishop’s Choir, a parody on the Andy Griffith Show’s “Welcome Sweet Springtime,” led by Greg Schaffer.

(Continued on page 14)

Bishop John Iffert encourages school administrators and teachers to rely on Christ as the 2025-2026 school year begins

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The annual Mass opening the new school year had the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, filled to max capacity as faculty and staff from schools across the Diocese gathered to celebrate the start of the 2025-2026 school year. The Mass, celebrated by Bishop John Iffert and organized by the Diocese of Covington Office of Catholic Schools, is a

way for these school faculty and staff to gather in communion with one another before the hustle and bustle of a new year.

“In just a few days, you will welcome students into your classroom,” said Kendra McGuire, superintendent. “Each child in your class will be unique coming to you from different families, backgrounds and experience, their interests, talents and abilities will be unique too.”


Mrs. McGuire continued saying, “This year, let’s teach by looking at each child as Jesus would, to love them as Jesus would.”

(Continued on page 9)



Bailey and Keener photos

(above left) Bishop Iffert gestures during the homily at the Mass to open the school year. (above right) Teachers from Immaculate Heart of Mary kneel in reverence during the consecration of the Eucharist.



August 2025

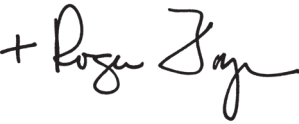
My dear Friends in Christ,

Although there are no words adequate enough to express the gratitude I have for the celebration of my 80th birthday, I nonetheless want to attempt to express my profound gratitude. I am especially grateful to our Bishop John Iffert for proposing this celebration and for the many other kindnesses he has shown to me since his arrival in the Diocese. I am likewise grateful to the committee that oversaw the festivities, to all those who were instrumental in preparing for the celebration in any way as well as to all those who attended, to those who sent cards, gifts. and expressions of support.

The celebration was overwhelming for me, and I will never forget it. As I grow older, I appreciate more and more the many gifts the Lord has bestowed on me throughout my lifetime. I thank Him for the gift of life, for a wonderful loving family, for parents who passed the faith on to me by their example, for the gift of the priesthood and the episcopacy, for the gift of good friends, for the priests and faithful with whom I have ministered and served to be best of my ability.

So, although it is inadequate, please accept my gratitude. Thank you!
Let us pray for one another. God bless you!

Yours devotedly and gratefully in the Lord,



Most Rev. Roger Joseph Foys, D.D.
Bishop Emeritus of Covington

Bishop Iffert commissions new and returning principals for the 2025-2026 school year

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

With the start of the 2025-2026 school year on the horizon the Diocese of Covington Office of Catholic Schools hosted the annual principals’ meeting. This meeting serves as a way for the superintendent of Catholic schools, Kendra McGuire, and other office directors to meet with the principals and discuss the upcoming school year.

In addition, Bishop John Iffert commissions the new principals, of which there were eight, into the sharing of his pastoral ministry. Recalling a story, Bishop Iffert shared one of his first thoughts when finding out he was going to become the bishop of Covington. “I have no idea how to pastor to 90,000 people. How do you do that?”

What he soon realized however was that he could pastor to 400, and then those 400 could aid in his pastoral ministry. This, he said, is the same relationship he envisions as he participates in the commissioning of new principals and teachers.

“Principals of our Catholic schools are ministers of change; you are pastoral associates. In my mind, you are helping to promote the kingdom of God’s values and its virtues, and to prepare our young people for a life of pursuing growth and sanctity,” said Bishop Iffert to the principals gathered.

Before handing the eight new principals a new bible — symbolic of their new role as pastoral associates, instilling in students the values and virtues of the Catholic faith — Bishop Iffert said, “Our purpose is to be Church to one another and to lead one another in faith, to pass on to others what has been passed on to us. So, that’s my goal for you, when you’re talking about key responsibility areas, put that one right at the top.”

Then, standing, the new principals announced their resolve to carry out the responsibilities of a Catholic school principal with “fervent joy and prudence.” And, to the best of their abilities, form those entrusted to their care in the Catholic faith.



(above left) Bishop John Iffert stands and addresses the principals for the upcoming school year: Sharing with them their roles as pastoral associates in his ministry, forming students to be disciples of Christ. The principals stand facing Bishop Iffert proclaiming their resolve to dutifully fulfill their role as principal with “fervent joy and prudence.”

(above right) Jacob Hay, principal, St. Patrick Elementary School, Maysville, shakes Bishop Iffert’s hand before receiving a new bible, a symbol of his new role as a principal, sharing the faith.



Divine Mercy/ St. Bernard Parish Young Adult Group sets an example

Macie Becker
Media Intern

As part of the Diocesan pastoral plan, the diocese has partnered with the Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI). CLI has been working with the parishes in the diocese on long-term pastoral plans for each parish. Divine Mercy and St. Bernard Parishes, Bellevue and Dayton, are a part of Next Generation Parish, a program in which the parish is paired with a CLI consultant to help not only develop but also to implement their plan.

One of the goals for the Divine Mercy/St. Bernard (DMSB) pastoral plan is to increase parishioner involvement in social and service groups within the parishes. DMSB has a thriving young adult community, drawing in people from in and out of the parishes to their events. Father Martin Pitstick, Pastor, refers to it as one of their parish’s “charisms.” Having events almost every day, the DMSB young adults have been an influence on the parish community, setting an example for the pastoral plan.

The young adults within the parish have continued to set this example by getting involved with other aspects of parish life, such as serving Masses and planning after-Mass brunches for the parishioners. Mr. Nienaber says the reason for starting integrated events is for the parishes to be “living and breathing and really healthy going into the next 20, 30, or 40 years.”

They combine the religious and recreational, planning events like Masses and Bible studies, as well as fun events like bonfires and swing dances. That dynamic has drawn in many people, both Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Oftentimes, non-Catholic participants in these recreational events end up being drawn to the Catholic faith by it.

“We always try to find that balance,” says Colin Nienaber, DMSB Young Adult Minister, who continued to say, “we’re having a lot of fun, but we also want to integrate the rest of the parish so that it’s not like two different parishes being made.”

“The young adults are taking on the service role for the life of the rest of the parish to leverage and to be the yeast for helping the rest of the parish,” said Father Pitstick. He continued, saying “no program is perfect, but you take valuable resources from the program, and we’ve done that and it has been very helpful.”

To learn more or get involved with DMSB or their young adult ministry, visit <https://dmsbcatholic.com/>

Upon their pronouncement Bishop Iffert accepted them and commissioned them as principals, pastoral associates, so that they may dutifully aid in shaping disciples of Christ.

Bailey photos

Bishop Iffert travels to Ghana to visit family, Church and culture of African priests serving in Covington

Laura Keener
Editor

A little piece of the hearts of parishioners from Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish (IHM), Burlington, now beats in Tapa, Ghana, in the form of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Technology Center: The Center, which is in the hometown of Msgr. Dominic Fosu, pastor, IHM, was made possible through donations and support from IHM parishioners. Bishop John Iffert dedicated the Center on a recent trip Ghana. The Center blessing was part of a larger trip, July 7–23, to the Archdiocese of Kumasi.

Bishop Iffert was accompanied by Msgr. Fosu, four other Ghanaian priests ministering in the Diocese of Covington — Father Augustine Aidoo, pastor, St. Patrick Parish, Maysville; Father John Opoku, parochial vicar, St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright; and Father Samuel Owusu, parochial vicar, Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger — Msgr. Daniel Vogelpohl, Deacon Jim Fortner and Julie Fortner and nine IHM parishioners. All four of the Ghanaian priests are from the Archdiocese of Kumasi, three of the four — Msgr. Fosu, Father Opoku and Father Owusu are from the city of

Tapa.

“It was a wonderful, amazing trip. Instructive at every level,” said Bishop John Iffert.

The idea for the trip came from Bishop William Medley of the Diocese of Owensboro, Ky. In a conversation with Bishop Medley during one of the bishop’s meetings several years ago, Bishop Iffert learned that Bishop Medley had made a point of visiting the home dioceses of missionary priests ministering in Owensboro.

“He talked about what a joy it was to meet their families and have Masses in their home parishes. As soon as I heard him talk about that, I just thought, well, that is a good and right thing to do,” said Bishop Iffert in an interview with *Messenger* after returning from the trip.

Msgr. Fosu worked out the details of the visit with Archbishop Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye, who proved to be eager for Bishop Iffert’s visit. Archbishop Anokye even invited Bishop Iffert to ordain five priests during the visit — four priests for the Archdiocese of Kumasi and a Redemptorist priest.

(Continued on page 10)



After Mass and the blessing and dedication of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Technology Center, near Tapa, Ghana, Bishop John Iffert holds a bouquet of flowers given to him by children of Mary Queen of Peace School.

Diocese and intercommunity sisters continue dialogue on immigration with upcoming presentation, continuation of June efforts

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

This past June, the Intercommunity Sisters Peace and Justice Committee, in a collaboration with the Diocese of Covington, held a presentation attended by near 200 participants on the topic of immigration — the Catholic perspective.

On August 18, the sisters aim to continue this dialogue with the second part of the immigration series, once again to be held in the diocesan Curia, Covington, from 6:30–8:30 p.m.

The August presentation will begin with a “deeper look at Catholic social teaching as it pertains to immigration,” said Divine Providence Sister Kay Kremer, one of the hosts and speakers of the event. “At the first session, Hannah Keegan,” of Thomas More University, “gave more of an overview of those parts of Catholic social teaching ... but, this time, she’ll delve deeper into what it means specifically in regards to how we are called to treat migrants, and how we are called to live in contrast to

what’s happened to migrants in the country right now.”

Immigration lawyer Jessica Ramos will also be participating in the upcoming presentation. She will be speaking on the “pathways to legal immigration and citizenship in our country,” said Sister Kay, “and how those things have drastically changed in the last six months.”

Attendees will also be supplied with a resource sheet of discussing immigration in the Catholic context, as well as local ways to help migrant populations.

“We want everyone who attends to feel welcome,” Sister Kay continued, “And we want this to be an opportunity for all of us to continue to learn about what the Church teaches about immigration.”

These conversations are important, she explained, as “people are really suffering right now,” Sister Kay said. “The majority of migrants are good, hard-working people who simply want to live their lives in a place where they’re safe and where they can provide for their families, and where their children have an opportunity for a good educa-

tion. Their hopes and dreams for their lives are the same hopes and dreams that probably all of our ancestors had when they came to the United States.”



Clarification

A poor choice of words was used in a photo outline for the Our Savior Parish and School historical marker dedication. The drumming was described as a “summon” of the ancestors, but should have been “acknowledging” the ancestors. The Church, in its teachings on the Communion of Saints, reminds us that, “The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom ... share in the living tradition of prayer by the example of their lives, the transmission of their writings and their prayer today ... We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world.” (CCC § 2683) The *Messenger* apologizes for the mistake.

Official Assignments

Effective June 30, 2025

Deacon Phillip J. Racine

To: Retirement after 26 years of dedicated service
From: Deacon, St. Benedict Parish, Covington

Effective July 1, 2025

Very Rev. Michael E. Comer, V.F.

To: Vicar Forane (Dean), Covington Deanery
Term: Three years
Continues other duties

Effective July 15, 2025

Sister Janet Bucher, C.D.P.

To: Retirement after 34 years of dedicated service at Our Savior Parish
From: Parish Life Collaborator, Our Savior Parish, Covington

Effective July 29, 2025

Rev. Kevin J. Kahmann

To: Pastor, St. Henry Parish, Elsmere
From: Pastor, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California

Rev. Joshua L. Lange

To: Sabbatical
From: Pastor, St. Henry Parish, Elsmere
Term: One month

Rev. Msgr. Gerald L. Reinersman

To: Parochial Administrator Pro Tem, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California
From: Retirement

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

Jamie N. Schroeder
Jamie N. Schroeder
Chancellor



Bishop's Schedule

- Aug. 9**
Deanery Pastoral Council orientation, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington, 9 a.m.
- Aug. 10**
Mass, Madonna Manor, Villa Hills, 11 a.m.
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 5:30 p.m.
- Aug. 12**
DPAA Priest Committee meeting, 1 p.m.
Cursillo Team meeting, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, 7 p.m.
- Aug. 13**
Mass, Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills, 10 a.m.
Rome Pilgrimage group meeting, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, 7p.m.

- Aug. 14**
Seminar pictures, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 11:30 a.m.
Seminar cookout, Thomas More University Biology Field station, noon
Vigil Mass for the Solemnity of the Feast of the Assumption, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 5:30 p.m., followed by reception in Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium
- Aug. 15**
Diocesan Curia closed in observance of the Solemnity of the Feast of the Assumption
- Aug. 17**
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 10 a.m.

St. Henry student achieves rank of Eagle Scout, busts river bank refuse

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

An incoming junior student of St. Henry District High School, scout Sam Dirksing has achieved the rank and honor of Eagle Scout — the highest rank attainable in the organization of the Scouts BSA. The efforts to become an Eagle Scout are lifelong, with Mr. Dirksing having entered the Boy Scouts of America in the first grade and continuing to this day. The journey culminates with an Eagle Scout project, scout-led and benefitting the community. To Sam Dirksing, he took example from the conservation requirements needed for ranking up and turned his project into an opportunity to clean up the community’s local waterways.

He teamed up with the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) and rallied community members, family and friends for a litter cleanup along the banks of the Ohio River at Giles Conrad Park, Hebron this past October.

“I cleaned up the park and the bank of the river,” said Mr. Dirksing. “The weather was perfect, and it went great.”

In addition to the project, achieving the rank also gave Mr. Dirksing time to reflect on his achievements as a scout, and the memories therein.

“To me Eagle represents all of the hard work that I have put into scouting and all of the fun trips and memories I have made along the way and the ones yet to come,” he said, “This was accomplished by the love and support of many adults in my life and the support of my fellow scouts. Many of the rank requirements and merit badge requirements have collaborative aspects where a Scout has to teach, lead and demonstrate life skills to others. I have learned much about myself during this journey.”



Dirksing photo

(above) Eagle Scout Sam Dirksing stands in front of volunteers gathering litter from the banks of the Ohio River. In collaboration with the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO), Mr. Dirksing led a riverside cleanup at Giles Conrad park, Hebron, for his Eagle Scout project.

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The real treasures

The readings for the nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C — are: Wisdom 18:6-9, Hebrews 11:1-2. 8-19 and Luke 12:32-48.

Last Sunday’s Gospel reading and this Sunday’s Gospel reading are really one reading. You should read them together. The teaching Jesus offers is layered and rich and radical. He is trying to liberate his disciples, liberate us. You would do well to dive deep here to hear what Jesus has to say. Chances are it will make you uncomfortable. Chances are it will be good for you, especially eternally.

GUEST



Father Joshua J. Whitfield

Jesus has been preaching against what causes fear; about what we should really fear instead. We shouldn’t fear what can kill the body, for instance, but instead fear him who can cast the soul into hell (Lk 12:5). We shouldn’t worry about things like inheritance, money, food or possessions, for “your Father knows that you need them” (Lk 12:30).

Jesus is not telling his disciples to shun possessions or money or food completely; he is not saying that each Christian should become a beggar like St. Francis. Rather, he is talking about the proper perspective believers should have and how such perspective should order their lives. That is, unlike the birds of the air or the lilies of the field, human beings have an eternal destiny to account for and prepare for.

What Jesus is trying to do is to get his listeners to focus on one treasure rather than another. That is, he is saying that when we fail to account for eternity, for the kingdom of God, our fear will too likely cause us to store up treasures for ourselves to hedge against the future. Which is plainly foolish, Jesus says; for once you’re dead, he asks, “the things you have prepared, whose will they be” (Lk 12:20-21)?

Instead, Jesus tells his disciples to focus on “a treasure in the heavens that does not fail” (Lk 12:33). And you do that, Jesus says, by selling your possessions and giving alms (Lk 12:32).

Here Jesus is simply underlining good rabbinic wisdom, wisdom almost completely forgotten today. It is the wisdom found in Proverbs 10:2 and 11:4, the idea that wealth “does not profit in the day of wrath” but that only “almsgiving delivers from death.” The notion of a treasury in heaven is thoroughly Jewish; Jesus didn’t pull it out of thin air. “Store up almsgiving in your treasury, and it will rescue you from all affliction” (Sir 29:12).

This, simply and radically, is what Jesus teaches, but with an emphasis and urgency befitting the advent of the Messiah: “it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” he says (Lk 12:32). These words have the same punch to them as those he spoke at Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry, that “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:21).

What Jesus is saying is that his disciples are to enact the ethics of the kingdom now, to sell possessions now and to give alms now. “I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon,” Jesus will later say, “so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations” (Lk 16:9).

This is not something to put off, Jesus clearly teaches, for that’s the warning of the parable of the rich fool (Lk 12:20). Disciples are meant to begin heaven now not simply by believing in Jesus but also by living as he taught us to live as sharers with one another and as friends with the poor.

Now we may understand better the strange ethics found in Acts, why the first Christians “had all things in common,” selling their possessions and distributing goods “as any had need” (Acts 2:44-45). Now we know why Luke said of that community, “There was not any one needy among them” (Acts 4:34).

These first Christians were simply being faithful to

(Continued on page 14)

Focus on the 249

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious — if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” —Philippians 4:8

VIEWPOINT



Karen Zengel

It’s no secret that our St. Vincent de Paul, Erlanger, location can get hectic. On any given day, more than 250 people come through our doors — some to shop, some to seek help, others to drop off donations or offer their time as volunteers. The parking lot is an absolute zoo most days, full of people coming and going, weaving in and out, finding ways to squeeze in just one more car. Recently, the sweltering heat has turned an already hectic scene into a true pressure cooker. The air is heavy, tempers can run short, and still — our community shows up. They show up in droves, with generosity, with hope. And we love them for it.

A few weeks ago, one of our new cashiers shared with me an experience she’d had during a particularly busy day. A customer had been short-tempered and demanding. While this cashier tried to remain calm, frustration got the better of her. An eye roll later, she realized she missed an opportunity to show more patience and compassion.

As I listened, I thought about how easy it is for one hard moment to overshadow a day. Out of the 250-plus people who visited Erlanger that day, one interaction lingered in her mind. One harsh voice drowned out the many kind ones. And I realized — I do the same thing. I only hear about a challenging encounter every few

months, but when I do, it takes up more mental space than the dozens, even hundreds, of good stories that happen quietly each day.

As humans, we’re wired to notice the negative. It stands out. But at St. Vincent de Paul, we’re called to more. We strive to see the face of Christ in all those we encounter — those we serve and those who serve alongside us. And most days, we’re given hundreds of chances to do just that. Each person who walks through our doors carries a story. In the smile of a neighbor finding what they need, in the hands of a volunteer gently sorting donations, in the quiet “thank you” whispered by someone receiving assistance — we are brushed by Christ.

But when we allow one difficult interaction to take over, we risk missing him — not just in the hard moment, but in the many beautiful ones that surround it. We ignore Christ in the 249 because the one who challenges our joy demands all our attention.

That’s when Paul’s words to the Philippians offer more than encouragement — they give direction. “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable ... if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Paul knew that we need to intentionally focus on what is good, even when the negative screams for our attention.

This doesn’t mean we ignore the one. That difficult person matters just as much as the rest — perhaps even more. Because maybe that’s the face of Christ we are least prepared to see. Maybe he comes to us not only in the easy and uplifting moments, but also in the ones that stretch us — those that call us to patience, to grace, to mercy.

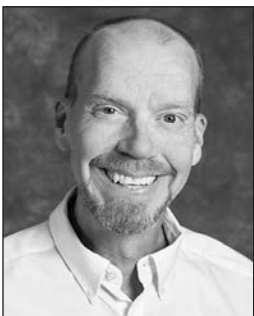
So, let’s not lose sight of the 249. Let’s celebrate the ordinary kindness that happens all around us. Let’s choose to fix our minds on what is lovely and gracious and praiseworthy. And when the one hard moment arrives — and it will — let’s meet it with love. Let’s look a little harder for Christ in that moment too.

Because he’s there.
Karen Zengel is executive director, Society of St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky.

Is this burning an eternal flame?

One day, several months ago, I was driving home listening to Sacred Heart Catholic Radio. Father Rob Jack, a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and the host of the station’s afternoon “drive-time” program, was talking about the candle that is presented to parents and godparents of children being baptized.

BELIEVE, TEACH, PRACTICE



Deacon Timothy Britt

As I listened — and I am not making this up — I drove under some high tension wires and, for just a moment, the radio was playing static. When it came back on it had slipped onto an oldies station that was playing a song by a group called the Bangles (an all-girl pop/rock band from the 1980s). The song was called “Eternal Flame.” Some of you might remember. The lyrics are: “Close your eyes, give me your hand, darling / Do

you feel my heart beating / Do you understand / Do you feel the same / Am I only dreaming / or is this burning an eternal flame?”

Clearly this song is about a romantic relationship between a man and a woman. The singer of the song is asking her boyfriend if he thinks their love for one another might be the one that lasts forever. But, given that I had just been listening to Father Rob Jack on the radio talking about a candle that (according to the Rite of Baptism) is “to be kept burning brightly” and then my radio starts playing a song called “Eternal Flame”? You know how some people say there are no such thing as coincidences? I’m not one of those people; but what had just happened to me was a “God-wink” if

there ever was one.

Following this experience, I thought more about the baptismal candle. The priest or deacon presiding lights it from the Easter candle and addresses the parents and godparents saying: “Receive the light of Christ. Parents and godparents, this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly.” The presider talks about the child as being enlightened by Christ and that the child is to walk always as a child of the light. Then, “May he or she keep the flame of faith alive in his or her heart and when the Lord comes, may he or she go out to meet Him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.”

Certainly, the flame of the baptismal candle will be blown out as the family prepares to take pictures at the conclusion of the Rite of Baptism. It is merely a symbol of the true “flame of faith” that, once lit in baptism, is intended by God to burn until the Lord comes.

Parents and godparents watch over the flame, they keep it burning brightly; meaning that they introduce the child to Jesus, they bring the child to church, they teach the child to pray and they pray themselves. They pray with and for the child because there will come a day when the flame that was entrusted to them will be passed on to the child at Confirmation.

Certainly, that is what happens in the Sacrament of Confirmation. Children of a certain age are sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit that make it possible for them — now young adults — to maintain their own flame of faith; to keep it burning brightly until the Lord comes and then still, to burn on into Eternity. Indeed, an eternal flame. In the end, we are all responsible for our own light of Christ; we are all charged with keeping the flame of faith that we received in baptism alive in our hearts

My contemplations about all this brought me to thoughts of my own baptismal candle. The one presented to my parents and godparents more than 67 years ago. Where is it? In what shoebox, in which drawer or on what

(Continued on page 14)

Prepare space in your hearts for God’s love to grow, pope urges

Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

While enjoying a summer break from school or work, Catholics should not neglect “the Lord’s invitation to prepare our hearts by actively participating in the Eucharistic sacrifice and by doing generous acts of charity,” Pope Leo XIV said.

Speaking in English at his weekly general audience Aug. 6, the pope summarized his main talk, which focused on how Christ prepared to sacrifice himself out of love for humanity and how Christians, in response, must prepare space in their hearts and lives for him.

The Gospel accounts of Jesus and his disciples preparing for Passover and the Last Supper — and for Jesus’ passion and death, he said, “shows us that love is not the result of chance, but of a conscious choice.”

Jesus, the pope said, “does not face his passion out of fatalism, but out of fidelity to a path freely and carefully accepted and followed.”

Believers should be comforted by “knowing that the gift of his life stems from conscious intention, not a sudden impulse,” Pope Leo told thousands of people gathered for the audience in St. Peter’s Square.

As Passover and his death draw near, Jesus “has already thought of everything, arranged everything, decided everything,” the pope said. “However, he asks his friends to do their part. This teaches us something essential for our spiritual life: grace does not eliminate our freedom but rather awakens it. God’s gift does not eliminate our responsibility but makes it fruitful.”

Catholics today also are called to prepare themselves to receive Christ’s sacrifice, he said, and not just at Mass.

“The Eucharist is not celebrated only at the altar, but also in daily life, where it is possible to experience everything as an offering and giving of thanks,” Pope Leo said.

Often that preparation is not about doing more, he said, but rather about creating space by “removing what encumbers us, reducing our demands and ceasing to hold unrealistic expectations.”

“Every gesture of willingness, every gratuitous act, every forgiveness given in advance, every effort patiently accepted, is a way to prepare a place where God can dwell,” Pope Leo said.

“May the Lord grant us to be humble preparers of his presence,” the pope prayed. “And, in this daily readiness, may that serene trust also grow in us, allowing us to face everything with a free heart. Because where love has been prepared, life can truly flourish.”

Burning an eternal flame?

(Continued from page 5)

shelf, in what closet? I should know exactly where it is; because every year, on the anniversary of my baptism, I should’ve been getting it out and maybe lighting it again — for just a moment — or for as long as it takes for me to answer the question asked by the Bangles back in the 80s, “Is this burning an eternal flame?”

Deacon Timothy Britt is assigned to St. Mary Parish, Alexandria, Ky

The real treasures

(Continued from page 5)

Jesus’ rabbinic teaching made real and contemporary by his continued Messianic presence in the community, the same Messianic presence we believe is present in the church today. The kingdom has been given in Christ today too, so what are we waiting for? Why aren’t we sharing our possessions now?

Which is the question, I said at the beginning, would make you uncomfortable. But I also said it may just save you, eternally at least. And please know how serious the question is: Why aren’t you sharing your possessions now?

Please don’t make the mistake of thinking this is

not a question immediately connected to your salvation. Please don’t think you can get into heaven while ignoring this question, passing it off with excuse after excuse.

The whole wisdom of the Scripture, the clear teaching of Jesus, can’t be set aside. The matter is urgent. As St. Basil the Great preached once, “Think reasonably about that which is and that which shall come, and what you might lose through shameful profit.”

Really, I can’t say anything more chilling or truer than that. Just that maybe it harrows the soul to think of so many Christians who ignore such teaching, so weighed down by their possessions, unaware how eternally weighed down they really are.

Father Joshua J. Whitfield is pastor of St. Rita Catholic Community in Dallas.



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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/>.

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/>.

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.

Beginning in August the **Bishop Brossart High School art gallery, Alexandria, will display the exhibit “Madeline,”** works by BBHS and St. Joseph, Cold Spring, alum, Beth Lauer; every Sunday from 12-4 p.m.

St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill, annual Our Lady of Knock Novena, Aug. 14–22. Mass and novena prayer times are: Aug. 14, 7 p.m.; Aug. 15, 7:35 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Aug. 16, 4:30 p.m.; Aug. 17, 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m., with Ancient Order of Ladies Hibernian and the Ancient Order of Hibernian Color Guard; Aug. 18, 7:35 a.m. and 7 p.m., Adoration (no Mass); Aug. 29, 7:35 a.m. and 7 p.m., Adoration (no Mass); Aug. 20, 7:35 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Aug. 21, 7 p.m., Adoration (no Mass); Aug. 22, 7:35 a.m. The relic of St. Faustina will be available to inspire all in the works of Divine Mercy. For information, e-mail parishoffice@stpat.church, or call (859) 356-5151.

Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California, picnic, Aug. 23, 3–11p.m.; dinner served 3–7p.m.

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.

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



Missionary Disciples hit the GYMM

Thirteen graduates (above) of Parish Missionary Discipleship training hit the GYMM (Growing Your Missionary Muscles), July 14, to share ideas on helping loved ones back to our Church. “As always, it is so good to be around people who are inspired to bring others closer to Christ,” said Bridget Otto, GYMM organizer and parishioner, Mother of God Parish, Covington. Also during the meeting the group listened to YouTube vides from Bishop Robert Barron and Pope Leo on the topic. The GYMM is open to anyone who has attended the diocesan Parish Missionary Discipleship training program or the mini parish training. To learn more about the GYMM or to schedule PMD training at your parish, e-mail Bridget Otto at bridgetotto.pmd@gmail.com.

required for anniversary couples; family members and guests are welcome to attend.

Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California, stagette, Sept. 28, doors open at 12:30 p.m.; bingo starts at 2 p.m.

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 week-end 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 over-all 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.

The Holy Face of Jesus devotion, every Tuesday 6 p.m., St. Cecilia Church, Independence, with Benediction 7 p.m., for reparation of sins against the first three commandments: denial of God, blasphemy and the profanation of Sundays and Holy Days; includes praying the Litany of the Holy Face of Jesus, the Holy Face Chaplet, prayers of petition and silent devotion, all during Exposition.

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

The new chimeras have arrived ready to take their spots atop the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Two years ago, the twenty-six chimera which lined the top of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, were removed as part of the Cathedral restoration initiative. Now, their new and improved counterparts have arrived, ready to reclaim their spots atop the Cathedral.

The new chimera, perfect replicas of the ones removed, were made by Boston Valley Terra Cotta, New York, and arrived in late July. In order to perfectly replicate the ones removed, 3D scans were taken, and from those scans foam molds were made, which were cast to make a hollow mold, from which they created the new chimera.

“There’s a lot of hard work,” said Don Knochelmann, director, Buildings and Properties Office for the Diocese of Covington, “there’s a team of artists that put all the really fine detail; the wrinkles in the elephant’s skin and all the

different things, that’s all done by hand.”

Father Ryan Maher, rector, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption said about seeing the new chimera, “I was excited to see them up close, to see the incredible level of detail that the artist put into replicating the former chimera.”

Previously, each chimera weighed approximately 270 pounds, having at one point been filled with concrete. Each new chimera weighs only 170 pounds and are hollow. Mr. Knochelmann, suspects the old chimera, which were originally hollow as well, were filled in an attempt to elongate their life.

“Our understanding from the design team is that doing that actually shortens their life,” said Mr. Knochelmann, “because the concrete and terracotta didn’t expand at the same rate.”

While the talented team at Boston Valley Terra Cotta created the chimera, Trisco Construction will be the ones

installing them.

“The workmen, to see day by day the details that they pay attention to do this restoration, every millimeter matters, every inch matters. Being here every day and being able to see them exercise the care, the diligence, the hard work, using their expertise, their God given talents, to do these small, very important restoration pieces, I’ve really enjoyed seeing that unfold,” said Father Maher.

He continued saying, “we’re doing something for the Lord, for all the Catholics in the area, all of the non-Catholics in the area, anybody who comes. We’re doing a great work of service in the Lord with his help to make sure this cathedral is here for generations, and that this type of work doesn’t have to be done for a long time.”

The replacement of the twenty-six chimera is one piece of the larger Restored in Christ Campaign, which seeks to restore the Cathedral façade and architectural structure. To learn more, go to covcathedral.com/restored-in-christ/.

Bailey photos



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IN CHRIST
www.covcathedral.com/restored-in-christ

(above and below) The chimera visible between the packaging showcase the extraordinary level of detail provided by Boston Valley Terra Cotta when crafting the new chimera. From feathers to wrinkles, the detail is a byproduct of a team of artists who hand carve each detail.



Rely on Christ as the 2025-2026 school year begins

(Continued from page 1)

A sentiment reaffirmed in the first reading, Numbers 11:4b-15, and Gospel reading Matthew 14:13-21, which showcased Jesus’ merciful love and unending patience as a teacher to all.

In his homily, Bishop Iffert reflected on the first reading, where God provided for the Israelites in the desert with manna. This manna, said Bishop Iffert, would provide all they would need to sustain life, but still, they griped.

“Oh yeah, the Lord saved our lives. But what a monotonous and terrible life it is. Manna every morning, manna every noon time, manna every evening,” Bishop Iffert said, echoing the cries of the Israelites. After hearing the plight of Moses and his people, in his infinite mercy, God provided the Israelites with quail, giving his people meat.

Perhaps a moment many teachers have experienced, when they have given all, they have to give, and still the student entrusted to their care asks for more.

“There will come a day this year,” said Bishop Iffert addressing the teachers in attendance, “when you’re tested, when you feel like ‘I have nothing left to offer.’ In that moment Jesus invites us, ‘What do you have? What’s left? What scrap?’ And when we bring it to him, he will bless that, he will break that, and he will give for the life of the world.”

In the same way that Jesus, grieving the death of John the Baptist in the Gospel reading, fed the 5,000 that followed him, though he was tired, grief stricken, and “he’s had just about enough,” said Bishop Iffert.

“Jesus teaches us the way to respond when we feel alone and tired and put upon and ground down and abused,” said Bishop Iffert. For, in spite of his grief and exhaustion, Jesus took five loaves and two fishes, and from these scraps fed the masses.

This year, as teachers bring to the feet of Jesus their scraps, Bishop Iffert said, Jesus will break it, as he did the

loaves and fish, “and this is the promise, it will be plenty. It will be plenty for you, it will be plenty for them. That is the promise,” said Bishop Iffert.

Echoing the early message from Mrs. McGuire, Bishop Iffert said, “Trusting in Christ, we hold our heads high. We commit ourselves to these children and to their families. We strive to be like Christ, and we beg him to be our support.”

“Thank you,” he continued, “for leading these children to the truth. I thank you for giving them the example of one who follows Jesus Christ, even unto the cross. I thank you for your dedication and devotion this year”

As the new school year opens, teachers remember, that when there seems to be no more to give, offer the scraps to God, and he will make it plentiful, “that is the promise,” said Bishop Iffert.



(above left) Bishop Iffert along with the priests of the Diocese of Covington listen attentively to the first reading, which is the later basis for Bishop Iffert’s homily.
(above center) Kendra McGuire, superintendent, Office of Catholic Schools, addresses the faculty and staff of Diocesan schools ahead of the Mass to open the new school year.
(above right) Teachers Aideen Briggs, Blessed Sacrament School, Ft. Mitchell; Theresa Fillhardt, Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Burlington; Jennifer Geiman, St. Mary School, Alexandria; and Carol Hyatt, St. Edward School, Cynthiana, present the gifts to Bishop Iffert.



(above left) Father Ryan Maher, rector, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, hands the Eucharist to a schoolteacher at the Mass to open the school year.
(above center) A teacher reads from the program handed out at the Mass.
(above right) Two teachers pray at the Mass to open the new school year as incense billows from the thurible.



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Bishop Iffert travels to Ghana

(Continued from page 3)

“That became the centerpiece of going there, to preside at the ordination and to visit the Archbishop, and then I also got out to visit the home parishes of these men, and to visit with their families, and to see the kinds of ministries they had done at home, and to learn about where they came from, and just to see them interact with their families and with the Church that they’re most familiar with,” said Bishop Iffert.

The Church in Ghana is “very lively and growing” Bishop Iffert said. The Archdiocese of Kumasi has 212 priests for its 72 parishes, with about another 75 priests serving outside of the country, like the four who serve in Covington.

Bishop Iffert said that the Archbishops of Ghana have taken seriously the call of Pope John Paul II who, on in his 1995 visit to Cameroon, exhorted the young Church in Africa to, “set yourselves on the path of holiness. Only thus can you be a sign of God in the world and relive in your own countries the missionary epic of the early Church. You will also be a leaven of missionary spirit ... (Ecclesia in Africa 260) In the Kamasi, with the permission of Rome, priests are assigned secular jobs — professors

and teachers at public universities and schools, architects, engineers, lawyers and government workers.

“The whole idea is that they will work in these offices, in these schools, and that they will never take a bribe; never ask for anything ... To show up on time, work full days, and, to kind of set the example in ethics, to try to raise the bar for the whole culture,” Bishop Iffert said.

Their efforts are having a positive effect on priestly vocations. “There’s a lot of excitement, a lot of young men in seminary,” Bishop Iffert said, noting that he celebrated Mass for a high school seminary class of first- and final-year young men because the church would not hold all the students. It was estimated that 40 of the senior students would go on to college seminary and that 15 would be ordained priests. “Very lively vocational situation there,” he said.

The liturgies are equally lively. The ordination lasted over 5 hours with Sunday Masses in Tepa typically lasting 2.5 hours, with lots of singing, dancing and drumming.

“They did not just receive the Roman Catholic liturgy as an imported product,” said Bishop Iffert. “It really, at least in the central part of Ghana, they have made it their own.”

Also typical of a Ghana Mass, are several processions. During the offertory, worshipers are called by the day of their birth to dance up the aisle and present their gifts. In another procession, parish groups of women bring food, toiletries, cleaning products and anything they have that the Church would need. The items were brought to Bishop Iffert as he sat in the chair, and he touched each item in blessing. Afterward, the priests and seminarians would place the items under the altar.

“So that when you’re celebrating the Eucharist, you’re literally celebrating all the gifts that everyone had brought forward,”

said Bishop Iffert. “Those gifts are used later, some help provide support for the priests and the rectory. Some of it goes out to the seminary. Some of it goes to the high schools to provide for their needs there, and others is kept by the parish to distribute to people in need. Just incredible.”

“If we brought all of that into our liturgy, it would be an import; it would not speak to us, it would be a distraction from the Consecration,” Bishop Iffert said. “But for them, it’s not. For them, it’s an expression of who they are and how they come to recognize Jesus. It’s really quite beautiful. That inculturation is part of what is encouraging the growth of the Church, is encouraging the growth in vocations, is encouraging young men and women to consider consecrated life as a real option. It’s, it’s amazing.”

A highlight was visiting the families of the priests in Tepa and Father Augustine’s family in Kumasi. “It was just a joy to visit them in their home... it was really a lovely, lovely gathering and to get to know their parents,” Bishop Iffert said.

The group also took time for some cultural experiences enjoying the local food, crossing a rope bridge, visiting art and cultural centers, the palace of the Ashanti King and meeting local artisans — weavers, printers and carvers. An especially haunting and moving was a tour of Elmina Castle — the first European slave trading post in sub-Saharan Africa.

“It was a slave dungeon, and it was where millions of people from that West African area were held captive and eventually shipped off on that middle passage. Probably half of the people who went through there died. Others were enslaved and became the beginnings of generations of chattel slavery in our country and others,” said Bishop Iffert. “It was just, it was very eye opening, and this made us aware of the other half of that equation. That was very, very moving.”

In the next year or two, Bishop Iffert plans to visit the home dioceses of the priests from India ministering in our diocese.

“I hope to make those visits and to meet their religious superiors and to meet the local churches that they’re from, and meet their families,” said Bishop Iffert. “It was well worthwhile.”



(above) Ghana travelers (from left) Father Owusu, Father Augustine, Deacon Jim Fortner, Msgr. Vogelpohl, Julie Fortner, Steve Mueller, Paul Rogers, Bishop Iffert, Clare Rogers, Jennifer Ihrig Msgr. Fosu, Mark Ihrig and Sue Wedemeyer.

(below) The travelers in front of the St. Peter’s Minor Basilica.

(right) Bishop Iffert blesses students.



(right) A student presents Bishop Iffert with a bouquet of flowers.

(below) Msgr. Fosu chats with family members prepare fufu a type of cornmeal sidedish.



(right) Bishop Iffert and travelers from Kentucky gather around Archbishop Emeritus Peter Kwasi Sarpong, Archdiocese of Kamasi, who hosted Bishop Iffert, travelers, and families of Msgr. Fosu and Father Owusu for brunch.

(below left) Bishop Iffert applauds Msgr. Fosu after celebrating Mass at his home parish.

(below right) Bishop Iffert ordains five men to the order of priesthood. Presbyters (from left) are Msgr. Fosu, Msgr. Vogelpohl, Msgr. Louis Kofi Tuffuor, Archbishop Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye and Bishop Iffert.

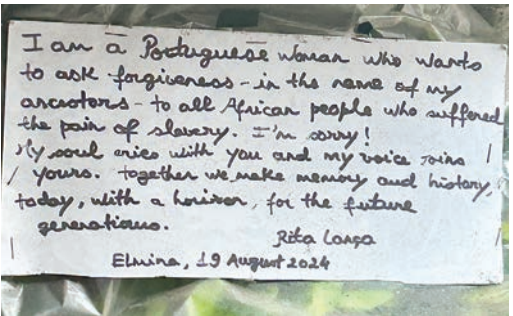


(below) Father Augustine Aidoo (far right) introduces his family to Bishop Iffert. His parents are seated in front.



(above) Bishop Iffert shares a moment of conversation with Archbishop Emeritus Peter Kwasi Sarpong.

(below) A photo of St. Peter's Regional Seminary and its (foreground) St. Thomas Aquinas Hall.



(left) Bishop Iffert and Msgr. Fosu and his close friends cross a rope bridge in Kakum National Park.

(right) The entrance to the slave quarters at Elmina Castle.



(above) A view of Elmina Castle — the first European slave trading post in sub-Saharan Africa.



Concert at St. Mary’s Park honors Bishop Foys 80th birthday

(Continued from page 1)

Speakers included Dale Henson, the diocese’s former Chief Financial Officer who worked with Bishop Foys for over a decade and Father Joey Shelton, former secretary to Bishop Foys.

Mr. Henson praised Bishop Foys for his commitment to Catholic education, especially in formalizing and centralizing the Alliance for Catholic Urban Education Consortium.

“This new model introduced elements of consistency and operational efficiency that allowed for the realization of significant cost savings,” Mr. Henson said. “His forethought in the formation and support of ACUE absolutely saved our inner-city schools and has allowed them to continue serving our community and transmitting the faith to hundreds of students over the years.”

Mr. Henson also commended Bishop Foys for his commitment to vocations by, early on, making the vocations promoter a full-time position.

“Bishop Foys himself was active in the diocese’s pur-

suit of good men for the priesthood. That increased focus had a profound impact on the number of men discerning for the priesthood in our diocese,” he said mentioning that at one time during his tenure, 28 men were studying for the priesthood and Bishop Foys ordained 42 men to the priesthood. “Today over 60 percent of our active diocesan priests were ordained by Bishop Foys. That’s a true testament to his love of the Church, the priesthood and our diocese.”

Father Shelton also affirmed Bishop Foys commitment to his priests. “Bishop Foys is a priest’s bishop,” Father Shelton said. “If a priest needed something – anything at all – Bishop Foys would do everything in his power to get that priest what he needed ... He was always there to provide support and encouragement to those priests whose vocations he fostered ... Bishop Foys loves the priesthood and during his time as our chief shepherd we knew and felt his love for us.”

In his remarks, Bishop Iffert recalled his first conversation with Bishop Foys just minutes after speaking with the

nuncio calling him to Covington.

“From the very first moments he was supportive, encouraging, reassuring ... from the very first moments he expressed his happiness to welcome me and to support me in this transition. That’s the graciousness of this man. That is who Bishop Foys is and has been to so many. It is why we are all so eager to be here tonight to wish him a happy birthday and to celebrate these 80 years of life,” Bishop Iffert said.

Bishop Foys ended the presentation in deep gratitude.

“To all of you who came I am very, very grateful,” said Bishop Foys. “I am grateful for all the outpouring of support, and encouragement and love that came from you these past 23 years. Know that I love you and pray for you every day and will continue to do so. I ask, please, that you pray for me. My sincere gratitude to Bishop Iffert who spearheaded this gathering — this is the kind and wonderful person that he is.” (See related letter from Bishop Foys on page 2.)



(above, from left) Bishop John Iffert, Dale Henson and Father Joseph Shelton welcome guests and share memories of Bishop Roger Foys at a concert celebrating his 80th birthday at St. Mary’s Park, Covington.

(above, far right) Six Margaret Mary Foys Ciesla ACUE Scholarship Fund scholars present balloons to Bishop Foys.

(left, from left) Jennifer Cox, Deacon Brian Cox and Carrie Hamburg wheel in the cake.

(right) Father Stef Bankemper congratulates Bishop Foys on his birthday.

(below, left) Guests read the signs that made up memory lane, highlighting Bishop Foys life.

(below, center) Many women religious attended and greeted Bishop Foys.

(below, right) Bishop Foys speaks with longtime friend and attorney Carrie Huff from Chicago.

What Pope Leo XIII had to say — Part 1 of a 4-part series

Rev. Msgr. Gerald E. Twaddell, D.Phil., KCHS
Contributor

Since the election of Pope Leo XIV, we have heard many observations about his admiration for the teachings of Pope Leo XIII. Frequent comments have referred to the encyclical “Rerum Novarum” that brought Catholic Social Teaching (CST) into the spotlight in 1891. That was not really something new, since CST is simply the application of long-established moral principles to situations that develop in the relationships of people in their social interactions. Moral theology extends to more than just the choices of individual persons.

We should first recall the turmoil that marked the end of the 18th and the whole of the 19th centuries, the “new concerns” that the title of the encyclical refers to. Intellectually, there was the rise the Enlightenment which sought, in the name of progress and reason, to sweep aside all religion as nothing more than sentimental, superstitious nonsense. It was an era of rising individualism and liberation from all forms of authority, whether of Church, or King, or any other.

Politically, Enlightenment ideals were embodied in the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the War of 1812, the various European revolutions in 1848, the Franco-Prussian War, etc., all of which disrupted the stability of monarchies, introduced republics (condemned by Blessed Pope Pius IX) and wrenched the Papal States out of the control of the Catholic Church.

Economically, there was the rise of industrial capitalism which shifted the control of productive forces from traditional artisans and small family shopkeepers into the hands of wealthy individuals pursuing ever greater concentration of political and economic power. The Popes were dismayed, and did their best to dampen such destructive forces, and advance the alternative of the teachings of the Gospel to the people being trampled and oppressed in these circumstances. Pope Leo XIII had addressed several of the issues in a suite of documents. “Rerum Novarum” must be read against the backdrop of the many disturbing trends that surrounded the life of the Church in his day. This is why it is important for people, Catholic or not, to know what he had to say. The purpose here is to get a sense of the teaching of Pope Leo XIII in just this one encyclical.

The pope’s concern was the condition of workers in a time marked by conflict brought about by the factors shifting the landscape. The first he lists is the expansion of industrial pursuits and scientific discoveries in the 19th century. Second were the changing relations between owners and workers. Third, he noted the enormous fortunes of a few and the utter poverty of the vast majority. Next were the increasing self-reliance and mutual organizations among workers. Finally, the pope pointed to the “prevailing moral degeneracy.” (§ 1) Each of these factors receives attention in the encyclical.

In this first part of this series of articles, we will focus on how Pope Leo XIII presented the underlying problem.

Property and Society

In the first portion of the encyclical, the pope reflects extensively on the economic conditions that had emerged with the rise of industrialism in the 19th century.

Leo XIII wanted to bring the principles dictated by truth and justice to bear in confronting those taking advantage of these changes to pervert people’s judgment and stir up revolts. (§ 2) He saw a need to find a remedy quickly for “the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class.” (§ 3)

As a result of the elimination of ancient protections by public institutions and laws, “working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless, to the hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition.” In addition, usury, long condemned by the Church, was being practiced under new guises “by covetous and grasping men.” The pope’s judgment was that “a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself.” (§ 3) After this critique of the workings of industrial capitalism, Pope Leo XIII turns his attention to another morally unacceptable proposal.

One answer being put forward came from socialists who sought to eliminate private ownership of the means of production, seen as the root of the problem. The pope did

not state specifically whose theory of socialism he had in mind. There were several, and not all agreed on every point. In any case, the false solution of eliminating all private property long ago introduced by Plato in his “Republic” would have had the effect of taking away from workers themselves what little they had.

Laborers have a right both to be paid for their efforts, and to use that pay as they see fit. The socialist plan to transfer people’s possessions to the community at large would deprive the laborer of all hope for improved living conditions. (§5) These practical problems call for a deeper consideration of the implications of human nature itself.

A distinctive feature of human beings, flowing from the capacity for rational thought, is the right of every person to possess property not just for immediate use as in other animals, but also to hold it on a stable basis to meet future needs. (§6) Reason links the future with the present, enabling humans to make choices about what might be advantageous at a later date. All this is grounded in humanity itself, so before any State ever comes into existence, possession of property already provides for the needs of the body. (§7)

The pope explains that the fact that God gives the earth for the use and enjoyment of the whole hu-man race can in no way exclude the owning of private property. (§8) For in giving the earth to all in general, “no part of it was assigned to anyone in particular,” thereby leaving the limits of private ownership to be worked out by people themselves. So private ownership “is in accordance with the law of nature.” (§9) An important means by which people come to own things is by their own labor. Thus, the pope asks, “Is it just that the fruit of a man’s own sweat and labor should be possessed by and enjoyed by anyone else?” (§10)

Civil laws affirm this provision. Given that such laws are just, the law of nature gives them their binding force,



OSV News photo/Library of Congress

Pope Leo XIII is depicted in this official Vatican portrait. He laid the foundation for modern Catholic social teaching with his landmark 1891 encyclical “Rerum Novarum,” addressing the rights and dignity of workers in the face of industrialization.

and the divine law against covetousness adds further sanction. (§11) These rights are also affected by the right of each person to choose a state of life, single or married, so that provision for whatever is necessary for the preservation and just freedom of the family is also a right. No state can hinder or control the life of the family. (§13)

Indeed, “if a family finds itself in exceeding distress, utterly deprived of the counsel of friends, and without any prospect of extricating itself, it is right that extreme necessity be met by public aid, since each family is a part of the commonwealth.” Likewise, when, within the family, mutual rights are not respected, the public authority must intervene to safeguard and strengthen those rights. Still, parental rights cannot be abolished or absorbed by the State as the socialists would have it. (§ 14) Since the result of applying the idea of communal holding of all goods would upset all relations among

people, leaving them in a situation worse than slavery, the socialist “solution” must be rejected. (§15)

A true solution to the challenge of industrialism must be found by involving State leaders, employers of labor, the wealthy, and the working classes as well. But their efforts will fail if the Church is not permitted to contribute her services in endeavoring to uplift the working classes. (§16) The variety of capacities, skills, strength, etc. that people possess need to be recognized. Each person should be able to choose what best suits their own situation. (§17) In making such choices, people need to see the world as it truly is, with all its ills and troubles. It is a mistake to deceive oneself about some simplistic solution that will supposedly make them disappear. (§18)

In the next article in the series we will discover the mutual duties and responsibilities of employees and employers that Pope Leo XIII identified.

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New teachers from across the Diocese of Covington gathered for an orientation, August 1, where they met with the Diocese of Covington Office of Catholic Schools in preparation of the new school year. At each seat was a rosary, a packet of information and a piece of classroom décor that read, “Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Do everything with love.” A poignant reminder ahead of the new year!

Mary’s assumption: The long-held belief was declared dogma 75 years ago

Father Richard Gribble
OSV News

The feast of the Assumption, possibly the oldest celebration of the Virgin Mary, is rooted in the tradition of Christian practice, supported by magisterial teaching and defined as one of four Marian dogmas.

As ancient as this belief is, however, 2025 marks only the 75th anniversary of the Assumption being declared a Catholic dogma.

Scripture makes no direct reference to the bodily ascension of Mary to heaven, but several passages speak of the great dignity of her life, lending support to the idea that Jesus would have continued to reveal his glory by removing the corruption of the grave and extending the privilege of the Assumption to his mother.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Song of Songs contains passages which some scholars today say are prophetic references to Mary. We read, “Arise, my friend, my beautiful one, and come!” (2:10). Also, “Daughters see her and call her happy, queens and concubines, and they praise her” (6:9). The New Testament also provides evidence supportive of Mary’s special privilege. Gabriel’s greeting, “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women” (Lk 1:28,42), and Revelation 12:1, in its description of “a woman clothed with the sun,” are illustrative.

The silence of history and Scripture concerning the death of Mary, coupled with the definition at the Council

of Ephesus (431) of Mary as the “Theotokos” (Mother of God), most probably were the catalysts behind the rise of a wealth of apocryphal literature descriptive of the dormition (falling asleep) of the Virgin.

The chief authority for information on Mary’s death comes from St. John Damascene (who died around 750), who used the otherwise unknown scholar Euthymius for his data. Pulcheria, the wife of Emperor Marcian (450-457), ordered the construction of a church in a suburb of Constantinople called Blachenae, to where she wanted brought the earthly remains of Mary. In speaking with Bishop Juvenal of Jerusalem during the Council of Chalcedon (451), the empress was informed that the Virgin’s body was not in Jerusalem.

Buried in the Garden of Gethsemane in the presence of the apostles, with the exception of Thomas, it was discovered three days later, when the apostles came to venerate her body, that the tomb was empty. It was concluded that Jesus had taken his mother to heaven. These apocryphal accounts, although they

contain no historical foundation, nevertheless serve an important function in demonstrating what the people believed, which became important for the development of the tradition of the Church.

Pope Sergius I (r. 687-701), made the celebration a principal feast and added a procession to its liturgy. On Nov. 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII, in the apostolic constitution “Munificentissimus Deus,” stated, “We pronounce, declare and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.”

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

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Knights of Columbus called to be ‘heralds of hope’ as order’s 143rd Supreme Convention opens

Nicole Olea

Catholic Standard for OSV News

The 143rd Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus opened in Washington Aug. 5 with a call to charity, unity, fraternity and patriotism, as Supreme Knight Patrick E. Kelly urged members to be “heralds of hope” in a world searching for meaning.

Delegates from the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Philippines, Poland, Ukraine, Cuba and other nations gathered in the nation’s capital, joined virtually by viewers on EWTN, Salt + Light Television and CatholicTV.

The session began with prayer led by Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori, the Knights’ supreme chaplain, invoking hope rooted in Christ’s love and the intercession of Blessed Michael McGivney, the group’s founder.

“Our hope is born of love, and is rooted in the pierced heart of your Son, Jesus Christ,” Archbishop Lori prayed. “Let us, your Knights of Columbus family, be heralds of hope.”

Pope Leo XIV addressed the convention in a video message reflecting on the Jubilee Year of Hope.

He reminded the Knights that “the source of our hope is Jesus Christ,” and praised the fraternal order for being “tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind.”

Saying the convention’s theme, “Heralds of Hope,” is timely, Pope Leo commended the Knights’ charitable outreach, including efforts for “the unborn, pregnant mothers, children, those who are less fortunate, and those affected by the scourge of war,” which he said “brings hope and healing to many and continues the noble legacy of your founder, Blessed Michael McGivney.”

Kelly’s annual report highlighted the Knights’ global impact and alignment with the vision of Pope Leo. He recalled being in Rome at the time of the conclave and pledging the “unfailing unity” of 2.1 million Knights to the new Holy Father. He said Pope Leo’s call for missionary outreach, unity and fraternity “felt like he was speaking directly to the Knights of Columbus,” because those principles reflect the order’s founding mission.

He also paid tribute to Pope Francis, describing him as “a pope of charity,” whose example inspired the Knights’ outreach to Indigenous communities, efforts against human trafficking, and humanitarian aid in Ukraine.

“We don’t merely volunteer,” Kelly said. “We see the face of Christ in those we serve, and we sacrifice for them because that’s what Jesus did for us.”

Humanitarian work remains a hallmark of the Knights’ mission. The Global Wheelchair Mission has donated more than 158,000 wheelchairs, including 19,000 last year. Aid continues for Christians in Nigeria, where persecution persists, and for Ukrainians suffering from the ongoing war.

Kelly shared the story of Tetiana Sahaidak, a young woman in Ukraine who lost her foot in a missile attack and is now receiving a prosthetic with the Knights’ support.

The Knights of Columbus continue their longstanding support for the Special Olympics through volunteer service and financial contributions, Kelly said. Members assist at local and international events, helping athletes and families experience the joy of competition while promoting the dignity of every person with intellectual disabilities.

In the United States, Knights responded to natural disasters including the Texas floods, hurricanes in the Southeast and the California wildfires. He shared a story about one Knight’s family whose home was destroyed in California and found hope in a statue of the Blessed Mother that survived untouched. Their video singing the “Regina Caeli” went viral, inspiring millions.

The Knights of Columbus in the Philippines exemplify the fraternal group’s mission of charity, serving those in the most desperate conditions. Kelly praised the more than 500,000 Filipino Knights for their daily outreach, from operating soup kitchens in Manila to supporting hundreds of children who live in what he called a “heartbreaking place” — a giant landfill — through education and care programs.

Filipino Knights also lead the national “Guardians of Dignity” initiative to combat human trafficking in partnership with the Arise Foundation. Their work, Kelly said, reaches “beyond the peripheries,” bringing hope to abandoned children, trafficking survivors and the poorest families across the nation.

The Knights’ pro-life mission expanded through the Aid and Support After Pregnancy initiative, which provided \$6 million to pregnancy resource centers last year. The Knights also reached a milestone of 2,000 donated ultrasound machines, including a new unit for a Virginia center that has already helped save more than 200 babies.

“Too many men are acting like boys,” Kelly said, emphasizing the order’s COR program for men’s faith formation. “Women need husbands, children need fathers, and we all need men to act like men.”

Spiritual renewal is central to the Knights’ work. The Sacred Heart Pilgrim Icon program has inspired more than 5,000 prayer services, drawing one-half million partici-

pants, while the Knights continue to lead Eucharistic processions and support the National Eucharistic Revival.

Vocations support also remains a priority. The Knights’ RSVP program has assisted more than 150,000 men and women discerning the priesthood or religious life and has surpassed \$100 million in contributions. Membership in the Knights of Columbus continues to grow worldwide, with 96,000 new members in the past year, Kelly said.

“We have come further than Father McGivney ever imagined, but we have only gone where Christ has called us to go,” Kelly said. “Now, let’s put our faith into action once again as heralds of hope in all we do.”



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World must disarm nuclear weapons to preserve peace

Gina Christian
OSV News

Ahead of his third “Pilgrimage of Peace” to Japan to mark the 80th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, Archbishop John C. Wester spoke with OSV News about the current state of nuclear risk, and efforts to disarm the world of nuclear weapons.

This interview has been edited for clarity and style.

OSV News: How would you describe the climate world-wide now in terms of the nuclear risk? The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists currently has the Doomsday Clock clock set at 89 seconds to midnight.

Archbishop Wester: Sadly, I think that the atomic scientists are right. The geopolitical landscape today is really very difficult, very stressful, very nerve-racking. We just keep seeing more and more instances of countries and areas of concern — for example, India and Pakistan; we saw Thailand and Cambodia (neither of which are nuclear powers, but have experienced long-running conflict) just recently. Of course, we’ve been seeing (concerns in) Ukraine for years, and what’s going on in Gaza and Lebanon. There are just so many areas that are of concern. Clearly, we’ve been living under the threat of nuclear annihilation for quite some time, for decades. But that threat seems to be more ominous these days.

OSV News: What do you say to those who advocate for nuclear deterrence in the interest of national security?

Archbishop Wester: A lot of times people will say to me, “We need nuclear weapons for deterrence.” And it strikes me that deterrence has become our worst enemy — because it’s deterrence that guarantees nuclear weapons forever.

All the nuclear weapons states, the nine of them — and who knows who in the future — will feel we have to have these for deterrence.

But we know that by having them, we are in danger, because there could be a miscommunication, a nuclear war could start à la “Fail-Safe” (a 1962 novel by political scientists Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler which envisions an accidental nuclear confrontation between the U.S. and Russia).

Or it could be a terrorist, or any number of accidents. We’ve had nuclear accidents happen in the past.

I remember that Defense Secretary (Robert) McNamara under Kennedy said that the only reason we avoided nuclear war in the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 was luck. And I don’t think the world should hang onto luck as our strategy.

It’s complicated. I know people think that we’re naive to be pushing for nuclear disarmament, but I would ask, “Well, who really is naive: those who think we can live with nuclear weapons, or those who are insisting that we get rid of them?”

OSV News: You have really walked closely, and over the long-term, with people who have known firsthand the dangers and literally the fallout from nuclear war — such as the Trinity Test Downwinders, and the Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors you’ve met. Talk about how that accompaniment has informed your disarmament advocacy, especially as these individuals, over time, recede from recent memory.

Archbishop Wester: A lot of times people say to me, “Well, nuclear weapons are just sitting in their silos. They haven’t hurt anybody.”

Obviously they hurt a lot of people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 80 years ago, and they continue to hurt people in a variety of ways. The Tula Rosa Basin Downwinders (who suffered radiation and other aftereffects from the U.S. 1945 Trinity atomic bomb test) are prime examples of people who have been affected by the development of nuclear weapons in New Mexico.

Tina Cordova (co-founder of the Tula Rose Basin Downwinders Consortium), who’s been championing that cause, has five generations of her family who have cancer linked to the radiation.

Nuclear weapons have and continue to hurt us by people who’ve been affected by radiation poisoning — and by the fact that we’re in a multi-trillion dollar program looking ahead to modernize our nuclear weapons in this country. That money could be used for cancer research, for the education of children. It could be used for all manner of things that would improve humanity in our country and throughout the world.

OSV News: What can the person in the pew — the average Catholic who is going about his or her job, raising a family, attending to the faith — do to bring the world closer to disarmament?


Archbishop Wester: I think it’s a good question. I’ve often asked that myself, and (have asked) our parishioners here in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

I think we have to have confidence that God works through each of us, that we’re all called by Christ through our baptism to proclaim the Gospel. And so we must never underestimate the power of that.

If all Catholics really started to promote nuclear disarmament, it would have an effect.

Obviously, from a practical point of view, we need to tell our elected officials of our opinion. They look to polls, they look to votes. So we have to make it known to them. If enough people made it known that, “Look, we want you to do something about this,” it would get done.


But even aside from the politics of it, if there’s a moral will and determination, that will win the day. And so I think Catholics need to get out there.




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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Mass celebrated at ‘Alligator Alcatraz’ for detained Catholic migrants

MIAMI — The Archdiocese of Miami celebrated the first Mass for detainees at “Alligator Alcatraz,” the Trump administration’s controversial immigrant detention center in the Florida Everglades. “I am pleased that our request to provide for the pastoral care of the detainees has been accommodated,” said Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski in a statement from the Archdiocese of Miami dated Aug. 1 and released Aug. 3. The archbishop added, “Also, we were able to respond to a request to provide similar service to the staff who reside at the facility. According to the archdiocese, the first liturgy was celebrated Aug. 2 at an unspecified time “in the afternoon,” with “regular liturgical celebrations” set to continue “following the facility’s guidelines and the pastoral availability of our clergy.” An archdiocesan spokesperson said confidentiality agreements prohibited photographs and the release of the names of clergy and participants at the on-site liturgy. Access to the facility for pastoral care came “after months of dialogue” among Florida’s Catholic bishops, archdiocesan leadership and state correctional authorities, the archdiocese said Aug. 1. Catholic chaplains and pastoral ministers from the Miami Archdiocese now “will have full access to offer two liturgical Masses to detainees and Catholic staff inside the detention facility.”

No apparent plans for IVF mandate despite Trump campaign pledge

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration has no plans to implement a campaign promise from President Donald Trump to require the government or insurance companies to pay for in vitro fertilization treatments, the Washington Post reported recently. IVF is a form of fertility treatment opposed by the Catholic Church on the grounds that it often involves the destruction of human embryos — estimated to involve hundreds of thousands of embryos annually — among other moral and ethical concerns. As a candidate for president in 2024, Trump pledged his administration would protect access to IVF but would have either the government or insurance companies cover the costly treatment. A 2024 Department of Health and Human Services fact sheet estimated that a single cycle of IVF costs from \$15,000 to \$20,000 and can exceed \$30,000. In February, Trump signed an executive order that aimed “to ensure reliable access to IVF treatment,” seeking policy recommendations within 90 days, a deadline the Post noted passed in May. Spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said in a statement to the Post that Trump “pledged to expand access to fertility treatments for Americans who are struggling to start families.” Patrick Brown, a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center’s Life and Family Initiative, told OSV News, “I am hopeful, cautiously optimistic, that what’s been reported is true and that they won’t impose some sort of IVF executive order that could really harm the cause of life in the U.S.”

turned its precedent finding abortion access a constitutional right, allowed the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide abortion-related counseling, as well as perform some abortions in certain circumstances, such as rape, incest or risk of maternal mortality. The federal rule was issued to be in effect regardless of state law on abortion. But in a notice published in the Federal Register, the VA said it would revoke the rule and return to the previous policy in place since 1999. Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, head of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, praised the decision. He said in an Aug. 2 statement, “It is only fitting that an agency established to care for those who so often put their lives on the line to defend the innocent is freed from participation in procedures that do not support innocent life.” The reversal of the Biden-era rule will undergo a public comment period that ends Sept. 3.

Indian nuns released on conditional bail; advocates, superiors call their arrest ‘unlawful’

BILASPUR, India — Two Catholic nuns and an Indigenous youth accused of human trafficking and forced conversion in central India are out on bail, after a special court dealing with terror cases in Bilaspur granted their release on Aug. 2. Sisters Vandana Francis and Preeti Mary, members of the Assisi Sisters of Mary Immaculate, and 21-year-old Sukhuman Mandavi were arrested July 25 at a Chhattisgarh railway station after Hindu nationalist activists from Bajrang Dal accused them of trying to convert three young women to Christianity. The National Investigation Agency court set strict conditions: The trio had to surrender their passports, must report to police every two weeks and are barred from speaking to the media. Court documents note the women’s parents have sworn that no trafficking or conversion attempt took place, and Sister Preeti’s brother told the local media his sister always acted on the basis of Christian charity and philanthropy. Catholic leaders and rights groups call the arrests part of a rising wave of anti-Christian harassment in India, where documented incidents of persecution have surged from 127 in 2014 to over 800 in 2024.



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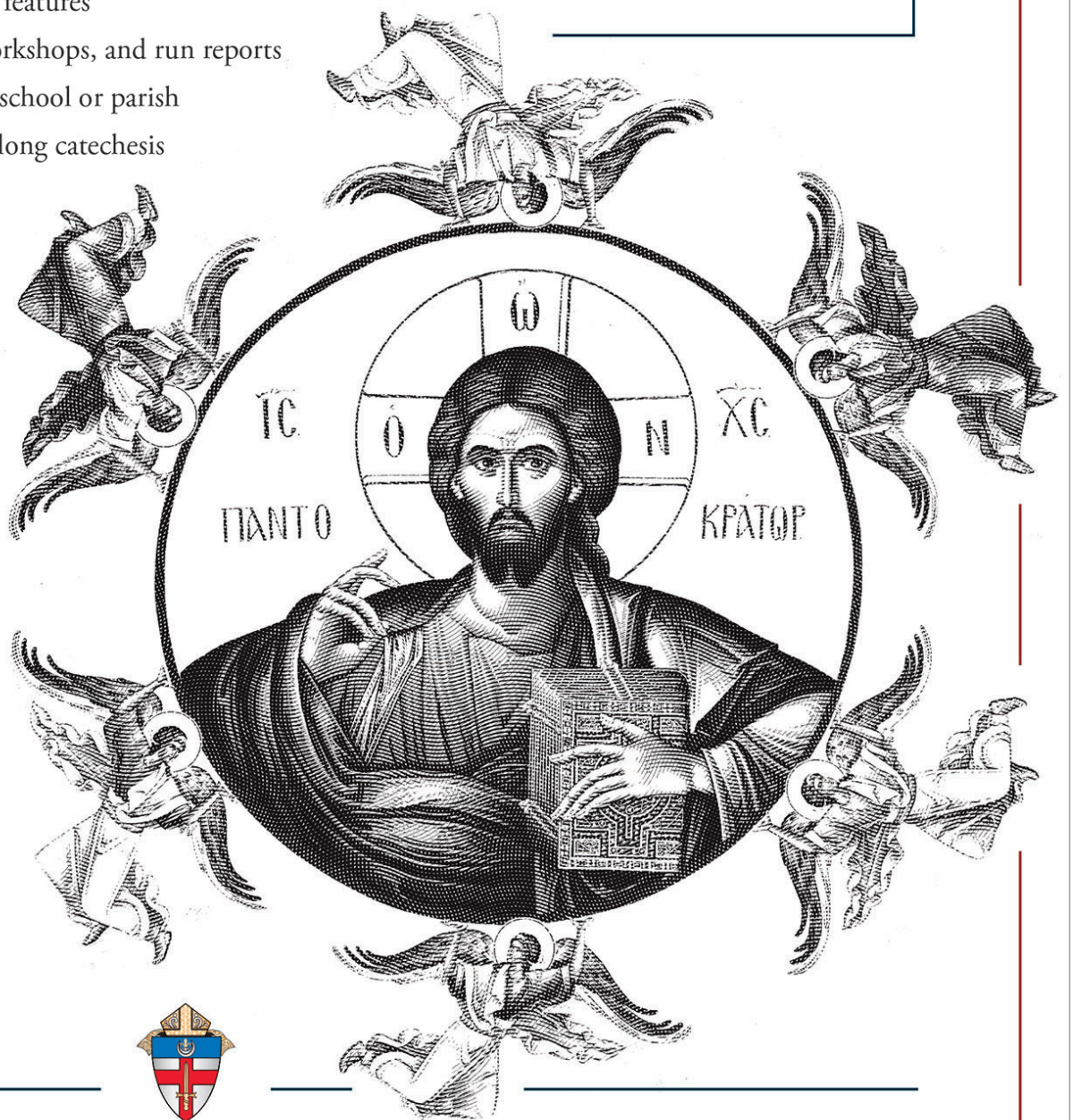
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9:30am	Welcome & Prayer
11:30am	Mass
12:15pm	Lunch
1pm	Onboarding Learners & Leaders & Mentors
2:45-3pm	Resources, Tips, Related Initiatives, & Conclusion
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